Leisure in a time of transition: A qualitative investigation into the leisure involvement of first-year university students

by

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# AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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# ABSTRACT

Every September, tens of thousands of students enter the world of higher education for the first time, and face numerous new challenges without their traditional support systems. The literature indicates that leisure involvement can work as an effective coping strategy, but little is known about how first-year students make decisions about their leisure. This study examined the factors affecting students' involvement in two leisure coping strategies (planned breaks and avoidance) and two leisure contexts (structured and unstructured). Nine one-on-one interviews with first year students were conducted. Insights consistent with the reviewed literature include students' social leisure choices, their personal background and behavioural factors, and the transitional issues they faced. A new factor to add to the existing literature is the connection between students' leisure actions and their sense of self. Researchers and leisure service providers on university campuses should explore these insights further, to help with students' transitions into university.

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# DEDICATION

To my mom and dad, Elizabeth and Jeffery Maple

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# CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION

Every September, tens of thousands of students enter the world of higher education for the first time. These students vary in their socio-demographic characteristics, academic preparation, personal and social experiences, and overall dispositions (Reason, 2009). For many, it is the first time that they are really leaving home (Pratt et al., 2000). Students do not always have positive experiences when they first enter university, and it is suggested that this may be due to a 'gap' in the expectations of students and their initial experiences (Parkinson & Forrester, 2004; Leese, 2010). While students expect an increased workload in university, research suggests that students have "little or no knowledge of what [is] expected at university, resulting in a number of concerns and pressures on students making the transition into higher education" (Leese, 2010, p. 245-246).

## 1.1 TRANSITIONS

The transition from high school to university is different from anything students have experienced before (Tinto, 1999); environments, schedules and expectations are all different than what students have experienced in the past. "Social transitions, even positive ones, such as the transition to university, are almost always accompanied by a certain degree of upheaval in terms of one's work, social and recreational activities, interpersonal relationships, and self-definition" (Tieu & Pancer, 2009, pp. 43-44). Specific factors that may accompany the transition to university (Benjamin, 1990, as cited in Gilbert, 1997) include: an increase in academic challenge, reduction of academic self-esteem, a change in tempo of daily life, and severe and on-going stress, to name a few (p. 47).

The transition can be difficult for new students to university because they are "at times unable to draw upon social networks of support" (Leese, 2010, p. 242). A study conducted by the

University of Manitoba (1991) found that, "high school students expected less difficulty in making friends than the actual level of difficulty reported by first-year students" (Gilbert, 1997, p. 48). Students do not anticipate how difficult, or at least how different, university will be from high school and past experiences.

It is not only difficult from the social perspective either; there is often a considerable increase in the academic demands of university than those experienced in secondary school (Pratt et al., 2000; Benjamin, 1990). Issues that students deal with while transitioning into university can have an influence on their learning (Ramsay, Raven, & Hall, 2005). And while the need for early support for students, both inside and outside of the classroom, has been expressed by researchers (Leese, 2010; Terenzini et al., 1994), it is debated in the literature how much institutions recognize the need for this support.

**1.2 INSTITUTIONS**

According to Leese (2010), all students need to be supported in their transition into university. Students with a wide range of backgrounds enter higher education, so institutions need to consider the needs of a diverse student body (Leese). Although Leese identifies that universities themselves should be playing a role in the support that new students receive in their first year, institutions are not always perceived as doing so. In Tinto's (1999) work, he has found that issues with students at the university level are often handled with an "add a course" strategy. That is, if there is an issue of diversity, a Diversity Studies course should be added; if there is an issue of new student retention, a Freshman Seminar can help students persist (Tinto, 1999, p. 5). However, research suggests that there is no "quick fix" that can result in a lasting transformation for new students (Black, 2010). Instead, transitioning is a process that students must experience

for themselves. Universities can provide opportunities that will assist in the transition (Black; Reason, 2009).

Research suggests that institutional effects on first-year students have less to do with institutions' characteristics (size, source of financial support, admissions selectivity, etc) and should be more of "a function of what institutions do (and how they do it)" (Reason, 2009, p.668). Encouraging success, fostering a sense of belonging, connecting students with others through academic and social settings, and providing both academic and social support (Tinto, 1999; Black, 2010; Reason) are all examples of what and how institutions can become involved in the student transition process.

Tinto (1999) goes on to emphasize that institutions need to provide an environment that encourages *both* academic and social growth. "The more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate" (Tinto, 1999, p. 7). Tinto goes on to stress the importance of this balanced involvement, particularly in the first year of study, because this is when membership at a new institution is most tenuous. One way that universities often provide social growth is through the provision of recreational and leisure opportunities. These opportunities can provide positive outcomes that can assist individuals in general, as well as assist students in their transition into university.

### 1.3 LEISURE COPING

One positive outcome that has been linked to leisure activity during times of stress is that of coping. Indeed, research suggests that "leisure is an important means of coping with stress" (Iwasaki, 2001, p. 136). When Iwasaki, MacTavish and MacKay (2005) interviewed individuals from five different, non-dominant social groups, they found that specific coping mechanisms were used by all five groups. This indicates that leisure coping research has a wide applicability

base, and may be generalized to a wider population. The coping mechanisms identified by Iwasaki et al. included: creating a "leisure space" that allowed for a feeling of safety, an opportunity to do something for themselves, and a sense of perseverance; allowed them to cope by providing a diversion from stress-inducing situations, and the chance for rejuvenation and renewal; and they are able to use leisure to balance their lives (Iwasaki, Mactavish et al.).

When examining how leisure affects one's ability to cope when stressed, Iwasaki (2006) found that immediate coping outcomes (coping effectiveness, coping satisfaction, and stress reduction) were significantly linked to one's health. This suggests that leisure can help individuals cope with a stressful situation because it can act as a stress-buffer. These findings could have implications for first-year university students; the idea of providing balance, rejuvenation, and helping to buffer stress are all outcomes which may assist students in their transition into university.

**1.4 LEISURE AND COPING WITH THE UNIVERSITY TRANSITION**

While leisure and leisure coping literature provides useful insights, these ideas have not been applied specifically to university students. As Ajzen (1991) expresses:

> At the most general level, to ask about the benefits of leisure is not a very meaningful question. Few would deny that there are benefits to be derived from leisure activities (as there are some benefits to most human activities). The more interesting questions have to do with the relations between particular kinds of leisure activities and the specific benefits they produce... Few people try to link particular leisure behaviours to specific benefits... We need to ask what kinds of leisure activities are most likely to produce the benefit(s) under consideration (p. 412).

Following Ajzen's lead, it is important to ask: what types of leisure activities are most likely to aid in coping with the transition to first-year studies in university?

Evidence has suggested, for university students in general, that Planned-breather Leisure Coping Styles ("planned breathers") can provide positive outcomes (or benefits). This is more so the case than for Avoidant Leisure Coping Styles (avoidance leisure) (Patry, Blanchard & Mask, 2007). Planned breathers are characterised as an intentional temporary distraction; centered in the idea for a need to recover energy to help regulate a demanding task, such as studying for an exam; and incorporate a planned or proactive approach to leisure (Patry et al., 2007, p. 250). Conversely, when leisure is used as a way to avoid assigned tasks, it can actually increase stress levels (Patry et al.). Additionally, highly structured and high quality leisure may benefit first-year university students (Tieu & Pancer, 2009; Tieu et al., 2010). High quality activities are those that bring positive feelings to students, have a perceived importance, and help them feel connected with others; highly structured activities involve regular participation schedules, are guided by a set of rules and an authority figure or adult, emphasize development of at least one skill, and give feedback  (Tieu & Pancer; Tieu et al.).

The planned breather leisure coping strategy and the structured leisure context have been shown to provide positive outcomes in the transition, adjustment and/or the stress coping in university. With respect to planned breathers, positive outcomes include a mastery-approach to goals, effective time management, positive affects following an exam, and an adaptive way to regulate a demanding academic task (Patry et al., 2007) The higher the quality of the activity, the higher one's self-esteem, social support, and social skills will become, and the lower the levels of stress (Tieu & Pancer, 2009). These positive outcomes are important skills that may directly

assist with transitioning issues mentioned previously, such as increased academic demands, and severe or on-going stress.

We know that "leisure provides an important arena for individual development during adolescence and young adulthood" (Raymore, Barber, & Eccles, 2001, p. 201). Universities typically offer a wide variety of extracurricular programs in order to facilitate leisure behaviour. However, the need and importance of becoming involved in extracurricular activities is not always apparent to students. While some data suggests that upwards of 60% of students reported involvement in at least one extracurricular activity (Tieu et al., 2010), other data suggest that students are much less involved in university (both large and small scale institutions) than they were in high school (Gilbert, 1997, p. 49). In a qualitative study about university students from diverse backgrounds and colleges in the United States, some participating students, particularly those first-generation university goers, "appeared to be deferring involvement in the non-academic activities and life of the campus until they felt they had their academic lives under control" (Terenzini et al., 1994, p. 64). This is an issue that needs to be addressed because, as mentioned above, involvement in certain leisure coping strategies, such as planned breathers, can actually help students acquire the skills that can help them get their academic footing.

**1.5 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE**

Several questions remain. First, certain studies have indicated that upwards of 60% of students reported involvement in at least one extracurricular activity (e.g., Tieu et al., 2010). While this may indicate that the majority of students are involved in extracurricular activities, it also poses a problem. This research suggests that upwards of 40% of students may not be involved in an out-of-class activity. Approximately 40% of students are not taking advantage of the positive outcomes that leisure can provide during their transition. Students may not be

putting themselves in a situation that can help them transition into their first-year of university, when they may need it most.

Second, while leisure coping research and leisure transition research provide two different, but useful pieces of information for students, it is unclear how they interact. What is the role that students assign to various leisure activities? How do various leisure contexts and coping strategies facilitate (or not) transition to university? Does level of structure of the leisure activity influence the way in which activities are used or the outcomes they generate? Does the role of leisure change over time (and particularly as transition processes evolve for the individual)?

Third, as mentioned above, involvement in certain leisure contexts and coping strategies, such as planned breathers, can actually help students get their academic footing. So, if this is the case, are students using these during their transition process? How do students make the decision of whether or not to become involved in such leisure activities?

**1.6 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of this project is to explore the role of leisure in a time of transition. Specifically, this project will explore the role of leisure during students' transition to university. Additional detail will emerge throughout the literature review; as a result, a more detailed set of research questions is provided at the conclusion of the review.

**1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research is intended to shed light on how students use specific leisure contexts and coping strategies during their first term of university. By exploring different points in time during the first term (busy versus less busy times, for example), this research will try to

understand how/why students decide to participate in two leisure coping strategies (planned breathers and avoidant) and two leisure contexts (structured and unstructured).

Even though this study is focusing on leisure in a time of transition, it is suggested that leisure involvement during students' transition year may roll over into subsequent years at university. If students are able to effectively utilise leisure to help with their university transition, its perceived value could result in continued use of leisure as a coping strategy throughout their entire university career. Additionally, if leisure can be used in this manner, it may also have positive implications for student persistence and retention literature.

**CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The overall aim of this project is to investigate the role of leisure in a time of transition, specifically, when students are transitioning into university for the first time and are becoming integrated into the university community. A review of concepts related to transitions, institutions, student involvement, leisure coping, leisure coping in university and when transitioning into university, and decision making processes is presented in this chapter. These concepts were explored to provide rationale for the project, to act as sensitizing concepts, or to be explored further within this research project; the purpose of each section in this chapter will be identified.

**2.1 TRANSITIONS**

The first year of university is a time of transition for students. Often it is their first time living away from home. It is very different than anything they have experienced up until then, as both the academic and social environments have changed (Tinto, 1999; Pratt et al., 2000). Like other transitions in life, the preliminary stage of university can vary greatly from person to person (Pratt et al., 2000, p. 427). However, this preliminary stage is especially important for new students because studies indicate that the first few weeks of the transition can be crucial to students' long-term university adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Pratt et al.).

The transition into university may be characterized and/or accompanied by many academic, social, and other factors that students may experience. Academically, not only are students now learning largely in isolation (Tinto, 1999), but the "academic demands at university often increase considerably over those in secondary school" (Pratt et al., 2000, p.427). Socially, students may find the transition difficult, at least partially, because their social networks are somewhat disrupted by their move to university (Pratt et al., 2000, p. 427).

When considering the whole transition scene, Benjamin (1990, as cited in Gilbert, 1997) identified 11 factors that *may* characterize or accompany the transition from high school to university:

- Increased academic challenge
- Reduced academic self-esteem
- Need to learn a new set of norms and assumptions
- Assimilation of new norms and values
- Disruption of ties to former peers and evolution of ties to a new peer group
- Change in tempo of daily life
- Novel living arrangements
- Sudden anonymity
- Threat of self-image
- Longing for home
- Severe and on-going stress (p. 47)

These factors include academic, social, and other aspects of student life that students may be experiencing during their transition. Not only are students adjusting to an increased academic challenge, new expectations, and trying to adapt to new norms and expectations, but they are trying to adapt to an overall change in their daily lives. All of these factors affect major areas of students' lives, especially the feeling of stress, anonymity and the threat of their self-image. As a way to combat these feelings, new students seek self-esteem (Terenzini et al., 1994). Two particular avenues in which they seek this self-esteem are by being both respected and valued by others (Terenzini et al.).

This need to be respected and valued is why the notion of disrupted social networks, mentioned above, is a particularly relevant during times of transition. Possessing social networks during their first year is important for students.

In a large study carried out in the United States, Astin (1993) came to the conclusion that students' peers and faculty, in that order, have the greatest potential impact on students' development [in their first year of university]. Not only do friends provide

the student with a sense of well-being, they may also provide much needed

psychological, academic, and even economic support (Gilbert, 1997, p. 47).

Disrupted social networks, resulting from beginning university, affect students in multiple ways

(and perhaps more than students realize).

However, creating these beneficial social bonds is not always as easy as students may

expect. For instance, in a study conducted by the University of Manitoba (1991), "high school

students expected less difficulty in making friends than the actual level of difficulty reported by

first-year students" (Gilbert, 1997, p. 48). So, not only are students unable to use social networks

as a form of support, but it is more difficult for them to cultivate these networks than they

expected. These factors, in turn, make it more difficult for students to transition into university

(Leese, 2010, p.242).

When high school friends are present during the transitional stage, they can be

instrumental in how successfully a new student is able to make this change. Terenzini et al.

(1994) found that when students knew high school friends or siblings who were either also new

students or already enrolled at the same institution "these precollege friends functioned during

the early weeks or months of college as a bridge from one academic and interpersonal

environment to the next... they provided important support during the transition" (pp.64-65).

Eventually, relationships with former peers fade and are disrupted as new friendships are formed

(Terenzini et al.; Benjamin, 1990) However, high school friends who do not move onto

postsecondary education may complicate a student's transition. These friends tend to become

personal anchors that hold the student to the patterns and activities that existed before they began

university (Terenzini et al., 1994, p. 65). These prior friendships are described as potential

liabilities in the Terenzini study, because they can inhibit or hold back students from moving

through the transition process. However, whether this varies or not between students who left home for university versus those who do not, has not been examined.

The issue of first-year student transitions is something with which the post secondary institution as a whole should be concerned, because the way in which students adjust during their first year of university "is predictive of significant life events later in their [university] career" (Baker & Siryk, 1984, p.188). For example, in one study, students that adjusted better to their first-year of university, either socially or academically, were more likely to become involved in residence life as a dormitory assistant or in academic societies up to two years later in their academic career; they were also less likely to be known to the Psychological Services centre on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1984, p.184-187). This indicates that students who are better able to adjust may become more involved in the university community. This type of involvement is important for institutions to foster, especially since a first-year student's membership is so tenuous (Tinto, 1999). This insight provide into the transition literature begins to develop a rationale for this study because it provides a background context of what students are facing when they first enter university.

## 2.2 INSTITUTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

In the discussion of first-year student transitions, many of the issues raised about institutions relate to institutional involvement in the transition process. Historically, institutions have been characterised largely by their structural-demographic characteristics, including size, curricular mission, source of financial support, and admissions selectivity (Reason, 2009). They have also been criticized for taking passive approaches to student issues. As mentioned earlier, they may address concerns of diversity or student retention by "adding a course" related to the required topic (Tinto, 1999). A more active program of support for students in their first-year,

however, might be much more effective and beneficial (Leese, 2010). This support could be incorporated into the culture of the institution (Black, 2010).

Black (2010) suggests that the culture needed to help students succeed focuses "holistically on the developmental needs of students – intellectual, social, emotional, and physical" (p. 2). The term "developmental" is a key concept here because it illustrates that a student progresses or evolves during his or her transition into university (Black). That is why it is more important to focus on what institutions do to help students and how they do it, rather than just their characteristics (Reason, 2009). The focus needs to be on how institutions can be involved and encourage first-year students to become involved.

This section continues to support a rationale for this research study because it provides details related to the institution's potential role in students' transitions to university.

## 2.3 INVOLVEMENT

Researchers Astin and Tinto both deal with issues of student involvement and persistence in higher education. Specifically, Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993) and Astin's theory of student involvement (1984, republished in 1999) are two of the most widely cited pieces of research in the field (Milem & Berger, 1997).

Tinto (1975, 1993) identified that a student becomes integrated into the university system once he/she has been able to navigate successfully through three stages: (a) *separation* – disassociating themselves from the norms and patterns of past ties, such as family, high school friends, etc; (b) *transition* – after they have disconnected from past norms and patterns, but have not yet incorporated new norms and patterns of their new community; and (c) *incorporation* – having adopted the new norms and patterns of the university community. These stages coincide with Benjamin's (1990) findings that the need to new and assimilate to new norms, values and

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assumptions may accompany the transition from high school to university. The main factor that facilitates the move from the transition stage to the incorporation stage is a student's involvement in the university (Tinto, 1975, 1993). He suggests that this involvement can occur through various academic and social activities on campus. In fact, he says, "the greater students' involvement or integration in the life of the [university], the greater the likelihood that they will persist" (Tinto, 1997, p. 600).

While Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement does not identify a specific transitional period, it still provides valuable insights into student involvement. The theory defines student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 518). The theory also has five basic postulates, or propositions: (a) involvement means investing physical and psychological energy in different "objects", which range in their degree of specificity (e.g., overall student experience vs studying for an exam); (b) involvement occurs along a continuum, in which different students invest different amounts of energy in different objects at different times; (c) involvement consists of both quantitative and qualitative elements; (d) the amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of a student's involvement; and (e) "the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement" (p. 519). According to Astin, when considering the design of educational programs for students, the last two postulates are key concepts to keep in mind.

Astin's (1999) discussion of student involvement is one that highlights the *behavioural* aspect of involvement, rather than its motivational aspect. In his words, "it is not so much what the individual thinks or feels, but what the individual does, how he or she behaves, that defines

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and identifies involvement" (p. 519). It is not enough to want to be involved; instead, the actions of the individual are the focus of the theory (Astin).

Taken together, Astin and Tinto's theories illustrate the importance of student involvement during their transition time. Also, since membership is so tenuous for first-year university students, it is important that this involvement takes place in both the academic and social environments of a university (Tinto, 1997). Although both of these environments are important in the transition process, this study focuses on students' social (non-academic) involvement.

### 2.3.1 Social involvement

Social involvement is identified as "organized or informal non-academic interactions students have with one another or with faculty [and that] involvement of this nature can be a positive experience in itself and can lead to desired outcomes" (Gilbert, 1997, p. 47). While in-class efforts can help students, at the same time academic and student affairs offices on campus need to recognize that students' in- and out-of-class experiences are interrelated to the transition experience. Institutions need to recognize that significant and important learning takes place outside of class time as well (Terenzini et al., 1994, pp. 71-72).

Various types of social involvement can provide support in a student's first-year of university. These can include, but are not limited to, involvement in student government, residence and student union activities, intramural sports, fundraising, religious involvement, volunteering, counselling, mentoring and ethnic student centres (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993, 1999; Filiatrault, 2001). These outlets and groups can act as secure, knowable arenas that allow students to safely navigate their new environment (Tinto, 1999). It has been suggested that

involvement in extra-curricular activities, such as these, can help students better emotionally and socially adjust to university than students who are uninvolved (Filiatrault).

Although this research proposes that balanced involvement in a student's first year of university can assist in a student's transition, concerns remain in the literature. In his suggestions for future research, Astin (1999) poses the questions: "How do different forms of involvement interact? Does one form of involvement (e.g., in extracurricular activities) enhance or diminish the effects of another form (e.g., in academic work)? What are the ideal combinations that facilitate maximum learning and personal development?" (p. 528). These questions are relevant to this discussion. Astin's question, particularly the second question, will help to further guide this research project.

**2.4 LEISURE COPING RESEARCH**

The following sections discuss evidence from research which suggests that leisure can be used as a method of coping with stress. Before this can happen, however, the concept of coping is explored.

**2.4.1 Coping**

There are many definitions and characteristics in the literature for the concept of coping (for example, see Skinner & Wellborn, 1994; Taylor & Stanton, 2007). One of the widely used definitions for coping is "the thoughts and behaviours used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful" (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004, p. 745). There are several common characteristics that are significant in this and other definitions of coping which describe the process, circumstance, and personal effects in which coping occurs. A summary of these characteristics could describe coping as an action-oriented process that occurs during personally significant, stressful events or situations, which in turn affect a person's

behaviour, emotion, and orientation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Skinner & Wellborn, 1994; Folkman & Moskowitz; Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Iwasaki, 2006).

As this summary describes, the process of coping is not a stand-alone phenomenon; it is a complex, emotional process that involves the relationship between people and their environment (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The process often begins when an individual believes that an important goal or idea has been threatened, harmed, or lost (Folkman & Moskowitz). However, before people can begin coping with the situation, they often must first try to regulate any stressful, negative emotions that may have risen at the thought that their goals or ideas are threatened. For example, a student feels as though her academic potential is challenged because she has two exams and a term paper due during the same week. Before she can begin coping with the situation, she may first have to overcome feelings of being overwhelmed, upset, and frustrated. Once these feelings have been dealt with, coping resources can be incorporated.

Coping resources are techniques or descriptive used to understand "how people actually respond to stress as they contend with real life problems" (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007, p. 121). They can aid in the process of managing, mastering, tolerating, reducing, or minimizing the demands of a stressful environment (Taylor & Stanton, 2007, p. 378). Common ways to cope include problem-solving, support-seeking, escape, distraction, a sense of helplessness, social withdrawal, negotiation, opposition, and emotional regulation (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck). Coping resources also affect the process one takes when coping; some resources may be used to confront the stressors directly, while others, such as withdrawal or denial, may be marked as an avoidant process of coping (Taylor & Stanton).

One of the most dominant frameworks used in coping research to understand stress and coping is the stress-buffer perspective (Iwasaki, 2006). In general, this perspective indicates that the effects of coping strategies on health benefits are evident or activated in times of stress, but have little or no impact when people are not stressed (Iwasaki). With this perspective, and insight into the concept of coping, the discussion now turns to how leisure can assist with coping.

**2.4.2 Using leisure to cope**

Research on leisure as a way to cope with stress has been approached and examined from a variety of different perspectives, contexts and situations. The discussion of these various approaches will begin specifically with the hierarchical dimensions of leisure coping and then will be expanded upon with other research.

*2.4.2.1 Hierarchical dimensions of leisure stress coping*

A key piece of literature which has brought together a lot of the research on leisure stress coping is the establishment of the hierarchical dimensions of leisure stress coping (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000). This research describes a three-level hierarchy of leisure stress coping. The first level distinguishes between two major ways in which leisure can help people cope with stress: leisure coping beliefs and leisure coping strategies. Leisure coping beliefs "refer to people's generalized beliefs that their leisure helps them cope with stress. [They] gradually develop over time and are maintained through the socialization process" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 165). Leisure coping strategies, on the other hand, "are actual stress-coping situation-grounded behaviours or cognitions available through involvements in leisure" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 167). The main distinction between the two is that leisure coping beliefs (LCB) are seen as a buffer or moderator against stress to maintain good health, whereas leisure coping strategies

(LCS)  are based around the idea that coping is a process and that these strategies help to mediate the effect of stress on one's health.

The second and third levels of the hierarchy deal with LCBs and LCSs more specifically. The two major types of beliefs are that leisure involvement can provide opportunities to develop and reinforce, to varying degrees, *friendships* and *personal autonomy* (Level 2), which help people to deal with stress.  These leisure friendships can help individuals cope with stress by providing *esteem support, emotional support, informational support,* and/or *tangible aid* (Level 3). Personal autonomy relates to beliefs "that leisure contributes to feelings of *self-determination* and/or *empowerment* that enable better stress coping (Level 3)" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 177). As for strategies, three major leisure coping strategies have been identified. "When faced with a stressful situation or event, people to varying degrees use leisure for *companionship, palliative coping,* and/or *mood enhancement* as ways of dealing with stress" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 177). While companionship and mood enhancement are evident, palliative coping is described as "a means of keeping mind and body busy, temporarily allowing escape from problems, and/or allowing individuals to feel refreshed and regroup to better handle problems" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 181). For further description of the various dimensions of leisure stress coping, see Figure 1.

| Subdimension | Definition |
|---|---|
| **Leisure Coping Belief Scale** | |
| Self-determination disposition | People's general beliefs that their leisure behavior is mainly self-determined, freely chosen, or autonomous; accordingly, a sense of control and intrinsic motivation is experienced in their leisure time. |
| Leisure empowerment | People's general beliefs that they are entitled to leisure, that self-expression in leisure provides resources to challenge constraints in their lives, and that their leisure fosters a valued sense of self. |
| Emotional support | Care or love by individuals' leisure-related friends, or a strong bond or closeness with them. |
| Esteem support | The bolstering of individuals' self-esteem or self-respect by their leisure-related friends. |
| Tangible aid | Instrumental support such as financial or tangible aids (e.g., assistance in moving) by leisure-related friends. |
| Information support | The provision of practical advice or information by individuals' leisure-related friends. |
| **Leisure Coping Strategy Scale** | |
| Leisure companionship | Discretional, intrinsic, and/or enjoyable shared leisure. |
| Leisure palliative coping | Leisure as a means of keeping mind and body busy, temporarily allowing escape from problems, and/or allowing individuals to feel refreshed and regroup to better handle problems. |
| Leisure mood enhancement | Enhancement of positive mood and/or reduction of negative mood through leisure pursuits. |

**Figure 1** Definitions for each sub-dimension of the leisure coping belief scale and the leisure coping strategy scale. Taken from Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000.

In the development of the hierarchical dimensions, Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) propose that leisure-generated beliefs can act as a moderator or buffer from the negative influences of health when stress is high. This stress-buffer perspective is explored by Iwasaki (2006), as a way to examine whether leisure, when used as a coping strategy, could protect people from ill-health when their stress levels increased (p. 211). Specifically, it is hypothesized

that leisure coping (LCBs and/or LCS) is linked to outcomes such as immediate adaptive outcomes (coping effectiveness, coping satisfaction, stress reduction) and/or health. The study corroborates Coleman and Iso-Ahola's proposition, in that only when stress levels are higher, do significant relationships exist between leisure coping and health. That is, when stress levels are higher rather than lower, "long-term health protective benefits of leisure coping became evident" (Iwasaki, 2006, p. 216).

*2.4.2.2 Findings in leisure coping research*

There are many variables which have been explored in the leisure coping literature; these include, but are not limited to gender, spiritual well-being, physical activity and non-physical activity. Some of the findings from these topics will be explored in this section. This discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive account of all leisure coping related research, but more a way of providing examples of some of the research that has been conducted in this field.

A variable that is typically collected in research studies (not just leisure coping research) is the variable of gender. While this may be a variable collected in leisure coping research, it is argued that "gender-based analyses of leisure stress-coping have been performed rarely" (Iwasaki, MacKay & Mactavish, 2005, p. 1). Research on this topic suggests that men and women both use direct action coping (i.e., using strategies that directly address an issue that is causing distress) most frequently and to the same extent (Gonzalez-Morales, 2003). However, when social support and leisure are used as coping strategies, women pursue them more frequently than do men (Gonzalez-Morales). In another study about male and female managers, a broad range of coping methods was used as life-survival techniques (Iwasaki, MacKay et al.). These methods were presented through both common themes and themes unique to gender. The nine common stress-coping themes shared between genders include socialization/generating

social support through leisure, deflecting stress-inducing thoughts through leisure, feeling rejuvenated through leisure, leisure as personal space, humour/laughter, spiritual coping, altruistic leisure coping, leisure travel, and problem-focused coping (Iwasaki, MacKay et al., 2005, p. 11). Themes which are female specific include involvement in arts and cultural activities and the preventative role of leisure and/or exercise. Themes which are male-specific include having a sense of control in leisure, playing hard in leisure, and sports spectatorship. These findings illustrate that although female and male managers share several stress-coping strategies identified, key themes are also unique to a manager's gender (Iwasaki, MacKay et al.).

Involvement in physically active types of leisure has also been found to produce some interesting results. When analysing data from the 1994 National Population Health Survey from Statistics Canada, researchers found that "the higher the level of participation in physically active leisure, the better one's overall functional health and subjective assessment of physical health" (Iwasaki, Zuzanek & Mannell, 2001, p. 217). Additionally, when experiencing higher levels of chronic stress, life event and/or work stress, being involved in physically active leisure also appears to help participants maintain better health (p. 217). These findings provide support toward the role that physically active leisure can play in improving positive health and coping with stress. Another study looking at physically active leisure reveals that certain leisure activity, particularly collegiate sport, can be perceived as both a buffer to and experience of stress (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). These researchers found that collegiate sports can be positively related to self-determination (including feelings of self-competence and mood enhancement) and social support. They can also, however, be related to negative issues of gender stereotypes and lack of social support. Lack of social support, for example, is expressed in relation to the amount of socializing students could do outside of their sport participation and that non-athletes do not

understand the type of support they need (Kimball & Freysinger). This suggests that, while physically active leisure can improve and maintain one's health, it can also provide some limitations depending on the circumstances.

Some leisure coping research has focused specifically on non-physical forms of leisure. Not all leisure coping must be done in a physically active way. Trenbeth, Dewe, and Walkey (1999) examined the role of leisure in coping with work stress, specifically the role of active-challenging leisure versus passive-recuperative leisure as coping strategies of high school principals and vice principals. For this occupational group, the passive nature of leisure is found to be more important for coping with stress from work (Trenberth et al.). This study stresses two main points about leisure coping in their findings. First, it is important to identify the types of needs that must be satisfied and not assume that a particular type of leisure (e.g., physically activity) will help all individuals cope with stress. Second, this study highlights the importance of passive/recuperative leisure on coping with work stress.

Another non-physical way in which leisure has been explored is through the spiritual function of leisure and how that is related to the effects of time-pressure in one's life. Research suggests that people's motivation, participation and the amount of time available may affect their sense of spiritual well-being (Heintzman & Mannell, 2003). For example, the more time available, the more highly motivated people are, and the more frequently they partake in certain activities (e.g., cultural or outdoor activities), the more likely they may experience higher levels of spiritual well-being (Heintzman & Mannell). The connection between leisure time and the spiritual functions of leisure is also stronger when one's time pressure is taken into consideration. "When experiencing time pressure and a consequent decrease in leisure time, time becomes a much more important resource or factor in the ability to use leisure for its spiritual

functions" (Heintzman & Mannell, 2003, p. 225). However, an interesting finding from this research is that an increase in time pressure actually appeared to prompt an increase in the use of leisure for its spiritual functions (p. 225). While increased time pressure may decrease one's leisure time, that leisure time appears to become more focused on the specific outcomes a person wishes to achieve.

*2.4.2.3 A summary of positive outcomes related to leisure*

Through the research discussed in this section, there is evidence to suggest that using leisure to cope with stress can provide certain positive outcomes. The hierarchical dimensions of leisure stress coping tell us that leisure coping beliefs can provide opportunities to receive support in the areas of esteem, emotion, and information as well as tangible aid; and gain a sense of empowerment and self-determination. Leisure coping strategies can help with companionship, palliative coping, and mood enhancement (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000). Leisure can act as a stress-buffer for those experiencing high levels of stress, particularly individuals with lower socio-economic statuses (Iwasaki, 2006). While leisure stress-coping strategies can be common amongst men and women (direct action coping, feeling rejuvenated through leisure, leisure as personal space, etc.), gender also plays a role in how leisure is used to cope with stress (Gonzalez-Morales, 2003; Iwasaki, MacKay et al., 2005). Using physical activity to cope with stress may provide various degrees of self-determination, self-competence, mood enhancement, and social support (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003); it is also directly related to higher levels of physical health and well-being and can help maintain good health and well-being during times of higher stress (Iwasaki, Zuzanek, & Mannell, 2001). At the same time, however, not all leisure must be physical in order to be effective. Depending on the situation, passive leisure can be more important in coping with stress (Trenberth et al., 1999).

This review of the leisure coping literature provides much support for the contention that leisure can be used as a coping resource. To bring this discussion back to the research project at hand, Iwasaki, Mactavish et al. (2005) raise the recommendation that clients and professionals need to work together to identify and facilitate a leisure lifestyle for the clients. When considered from the perspective of students being the clients and academic advisors or assistants being the professionals, the idea of an 'optimal leisure lifestyle' brings our discussion back to Astin's (1999) question about involvement: How can a student's academic involvement be enhanced or diminished when social involvement is incorporated? The previous section discussed the positive outcomes that can result when people use leisure as a coping strategy. More specifically, Iwasaki, Mactavish et al.'s quote above suggests that leisure (or social involvement) can provide a way for people to cope with or counteract stress in other areas of their lives and that the focus should be on how to optimally do so. Therefore, the next step in the review of literature is to investigate if and how leisure can be used in this capacity, specifically with university students and students that are transitioning into their university careers.

**2.5 LEISURE COPING: IN UNIVERSITY AND WHEN TRANSITIONING INTO UNIVERSITY**

There are two main foci addressed in the literature related to leisure and its potential positive outcomes on university students: leisure as a university coping strategy and leisure during the first-year transition. While both of these research areas address leisure's effect on university students, they approach the subject from two distinctively different points in an undergraduate career. University-based leisure coping research has, to date, focused on topics related to the student body overall, not identifying a particular cohort of students. Research on leisure in the time of first-year university transitions has focused on the outcomes during, related to, and directly affecting the transition period of first-year university students. The research areas

identify two leisure coping strategies and two leisure contexts, and the outcomes that may result from all; each area has been described below.

**2.5.1 Leisure as a university coping strategy**

University-based leisure coping research has focused primarily on the positive outcomes that students can obtain from leisure involvement. Outcomes that have been identified amongst university students include greater coping effectiveness, positive impacts on immediate coping outcomes, reduced feelings of stress, and predicted lower levels of mental ill-health; these have contributed to positive psychological well-being and restoration of depleted energy (Iwasaki, 2001, 2003; Patry et al., 2007). This is in contrast to outcomes of disengagement coping, which is identified as denial, mental disengagement, behavioural disengagement, and use of religion combined (Iwasaki, 2001). Disengagement coping is said to be a significant predictor of "negative immediate coping outcomes, higher levels of mental ill-health, and lower levels of psychological well-being" (Iwasaki, 2001, p. 136). When using leisure to cope with stress, it can result in a feeling of rejuvenation and a sense of renewal (Iwasaki, MacTavish et al., 2005), which may help students persist with their studies.

*2.5.1.1 Planned breathers vs. Avoidance leisure*

A study related to university-based leisure coping has provided evidence related to how students should approach their involvement in leisure. Specifically, the authors identify and compare two specific types of leisure coping styles: the planned-breather leisure coping style ("planned breathers") and the avoidance leisure coping style ("avoidance") (Patry et al., 2007). Planned-breathers function under the intentional focus in *temporary distraction,* which are consistent with Iwasaki and Mannell's (2000) concept of palliative coping (Patry et al., 2007). Planned breathers are also characterised as being centered on the idea of needing to recover

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energy, and incorporates a planned and proactive approach to leisure in order to continue a self-regulating task, such as studying for an exam (p. 250). Avoidance leisure, on the other hand, is viewed as an *avoidance tactic* toward a self-regulating task; its main function is to escape or avoid a task altogether, and is an outlet for procrastination (p. 250).

