

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS TO ART MUSEUM ATTENDANCE

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Abstract.—We explored selected socio-demographic factors that influence the perception of constraints to art museum attendance among a sample of *interested individuals* who were currently *not* enjoying art museum visitation. Data from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), a nationwide survey were used for this study. Using multivariate analysis of variance, we examined five main effects (gender, age, income, number of children, and place of residence) and all two-way interactions on two dimensions of constraints, internal and external. Our findings illustrated that perceived constraints to art museum visitation were a function of not only separate but also interactive effects of the socio-demographic factors. Implications for both constraints theory and practice are discussed.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, a considerable amount of leisure research has been conducted examining factors that have constrained people's participation and enjoyment in leisure. These studies have examined constraints in multiple activity contexts such as pool (Chick & Roberts 1989, Chick et al. 1991), golf and tennis (Backman 1991, Backman & Crompton 1989, 1990), trailer use (Bialeschki & Henderson 1988), bridge (Scott 1991), hunting (Backman & Wright 1993, Wright & Goodale 1991), physical exercise (Shaw et al. 1991), and sport fishing (Ritter et al. 1992). This research has provided important insights for practitioners by highlighting the impediments to their clients' access or complete enjoyment of the services offered. In spite of the progress leisure researchers have made toward understanding leisure constraints, contextual issues

complicate broad generalizations concerning how individuals experience and respond to certain constraints. One activity context that has received little attention is the arts. Only one study in a leisure and recreation context (i.e., Tian et al. 1996) has been published in the leisure literature. Without empirical evidence, we should not assume that constraints to art museum attendance are identical to those observed in other leisure activity contexts (Jackson & Scott 1999). With this in mind, the purpose of this investigation was to explore the effect of several socio-demographic indicators on the experience of constraints to art museum attendance among non-attendees who were interested in future attendance.

2.0 PAST WORK

In the literature review that follows, we provide an overview of work limited to examining the influence of socio-demographic variables on the experience of constraints and their conceptualization of constraints. Additional attention is also given to previous work on constraints to art museum attendance.

2.1 The Role of the Socio-Demographic Factors on Leisure Constraints

Leisure constraints can be defined as factors that affect people's leisure preferences, limit participation, or reduce the level of enjoyment and satisfaction (e.g., Jackson 2005, Tsai & Coleman 1999). A number of scholars have recognized that socio-demographic variables provide insight on how specific groups within our society perceive barriers to selected leisure activities (e.g., Jackson & Henderson 1995, Scott & Munson 1994, Searle & Jackson 1985). The salience of constraints can vary depending on the personal, social, and situational context signified by socio-demographic characteristics.

Among those socio-demographic descriptors thought to be influential that we consider in this investigation, gender, age, income, and the presence of children have received substantial attention in the literature (Jackson & Scott 1999). First, given that gender is a social construction that imposes specific roles and responsibilities on men and women (rather than a simple biological indicator), it has been useful for providing a

more nuanced understanding of how men and women experience constraints (Shaw & Henderson 2005). These social role expectations shape our lives and often limit our behavior, including leisure choices. Since the structural context differs between men and women, gender variations exist in leisure behavior and related constraints. Most literature on gender suggests that women are more constrained in their leisure life than men (e.g., Deem 1986, Horna 1989, Searle & Jackson 1985, Witt & Goodale 1981). In particular, women are more likely than men to score higher on constraint indicators such as time availability, transportation access, fear of crime, family responsibilities, lack of partners, lack of skill and ability, and lack of self-confidence (e.g., Horna 1989, Searle & Jackson 1985, Shaw & Henderson 2005, Witt & Goodale 1981).

Jackson and Scott (1999) also suggested that it is useful to examine recreationists' stage in the lifecycle when examining the constraints they face. The concept of a life cycle represents a process of continuing and expectable changes throughout the life course. Throughout various stages of a life cycle, an individual is constantly placed into new circumstances, such as having a job, starting a family, or retiring, which encompass new opportunities and restrictions. These circumstances could alleviate some constraints, but they might also build conditions in which new kinds of constraints start to appear, producing variation in constraints over the life cycle. The patterns of variation are significantly different depending on the type of constraint considered (Jackson & Scott 1999). In a comprehensive overview of constraint research, Jackson (2005) identified four stable patterns concerning changes in constraints as the life cycle progresses. Dimensions related to skill and ability gradually increase in importance across the life cycle, whereas cost factors decline with age. Alternately, level of commitment (e.g., work and family) increases in middle age but declines thereafter, which is typically characterized as an inverted U-shape relationship. The opposite pattern, a U-shape relationship, emerges for social relationship factors.

