

# ALR 101: An Overview of Leisure Studies and Recreation and Park Research related to Active Living

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**Seventh Active Living Research Conference**  
***Engaging Communities to Create Active Living Environments***

*San Diego, CA*  
*February 9, 2010*

# Aims of the presentation

- **Provide a brief overview of the leisure studies field.**
- **Highlight rationale for “active living research” in parks and recreation areas.**
- **Show examples of recent active living studies focused on parks and recreation.**

# Parks & recreation is an interdisciplinary field.

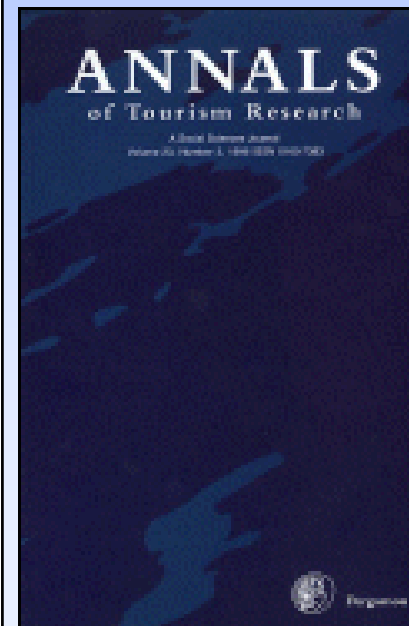
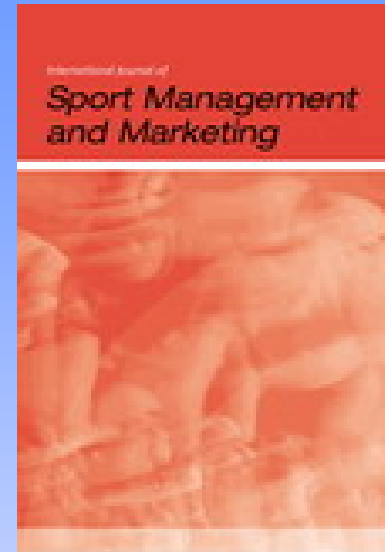
## Major Foci:

- Activity/behavior patterns
- Experience/benefits
- Leisure environments
- Economic impact
- Constraints to leisure
- Leisure contributions to quality of life (*e.g., health*)



**Provides social science evidence managing parks and recreation areas.**

# Examples of Leisure Studies Journals



Volume 20 • Number 3 • Fall 2002

## Journal of Park and Recreation Administration

Now available on-line in Acrobat PDF format:  
[www.sagamorepub.com](http://www.sagamorepub.com)

<p><b>Growing and Satisfaction Among Visitors to Built Desert Attractions</b></p> <p>—</p> <p><b>Predicting Motivations and Attitudes of Users of a Multi-use Suburban Trail</b></p> <p>—</p> <p><b>An Analysis of Lighting Safety Policies and Procedures in Florida's Municipal Recreation and Park Agencies</b></p>	<p><b>Assessing the Relationship Between Desired Experiences and Support for Management Actions at Yellowstone National Park Using Multiple Methods</b></p> <p>—</p> <p><b>Reaching Out/Reaching In: The Long-Term Challenge and Issues of Outreach Programs</b></p> <p>—</p> <p><b>The Time for Kids: Initiatives in Portland, Oregon: Challenge of Effective Multipurpose</b></p>
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A publication of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

# Parks and recreation areas are viable spaces for promoting physical activity.

- **Recreation services exist at all levels of government and in special park districts (Godbey et al., 2005).**
- **20,000 parks in the US; and 10,000+ playgrounds (Mowen, 2010).**
- **75% of American households are within 2 miles of a park system (ICMA & NaCO, 2006).**



# **Outdoor environments may be especially important.**

- **Stress reduction**
- **Natural affordances (e.g., slopes)**
- **Novelty which invites exploration**
- **Potential for intrinsic rewards**

**There is consistent evidence: availability of parks increase opportunities for physical activity.**

- **Across 20 studies in the health literature, access to *recreation facilities, programs, and aesthetics* were associated with higher PA (Humpel et al. 2002).**
- **14 of 20 studies show positive associations between access to parks and PA (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2007).**
- **Other reviews concur (e.g., Sallis & Kerr, 2006; Mowen et al., 2008) but less evidence for children and youth (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2007).**

# Physical activity in parks can be shaped by management and policy tools.

- **Programming/Facility Design**
- **Use policies (joint use agreements)**
- **Regulations**
- **Programming**
- **Pricing**
- **Marketing**
- **Safety/risk management**
- **Law enforcement**
- **Maintenance**
- **Hours of operation**