To determine an understanding of these two types of leisure coping styles, a series of scales were used to measure which leisure coping strategy students tended to use. In obtaining an overall orientation of the coping styles, researchers examined the nature of students' leisure activities two days prior to an exam; a 14-item scale to identify planned-breather versus avoidance type leisure; three items related to one's mastery-approach to goals; five items from Macan et al.'s 1990 Time management behaviour scale; and a 20-item scale to measure procrastination. To further validate these leisure coping styles, confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine possible correlates from Cohen et al.'s 1983 14-item Global Perceived Stress scale; the number of hours that students spent on leisure in the two days prior to an exam; and the affect, or general feeling, typically experienced after writing an exam (Patry et al., 2007).

When leisure is used as a planned breather from their studies, opposed to an avoidance tactic, students are able to use leisure in an adaptive way to regulate a demanding academic task, such as studying for an exam (Patry et al., 2007). Incorporating planned-breathers into study schedules indicates planning skills. By planning when leisure will be used as an intentional, temporary distraction, students are able to obtain positive outcomes such as less stress, a better emotional well-being, effective time management, and goals related to mastery (Patry et al.). In contrast, the avoidance coping style is associated with those respondents who reported higher the number of hours spent on leisure two days prior to an exam. This higher number of leisure hours is also associated with greater perceived stress and greater negative affect after an exam. Using

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leisure as an avoidance coping style has also been attributed to higher likelihood of procrastination and ineffective time management (Patry et al.).

**2.5.2 Leisure during the first-year transition**

Leisure research related to first-year transitions and adjustments, while limited, has identified specific leisure contexts that can provide positive outcomes while first-year students are transitioning or adjusting to university life. Primarily, the contexts of leisure involvement examined have focused on structured as well as high quality leisure. Based on the factors associated with transition into university – change in tempo of daily life, reduced self-esteem, lack of social support, increased academic challenge, etc (Leese, 2010; Benjamin, 1990; Pratt et al., 2000) – it is not surprising that these leisure contexts are focused and specific.

*2.5.2.1 Highly structured and high quality leisure*

Highly structured and high quality leisure activities both have many features associated with them. Regarding highly structured leisure activities, Mahoney and Stattin (2000) compiled the following list of features used to define this leisure context: regular participation schedules guided by a set of rules, direction from an adult or authority figure, an emphasis on the development of at least one skill, activity demands which follow a participant's competence, and clear feedback (p. 114-115). High quality activities, on the other hand, are described as bringing positive feelings to the student, having a perceived importance, and/or helping students to feel connected with others (Tieu & Pancer, 2009).

To identify the extent to which these leisure contexts were engaged in during the first-year student transition, a number of scales and variables were identified. These included: main demographics (age, sex, major of study if known); an activity structure index; an 18-item Quality of involvement scale; 10 items from the 1989 Rosenberg self-esteem scale; a 24-item scale on

social provisions of social relationships; four items from Cohen et al.'s 1983 Global Perceived Stress scale; and Baker & Siryk's 1984 67-item Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Tieu et al., 2010). Unique to Tieu & Pancer's (2009) study on leisure quality was an inventory of the nature of students' involvement in leisure and the inclusion of a Social Skills scale, which investigated eight social skills that may be associated with leisure participation.

Research on these specific leisure contexts has provided two main insights about the potential positive outcomes that they offer to first-year students. First, the quality of a student's involvement in extracurricular activities may be more influential than the quantity of activities in which students are involved. Tieu and Pancer (2009) identified that the quality of involvement in extracurricular activities was a significant predictor of first-year students' adjustment to university; whereas the number of activities and number of hours spent on activities were not found to be significant. Second, extracurricular activities with higher amounts of structure revealed to be related to better adjustment in students' first-year of study (Tieu, et al. 2010). More specifically, "taking part in highly structured activities will provide students with a high quality experience which will facilitate a smoother transition into the first-year of university." (Tieu et al., 2010, p.353)

Activities higher in both quality and structure, in a student's first year of university, also provided important positive outcomes related to self-esteem, social support, and stress (Tieu and Pancer, 2009; Tieu et al., 2010). Specifically, these forms of leisure "may facilitate adjustment to university by increasing students' self-esteem, increasing their feelings of social support, and decreasing their feelings of stress" (Tieu and Pancer, 2009, pp. 58-59). These positive outcomes are pertinent to student transitions because, as mentioned previously, transitions from high school to university may be accompanied by reduced self-esteem, lack of social supports, and

severe/on-going stress (Gilbert, 1997; Kenny, 1987 from Pratt et al., 2000; Leese, 2010).

Involvement in highly structured activity was also "found to be related to university adjustment

within the first few months of university, and possibly indirectly related to university adjustment

near the end of their second term of university" (Tieu et al., 2010, p. 353). This finding suggests

the need to take account of timelines when looking at the relationship between leisure and

adjustment.


While this transition literature focuses on two different cohorts of university students, it

suggests that the ideas and findings presented here may overlap for this research project, for two

reasons. First, the definitions of the leisure contexts and coping strategies being addressed have

the potential to overlap. Participating in leisure as a "planned breather" is characterized as an

intentional, temporary distraction which incorporates a planned or proactive approach to leisure

(Patry et al., 2007). Highly structured leisure involves regular participation, a set of rules, often

led by an authority figure or leader, etc (Tieu et al., 2010). Because highly structured leisure

involves regular participation, it can be assumed that meetings would be planned out ahead of

time, so students will know when, where, and how often they are meeting. Therefore, highly

structured leisure is likely to also fall under the larger category of "planned breather" leisure;

however, the reader should note that this does not infer that all planned breather leisure is also

highly structured.

The second reason this literature may overlap for this research project is the positive

outcomes identified as a result of leisure participation. The increased self-esteem and feeling of

social support identified in the first-year focused literature (Tieu et al., 2010) are important for

first-year students to develop. However, outcomes such as greater coping effectiveness, effective

time management, and mastery-related goals are also important outcomes for students to develop in their first year. The transition from high school to university is different than anything they have experienced before (Tinto, 1999); the research to date suggests that leisure may potentially play an important role in this transition. The literature also suggests it is important to examine different leisure contexts and coping strategies (e.g., planned breather, structured). It is for this reason that the concepts explored in this section will be further explored in this research project. Another factor, however, that has been neglected to date is the issue of decision making, and how students decide whether or not to engage in these forms of leisure.

## 2.6 DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

To gain an understanding of some of the decision making processes that students may consider, the theory of planned behaviour was explored. There are several components in this theory that could be applicable to students, which are outlined below. After these components have been discussed, the application of this theory in this research project will be explained.

### 2.6.1 The theory of planned behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour is based on the assumption that it is possible "to predict and explain human behaviour in specific contexts" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). However, the theory cannot predict the actual behaviour of an individual based only on that person's attitude toward the behaviour; instead, the theory determines a specific behaviour based on the person's *intention* to perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen). Through the quest to determine a person's intention, researchers also seek to understand the factors that influence the formation of behavioural intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

While it is now described as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), it was originally named the theory of reasoned action (TRA) in its inception in 1975. At the time, researchers

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Fishbein and Ajzen described TRA as the notion that "a person's intention is a function of two basic determinants; one personal in nature and the other reflecting social influence" (Ajzen, 1985, p.12). The personal determinant, or someone's *attitude toward the behaviour*, was seen to be based on their evaluation (positive or negative) of performing the behaviour. The second, socially influenced, determinant was based on normative pressures and named *subjective norms* because these perceived social pressures were seen to determine whether a person to either perform or not perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen). Generally speaking, TRA indicated that a person will intend to perform certain behaviour when he or she has assessed it as being positive, and when important individuals to them are also perceived as approving the behaviour. However, there is no set determination of how these came into play in an intention, because they are weighted differently from person to person (Ajzen).

Based on further research, this theory was adapted to fill in some of the missing pieces of the decision making process. The expanded theory was renamed the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). While similar, the theory of planned behaviour is thought to be an extension of the theory of reasoned action. This extension is thought to be necessary "by the original model's limitation in dealing with behaviours over which people have incomplete volitional control." (Ajzen, 1991) Ajzen (1991) describes volitional control as the freedom a person has to decide whether or not to perform the behaviour.

The main differences between the TRA and TPB are that TPB considers the perceived control and actual control that a person has over the behaviour in question, and the background factors of the individual (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Perceived behavioural control refers to a person's perceived capability of performing the behaviour of interest (Ajzen, 1991, 2002). Actual behavioural control "moderates the effect of intentions on behaviour"

(Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 21) in that it helps determine whether a person will actually perform the intended behaviour. Factors affecting a person's perceived behavioural control and actual behavioural control include environmental factors and whether each person possesses (or perceives that he/she possesses) the requisite skills and abilities needed to perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen). When people have perceived control of these elements, intention is expected to be a good predictor of behaviour (p. 21).

The background factors of people can affect intent to perform the behaviour because of people's differences in beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). These factors are described in three sections: individual factors may include personality, mood, values, stereotypes, past behaviour, etc; social factors may include education, age, gender, income, religion, race or ethnicity; and information factors include knowledge, use of media, and intervention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p.22). These individual differences in backgrounds can lead not only to varying experiences, but also to the type of information that an individual has been exposed to, and the way in which they understand and interpret the information (p. 20). These new adaptations led to the theory of planned behaviour, as modelled in Figure 2 below.

Individual, social and information-based background factors play a role in identifying an individual and may or may not influence a person's beliefs. These beliefs involve personal behavioural beliefs, the normative beliefs of a person's loved ones, and the individual's beliefs of personal control over a situation. These beliefs are then used to establish an individual's attitude toward the behaviour, the subjective norms perceived by a person's loved ones, and the perceived behavioural control that the person has over the behaviour. Along with actual behavioural control, all of these factors lead to the person's intention to perform or not perform the behaviour in question (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).
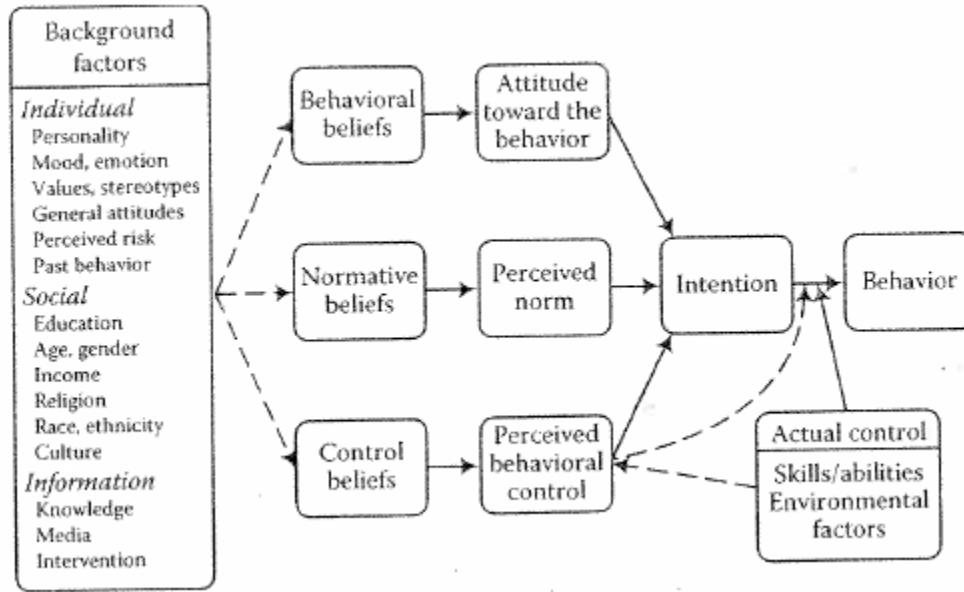
**Figure 2.** The theory of planned behaviour. Taken from Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010.

### 2.6.2.1 Use of the theory in the literature

In a recent count, more than 1,000 empirical papers have appeared in academic journals using the reasoned action [or planned behaviour] approach (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Most of the studies using the theory have done so using quantitative methods; this is not surprising, since the theory was originally developed in this fashion. These empirical papers have used the theory to identify people's intent to perform a wide variety of behaviours. These include, but are not limited to, the use of physical activity (Johnson, 2006); the ability to determine whether purchase intention can predict sales (Morwitz, Steckel & Gupta, 2006); the use of unethical shopping patterns (King & Dennis, 2006); and the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding in new mothers (Swanson & Power, 2005).

On the other hand, very little research has used TPB from a qualitative research standpoint. In one example of qualitative TPB research, Renzi (2008) examined the differences

in teaching models based on online learning platforms. When the same study was examined by Renzi and Klobas (2008) to identify how the qualitative methods were used with the TPB, the authors noted that the study "was not concerned with prediction, but with explaining the influences on adoption" of teaching models (p.5). In addition, intention was not actually included in the researcher's framework because the behaviour had already taken place and so emphasis was placed instead on understanding why this occurred (Renzi & Klobas). Renzi and Klobas' work is salient to the issues addressed in my thesis because it provides an illustration of how TPB can be used in qualitative research studies.

**2.6.3 Decision-making theory in this research project**

Reviewing the concepts of the theory of planned behaviour has contributed valuable insight that can be used for this research project. These theories have provided a clear understanding of the influence of beliefs and attitudes of the individual and those important to them; and the significance that perceived as well as actual behavioural control can have on a person's intention to do certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2002; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

The decision making literature will play a unique role in the exploration of this research project. Since the main focus of this project is to explore the factors affecting selected leisure involvement in a student's first term of university, the study will mainly be looking at leisure decisions in a post hoc fashion. The future intention of leisure participation will not be explored. It is important for the reader to acknowledge that the theory of planned behaviour is not the main purpose or goal of this research project. Instead, the components of this theory have been used as sensitizing concepts, to help sensitize the researcher to some of the variables involved in decision making; this familiarity of the components will guide the exploration and discussion about first-

year students' involvement in selected leisure contexts and coping strategies during their first term of university.

**2.7 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Recall that the purpose of this project is to explore the role of leisure in a time of transition. Specifically, the intent is to explore the role that selected leisure contexts and coping strategies (planned breathers, avoidant, structured and unstructured) are perceived to play in students' transition to university. This exploration will be conducted through the use of personal interviews with first-year students, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour as a guiding framework.

**2.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As the main focus of development for this research project, the overarching research question is:

- What are the factors affecting students' involvement in selected leisure contexts and coping strategies as they make the transition into university?

The literature review suggests that more detailed exploration is appropriate. To help focus this research project, a series of sub-questions will also be explored:

- What are the self-described leisure profiles of students during their transition period?

- How do students use planned-breather, avoidance, structured and/or unstructured leisure in their transition to university?

- How do students make decisions regarding planned-breather, avoidance, structured and/or unstructured leisure during their transition to university?

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature on transitions, involvement, and leisure coping have been able to shed light on the broad picture of university students and some of the issues that they deal with during their studies. However, the literature is limited in providing insight into how first-year students are using their leisure time while they are transitioning into university. A handful of recent quantitative studies have begun to explore this subject, and have uncovered some intriguing insights into leisure use of university students. While some leisure, such as planned breather and avoidant type leisure, has been examined among university students in general (Pantry, Blanchard & Mask, 2007), other forms of leisure, structured and unstructured, have focused on first year students specifically (Tieu & Pancer, 2009; Tieu et al., 2010). Due to the research that has indicated potential outcomes that the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies may provide, this is important to explore.

To help expand this body of knowledge, this study examined the use of different forms of leisure (planned breathers, avoidance, structured and unstructured) in a student's first term of university, and the role they play in transitioning into university. To help explore these concepts, definitions and potential outcomes from a variety of researchers have been considered (Pantry et al., 2007; Tieu & Pancer, 2009; Tieu et al., 2010; Iwasaki, 2001). In addition to these concepts, some of the students' decision making processes about leisure at various times during their first term were also explored. The components of the theory of planned behaviour (background factors, personal attitudes, social norms and perceived and actual behavioural control) (Fishbien & Ajzen, 1975, 1980, 2010; Ajzen, 1991) have been used to familiarize the researcher with

potential decision making factors. This knowledge, in turn, was used to steer the development of the research instruments.

It has been suggested by others (Porter and Swing, 2006, as cited in Leese, 2010) that "more research focusing on the first semester is needed." (p. 240) Therefore, the transition period explored for this research project was primarily defined as a student's first term of university. While students may not have fully completed the transition process by the end of their first term of study, this time period was the main focus of the study for two reasons. First, it is the first time that students would have faced university expectations and experiences; second, even if they were still transitioning into university during their second term, students would have been able to look back at their first-term experiences and adjust their leisure involvement accordingly.

Given the specificity and relatively limited research currently available in the literature, a qualitative explanation was warranted. A qualitative approach can play a role in understanding the factors affecting student involvement in these two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies in their first term of university. The remainder of this chapter provides a description of how this research was conducted. This includes an overview of the methodology that was used and the methods that were employed to undertake the study.

## 3.2 METHODOLOGY

In order to gain a better understanding of the factors affecting students' involvement in selected leisure contexts and coping strategies during their first term of university, the researcher used a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is "an approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two." (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009, p. 344) It is a theory that "is discovered, developed,

and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data" pertaining to the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Due to the nature of this research project, however, the aim of this study was not to generate an entirely new theory. Instead, the aim of this project was to gain new insights and concepts about students' use of the leisure contexts and coping strategies during their first year of university. These new insights and concepts could then be used as a point from which future research could venture from in generating theory about this topic. This approach allowed the relevant information about first-term involvement in selected leisure contexts and coping strategies to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23).

To develop theoretical insights, grounded theorists break down, compare, conceptualize, and categorize data; they then put it back together through axial coding, in order to make new categories and find relationships within the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While finalizing the main categories, grounded theorists use selective/theoretical coding to refine the findings and describe how the categories relate to one another (Daly, 2007; Strauss & Corbin). Further detail about this approach will be discussed in Section 3.3.4.