A stable pattern is evident with regard to changes in constraints as level of income increases. Problems related to cost, transportation, companionship, health and available activities/programs decline with increasing

income (McCarville 1993, Scott & Munson 1994, Searle & Jackson 1985). A similar picture emerges when variations in the importance of constraints are examined by the number of children an individual has. The time and cost to participation increase as people have more children whereas the difficulty in finding a partner declines (Jackson & Henderson 1995, Searle & Jackson 1985). In this study, we also examined the influence of the place of residence given that large cities offer more opportunities to attend art museums than smaller cities or towns. While little has been published examining this factor's influence on art museum attendance, we anticipated that place of residence should be less of a barrier to residents of metropolitan areas.

While much research has examined the main effect of various socio-demographic indicators, less is known of how they interact to influence recreationists' perceptions of constraints. According to Jackson and Henderson (1995), constraint research needs to examine multiple characteristics simultaneously (e.g., age, gender, and income). Since subgroups defined by demographic characteristics such as "male," "female," "poor," and so on are not exclusive homogeneous groups, their experiences of constraints are also characterized by as many within-group differences as between-group differences (Altergott & McCreedy 1993, Buchanan & Allen 1985, Jackson & Henderson 1995, Scott & Jackson 1996). For example, Jackson and Henderson (1995) found that the level of constraints experienced by women was intensified depending on a different combination of other situational factors, such as age, the number of children, and income. Thus, in this investigation, we also explored the two-way interactions among these selected socio-demographic factors on our sample's perceptions of constraints.

2.2 The Nature of Leisure Constraints

Several authors have attempted to provide a conceptual framework that explains the effect of leisure constraints in the process of leisure engagement. In the context of this investigation, we adopted Francken and van Raaij's (1981) approach, which suggested an internal/external dichotomy. Internal constraints refer to personal capacities, abilities, knowledge, and interest whereas external constraints consist of problems related to time, money, geographical distance, and facilities. Constraints

were also recognized as blocking characteristics, which prevent participation, and as inhibiting characteristics. The conceptualization has extended to the consideration of possible constraints on leisure which affect preferences, thus affecting interest, in addition to those which affect participation.

2.3 Attendance at Art Museums

Despite the importance of constraints, there have been relatively few studies in which constraints have been incorporated into investigations of art museum attendance. Tian et al. (1996) looked at factors that inhibit museum-goers from attending the Galveston, Texas, museums. In Tian et al.'s study, five dimensions of constraint (i.e., cost, time, access, program, and interest) were examined. We are not aware of any previous study that has investigated the constraints to art museum visitation in the leisure literature. However, pioneer works on the nature and effects of constraints to art museum visitation have been done by Hood (1983, 1989, 1993). Her studies illustrated that physical and psychological discomfort were primary reasons for not attending among non-visitors and infrequent visitors. People perceive "user-unfriendliness" in museum amenities and services. Hood (1993) also indicated that psychological fatigue can arise from the confusion about what the museum intended, the norms of participation in museums, and "museum codes" of objects, symbols, and language. She noted that museums "are still pummeling visitors by overloading them mentally and physically, and then complaining that too few guests read every label, look at every object, or follow the sequence we laid out for them" (Hood 1993, p. 18).

3.0 METHODS

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA 1997) was used for this study. The SPPA was a nationwide survey conducted between June and October in 1997 to determine the extent to which adults throughout the United States participated in the arts. Households were sampled from randomly selected telephone numbers using the method called list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD). The individual in each household who was 18 or older was interviewed. The 1997 SPPA has 12,349 fully completed interviews with 55 percent of the response rate.