# Research Issues

- **What factors contribute to physical activity in parks in ethnically diverse communities?**
- **What specific facilities and amenities contribute to physical activity in parks?**
- **What is an optimal configuration of park design, management, and programs to promote physical activity?**

# Recent Projects

*A Study of Leisure-time Physical Activity in Diverse Communities, Active Living Research (#526489)*

## Project Aim:

**Examine neighborhood and environmental influences on physical activity in parks in two US cities.**

## Co-Investigators:

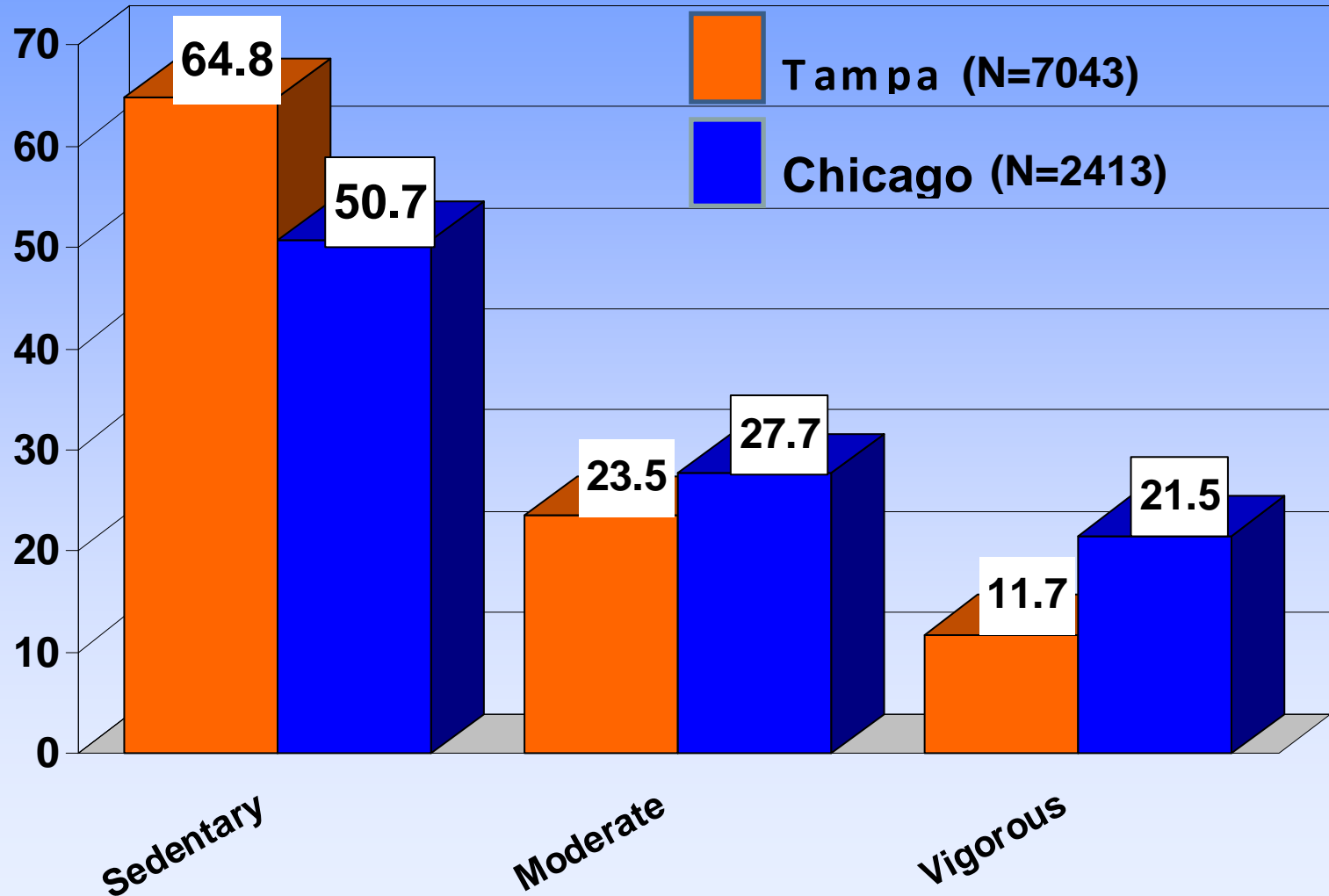
Myron Floyd, PhD (NC State University): leisure studies; race/ethnicity.