## 3.3 METHODS

This section provides a description of the methods that were employed to conduct this study. Specifically, the study design, sample population, data collection (including interview administration and interview guide instrument) and data analysis process will be discussed.

### 3.3.1 Study Design

The primary data collection tool for this research project was semi-structured one-on-one interviews. These interviews took place at the University of Waterloo and explored the factors affecting first-year student involvement in the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping

strategies. The sampling period occurred during the second half of the winter academic semester (March and April 2011). This time period was chosen in order to allow participants the time to experience the beginning of university and make leisure decisions without the external influence of a research study. It also allowed students to reflect back on the leisure decisions they made when they first entered university, and the role this may have played in their transition into university.

### 3.3.2 Sample Population

The sample population of this study was students in their first year of university, enrolled at the University of Waterloo. Initial contact with potential participants was through an introduction in first-year classes during the winter term of 2011, in which students were invited to participate in the study. Upper-year classes were not used within the sampling frame because they may have limited, if any, first-year enrolment. While first-year classes are often open for upper-year student enrolment, measures were taken to differentiate first-year students from their upper-year counterparts. A short screening paper-based questionnaire was given to each member of the class for students to fill out (Appendix B). The questionnaire had three purposes: (1) it was designed to separate first-year students from upper-year students in each class; (2) items on the screening questionnaire have been adapted from various studies (Pantry et al., 2007; Tieu & Pancer, 2009; Tieu et al., 2010; Iwasaki, 2001) to identify participation in the leisure contexts and coping strategies which were the focus of this study; (3) the last page of the questionnaire asked if respondents were willing to participate in a 60 minute interview to further discuss their involvement in and decision-making processes about leisure. If they agreed to participate, students were asked to supply their name, preferred method of contact (phone number, email, etc.), and a preferred time to contact them.

The researcher's goal was to explore the two leisure contexts (structured and unstructured) and the two leisure coping strategies (planned breather and avoidance) throughout the interviews. For this reason, the questionnaire results were used to help identify first-year students who participated in at least one of the leisure contexts and/or coping strategies. Willing participants were grouped in this fashion, and then contacted to participate in an interview. Fifteen first-year students agreed to participate in an interview with the researcher, but not all of these individuals ended up participating. There were a few reasons for not participating; two students could not be contacted, and four other students were unable to arrange a time to meet due to final exam preparation and moving home for the summer. For the students that had schedule conflicts, they were required for the Housing and Residence Department on campus to move out within 24 hours of their last exam and therefore were unable to meet with the researcher once they finished their final exams. In the end, a total of nine first-year university students were interviewed.

All nine students were in their first year of university and had not been previously enrolled in any other academic programs or institutions. There were seven female and two male participants, and eight of them lived in an on-campus residence (three of which were of a suite-style layout and five were dormitory-style) and one participant lived off campus in a rented house. Four of the nine participants were varsity athletes during their first year of university. While the specific programs were not always disclosed by the students, two participants were from the Faculty of the Environment and the other seven participants were from the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences.

### 3.3.3 Data Collection

Students were recruited to participate in the one-on-one interviews by way of a letter that was attached to the end of the screening questionnaire. It included an explanation of the study,

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anticipated length of the interview, statement of agreement to participate, and a place to leave

their name, preferred method of contact, and best time to contact them. If students wished to

participate in the interview process, they filled in their information before handing back the

completed screening questionnaire. In order to encourage participation, all participants who

agreed to take part in the interview process were entered into a draw for one of three $20 gift

certificates to the University of Waterloo bookstore.

Students who wished to participate in an interview were contacted by the researcher and a

meeting date and time was mutually agreed upon to meet. The interview took place in a private

office on the University of Waterloo campus. Prior to the interview, an information sheet and

consent form with a written explanation of the study was given to each participant to read over

and fill out. While the majority of the data were collected during the interview process, students

were given contact information for the researcher in case they wished to add any additional

information to what was discussed during their interview. The interviews were recorded and

written notes were taken to capture visible reactions or expressions that were unable to be

captured verbally. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Once the study has been

completed, study findings will be shared in writing with all of the participants involved with the

interviews.

*3.3.3.1 Interview guide description*

An interview guide was created as a way to help remind the researcher of the overall

research question and sub-questions of the study (Appendix A). Ultimately, the goal of the

interview guide was to help answer the primary research question. To do so, the guide was

centered on the three sub-questions.

The first main section in the interview guide explored what students thought about their university experience so far. This helped to initiate the conversation and allowed the student to become comfortable with the researcher. This section also looked at some of the challenges the students had faced to date, and whether leisure had helped them with these challenges.

The second main section established the participant's leisure profile. The questions and probes asked at the beginning helped initiate the conversation between the researcher and participant about the participant's leisure choices in their first term of university. It also explored any factors or circumstances that enabled or inhibited students from participating in the leisure with which they identified (perceived or actual behavioural controls). The latter half of this section looked to specifically explore the perceived and/or actual behavioural control that is identified in the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The third and final section explored how students made some of their leisure decisions during their first term. Specifically, scenarios were presented to the participants, relating to each of the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies which are the focus of this study. If participants identified that they used a specific leisure context or coping strategy, further questions were asked about how they decided on that activity, what they were hoping to get out of it by participating, and whether that leisure was circumstance/situation-specific or used throughout their first term. If participants indicated that they did not use one of the specific leisure contexts or coping strategies during their first term, follow up questions were asked about whether their decision of non-participation was specific to the first term, and if there were any reasons as to why they did not participate. The questions asked in each of these scenarios further explored concepts highlighted by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Specifically, the questions

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probed issues related to: perceived/social norms (who decided to participate), the perceived or actual behavioural control (whether they were as involved as they wanted or if their involvement waivered), and their attitude toward the leisure context or coping strategy.

### 3.3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a typical grounded theory format, as mentioned above: open coding, axial coding, and selective/theoretical coding. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were read through, line-by-line, and the data were assigned open codes. Coding, as described by Daly (2007) is the process of choosing a word or phrase that provides an indication of the meaning of the data segment. More specifically, open coding is "a way of opening up the data in order to explore what it means." (p. 230) Once all of the concepts were created from the open coding process, the researcher began to bring them together into a higher level of abstraction, known as categories (Daly). These categories brought together concepts which were similar and dissimilar (but allied) in order to create an emphasis on internal continuities and variability (Daly, 2007, p. 233). The sensitizing concepts developed from the literature were noted during this stage of coding, when they appeared in the data.

The next step of data analysis was axial coding. This is described as putting "data back together in new ways by *making connections between a category and its subcategories*." (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97, emphasis from original) Strauss and Corbin go on to stress that this process is still primarily concerned with developing categories and subcategories, but not yet the main categories that form the overall theory. Therefore, the researcher continued to review the concepts grouped under each category and determined if each concept was part of an existing subcategory or if a new one needed to be created.

The last stage of the data analysis was selective or theoretical coding. As mentioned above, selective/theoretical coding is used to refine the theory and describe how the categories relate to one another (Daly, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher used this type of coding to bring the categories and subcategories together to identify the overall insights and concepts that illustrate the factors affecting student involvement in selected leisure contexts and coping strategies during their first term of university.

**CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS**

This section presents the findings gathered from interviews with nine first year university students. These findings are split into two main sections within this chapter, as well as several subsections. The two sections are (1) students' leisure profiles, and (2) the factors affecting students' leisure involvement. The leisure profiles are discussed in relation to the leisure in which students **participated** most often, the leisure that they **enjoyed** the most, and whether their leisure was **new**, **continued** or had been **adapted**. There are three factors affecting students' leisure involvement in their first year: (1) Predispositions, which is comprised of two sub-factors: (a) Students' perspectives prior to university, and (b) Students' perspectives on the school-leisure relationship; (2) The transition experience, which is also situated in two sub-factors: (a) How students made the transition to university, and (b) Social connectedness; and the last factor is (3) Connection between action and self-identity, which was divided into two sub-factors: (a) Continuity between pre and post arrival, and (b) Consistency between their actions and sense of self. Some of these factors or sub-factors are further divided into more specific findings, while all three are discussed in relation to the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies from the research question (planned breathers, avoidance, structured, and unstructured).

**4.1 STUDENTS' LEISURE PROFILES**

Recall that the first research sub-question for this project was, "What are the self-described leisure profiles of students during their transition period?" To address this sub-question, each interview began with a discussion about students' leisure in general during their first year. These discussions helped to form a general leisure profile of the students by asking

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them to recall the leisure in which they participated most often, as well as the leisure that they

enjoyed the most over the year. The profiles were created based on loose groupings of different

leisure types – active activities, non-active but social activities, and non-active solitary activities.

As these discussions took place, many students also mentioned their "involvement history",

meaning whether their leisure patterns represented a continuation of their involvement prior to

attending university, whether it was a new type of leisure since arriving at university, or if it was

leisure that was continued but had changed or been adapted since beginning university. Together,

these discussions have brought out students' leisure profiles and therefore deal with the first sub-

question.

### 4.1.1 "Most often" leisure

Non-active social activities emerged most frequently when these students were asked

about their leisure during their first year of university. Several students described their most

frequent types of leisure to include watching movies and/or television with friends, hanging out

with friends, playing music with friends, or theme party nights on a residence floor. Kelly

indicated that these leisure types were not necessarily mutually exclusive when she said,

"hanging out with people on the floor I guess, socializing with people or going in their rooms or

watching movies with them, things like that." In terms of frequency, these social activities

ranged from daily to weekly activities. For example, Jake related how he hung out with his

friends "probably like 3 or 4 hours a day, probably more but, I'm not sure actually, just really

when I had free time… it was just whenever people had free time we'd just go and hang out." On

the other hand, the theme party nights that Jessie had on her residence floor were typically "once

or twice [a week], it depended on how everyone was on Friday night, how tried they were on Saturday so it was basically usually it was twice a week."

A few students spoke of active activities (included swimming for the school's varsity team, playing varsity field hockey, and a more generalized description of 'physical activity') as the leisure that they undertook most often. The frequency of involvement in these active types of leisure varied. The varsity involvement was quite extensive throughout the week for two students, which Beth explained: "I practiced twice a day, so a good four hours there. Um, and I think Sunday was our only break if we didn't have a swim meet that weekend." On the other hand, Alicia's involvement in physical activity, which consisted of playing intramural sports and going to the gym, was less frequent. "I'd say at least an hour a day balancing it out, so it was probably about 7 hours a week at least… [it] would probably be an hour for a game and an hour at the gym." While not as extensive as varsity involvement, Alicia's most frequent leisure was undertaken daily.

The last type of leisure grouping is that of non-active solitary activities. These types of leisure included sleeping, reading for pleasure, or doing mental exercises such as Sudoku puzzles. Alicia characterized this leisure grouping well when speaking about how often she read or did mental exercises:

Um, I'd say that was probably about 20 minutes to half an hour a day just to do it intermittently between um homework, if like you didn't want to pick up another subject right away then I'd just kind of take a break from it.

Students described engaging in the non-active solitary activities for less time than the other leisure groups; as Alicia illustrated, however, they were still a fairly regular/frequent part of the leisure that students engaged themselves in most often.

*4.1.1.1 Most frequent leisure activity – Involvement history*

Students had a range of leisure in which they were involved; however, the characteristic of leisure that dominated conversation regarding students' most frequent leisure was some form of leisure they had done prior to university. These activities included swimming, field hockey, reading for pleasure, hanging out with friends, watching television, physical activity, and playing music. Kristen explains that she was accustomed to having swimming as her most frequent activity when she said: "I had been used to that because I had swam all throughout high school too." Other students spoke of their involvement in leisure that had begun even before high school. This is illustrated by Zach, who explained that playing music carried over into university because he "was raised on music"; as well, Alicia continued her involvement in physical activity because "that was something that was engrained in me from a very early age."

Three students indicated that the leisure they undertook most often was a new leisure activity since beginning university; these included theme party nights on their residence floor, hanging out with friends at events such as keg parties, and watching television with their friends. Jessie identified that "we were always on the floor like having theme party nights; that was probably our main thing." The keg parties were new for Tamara because they were "something that I had never tried before… Because I don't drink, hardly, so and yeah, and in high school I would never do anything like that" but she "wanted to see what it was like." All of the new activities that students did most often were done with friends.

Finally, one student spoke of how her most frequent leisure choice, watching movies and television on her computer, had changed since starting university because the nature of her schoolwork and schedule changed:

> I find I can. I found high school, it wasn't hard but there was so much little work to be done, that I found that I was always doing work and stuff, whereas here I've got blocks of work where everything's due in the same week and then I have a week off of nothing, so I just, I'll work a bit toward the next week of stuff due, but in general if I don't have anything to do then I'll just watch stuff.

This comment suggests that not all leisure activities fulfill the same roles. In this case watching television was very passive, almost a place holder. It was activity undertaken when there was nothing more interesting available.

### 4.1.2 "Most enjoyed" leisure

When talking about the leisure which students enjoyed the most during their first year of university, active activities dominated the conversation. Several students described their most enjoyed types of leisure to be intramural sports like ball hockey and dodge ball, working out, fitness class, varsity swimming, and varsity rugby. There were a number of reasons why students enjoyed these active activities more than other options. Tamara's group fitness classes were enjoyed because "when I work out with a group it was nice because I was with my friends and I was learning new things." Alicia said that having fun with intramural dodge ball was linked to competition: "it was really competitive but we still had a really good time with it so yeah it was a lot of fun."

Also, Jake had a few reasons for enjoying varsity rugby the most:

> Well I feel like it's somewhere that I can like express myself; it's just really one of
> the only sports that I'm decent at and I really just enjoy doing it a lot. And the guys
> on the rugby team are just a bunch of good guys so yeah it's really fun, and again
> another median to meet people right?

The active pastimes that dominated conversation of students' most enjoyed leisure were described as ways to meet and spend time with friends, a place to experience an enjoyable degree of competition, to learn new things, and to express one's self.

A few students also mentioned that they most enjoyed non-active social activities during their first year of university. These activities included using the computer and/or telephone to talk with loved ones that lived out of town, hanging out with friends, and theme party nights on their residence floor. Staying connected with loved ones by talking with them using the computer or phone was a frequent and enjoyed activity for some students. Kristen explains this well when she said:

> My boyfriend lives in my hometown so uh basically we've talked to each other for
> the last four months since we've been together, every day on msn… I think that was
> definitely the leisure that I enjoyed the most last semester and this semester.

These non-active social activities were also used as a way to relax and take a break from or temporarily forget school. Jessie expressed this well when saying, "[theme party nights were] probably the best just because you kind of just forgot about everything for school and stuff like that, so yeah it was good."

Finally, it is noteworthy that Lisa spoke about how taking a nap, a non-active solitary activity, was her most enjoyed activity. While napping may not meet many of the criteria we use to define leisure (Mannel & Kleiber, 1997), Lisa viewed napping as a welcome break from her most frequent activity, varsity field hockey. She spoke of the demands of field hockey and the rehabilitative effect of napping. "[Field hockey] just wears you out all the time, just being up so early and whole days and [napping is] just like a time to yourself where you can lay there and relax." Even though she expressed thoroughly enjoying field hockey ("it took up 90% of my week… [but] I enjoy it just so much that it didn't really bother me"), the busy schedule from her varsity sport led Lisa to search for down time.

*4.1.2.1 "Most enjoyed" leisure – Involvement history*

When looking at the range of leisure activities that students enjoyed the most, once again the characteristic of leisure that dominated conversation was some form of leisure they had done prior to university. These activities included working out, varsity swimming, varsity rugby, hanging out with friends, and dodge ball. Tamara described how working out represented an extension of a favourite activity from home. "...when I lived at home I used to ride my bike everywhere like just for fun, and [now] when I would go and work out by myself I would go on the bike."

There were also a few new activities that students identified as the leisure that they enjoyed the most; these activities included ball hockey, fitness classes, and theme party nights on the residence floor. For example, Kelly indicated that floor hockey was a favourite new activity. :

I really like hockey and I've never really played it, and I like running and just kind of

learning [about it]... and I guess that was my favourite because it was at night so it

didn't really interfere with things.

This suggests some elements of continuity in her choice (she had always enjoyed running) but

some experimentation as a result of the new opportunities that university offered. Changing

opportunity patterns seemed important to changing activity patterns. Like Kelly, Jessie reported

that theme party nights on her floor were a "relaxing sort of thing, it was fun for a little bit".

Last, while new conditions created greater opportunities, they also generated new demands.

One student related that her most enjoyed type of (changed) leisure was that of talking with her

boyfriend over the computer. This activity was Kristen's most enjoyed type of leisure for several

reasons. She was able to spend time with a loved one who was not living locally. More than that

though, this was leisure that she could adapt when a physical limitation (an injured back) had

affected her ability to participate in other leisure activities, particularly varsity swimming. She

explained the ability to adapt when saying "I'd be like laying down too so it wouldn't involve

too much physical activity on my part." Since she wasn't able to participate in one type of leisure

to the extent that she wanted, her most enjoyed type of leisure became one that was adaptable to

her situation.

### 4.1.3 Summary of leisure profiles

A basic pattern of leisure profiles seemed to emerge from these interviews, which

addresses the first research sub-question. Specifically, leisure performed **most often** was

typically non-active and solitary or social but non-active; however, the dialogue around leisure

that was **most enjoyed**, was more characterized as being either active, or non-active but social in

nature. Social/non-active activities were identified as types of leisure that they engaged in most often and that they enjoyed the most. The difference, however, indicates that while non-active solitary activities were frequently undertaken, students preferred active and/or social pursuits. Also, when asked about leisure that was engaged in most often and that was most enjoyed, the conversation was often dominated by a type of leisure that they had done prior to attending university.

