Why We Should Value Urban Whitewater Parks:
Exploring Whitewater Paddler Social Benefits

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Background of the Study

(Moorman, Schlatter, & Hurd, 2007)
(American Whitewater, 2007)
Economic Benefits of the Grand Rapids Whitewater Project

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Podolak (2012) expressed, “Many of the project objectives were socially focused; however, assessing social change was challenging because there was a lack of available data” (p. 82). Existing social measures such as head counts, attendance rate, level of attractivity, site observations, or use of space, tell us little about the actual social benefits users obtain by attending an urban whitewater park.

(Podolak, 2012; Whiting, Pawelko, Green, & Larson, 2011)
“By virtually every conceivable measure, social capital has eroded steadily and sometimes dramatically over the past two generations” (2000, p. 287)

(putnam, 2000)
Research Questions

1) Do whitewater paddlers achieve social benefits as a result of urban whitewater park use?
2) What are these social benefits?
SALIDA

This town is a sweet retreat during the winter months and shoulder seasons in the high country. In the summertime, Salida is a must visit. The list of Amenities and Activities seem endless while the Art and Culture scene is a huge anchor. Bring a towel, a bike, and your best appetite.
Participants

- **Previously Visited** = 92% (n = 23)
- **Average Age** = 35.56
- **Travel distance** = 48% (n = 12) Locals
- **Average Time on Water** = 2.22 hours
- **Paddled with others** = 72% (n = 18)
**Methodology: Means-End Theory**

Values

Consequences (Benefits)

Attributes

“It makes me feel good about myself. Throw a big monster loop, impress the boys”
>>> Interview 20

“And that's what's important. We came out here to have fun”
>>> Interview 25

“Then when you have those competitions that community feel is not so much, oh I got to beat that person”
>>> Interview 7
Methodology: Means-End Theory

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(Gutman, 1982; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988)
Results

Female, 33 SUP

Male, 33 Canoe

Female, 22 SUP
Discussion

Social Capital = Intentional Investment in Social Networks

Trust and Norms of Reciprocity

Social Support n=37
- Moration n=24
- Sense of Belonging n=13

Learning & Development of Skills n=37
- Develop Confidence n=20
- Sense of Safety n=17
- Fun n=45

Social Network n=12
Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research
Questions
References