J.O. Spengler, PhD, JD (University of Florida): leisure studies; legal issues

Jay Maddock, PhD (University of Hawaii): public health sciences

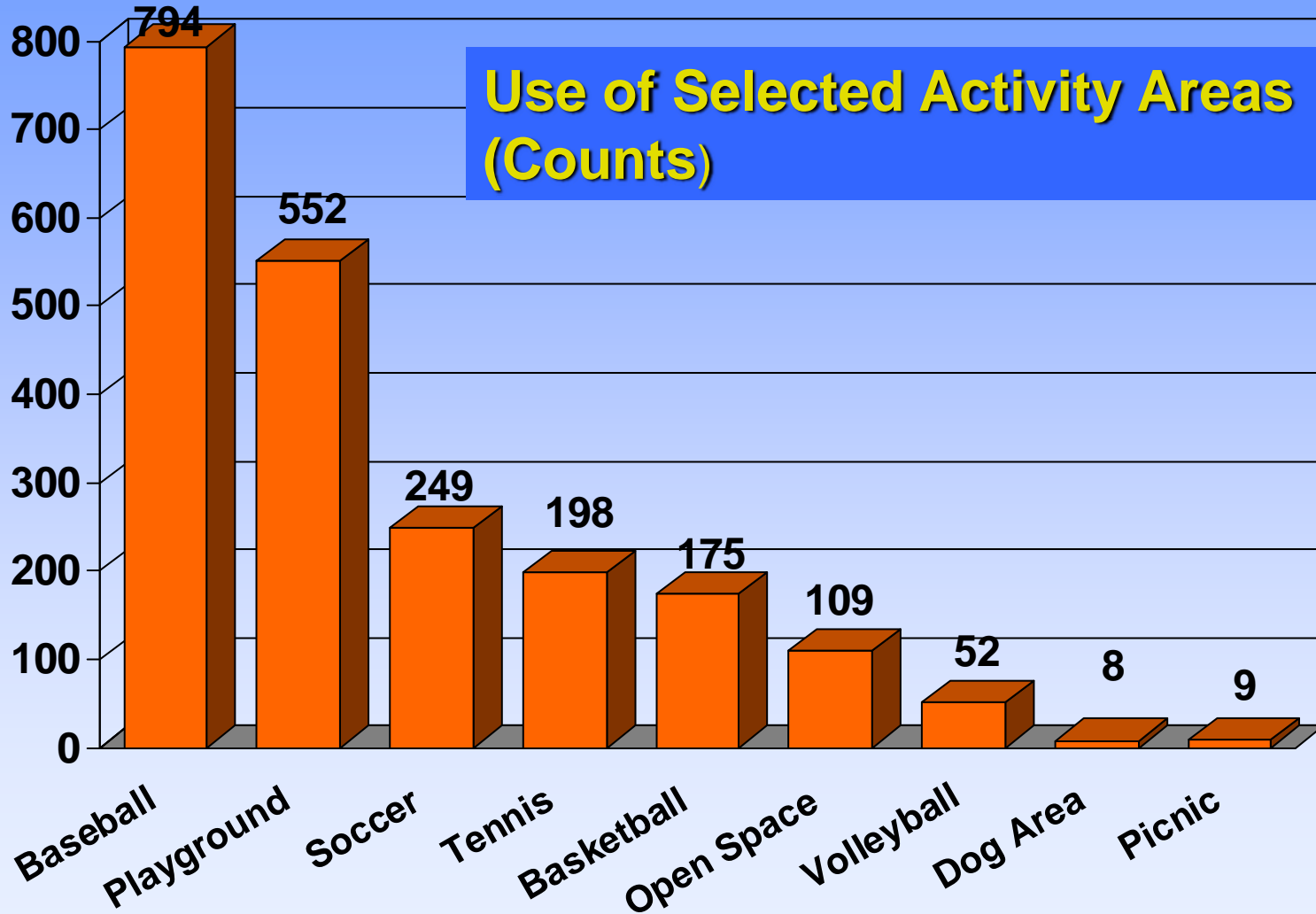
Paul Gobster, PhD (US Forest Service): urban forestry; urban planning