**4.2 THREE FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT'S LEISURE INVOLVEMENT**

Recall that the second and third research sub-questions asked, "How do students use planned-breather, avoidance, structured and/or unstructured leisure in their transition to university?" and "How do student make decisions regarding planned-breather, avoidance, structured and/or unstructured leisure during their transition to university?" These two sub-questions are dealt with simultaneously for the remainder of Chapter Four. Throughout this section, the decision-making factor is first identified and described. Students' use of the leisure contexts and coping strategies (planned breathers, avoidance, structured, and unstructured) is then discussed in relation to each factor.

Three main factors emerged from the interviews were: (1) Predispositions, which is situated around two sub-factors: (a) Students' perspectives prior to university and (b) Students' perspectives on the school-leisure relationship; (2) The transition experience, which is also situated in two sub-factors: (a) How students made the transition to university and (b) Social connectedness; and the last factor is (3) Connection between action and self-identity, which was divided into two sub-factors: (a) Continuity between pre and post arrival, and (b) Consistency between their actions and sense of self. As these three factors emerged, it was also apparent that

they were the factors that affected how students made decisions about their leisure throughout the year, and thus address the overall research question. The reader should keep this in mind while reading through the more detailed descriptions of the three factors and their sub-factors.

**4.2.1 Predispositions**

The two sub-factors identified in these findings are connected to TPB's individual background factors, as they both relate to students' perspectives. The first sub-factor highlights students' perspectives prior to university, while the second draws attention to their perspectives on the school-leisure relationship. Both of these sub-factors could be affected by a student's personality, mood, values, stereotypes, past behaviour, etc (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

*4.2.1.1 Students' perspectives prior to university*

The first of the two predisposition sub-factors that affected students' involvement in leisure during their first year of university was their perspective prior to coming to university. Students spoke about different ideas or perceptions that they brought with them when they came to university. These perspectives seemed important as a result of the uncertainty that characterized their early days on campus. For example, several students noted that they did not know what to expect upon arrival at university. Alicia spoke of this concern in regards to managing her schoolwork and leisure activities. "I didn't know um if I could manage it at the beginning of the year because you're coming into university blind and you don't know how much or how heavy the workload is." Jessie also expressed her reasoning for some lack of involvement in leisure: "Um, I don't know if it would be a lack of knowledge of what there is to do".

Given this uncertainty, pre-existing dispositions could play an important role in these students' activity patterns. For example, Alicia and Jessie took very different approaches when dealing with this uncertainty. Both seemed to be guided by predispositions they brought with them to campus. Alicia shared how she looked for ways during a campus tour to continue to be involved in her leisure activities once she started university:

> I know a lot of people might be worried about like 'what kind of things does residence provide?' but for me the question was always 'well what does the gym look like?' kind of thing, and 'what facilities are available?' yeah and 'what can you participate in?'… so yeah those were the kinds of questions that I asked before coming here… that's always been a big part of my life so I wanted to see if I could continue doing it in university."

Like Alicia, Tamara expressed that she wanted to try a lot of new things when coming to university, and that she had thought about it prior to arriving: "my idea when I came into university was that I wanted to try a lot of new things… and I wanted to take advantage of everything that I could um, so that was what I wanted to do." This perceptive led her into university with an open mind about the types of leisure that she might experience.

Jessie, on the other hand, did not search for a way to be involved in structured activity because of her previously determined opinion that "I just really wanted to focus on school this year." She decided prior to university that she wanted to focus more on performance in the classroom, and therefore was less involved in activities than she had been previously.

The next section outlines how predispositions or pre-existing perspectives played out in terms of these students' leisure patterns. They seemed to most influence structured activities.

4.2.1.1.1 Predispositions and their influence on structured activities

Students' predispositions prior to university were a personal factor that affected many students' structured activities, particularly those that played on school varsity teams. Jake's perspective on university prior to arriving, like several other students interviewed, illustrates that he was conscious of his desire to continue on with a previous form of leisure:

> I knew that I wanted to go to a university with a rugby team and so I got into Waterloo, with awesome academics too so uh [I was] just like 'well I want to go play rugby, I don't want to just get all out of shape and I want to get better'.

So he was conscious enough about his interest in playing varsity sport that he contacted the coach prior to arriving on campus: "so I just kind of decided like when I accepted the thing, so I contacted the coach and said 'I'm interested' like I contacted him in like June or July and then just kind of went from there."

This perspective was shared by a couple others in terms of their structured activities. Lisa's views, on her involvement in varsity field hockey, spoke to the importance of pre-arrival priorities. "That's the only reason why I came to Waterloo really." Her high school coach had encouraged her to play at the varsity level and her presence at university was largely derived from her desire to play. "If I didn't make the team then I'm pretty sure that I would have just come home." These strong perspectives illustrate Lisa's view that she wanted varsity field hockey to be a prominent part of her first year of university. Additionally, Beth's perspective

prior to university was that the school that she chose had to have a strong varsity swim program because she knew she wanted to swim also. She expressed this by saying:

> I had to go to a school that had a good swim team… I was going to school to go to school but also to swim so it wasn't so I wasn't just coming here to go to school; it was for school and swimming.

The decisions made by these students illustrate how the leisure, in which they were involved, during their first year of university was, in part, connected to perspectives that they held prior to university. Indeed, these students very much expected to undertake favourite activities upon arrival. More than that, they expected to receive formal support from the university (coaching, facilities, etc.) to aid them in this participation. The structured nature of these activities may have contributed to this dynamic. Structured activities often require ongoing commitment, physical and emotional resources, and so on. It seems natural that they can persist over time (especially in a supportive environment).

*4.2.1.2 Students' perspectives on the school-leisure relationship*

The second sub-factor that affected students' involvement in leisure during their first year of university was their perspective on the school-leisure relationship. Students spoke about their perspectives and how they dealt with school in relation to their leisure and vice versa. These approaches and perceptions, in turn, affected their involvement in leisure during their first year of university.

The power of the school-leisure relationship was made clear by Lisa as she talked about her involvement with the varsity field hockey team. As mentioned above, she decided to attend

university based on the premise of playing for the varsity team, and she expressed that her ability to play strongly influenced her continued attendance at the university. Expanding on her point she observed:

> I don't know, like if I didn't make the team then I'm pretty sure that I would have just come home. Like, I was just like 'if I'm not making the team then what am I..' like I didn't know what I was doing at university as well, so like 'what would I be doing here?' I'd just be doing school and like I wouldn't have as much field hockey, like I'd still practice once in a while because there is a development team that [the coach] would make as well but they only play a game every two weeks and they practice like twice a week type of thing so it would be a lot less field hockey, but then I would have just been here for no reason kind of, you know?

Lisa's involvement in school seemed contingent upon her ability to be as involved as possible in her preferred leisure choice. For her, leisure was the catalyst to pursuing university in the first place. While this perspective may have been the most extreme example, the other students also expressed opinions about connections between school and leisure during their first year of university. These opinions make up the remainder of the discussion on this sub-factor.

First, some of the students placed a greater priority on leisure over schoolwork during their first year of university. Jake expressed this perspective without concern, and even regarded it as a predetermined or expected norm. In particular he referred a great deal to unstructured and avoidance leisure: "I hung out with my new friends a lot, like instead of studying sometimes, haha. But it's first year, it's supposed to be like that haha." Jessie, while not taking the same perspective, expressed similar ideas when she reflected on balancing her schoolwork and leisure:

"I guess the leisure was a little higher than schoolwork was, when I feel like I really feel like schoolwork really should be higher than leisure... So no, it definitely wasn't balanced, leisure was definitely higher I found."

Kristen also indicated that her leisure pursuits took priority over school, but due to a different reason. Her involvement in varsity swimming had been a struggle for her and she found that she was putting that leisure activity before schoolwork out of guilt. "...if I didn't go to a practice because of school or if I wasn't feeling well then I would just feel guilty." She felt as though she was unable to miss swim practice, even if it was for school-related reasons, and as a result, put her leisure involvement before school during her first year of university.

Second, some students noted that their schooling came before their leisure. Alicia expressed this most clearly when talking about her planned breather and structured activities (intramural dodge ball and basketball).

School did and always has come before any of my extracurricular activities, so it was just prioritizing what was important. So if I knew that I had something due that day or the next day after a game then I'd sit that day out because, I mean, it's not a huge deal. I mean, I am here for school first and foremost and this is just something on the side that I like to do.

This quote expresses that Alicia had a very firm perspective on her school-leisure relationship. Even though she explained that "[I] know that school's not everything and [I] like to do things outside of school", she was very conscious that her leisure involvement did not come before her schooling.

Third, students spoke about adapting school in some way in order to accommodate their leisure choices, particularly their structured varsity activities. Jake spoke of adjusting his class schedule around his varsity rugby schedule so that he didn't miss classes. "No, I usually don't miss classes to go to rugby; I kind of worked out my schedule around rugby so I don't miss anything." By adapting his school schedule around his varsity schedule, he did not have to worry about missing class or practice. Beth also used her varsity swimming schedule to adapt the rest of her schedule – not only her school schedule, but the rest of her life also.

> I wrote all the meets out in September so I knew where my weekends were going to go and if I was going to go home then I would call my mum and say 'well I have a weekend in November free' and that's when I would go home... and even like the activities that we do outside of swimming as a team like they were always planned around the swim meets that we'd have.

This example illustrates that, aside from adapting her school schedule, Beth also accommodated her swim schedule by adapting her other leisure, including her planned breathers of visiting home.

As seen above, there were some examples of school coming before leisure and leisure coming before school; students also spoke about how they adapted some aspect of their schooling to accommodate their leisure. This interplay affected all of the leisure contexts and coping strategies examined in this study (planned breathers, avoidance, structured, and unstructured) in some way.

**4.2.2 The transition experience**

The two sub-factors identified in this section relate to some aspect of the situation in which students found themselves (i.e. being in first year university). The first sub-factor highlights how students' leisure involvement was affected by how they made the transition into university, while the second sub-factor draws attention to the social connectedness experienced in their first year of university.

*4.2.2.1 How students made the transition into university*

There were a number of transition-related components that played into students' first year of university, and consequently, their leisure involvement. These components include: initial impressions; the academic work load; and most prominently, balance and time management in relation to various aspects of their life.

4.2.2.1.1 Initial impressions

One component of the transition that was brought up by students was their initial impression of university. For Tamara, one of her first impressions was the change in lifestyle on her residence floor. In her residence, several people stayed up late several nights a week, and this was something that she initially tried to adapt to. "When you see other people staying up all the time, you think 'Oh, well if they can do it then I must be able to do it too.' So you try to stay up." This initial impression was a big change in tempo from her daily life, and she tried to assimilate to this new norm.

A few students described their initial reactions as experiencing a sort of culture shock when they began university. Jessie explained this experience in relation to the new people she

met: "I'm from a really small town so it was really different with the different nationalities and everyone like, having a friend [who doesn't] eat meat because they are Hindu... it's just like, almost like a culture shock." Tamara also reflected quite poignantly how the culture shock experience felt for her:

> You don't really realize it at the time but then you kind of look back and you're like 'oh my gosh, you had no idea what you were doing' haha, just kind of wandering around hoping things would turn out alright... to an extent for the whole first term I was a little flabbergasted."

This description explains the experience of culture shock and transition well, as well as indicating how long students may feel this way.

Another experience that was expressed by students was the feeling of homesickness. One particular student, Kelly, expressed extreme homesickness. She explained that "I guess I get upset and kind of like sad when I'm here and away and stuff, so that's like hard." Feeling homesick led Kelly to travel home to visit family almost every weekend during her first year. She would use these visits to get through the week while she wasn't with family. "I count down the days, so it's kind of like, it makes it go by faster too, so that's good." This initial feeling of homesickness and longing to visit family also affected Kelly's leisure involvement; for example, she reported skipping her structured leisure on Toastmasters so that she could get home earlier on the weekend.

4.2.2.1.2 The academic work load

The next component of students' transition in their first year of university was that of workload required for studies at university. Several students spoke about the difference in work requirements, in comparison to what was expected in high school. Jake thought that "it's a lot harder than high school because you have to do all the work yourself." Kelly spoke specifically of the requirements outside of the classroom: "There's more reading here and uh more work outside of the class and essays and assignments and things like that."

Kristen echoed Kelly's opinion when she said, "I've had lots of papers, like research papers, and just spending hours on the computer and just looking up journal articles and research." Her need to adjust to this aspect of her transition was related to preparedness. "I just, the schoolwork didn't surprise me, it just came on so fast and I just wasn't prepared for it I guess, because I was like 'oh, I can just put that off' but no I can't."

Finally, Lisa spoke about adjusting to her work load requirements due to the seemingly continuous amount of work that she had to do.

> I wrote like 17 essays over the last 8 months... it's just a lot of work and so much reading and its like when you're finally finished you're just like 'yes! I finished this!' and then like 'oh no, I have another reading for this class!' and then it just never ends"

The amount of independent, non-classroom work that was required of students in their first year was an aspect of the transition that they all experienced. This amount of work also related to their leisure and trying to find a balance between their schoolwork, leisure and other aspects of their life; this search for balance is the last aspect of this situational factor and an aspect that was quite present in students' conversations about their leisure in first year.

4.2.2.1.3 Balance and time management

When speaking about their first year of university, students identified a few different aspects of life that they tried to balance. For Zach, his challenge was balancing his studies with the rest of his life.

> The great challenge would probably be, just, organizing… EVERYTHING that you have to do 'cause you know, I've had 5 classes before and it shouldn't be that hard to handle... but when that interlocks with your other life, your social life, and like your family life it just becomes kind of like, you can only give and choose a certain amount of time.

By describing his challenge this way, it appears that he was surprised how difficult it was balancing school and life. This was a surprise to him. He had already experienced the quantity of classes required, but ensuring ample time for everything seemed to cause him trouble.

Lisa also spoke about organizing her time, but more so in relation to taking responsibility for daily life activities:

> I live in [a suite-style residence] and have to get all of my own food, so it's like 'oh no I don't have any food!' like you have to make the time to go and do that and like 'oh I don't have any clean socks to wear for field hockey.' You've got to make the time to go do your laundry so you don't stink everyone off the field, hahaha.

Lisa realized that a part of being in university meant being more accountable to herself, including in her preparation for her leisure activities.

Others spoke of the need to balance their schoolwork and leisure. Tamara spoke about this in terms of needing to set priorities when socializing (an activity that she used as both avoidance and unstructured leisure): "So you'd have to prioritize; 'Okay I can't always be talking to people, I have to do work and focus'." Alicia, on the other hand, was able to use her structured activities to help her with her time management issues and become more disciplined:

> [At university] it's like, 'Oh well I'll always have tomorrow' kind of thing; it's more of the discipline aspect of it. So I found that when my schedule was busier I kind of stayed on top of things more and didn't let as many things slide."

This quote illustrates the potential positives that first-year leisure involvement can provide for students if students use their leisure effectively.

While these potential positives exist with the effective use of leisure, a transition period seemed to exist for these students. This was apparent with students when balancing their time between school and varsity sports. Kristen identified her greatest challenge to be connected to this:

> Uh, first term, my greatest challenge, well uh I had joined the varsity swim team here, and umm, my greatest challenge was just dealing with the practice times like 6:00 in the morning and then like having class at like, in first term my earliest class was like 9:30, and um, just dealing with like just having to wake up every morning and having to do that.

Jake also experienced some difficulty when trying to balance varsity practice and studying:

Well yeah it's hard because rugby was, like it was everyday from between 5:00 [and] 7:00 I guess and that is like the prime time to study so it was just kind of hard to balance them both, but I got through it so yeah"

While these structured varsity activities provided many positives for the students, their extensive schedules seemed to still prove challenging while students were transitioning into their first year of university.

Varsity activities were not the only distraction. Recall that Tamara expressed interest in trying lots of new things in university. However, she began to describe how sleep deprivation affected her previous plans: "I kind of lost track of that over time, haha, throughout the year the sleep deprivation and stuff kind of threw me off that course." Tamara had to adjust to living in a residence with many other people, and being constantly surrounded by multiple options of things to do. She eventually adjusted to this aspect of residence after seeing the effects of that lifestyle: "Those people ended up almost failing or dropping out and then you realize 'oh my gosh they can't do it'... but yeah, that took me until the end of term to realize 'okay, that's not okay! Go to bed'." This sequence of events also illustrates how a person's perspectives prior to university won't necessarily remain consistent once in the situation.

A number of transition-related components were identified in making up the first sub-factor that affected students' leisure involvement in their first year of university. These components included: their initial impressions; the academic work load; and most prominently, balance and time management. From here, the second sub-factor will be discussed: the affect social connectedness had on students' transition and leisure involvement during their first year of university.

*4.2.2.2 Social Connectedness*

The social aspect to university appeared to be an important sub-factor in students' transition experience, as well as their leisure involvement during the first year of university. This is not surprising, as perceived norms of one's peers are identified as a determinant of behaviour in the theory of planned behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). There were many social components related to this study's sub-factor, including: Shared experiences; sense of social support; social leisure interactions; and the often contradictory nature of social influence.

4.2.2.2.1 Shared experiences

The recognition that other students were experiencing the same things was a positive social component that certain students identified. The idea of other students being 'in the same boat' as you was viewed positively both overall and when students felt they came from different circumstances than their peers. The overall perspective was expressed well by Alicia when she explained the benefit of the unstructured activity of talking with her roommates:

> Sometimes they'll be going through the exact same thing or... you both just need to vent about how shitty your classes were at the moment or how much work you have going on. Um, so I think that it's comforting knowing that other people are going through the same thing that you are, to know that you're not alone in a situation, um, so I think that that helps

This perspective was echoed by Lisa when she explained "Um, I'm definitely more comfortable just going up to random people in my program and being like 'oh do you want to study this' because they're in the same boat as you are." By recognizing that other students shared the same

experiences as she, Lisa felt comfortable making social connections with individuals in her classes.

Feeling as though other people were in the same boat was also helpful when students felt they came from different circumstances than their peers. For example, Lisa was from out-of-province and she found comfort in the fact that she was not the only one: "...and in Health [class] I met this guy... and it turns out that he's from BC too which is kind of nice so I met him in Health that way and then we sat [together] everyday in Health." Coming from a small town, Tamara also found it helpful to have other people that could relate to her experiences while she got used to being in a new city:

> ...and um it's also helped because well two of my good friends are also from small towns and um, it's just kind of funny because if I don't know something then they'll be like 'oh my gosh, I didn't know that either' haha. It's like we'll stand there and look flabbergasted until someone will have to explain to us, like, how to use the city buses, haha.

By making social connections with students with similar backgrounds, Tamara was able to recognize that she was not the only student having to adjust to being in an unfamiliar place.

4.2.2.2.2 Sense of social support

An extension from the previous discussion, a prominent social aspect to university is the sense of social support that students received. The two main sources of support provided by friends were discussed specifically in relation to support with school, and the feeling of support received by being a part of a sports team.

The school-related support was described by students in a few different ways. For example, Jessie said that having a close friend on her residence floor that was in the same program was helpful because "if she didn't get something then I'd explain it and if I didn't get something then she'd explain it." Also, Kelly found that school-related social support could come indirectly. She expressed that "if people are in like their rooms doing work then I'll do work too." She used the fact that her friends were doing work as a source of motivation to accomplish her own schoolwork. The school-related social support was not restricted to people with the same program as the student. School-related social support also extended beyond people in the same program. Lisa explained how her roommates, each in a different program, would help her study for bi-weekly tutorial quizzes. She posted pre-determined questions on the cupboards in their shared residence kitchen and explained how they would help her:

> I'd be like 'okay so when one of you go get food, like look at this and ask me a question.' So they'd be like 'what kind of cells do this in cancer?' and I'd be like 'I don't know!' and they'd be like ... 'I'll give you a cookie if you find me the answer' so I'd come up with the answer somehow and then they'd like kind of help me that way throughout the week.

Even though they were each in different programs, Lisa was able to find social support when her schoolwork was challenging. Lisa also found support from classmates that helped her with her structured activity of varsity field hockey. "I was going to miss class because [of a tournament] so I just started talking to these guys that I'd sit by. So I was like 'can I have your notes for this class?' and like 'yeah, for sure'." She was able to receive school-related support from people in

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class that enabled her to be able to keep up with her schoolwork while pursuing her structured activity in her first year of university.

There was also a feeling of social support received for students' structured activities through their involvement with sports teams on campus. The team support included helping with school-related issues, like when Lisa explained that "if you're down and you're like 'oh I have so many essays to do' then [teammates were] like 'You can do it! I've been through that too! C'mon I'll help you if you need to!' so it's good that way." The support received from a sports team was also expressed as an ongoing, ever-present type of support by Beth:

> You have that group of friends and the team that's always going to support you kind of thing and uh, I feel like that's a really positive thing to have, because then you always know that you can go to practice and everyone's going to be there for you kind of thing.

This sense of social support perceived by Beth could be very important to first-year university students because it is not condition-specific. By having this type of support offered to students, it means that they could have the resources needed to deal with multiple scenarios that may be presented to them during their first year of university.

4.2.2.2.3 Social leisure interactions

Students' social interactions and their leisure were connected in a few ways. These connections include the leisure interactions experienced as a result of meeting people on their residence floor; using meal times to socialize with friends from residence; and the influence new friends had on students' new leisure.

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First, the majority of students spoke about meeting people on their residence floor and the leisure interactions that existed as a result. Some students identified that their social leisure interactions were spent largely on their residence floor and/or with other students from their floor. These interactions mainly consisted of hanging out with friends on the floor and interacting informally, such as, by talking or watching a television show or movie. For example, Tamara explained "one night we did like a movie night sleepover thing on the floor which was good; we pushed the beds together and watched movies." These types of social interactions generally fit the description of a type of avoidance leisure, as Jessie identified that she participated in them "because I didn't want to get started on studying." These informal interactions also took place as a means of escape (generally from schoolwork). Jake expressed that "I just procrastinate because I just really don't want to do the readings, like I find the readings to be so boring."

The desire to rejuvenate from or to refocus on studying was also a characteristic that was identified by some students, while speaking about their avoidance leisure. Tamara explained that by "talking to people or just flop on a bed, you kind of take your mind off of it for a bit and it helps to rejuvenate you." Alicia also explained, "I think I have the notion that like 'okay well I'm really distracted, ok just get it all out now and you'll be more focused later'." These leisure examples seem to be a mixture of planned breathers and avoidance leisure; Tamara and Alicia explained that, even though they identified this type of social leisure to be avoidant in nature, they were ultimately acting in ways that might assist in their studying later on. The activities were less about avoidance and more so about emotional preparation for the task at hand.

Second, another social leisure interaction that students mentioned was using meal times to socialize with residence friends. Trying to express that eating with friends was a social aspect, Kelly said,

> It takes us like a half an hour to eat and we sit in the cafeteria for like two hours and talk about stuff or you know, people watch and stuff, haha, I would consider that socialization because we're down there for so long and it's not like we're just not talking to each other.

Kristen also illustrated this point when she said that "the eating times are pretty much my biggest social times."

The idea of meals being a time for social interaction was characterised differently by students. Some students identified using meals to socialize as planned breather leisure coping strategy. Kristen suggested that meals were positively used as planned breaks for her when she said, "I definitely look forward to every meal, especially if I was stuck in my room doing work all day, so it's like 'Yes, I get to eat!' and I get to see my friends and stuff." Lisa supported the concept of planned breaks by saying that eating with her roommates allowed her to regain energy by bonding with her roommates by talking and eating with them. On the other hand, Alicia identified meals as unstructured leisure. She described meals with her roommates as a decision that she makes on the fly "because that's when you notice that you're the hungriest, when you're stomach starts grumbling and you're like 'you know? I've had enough of school right now' and you'd go and eat." The commonalities between Lisa and Alicia suggest that while certain characteristics may exist for certain types of leisure, how these types of leisure are classified may be dependent on how students actually use the type of leisure in question.

Third, while friends influenced students' leisure decisions in different ways, the students interviewed tended to speak of their friends' influence regarding leisure that was new to them, particularly with their planned breaks and unstructured activities. Some new leisure that was influenced by friends was used as planned breaks for students. Jessie spoke about how she would plan her studying around the theme party nights held on her residence floor:

> "I'd see the Facebook page and be like 'okay so I have to stop working by this time so I can get ready.' So I always planned it by myself sort of thing... and when my roommate would be like 'well when are we going to this thing' and I'll be like 'well I'm working until 7:00 and then we'll go' sort of thing."

The party nights were always something that she did with her friends, but she was able to plan her involvement around her own study schedule. Alicia's involvement in dodge ball was also a planned break that was initiated suddenly by a friend:

> "I was actually honestly sitting in one of my classes right before it was about to start and I got a text message from my friend saying 'do you want to be on a dodge ball team?' and I just said 'Yes!' like it was completely spur-of-the-moment haha"

Her decision to play was spur-of-the-moment, but she had given some thought to incorporating activity into her schedule; her friend just helped initiate the thought. "I did have it in my mind that I wanted to do something like that, so when the opportunity like that arose then I kind of just jumped on it." She also added that, "had it been Frisbee or soccer, I still would have said yes; it could have been anything." Alicia already had it in mind that she wanted to be involved in some kind of planned leisure, it seems though that her friend just helped her decide what the actual sport would be.

Tamara indicated that one of her unstructured activities in first year was going to keg parties, or 'keggers'. While she indicated interest in attending ("I wanted to see what it was like."), she was not the one to suggest the activity, nor would she go with just anyone:

> Other people would get [text messages] and they'd say 'Hey, [does] anyone want to go to a kegger?' and then if [my friends] decided to go to the kegger then I'd go along. But it's not really my type of thing to go to with people I'm not really that close with.

Kelly also participated in a new, unstructured activity during her first year of university. She explains below about her friends' offer to go skiing:

> I've like never really skied before this year, and now I've skied 3 times in my life. I went skiing up here for the 2nd time with two friends and they were kind of like 'Oh we should go' because the one friend, he snowboards and he said 'Oh we should go to Chicopee [a local ski hill]' so we went there one weekend when I stayed here.

While both Tamara and Kelly enjoyed participating in these unstructured activities, they may not have engaged in them had it not been for their friends' suggestions.

4.2.2.2.4 The often contradictory nature of social influence

While the discussion above suggests a positive role for social influence, this influence can also be disruptive.

First, the social relationships developed on a student's residence floor sometimes detracted from students' studies. Tamara admitted that, at times, it was difficult to prioritize her

time between friends and studying because "when living in residence, there's always something to do." Jake supported this idea when he said that being around friends on his floor made it harder to study: "It's so hard to study when there are so many people outside and you can hear them talking so you just want to go talk." Additionally, Kelly expressed the same ideas when talking about her second term of university. It took her some time to develop close relationships with more people on her floor but once she had done so, her perspective about her schoolwork changed:

> I find that I like don't feel like reading and, you know, spending all that time doing stuff because there's more stuff that I'd rather do; like now that I have friends, I'd rather be doing things with them instead of doing work.

This change in Kelly's perspective suggests that while social connections are important for first-year students to develop, students need to remember to maintain a balance of school and leisure.

Second, some students expressed that their connections with others in residence were limited in certain ways. Jessie expressed that she developed friendships with several people on her residence floor, but found it more difficult to develop the same relationships outside of her floor.

> We would try to see other floors and we'd walk by and we'd like meet other people but you'd never remember who they were the next day like just it was just so many people and you'd just like totally forget.

This statement suggests that Jessie's residence floor was a more manageable area in which she could develop friendships; however, when she ventured outside that area, the parameters were

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too broad. When she did meet new people, they remained mainly as acquaintances and did not become close friends.

Conversely, Zach shared less in common with people on his residence floor.

> And the residence I'm living in now like, my roommates are great they are really good guys but it's not me. It's a residence full of engineers and math students and you know it's nothing wrong with them... but it's just, I can't go to the gym with a bunch of guys, I can't say, you know let's go to the field and like, let's play some baseball or football, or let's play some Frisbee.

These assumptions were made based on the assessment that his floor mates were in different programs than himself and therefore would not have the same interests. Whether or not this was true was not determined, but it was an assumption that limited Zach's involvement with other students.

The third negative aspect related to students' social leisure involvement is that students' leisure was sometimes limited when others were unwilling to take part with them. Jessie spoke about not continuing with her previous structured activity of volunteering. One of the main reasons for her not pursuing this leisure in her first year of university is that she didn't have anyone to volunteer with. As she noted, "I probably didn't want to do it by myself, I probably would have wanted someone to come do it with me sort of thing, but there wasn't really [anyone]." She reiterated this when she said, "I probably wouldn't have known anyone, and I guess I would have met someone but like, I think I would have been more comfortable with doing it with a friend and stuff."

The importance of companions was an ongoing theme. Tamara, for example, encouraged a friend to take part in a structured activity (a group fitness class). "I wanted to have someone to do it with um, so I kind of encouraged her to do it." She notes though that taking part with others was not without its costs. She acknowledged that her participation was limited by her friend's availability. "Yeah, pretty much if one of us couldn't go then the other one wouldn't go, except for the last time um, she couldn't go but I went anyway." She finally tried to remove this limitation by going by herself, but this did not happen until the end of the term. This limitation on her ability to participate in the group fitness class seemed to bother Tamara and she expressed that her desired level of involvement was affected as a result: "The fact that we didn't end up starting until half way through the semester was ridiculous so I didn't get to do that as much as I wanted to." At the beginning of the term, she waited until both she and her friend were able to attend the fitness class together, which led to a lower level of involvement than she wanted.

Finally relationships, and particularly romantic relationships, can have a profound (and potentially negative) effect on leisure and social interactions for the entire school year. Zach explained that, at the beginning of the year, he began a romantic relationship. This relationship affected the way in which he participated in leisure. During breaks (weekends, holidays, etc.) he travelled to be with her. This limited his opportunities to do other things:

I missed out on [varsity] sports here; that was a bit of a letdown. And then I couldn't do any of the intramurals stuff because I had a girlfriend and like she lived like an hour away; every weekend there [were] sports and, you know, she was every weekend.

By making this decision to spend every weekend with his girlfriend, he changed the way that he participated in leisure:

> Sport is my main leisure; and through that leisure I get to meet other people and then that can lead to other leisure, so... theoretically it's this never ending line of leisure. But I haven't done any of that this year, which kind of sucks.

This change in his leisure also greatly affected the way in which he was used to meeting people:

> So it's just kind of hard to, to make that connection right away because I've always made friends through sports, like, that was my initial way of meeting people and then after sports then they'd have their friends and I'd get introduced to them and then it just became like this, kind of like this web of people that you'd know through sports.

In these two quotes, Zach illustrates that both his leisure and his ability to make social connections were hindered very quickly after beginning university. By prioritizing his relationship with his girlfriend and setting a pattern of visiting her every weekend, he took away the manner that he had historically been accustomed to using to both meet people and participate in one of his main forms of leisure.

### 4.2.3 Connection between actions and self-identity

The connection between students' actions and their self-identity was discussed in two sub-factors. The first is their leisure continuity between pre- and post-arrival; the second is the consistency between their actions and sense of self. This discussion of self-identity and leisure participation seemed to play out in different ways depending upon the leisure context and/or

coping strategy being contemplated. Consider throughout the following discussion, for example, the importance of planned breaks, structured activities, and unstructured activities.

*4.2.3.1 Continuity between pre and post arrival*

As mentioned in the general leisure profiles at the beginning of this chapter, many of the students' most frequent and most enjoyed leisure were types of leisure that they have done prior to university. While new forms of leisure were also explored by students, several participants spoke of continuing longstanding leisure patterns upon arriving at university. For example, Kristen described how she went to the movies as a planned break. This activity was well established prior to starting university, as she states here:

> [My family has] a projector in our basement so it's just like the whole wall; we just have our own movie thing, so on Friday nights [it was] always just the night to hang out and watch a movie all together.

The ritual of watching weekly movies with her family continued with Kristen when she came to university. She established excursions to the movies with a friend, which she planned ahead of time and used as a break when she had a lot of schoolwork. "I did it more in November when things really started to pile up; I was like 'okay, I'm going to give myself like a movie every now and then' to just get away from the schoolwork." These planned breaks allowed Kristen to take some time away from school, but also to continue a leisure activity that was connected with leisure that she had been involved in with her family.

Alicia also used her planned breaks to maintain her self-identity. Having been involved in several activities while in high school, Alicia arrived at university already with the mindset of

using planned breaks in conjunction with her schoolwork. Here, she expresses her reasons for participating in this leisure coping strategy and how her choices echo her self-identity:

> I had always done extracurricular activities... I would have gone stir crazy if I didn't do something like that [at university]. And it's always, I like knowing that I have a physical outlet to do um just like as a break or to clear my mind, oh yeah and to stay active because I've always been an active person.

During her first year of university, Alicia found activities that she could be involved in as planned breaks from her schoolwork and, as a result, she was able to continue with the leisure coping strategy (planned breathers) in which she had been involved prior to university.

Alicia also discussed her desired continuance of her structured leisure. Prior to university, she was very heavily involved in structured forms of leisure, both inside and outside of the school day. Similar to her involvement with planned breaks described above, the mentality of having some form of structured leisure remained with her ("Just school? That's so weird, like it's never been just school, it's always been school and something else'.") That structure is what she sought and was able to find. This structured outlet was something that she was able to continue on with.

> I think the structured element of [intramurals] was something that I was looking for, so even just going for runs or playing ping pong, I don't think that that would have been enough; I still would have wanted the structured aspect of it, which is what I think the intramurals gave.

It was not just any leisure that she was looking to continue when entering university, but specifically structured leisure. Her involvement in structured intramurals allowed Alicia's previous self to continue by balancing school and leisure.

However, this factor was also present with students that appeared to be having difficulties with their self-identity during the first year of university. As mentioned above, Zach's lack of sports became a major problem for his transition because sports had historically helped him meet others with similar interests. He talked of how he was able to sustain leisure activities that helped him retain a sense of self.

> I feel like if I'm going to hang onto any part of me, you know, I've already lost the social aspect of my life you know, I know I can get it back if I want but if I can hang onto anything, it would totally be music and I have, so it's just kind of like that. It's just, it in itself is its own support group for me because no matter what I'm not losing music... no matter what music will always be in my life.

Earlier in the conversation, Zach identified that he "was raised on music and sports" and that sports were his "main leisure". Here, he acknowledges that he lost the social aspect (sports) that he had used previously to identify himself. However, he also appears very adamant that he continue with another aspect of his self-identity, his involvement with music.

*4.2.3.2 Consistency between actions and sense of self*

For some students, their "continued" leisure seemed very much a part of their sense of self. The perceived importance of remaining consistent between their sense of self and leisure

participation was profound. These students spoke about their connection with their leisure and how it helped shape the type of person they were. Jake expressed this quite well when he said:

It's an important part of my life. I think that without rugby I wouldn't be the way that I am now. Like, I wouldn't be as outgoing, probably [not] as tough... I just think that I wouldn't be the way that I am now if I didn't start with rugby.

Jake's perspective on his rugby involvement illustrates how closely some students perceived their leisure to be connected with their self-identity.

When speaking about structured activities, the varsity students focused on their chosen varsity sport. Three of the four varsity students identified a connection between their self-identity and the varsity sport in which they played. Beth illustrated very well the connection that the varsity students expressed toward their respective structured sports when trying to explain what she hoped to get out of her varsity involvement:

Um, I've honestly been asked that question a lot and not that there's something that I want to get out of it but it's just that it helps me, I don't know, it helps me to be me, I guess because all my life I was known as 'Beth the swimmer' kind of thing and like I don't really see myself doing anything else other than swimming.

This perspective shows the connection varsity students displayed between their respective varsity sports as structured activities and their self-identity.

A couple students also identified how their unstructured leisure activities were connected with their sense of self-identity. For Jessie, she explained how she was more herself with low-key activities to more structured ones: "I prefer to watch movies and read books; like that's just,

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like I grew up in the country, like that's what we do sort of thing. So I prefer to do that, to going out." The activities that she chose, while less structured in nature, allowed her to stay consistent with who she was prior to university. This was reinforced when she was asked, "So you're pretty content with everything?" And she replied, "Yeah definitely I am, like I don't wish anything more than what I do, so I love it." This suggests that unstructured activities, while touted in the literature as having fewer positive outcomes than structured activities, may still provide an opportunity for self expression as students navigate through their first year of university. This may even lead to speculation that it is less about the structure of the activity in which the student is involved, and more about how students use the activities in which they ARE involved and how they connect/react to them in their first year.