# Levels of Physical Activity in Tampa and Chicago Parks

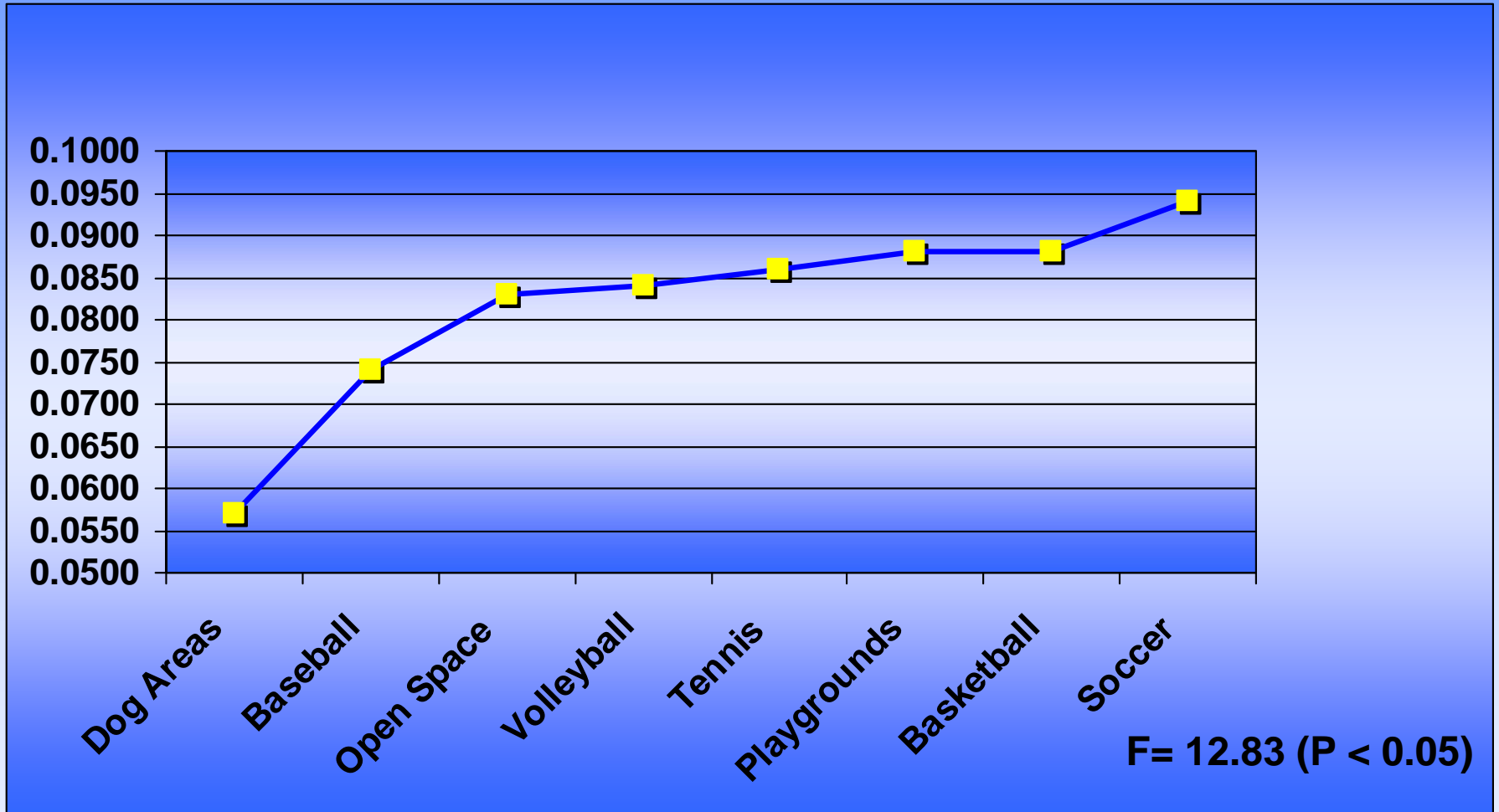


# Use of Activity Areas in 18 Chicago Parks

Use of Selected Activity Areas (Counts)



# Mean Energy Expenditure Per Person in Parks by Activity Zones (Chicago Example)



# Recent Projects

## *I-PARK: Investigating Places for Active Recreation for Kids Active Living Research (#526489)*

### Project Aim:

Examine how the neighborhood and park environment influence children's park use and physical activity (Durham, NC).