The other student who connected her sense of self-identity to their unstructured activities was Beth. However, she connected to this factor by explaining her inability to have unstructured activities in her life. When asked to describe her unstructured leisure, Beth replied with this example:

> I decided that I was going to go out with my friends one Saturday night and I kind of decided that on Friday. I don't know if that's unstructured haha, but uh, I think that was the biggest form [of unstructured leisure] because I like to plan things like weeks in advance haha...

The extent of Beth's unstructured leisure was planning an outing with her friends only one day in advance, instead of weeks in advance. This way of approaching her leisure time was further explained:

I've always been pretty structured... I guess my mum would always say that I'd get

wound up if I was going to be late for something because I don't like being late and I

feel like if I have to be on time for something, everything has to be planned out and

you have to know, you kind of have to know what you're doing to make sure that it

happens.

This quote illustrates how Beth's desire to plan and structure her activities resulted in her not

being able to, nor even wanting, to have unstructured activities. This idea was solidified when

she expressed, "I don't know, I don't know what I would do if I honestly had no structure, haha."

**4.2.4 Summary of the findings**

There were several important issues that emerged from these interviews. First, students'

leisure involvement was commonly situated around leisure in which they had engaged prior to

university. This sense of continuity emerged in conversations about both the form of leisure that

students engaged in **most often** and that which they **enjoyed the most**. These leisure behaviours,

such as watching movies or incorporating structured leisure into a daily schedule, were

longstanding leisure patterns for these students and were actively used in relation to their

schoolwork.

This continuity also seemed tied to the third main factor; that of connection between

actions and self-identity. These students wanted their leisure actions to remain consistent with

their sense of self. Students' sought to maintain their self-identity through both structured and

unstructured leisure contexts. This range in leisure contexts indicates that students identify with

an assortment of leisure contexts and may perceive all of them as important as they make the

transition into university.

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Activities that were social but non-active in nature were very present in these students' conversations about both their most frequent and most enjoyed first year leisure pursuits. Therefore, it is not surprising that the sub-factor that was talked about most often was students' social connectedness. Social connections were very prominent in students' descriptions of their leisure in first year.  It seemed clear, however, that while many of these social connections assisted students in their transition to university, social leisure could play a contradictory role in students' transition experience.  Some students placed leisure before school, others put school before leisure, and/or some adapted school in some way in order to accommodate their leisure choices. The choices made based on this perceived relationship between school and leisure, as well as the other two main factors, ultimately affected the extent of students' leisure involvement in their first year of university.

**CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

This final chapter reviews key findings that have emerged from these interviews. These findings will be discussed as to how they relate to existing academic literature. Strengths and limitations to this study are also considered. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion on possible implications for future research and practice.

**5.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

**5.1.1 Reminder of the research problem**

This project explored the role of leisure in a time of transition. More specifically, the research focused on the leisure involvement of first-year university students and the decision-making factors affecting such involvement. Students' leisure involvement was discussed both generally to help understand students' leisure profiles, but also more specifically in relation to two leisure coping strategies and two leisure contexts identified from the literature (planned breather, avoidance, structured and unstructured leisure) and their decision-making around this leisure.

The transition, involvement, and leisure coping literatures discussed in Chapter Two have shed some light on the issues that university students deal with during their studies. Within these literatures, there have been two leisure coping strategies and two leisure contexts studied in relation to university students or specifically first year students. However, the literature is limited in providing insight into if or how first-year students are using these leisure contexts and coping strategies in their leisure time while they are transitioning into university. This current study sought to expand this body of knowledge in two ways: gather further insight into first-year

students' leisure involvement and also to try to understand what factors are considered when making decisions about their leisure involvement. It is one thing to understand the leisure contexts and coping strategies that may provide certain outcomes for students, but it is another thing to understand how students decide whether or not to be involved in them. This is particularly the case when these forms of leisure are thought to ease the transition from home to university.

## 5.1.2 Central research findings

As illustrated at the end of Chapter Four, several key issues emerged from the findings of this research project. While that summary provides a synopsis of these issues, the findings can also be summarized using the determinants from the Theory of Planned Behaviour to address two questions: "Why did students act the way they did?" and "What are the outcomes of these actions?" These central research findings are addressed below.

Understanding why students acted as they did can be explained using three perspectives which align with the TPB: The behavioural perspective, the control perspective, and the normative perspective. The behavioural perspective relates to this project's factors of students predispositions and their connection between action and self-identity. Under the Predispositions factor, students were influenced by the concern that they did not know what to expect at university, and a certain amount of generalization in their leisure (For example, Tamara expressed the desire to be involved in as much as possible in her first year). Students' leisure profiles and the third main factor indicate that familiarity, or continuity, in their leisure was both sought after and appreciated. This search for continuity was prominent because students' sense of self and familiarity often directed their behaviour. This was often the case when students

incorporated the structured and unstructured leisure contexts and the planned breather leisure coping strategy.

The control perspective of the Theory of Planned Behaviour pertains to an individual's ability or perceived ability to perform a particular behaviour or not. This perspective was largely discussed in relation to the sub-factor of how students made the transition to first year. This sub-factor discussed demands of the balancing act in students' first year of university. These demands included becoming accustomed to the academic workload that was required of students; every day choices that could have negative consequences, like sleep deprivation; and trying to find a balance between their schoolwork, leisure involvement and the rest of their life. The balancing act also relates to the contexts and coping strategies that students incorporated into their leisure. Balancing or managing one's time was an issue for varsity athletes trying to balance their sport and their academics; however, other students also spoke of trying to balance school with unstructured leisure, such as socializing with people on their residence floor.

The normative perspective relates closely with the sub-factor of Social Connectedness. Social connectedness was brought up very frequently in conversation with students. These conversations revealed that first year social experiences could be both helpful and problematic for students. This normative perspective was also brought up when students spoke of the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies (planned breather, avoidance, structured and unstructured leisure). Shared experiences and feeling a sense of social support were helpful for students and were discussed in relation to unstructured and structured leisure contexts. Friends tended to influence the avoidance, unstructured and planned breather leisure that were new to students. Social connectedness became problematic for students when residence life became a

distraction from students' academic work, and when leisure choices were limited due to how students established or maintained social connections.

The outcomes of students' leisure actions were related to these decision making perspectives. These outcomes appear to support the assumption that leisure behaviour can help with coping and students' general well-being during their first year of university. Both students' coping and their well-being were enhanced by a consistency between the new and old forms of leisure, their self identity and how it was maintained through their leisure, and the leisure choices that were actually available to them. The following section of this chapter delves further into these findings, making connections between the findings and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

## 5.2 CONNECTING THE FINDINGS TO EXISTING LITERATURE

The results of this project are connected to or provide additional insights into the reviewed literature. Some of these insights are consistent with the literature, while others add to previous understanding of students' leisure involvement. Both of these will be addressed in this section, with reference back to the reviewed literature.

### 5.2.1 Predispositions

As mentioned earlier, the two leisure contexts and two leisure coping strategies studied in this project were all brought up when students spoke of the perspectives on the school-leisure relationship. Interestingly, when students spoke about putting their schoolwork before their leisure, it was in relation to their planned breather and structured leisure; when students placed a greater priority over leisure than their schoolwork, it was with avoidance and unstructured leisure

activities. This pattern is consistent with the findings from Patry et al. (2007) and Tieu and

Pancer (2009). Patry et al. described avoidance leisure to be an avoidance task and is used to

escape an academic task altogether. With respect to the task of studying for a test, avoidance

leisure was associated with those that reported a higher number of hours spent on leisure two

days prior to an exam than students who incorporated planned breathers (Patry et al.). Jake

illustrated this concept precisely when he explained his avoidance leisure: "I hung out with my

new friends a lot, like instead of studying... [for] exams I procrastinate until the last little bit." He

found studying to be boring and stopped frequently to escape through socializing.

When schoolwork was prioritized before leisure, the students' discussion was focused on

planned breathers or structured leisure. Structured leisure was also the leisure context that was

most influenced by students' pre-existing perspectives before they arrived at university. Several

students described that they knew of a specific sport or activity that they wanted to be involved

in during their first year of university and this may have got them thinking of how they would

balance both interests. Alicia, for example, knew that she wanted to be involved in an activity

like intramurals; however, once university began, she made sure that this leisure did not interfere

with her schoolwork. She stated that school came before leisure and would not participate in

intramurals if she had something due the following day; however, later comments about her

structured leisure suggest that involvement in this regularly scheduled activity allowed her to

effectively manage her time and plan for her leisure breaks: "they scheduled the games on

Sundays... if I did have something due on Monday then I could get it done Saturday or all day

Sunday, because the games were usually at night." This is consistent with findings that planned

breathers incorporate a proactive approach to leisure and can lead to positive outcomes such as

effective time management (Patry et al., 2007).

### 5.2.2 Making the transition into university

The main aspects of how students made the transition into university are consistent with the transition literature. Adjustment to their initial impressions, the academic workload and trying to manage their time are all characteristics identified by researchers that may accompany a student's transition (Benjamin, 1990, as cited in Gilbert, 1997; Pratt et al., 2000). These students often experienced a type of culture shock (Tamara expressing that "for the whole first term I was a little flabbergasted"). This illustrates how much of a transition some students may go through during their first term of university. This idea of culture shock and needing to adjust to their surroundings relates to the concern mentioned by some students of not knowing what to expect, which was highlighted in the sub-factor of students' perspective prior to university. These experiences are consistent with observations by Parkinson and Forrester (2004) and Leese (2010) that there may be a 'gap' in students' expectations and their initial experiences. This gap prevents students from fully being able to prepare themselves for university and, therefore, must try to adjust to the many different and new aspects of their lives once they begin university.

Leisure choices seemed consistent with life and study choices being made by these students. Transition into university played out in different ways in terms of various leisure choices. Lisa and Jake both spoke about the challenge of juggling their intensive structured leisure of varsity sport with academic tasks (such as studying) and new day-to-day responsibilities (such as doing laundry and grocery shopping). Tamara spoke of learning to try to set priorities when discussing her avoidance and unstructured leisure. These suggest that managing one's time in first year can be a factor that affects both leisure contexts and coping strategies.

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Avoidance leisure is attributed in the literature to outcomes such as a higher likelihood of ineffective time management (Patry et al., 2007) and therefore may be more obvious that it presented issues for students when trying to transition into university. However, it is notable that while structured leisure may assist in the adjustment to university through increased self-esteem and feelings of social support and decreased feelings of stress (Tieu & Pancer, 2009, pp. 58-59), the students interviewed still required time to adjust to the structured schedule involved. Even though it is structured, the 'gap' may still exist for these students because of their unfamiliarity with the overall expectations of university life (Parkinson & Forrester, 2004; Leese, 2010). This should not be surprising since the transition from high school to university is different than anything students have experienced before (Tinto, 1999). The leisure context wouldn't exempt them from the transition process; it can only hope to facilitate the transition.

### 5.2.3 Social connectedness

This sub-factor was one of the most talked about subjects in the interviews. It is not surprising that social experiences dominated many of the conversations, since the literature indicates that the transition into university is a social transition and that students' peers have the greatest potential impact on their development in first year university (Astin, 1993; Tieu & Pancer, 2009). Identifying that peers can have such a large impact on students' first-year development, it is not surprising that the concept of social support was so present in the findings.

Indeed, students spoke often about the social support that they did (or did not) receive from their peers through their leisure. Beth described how her varsity teammates provided a type of ongoing ever-present support for her throughout the year. Alicia and Lisa spoke of their roommates being supportive, as well as a way to cope with school and the realization that they

aren't alone. Tamara found it helpful that some of her new friends were also from a small town, and therefore she was not the only person having to adjust to a new city. This social connectedness provided these students with the support created through leisure friendships to help them cope with their transition into university (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000). Also, these findings are interesting because three of these four examples that students gave of feeling a sense of social support (Alicia, Lisa and Tamara) were from leisure they identified to be unstructured in nature. It was through informal interactions and socializing with their friends and roommates that all three girls found social support.

While not directly explored in this research, these leisure interactions seem consistent with what Tieu and Pancer (2009) described as high quality activities. Such activities bring positive feelings to the student, are perceived as important, and help students to feel connected with others. While their findings suggested that highly structured activities might be more inherently similar to high quality activities, there was no evidence that unstructured activity could not also be of high quality. This may provide an explanation for students feeling socially supported through their unstructured leisure. The examples of social connectedness described were also non-physical forms of leisure, which some literature (Trenbeth, Dewe & Walkey, 1999) suggests can assist certain cohorts, depending on their coping needs.

As noted, these data suggest that a perceived lack of social support could have negative effects on the individual. This finding is generally consistent with the transition literature. Recall that Zach lacked the social support through his leisure during his first term of university. He began a romantic relationship with someone off campus and chose to devote time to that relationship instead of participating in the structured leisure activities that he had been

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accustomed to in high school. The absence of this structured leisure prevented him from creating social connections. This was all the more problematic because this had historically been the way he met new people. The transition literature suggests that the transition into university can be difficult because students are unable to draw upon social networks of support. More than that, it is more difficult, than they think it will be, for students to create social bonds during their first year of university (Leese, 2010; University of Manitoba, 1991, as cited in Gilbert, 1997). By not engaging in his normal avenue for meeting people, Zach put himself at an even greater disadvantage than normal to create those social bonds. By not establishing these social connections in his first term, Zach was unable to draw upon his social networks in second term when his romantic relationship ended; this resulted in him having a lot of difficulty coping with his school responsibilities for the rest of the year. This is, unfortunately, a direct example of what can happen when structured leisure and social support are missing from a student's first year of university.

### 5.2.4 Self-identity in first-year of university

There were two specific findings from this study that are connected to each other but were not mentioned in the reviewed literature on transitions and first-year experiences. First, students spoke fondly about new leisure activities in which they were involved during their first year. However, the activities they enjoyed most were those in which they had participated prior to beginning university.

Second, these data suggest the importance of consistency between students' leisure actions and their self-identity. For example, these findings suggest that students may not completely disassociate from their past norms, values and patterns, even though some researchers indicate

disassociation to be a characteristic of the transition process (Benjamin, 1990, as cited in Gilbert, 1997; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Tinto identified that three stages are involved in students' integration into the university system: separation, transition and incorporation. He describes this process as the disassociation of norms and patterns from past ties such as high school or family, to the eventual adoption of new norms and patterns from the university community. The findings from this research project, however, suggest that students may not entirely disassociate in order to assimilate. Past leisure activities were often the activities they reported enjoying the most. As Beth expressed, "[swimming] helps me to be me I guess because all my life I was known as 'Beth the swimmer' kind of thing and I don't really see myself doing anything else other than swimming." Beth held onto her past leisure patterns of swimming because it was a central part of her; as a result, this maintenance of her swimming identity played a big role in her leisure choices and how she structured her time in first year.

These students faced many new challenges during their transition – increased academic workload, separation from their traditional support system (parents, teachers, friends, etc), sudden anonymity and threat to self-image, a change in tempo of daily life (Bejamin, 1990; Leese, 2010; Pratt et al., 2000; Scanlon, Rowling & Weber, 2007).  These were circumstances over which these students had little control. Change and stability are both required for personal development to occur but too much change is unsettling and stabilization is needed to cope (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). It is understandable, then, that one of the factors to emerge from this study would be related to students' ability to remain connected to their past self in some way. Leisure is an area of students' lives that they are able to control and make decisions about, even when several other areas of their life change around them. The setting may change but with all of the leisure offerings on campus, students have a wide range of options available to them at

university. By being able to maintain their self-identity through leisure, students may have been able to at least feel less anonymous and, like Beth, hold onto their self-image.

Another finding connected to self-identity was brought up in conversation with some students: the use of unstructured leisure as a way to remain consistent with your self-identity. Jessie was more at ease engaging in low-key activities (such as watching movies or reading books), than with highly structured activities, and was more comfortable as a result. While described in the literature as having fewer positive outcomes than structured activities (Tieu & Pancer, 2009), Jessie's description suggests that unstructured activities may still provide a form of leisure that allows her to stay true to herself while navigating through her first year of university. This may even lead to speculation that it is less about the label of the activity in which the student is involved, and more about how students use the activities in which they ARE involved and how they connect/react to them in their first year.

### 5.2.5 Connection to the Theory of Planned Behaviour literature

Three factors that came out of this project relate (or at least partially relate) to the previously reviewed Theory of Planned Behaviour. As suggested by the name, both sub-factors under the Predispositions factor are connected with TPB's descriptions of the background factors and personal attitudes toward the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). *Students' perspective prior to university* is directly connected to background factors of the Theory, as it takes into consideration who the person was before they were faced with making the decision. *Students' perspectives of the school-leisure relationship* can be associated with the personal determinant of personal beliefs and attitudes toward the behaviour. It is unsurprising that the students' predispositions would be connected to their personal attitudes toward their leisure involvement,

since attitude are considered to be a person's disposition to respond a particular way with respect to a psychological object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 77).

*Social connectedness* suggests that social norms are a prominent determinant in one's decision making process (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This was demonstrated by students through favourable leisure examples, such as finding shared experiences and feeling a sense of social support from teammates. It was also established through examples of the negative effects of social influence, such as avoiding participation if friends were not available. The *transition into university* is connected to behavioural beliefs and the perceived and actual behavioural controls. The students dealt with aspects of the transition such as time management, initial impressions, adjusting to the academic work load. Struggling with time management, for example, was expressed through the sense of perceived or actual behavioural controls when they felt or did not feel like they were able to participate in a certain activity.

*Connection between action and self-identity* is also connected with a few TPB factors. Background factors such as personality, values, and past behaviour relate to students' consistency; their personal beliefs and attitude to continuing their past leisure activities would play a prominent role; as well as their control beliefs (both perceived and actual) would play a role in their ability to execute their desired involvement. For example, Lisa was worried that she would not make the varsity field hockey team and would only be able to play with the development team; this would have been a large actual behavioural control for her if she had not been successful.

As mentioned above, there were both personal and social-related decision making factors that presented themselves in this research. These different factors suggest a consistency with the

complexity of the theory of planned behaviour. The findings in this project illustrate that, while personal factors existed, one of the factors most discussed throughout the interviews was the role of students' social experiences. This factor illustrated how friends may play various roles in students' decision making. For example, Kelly spoke of how her friends brought up the idea to go skiing. In that case they were providing leisure options as well as reasons to engage in that leisure. Tamara also suggested that her social circle was essential to helping her make at least some of her leisure choices.  She noted that while she was interested in going to a keg party, she wouldn't go unless her close friends went also. Jessie spoke about using the residence floor events that her and her friends planned as something to work toward when studying. This complexity also relates back to Fishbein and Azjen's original notion of TRA that "a person's intention [to perform behaviour] is a function of two basic determinants; one personal in nature and the other reflecting social influence." (Ajzen, 1985, p.12) While students spoke about the various ways in which they made their leisure decisions during their first year, the presence, opinion and attitudes of friends were definitely included in their decision making.

Azjen (1985) once remarked that with the Theory of Planned Behaviour that there can be no set formula created from the different determinants (personal, social, etc).  Each element is weighted differently from person to person. The complexity of decision making processes rings true in this research. The three factors and their sub-factors came into play in different ways in many different scenarios. For example, varsity students' perspectives prior to university of wanting to play a certain sport (which would allow them to act in ways consistent with their self-identity) held strong throughout the year. This was the case even while they had to combat other factors like making the transition into university and balancing their time. On the other hand, Tamara's idea prior to university of wanting "to try a lot of new things" became problematic. As

she made the transition into university she found that access to friends was both helpful (at fitness classes, keg parties) and disruptive (time management became an issue).

The weighting of behavioural determinants also shed some light into the leisure contexts and coping strategies that students used. Jessie did not know what to expect prior to arriving to university. Even though her personal background factors included past behaviour in a structured activity, she decided prior to starting school that she "really wanted to focus on school this year." Instead, she primarily engaged in unstructured leisure that she felt was also part of her self-identity and thus made her more comfortable in first year. Beth, on the other hand, was very clear in her intention to continue to swim, and to make the varsity swim team. The sport was not only consistent with her self-identity as "Beth the swimmer", but also allowed her the structure in her life that enabled her to make a smooth transition into university and obtain a sense of social connectedness with her teammates.

Clearly, there are several aspects of this research project which related to the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The factors that students identified during the interviews were presented in various ways to the background, attitudinal, social, and behavioural control determinants in the Theory. Even though TPB works to determine a specific behaviour based on the person's intention to perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), determining future intention was never the goal of this project. Instead, the theory was used as a sensitizing guide to some of the concepts that exist in the decision making literature. By using the theory as a guide, the researcher became more familiar with the types of evidence-based concepts that already exist in the literature. Knowledge of these concepts allowed for more specific questions to be asked during the interviews.

**5.3 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

As with any study, there were both strengths and limitations to this research project. First, nine students were interviewed with respect to their leisure involvement in their first year of university. These conversations provided insight into first year students' leisure profiles and the factors used in leisure decision-making. The students were involved in a variety of experiences, such as the style of living situation, and engaged in a wide range of leisure activities – varsity, intramural, residence-based, off-campus. However, it is recognized by the researcher that generalization of these findings cannot go beyond the group of students involved.

The leisure profiles of students interviewed were relatively diverse, for the number of individuals that agreed to participate. There was almost an equal number of varsity and non-varsity students who participated. Diversity also existed in the types of leisure that students indicated to be their most frequent and most enjoyed. These two findings allowed for varied insight into their leisure involvement.

Participants had lived in different styles of residence (dormitory versus suite) during their first year. These settings undoubtedly provided varied on-campus experiences for these individuals. However, while most first-year students at the University of Waterloo live in residence, a relatively large number do not reside on campus. The sample contained only one individual who did not live in residence. It would have been useful to include more off campus participants. It is likely that they have a very different first year experience and the insight they offer could have been helpful. Further insight could possibly have been gained if some participants had lived with their families during first year. While these students may have experienced a different transition in terms of living situation and developing social connections,

it would have been interesting to hear if/how their stories varied from those of their residence counterparts.

One strength of this study was that the length and structure of the interview guide appeared to provide students with the opportunity to speak openly about their experiences in first year. The guide began with opening questions about how students' transition into university (initial impressions, challenges, positive aspects). By starting with these questions, it allowed the student to get used to talking about their experiences, but also setting the context that the interview was about their leisure within the transition period. The interview guide became more specific and allowed students to describe their transition and their first year leisure involvement in more detail as the interview progressed.

One limitation to the structure of addressing the leisure contexts and coping strategies individually in the interviews was that repetition occasionally occurred in students' responses. While this provides evidence that the contexts and coping strategies are not entirely mutually exclusive, it also limited the amount of conversation that took place about the proceeding context and/or coping strategy. For example, planned breather coping strategies were discussed first throughout all of the interviews. If students identified the same leisure activity as a structured leisure context as well later in the interview, the conversation was not as in-depth because the questions in the interview guide were identical. While additional questions were asked during the interview by the researcher, the line of inquiry was not as profound.

**5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

In addition to adding to our understanding of how students make decisions about their leisure involvement during their first year of university, this project also highlights implications for future research and practice.

This research project provided initial insights into several areas related to the first year transition. To expand upon these insights, future research could examine the use of different leisure contexts and coping strategies from the ones used in the study. For example, what are the factors affecting students' involvement in solitary versus social contexts in their first year of university? Additionally, further measurement of the transition process could provide researchers and practitioners a better sense of how long students take to make the transition into university.

This research project also provides insight into how students make decisions about the leisure that they choose in their first-year of university. It advises how students decide about specific leisure contexts and coping strategies that have been suggested to provide more specific outcomes to university students. These decision-making factors are important for researchers and practitioners because of how these contexts and coping strategies may assist in the adjustment of university students during their first year of study. Students in first year are faced with so many different potential difficulties – separation from support systems, learning and living and adapting largely in isolation, homesickness, incredible change in the challenge of the learning material and environment. The decision making factors that have emerged from this research have shed light on how some students are choosing to deal with this transition, through leisure. If practitioners that deliver leisure services on campus know how students make decisions about

their leisure, then that could provide insight into how to tailor programs for students or how students are determining whether or not to be involved in leisure.

Some of the findings suggest problems that universities have likely been trying to address for years – such as the perspective of not knowing what to expect prior to arrival at university. Other findings suggest new perspectives that leisure service providers on campus should take into account, particularly students' attempt to remain consistent with their self-identity. The findings from this project suggest that students may be holding onto their self-identity from prior to university, at least through their leisure, as a way to maintain control in their life while everything else around them is changing. A potential next step in this area of research includes gaining further understanding about self-identity in first year students prior to their arrival to university and then once they have arrived. Questions that follow this line of investigation include: With a factor that is so individual in nature, like self-identity, how can leisure service providers on campus offer programs that are consistent with this type of factor? As students evolve through university, what role can leisure play in helping them through their undergraduate degree? What are the potential opportunities for leisure education in students' first year of university? These are some of the questions that practitioners and researchers may now try to address to expand/elaborate on this research project.

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**Interview guide**

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate. I will be audio taping our conversation and want to confirm that this will be okay with you.

I am hoping to talk with you for approximately 60 minutes, and I will be investigating a number of areas related to your leisure since you began university. For the purposes of this study, leisure can be identified as anything outside of schoolwork and paid employment. It is important to realize that I am looking for your opinion and that there are no right or wrong answers; this study is all about your experiences and perspectives, and that is what I'm most interested in.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Turn the tape on!!**

Opening verification questions:
1. Can you verify that you are currently in your first year of university?
2. Have you attended any other post-secondary program or institution prior to UW?
3. Do you live in residence, at home with family or off-campus not with family (or other)?

Transition to university:
1. Now that you are almost finished your first two terms of university, what have you thought of it so far?
2. What have been some of the greatest challenges so far?
   - How has leisure helped with them?
3. [*Potentially drop these if it's getting to be too long*] What have been some of the positive aspects of university so far? Why have they been positive?

Establish leisure profile:
1. Tell me about your leisure from last term.
   ○ What type of leisure did you use most often?
     - *Probe about how often they participated, why, any effect on challenges?*
   ○ What type of leisure did you enjoy the most?
     - *Probe about why they enjoyed it most, any effect on the challenges?*
   ○ Were these types of leisure similar to the leisure you had in high school?
     - *Probe about why or why not, how it is similar or different, whether they were aware of leisure that is new to them since entering university.*
2. (*Behavioural control*)
   ○ Were there any things (factors or circumstances) that made it easy or enabled you to do those things you enjoyed most?
     - How were they helpful?
   ○ Were there any things (factors or circumstances) that made it difficult or prevented you from taking leisure time?
     - What was it that prevented you?

Scenarios:

Now we're going to move onto a few different scenarios that may have come up in your leisure last term, to help you reflect upon or identify different types of leisure in which you may or may not have participated in. If you need a minute to think or need me to clarify what I'm talking about, that's okay. If you think you did not participate in any of the leisure types, let me know.

1. The first type of leisure is when it is used as a "planned break or breather". By this, I mean that leisure is used as an intentional, temporary distraction (from your schoolwork), it is proactively planned ahead of time (although how far ahead is flexible), and done with the idea of regaining energy to help with your studies.
Based on this description, tell me about a time last term that you used leisure as a planned breather.
   ○ At what point in the term did you use this type of leisure?
   ○ How did you decide on that activity? Was it a group decision or an individual one? *[Either of these to probe: who in the group initiated the idea of this activity? Was there anyone that you would consider important to you that influenced that decision, or brought up the idea of the activity?]*
   ○ What role did it play? What was its purpose? What were you hoping to get out of it?
   *** Based on the scenario provided...*
   ○ Did your involvement waiver? Were you as involvement as you wanted to be? Why or why not?

2. Tell me about a time last term that you used leisure as a way to avoid or procrastinate.
   ○ At what point in the term did you use this type of leisure?
   ○ How did you decide on that activity? Was it a group decision or an individual one? *[Either of these to probe: who in the group initiated the idea of this activity? Was there anyone that you would consider important to you that influenced that decision, or brought up the idea of the activity?]*
   ○ What role did it play? What was its purpose? What were you hoping to get out of it?
   *** Based on the scenario provided...*
   ○ Did your involvement waiver? Were you as involvement as you wanted to be? Why or why not?

3. Tell me about a time last term that you took part in a structured form of leisure (provide definition if needed)
   ○ At what point in the term did you use this type of leisure?
   ○ How did you decide on that activity? Was it a group decision or an individual one? *[Either of these to probe: who in the group initiated the idea of this activity? Was there anyone that you would consider important to you that influenced that decision, or brought up the idea of the activity?]*
   ○ What role did it play? What was its purpose? What were you hoping to get out of it?
   *** Based on the scenario provided...*

- Did your involvement waiver? Were you as involvement as you wanted to be? Why or why not?

4. Tell me about a time last term that you took part in an unstructured form of leisure
   - At what point in the term did you use this type of leisure?
   - How did you decide on that activity? Was it a group decision or an individual one? *[Either of these to probe: who in the group initiated the idea of this activity? Was there anyone that you would consider important to you that influenced that decision, or brought up the idea of the activity?]*
   - What role did it play? What was its purpose? What were you hoping to get out of it?
   ** *Based on the scenario provided...*
   - Did your involvement waiver? Were you as involvement as you wanted to be? Why or why not?

If the student has not been involved in a certain type of leisure, these questions can be asked as follow-up questions:

1. Have you participated in this type of leisure at other points in time? Is it just that you didn't participate in the fall term? Or never?
   - [If they have in the past] What led to you not participating in this form of leisure in the fall term?
     - Was there anything that prevented you from participating?
     - Did you notice any of your peers participating in this form of leisure?
   - [If they've never participated] Can you elaborate on your reasons for not participating in the fall term?
     - Was there anything that prevented you from participating?
     - Did you notice any of your peers participating in this form of leisure?

Screening Questionnaire

Please circle the answer that best describes your answer to each question.

Q1. Before the Winter 2011 term, what was your previous academic term?

Fall 2010        Spring 2010    Other (please indicate):_____

*\*\*Note: For the remainder of the questionnaire, the phrase "last academic term" refers to the academic term that you circled in Q1 above.*

Q2. Please list up to 10 of each structured and unstructured activities in which you were involved outside of schoolwork and paid employment, during your <u>last academic term</u>. In brackets, indicate how many hours, on average per week, you spent participating in each activity. *For example, swimming (4), reading for pleasure (7), shopping (1.5), etc.*

Structured Activities

Unstructured Activities

Q3. From your responses in Q2, which ONE activity would you say is **most important** to you?

_____

Based on your experiences, would you say that the nature of this activity is...? (Mark one response using an X for each line)

Active        ____|____|____|____|____|____|____    Passive

Challenging   ____|____|____|____|____|____|____    Relaxing

Individual activity   ____|____|____|____|____|____|____    Group activity

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Q4. Please select the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements, as they pertain to the quality of involvement in the activity you ranked as **most important** during your last academic term.

| | Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| This activity is an important part of how I define myself. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This activity is very important to me. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I take my participation in this activity very seriously. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I care about this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Participating in this activity makes me happy. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel that this activity challenges me. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This activity provides me with direction in my life | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Participation in this activity is very meaningful to me. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I enjoy participating in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My participation in this activity is a high priority in my life. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I believe that I will participate in this activity throughout my life. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel a sense of connection to others who also participate in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I easily become absorbed when engaged in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| No one has to push me to participate in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel a sense of belonging from participating in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I enjoy talking about this activity with others. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel pride when I achieve in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel competent when participating in this activity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q5. This next section asks you to consider your leisure time during two different points in the term. Please respond to each scenario based on your experiences in your last academic term.

*Scenario #1: During the first month of the term...*
a) Which ONE activity would you say is **most important** to you?

_____

b) Describe the **nature** of this activity (Mark one response using an X for each line)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Active | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Passive |
| Challenging | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Relaxing |
| Individual activity | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Group activity |

c) What makes it easier or **enables** you to participate in this activity? (List up to 3 examples)

_____
_____
_____

d) What makes it difficult or **inhibits** your participation in this activity? (List up to 3 examples)

_____
_____
_____

*Scenario #2: During the last two weeks of the term and/or the exam period...*
a) Which ONE activity would you say is **most important** to you?

_____

b) Describe the **nature** of this activity (Mark one response using an X for each line)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Active | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Passive |
| Challenging | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Relaxing |
| Individual activity | \_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_\|\_\_\_\_ | Group activity |

c) What makes it easier or **enables** you to participate in this activity? (List up to 3 examples)

_____
_____
_____

d) What makes it difficult or **inhibits** your participation in this activity? (List up to 3 examples)

_____
_____
_____

Q6. Please indicate the extent to which each item corresponds to the way you manage the stress of <u>preparing for an exam</u> using leisure. Respond based on your use of leisure overall, **not** just your most important activity.

| | Seldom true | | | | Very often true |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I use my leisure activities as a planned "breather" (e.g., taking a short break from studying). | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I find myself spending time on leisure activities when I really should be studying. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I spend a little time on leisure activities to *temporarily* escape the stress of studying. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I spend time on my leisure activities and act as though the exam is not really going to happen. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I spend time on leisure activities to avoid having to deal with studying. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I use a little leisure to experience pleasant emotions for a short while. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I spend a little time on leisure activities to replenish my energy. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I find myself spending more time on leisure activities than usual. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I spend a little time on leisure activities to regain my enthusiasm for studying. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I increase my time spent on leisure activities and I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into dealing with the exam preparation. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q7. Please select the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

| | Strongly disagree | | | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on equal plane with others. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I am able to do things as well as most other people. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel that I do not have much to feel proud of. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I take a positive attitude toward myself. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| At times I think I am no good at all. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q8. The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate *how often* you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question.

| | Never | Almost never | Some times | Fairly often | Very often |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q9. Below is a list of some things that other people do for us or give us that may be helpful or supportive. Please read each statement carefully and select the answer closest to your situation.

| I get/have... | As much as I would like | | | | Much less than I would like |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| people who care what happens to me | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| love and affection | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| chances to talk to someone about problems at work or with my schoolwork | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| chances to talk to someone I trust about my personal and family problems | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| chances to talk about money matters | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| invitations to go out and do things with other people | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| useful advice about important things in life | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| help when I'm sick in bed | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q10. What is your current academic term, as of Winter 2011? (Please circle ONE)

1A    1B    2A    2B    3A    3B    4A    4B    Other: _____

Q11. What faculty are you in?

_____

Q12. Are you (please circle):

Regular        Co-op

Q13. Please indicate your sex:

Male            Female

## *Please see next page!!*

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*Please read and complete the following page*

As part of this study I am also conducting interviews to discuss the leisure involvement of <u>first-year university students</u>. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be arranged at your convenience on campus. You are under no obligation to participate. If you choose to be a part of the interviews please sign below and provide me with the best way to contact you. As a token of appreciation for participation anyone who volunteers for the interview portion of the study will be entered into a draw for one of three $20.00 gift certificates to a the University of Waterloo's bookstore. If you agree, and the <u>Winter 2011 term is your 1A or 1B term</u>, please read and sign below.

I agree to participate in an interview conducted by Laura Maple of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies and held on campus. I understand I will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 60 minutes and that I may decline answering any question(s) at any time during the interview. I understand that anonymous quotes may be used, but I will not be identified in the final thesis or any reports, publications or presentation associated with this research. I also understand that this research has received approval through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and that I may contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca if I have any questions or concerns about my participation in this study.

**I have read and fully understand the information above.**

Participant's Name (please print) _____

Participant's signature; _____

Date: _____

**Preferred contact method**

Email: _____

Phone: _____Best time/days to call? _____

Other: _____