### Co-Investigators (NC State University)

Robin Moore: landscape architecture; park design

Myron Floyd: parks and recreation management; race/ethnicity

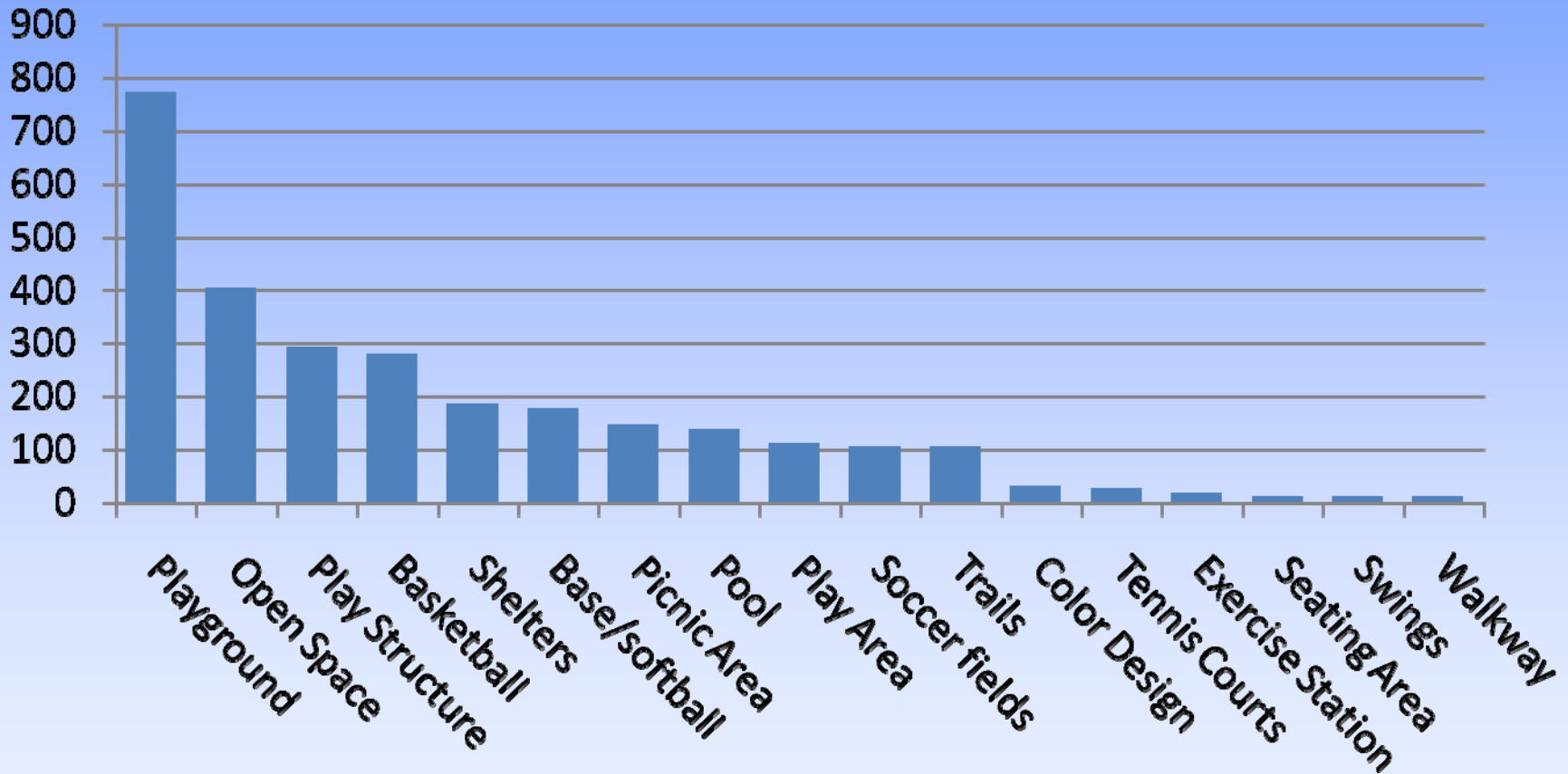
Perver Baran (NC State University): GIS; urban planning

Jason Bocarro (NC State University): parks and youth development

Nilda Cosco (NC State University): education; early childhood development

William Smith (NC State University): sociology/crime

# Frequency of Children in Different Park Zones (n=2847)



# Effect of Style of Play on MVPA: Girls vs. Boys

## Girls:

Free play, informal organized, and formal organized increased odds of MVPA by 41%, 97%, and 99%.



## Boys:

Free play and informal organized play increased odds of MVPA by 80% and 200%.





# Effect of Environmental Features on MVPA: Facilities and Amenities



Increased facilities *increased* odds of MVPA by 27% among girls.



Increased amenities *lowered* odds of MVPA 18% among girls *and* 10% among boys.

# Summary

- **Parks and recreation environments can promote physical activity in communities.**
- **Research on specific environmental factors associated with activity is emerging.**
- **This evidence can inform management and policies to create “active parks,” e.g.,**
  - **Encouraging formal activities for girls.**
  - **Providing the right “mix” of facilities and amenities.**
  - **Joint-use agreements (schools & park systems)**



Middle Creek School/Park  
Cary, NC

## Benefits of Joint-Use Policies:

- More efficient use of public resources
- Increases access to resources for active lifestyles.
- More active communities.
- Healthier communities.

Middle Creek High School  
Cary, NC



# Thanks!

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