3.1 Measures

Our sub-group, *interested non-attendees* (n= 2,310), was selected based on their previous participation in art museums and interest in future attendance. The *previous attendance* was represented by binary variables (i.e., yes/no) recording whether or not respondents had visited art museums over the previous 12 months. *Interest* was measured by asking whether respondents were interested in future art museum attendance. Respondents were then requested to choose the reason they did not visit art museums. Nine *constraint* items were offered and respondents could cite as many as were applicable. Problems involving cost of entrance tickets, insufficient facilities/programs, feeling out of place, lack of companions with whom to go, child responsibilities, health problem, inconvenient location, safety, and limited time were listed as barriers to art museum attendance. Consequently, these items were used to form a summative index for each component (i.e., internal and external constraints) that provided respondents with overall constraint scores based on their responses to the constraint items. *External constraints* included barriers related to cost, programs, location and time while *internal constraints* consisted of feeling out of place, lack of companions, child responsibilities, health problems and safety. Five socio-demographic variables were used as independent variables: gender (1= male and 2= female), age, income, number of children under 18, and residential area (ZIP-code). Based on their responses, four socio-demographic factors were recoded into different categories: age (18-31, 32-42, 43-55, and 55<), household income (> \$20,001; \$20,001-\$40,000; \$40,001-\$75,000; \$75,000 <), residential area (metro/non-metropolitan area), and number of children under 18 (0, 1, 2-3, 4 or >).

4.0 ANALYSES, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Testing for Main and Interactive Effects of Socio-Demographic Factors on Constraints

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine the interactions and main effects of selected socio-demographic variables (gender, age, income, number of children under 18, and place of residence) on each constraint dimension (internal and external).

Table 1.—MANOVA statistics for 2-way interactions and main effects

	F	df	P
External Constraints ^a			
Gender x Age	2.697	3	.045
Gender x Number of Children under 18	3.873	3	.009
Place of Residence x Income	2.927	3	.033
Income	4.220	3	.006
Internal Constraints ^b			
Place of Residence x Age	3.591	3	.013
Place of Residence x Number of Children under 18	4.563	3	.003
Age x Number of Children under 18	2.381	9	.011
Number of Children under 18	5.250	3	.001
Place of Residence	9.586	1	.002

^a= F=2.556, df=57, p<.000, R-square= .119

^b= F=3.803, df=57, p<.000, R-square = .167

Table 1 shows significant 2-way interactions and main effects on external and internal constraint dimensions. Significant interactions were observed on the *external constraint* dimension for Gender x Age (F= 2.697, df= 3, p>.045), Gender x Number of Children (F= 3.873, df= 3, p > .009) and Place of Residence x Income (F= 2.927, df= 3, p > .033). The main effect of income was statistically significant on *external constraints* (F= 4.220, df= 3, p > .006). The data in Figure 1 clearly demonstrate different ways in which 2-way interactions affect the experience of external constraints. For the interaction between gender and age on external constraints, we observed a declining pattern for women across the life cycle while there was a relatively consistent level of external constraints for men. For the interaction between gender and number of children, we observed that women who have up to three children, perceived more constraints than women with four children. For men, the opposite pattern was observed. Last, for the interaction between place of residence and income, a relatively flat pattern relating to income was observed among people in non-metropolitan areas whereas a decline in income was observed among those in metropolitan areas.

Results also indicated three significant interactions and two main effects were observed on *internal constraints* (Table 1). There were significant interaction effects of Place of Residence x Age (F= 3.591, df= 3, p>.013), Place of Residence x Number of Children (F= 4.563, df= 3, p > .003) and Age x Number of Children (F= 2.381, df= 9, p > .011) and main effects of Number of Children

(F= 5.250, df= 3, p > .001) and Place of Residence (F= 9.586, df= 1, p > .002). As shown in Figure 2, people in metropolitan areas generally perceived a higher level of internal constraints than those in non-metropolitan areas, regardless of their age. However, individuals aged between 42 and 55 in metropolitan areas showed the lowest scores on internal constraints. A relatively consistent level of perceived constraint was observed among people living in non-metropolitan areas regardless of the number of children they have, whereas those in metropolitan areas experienced a higher level of constraints as they have more children. Regardless of age, individuals with more than three children perceived the highest internal constraint level. The pattern of the number of children effect was noticeable among the youngest age group. For main effects, the more children respondents reported, the more internal constraints they felt. In addition, individuals in metropolitan areas perceived more internal constraints than their counterparts.

4.2 Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study illustrated that the experience of leisure constraints is influenced by multiple socio-demographic factors. Individuals differ in their experience of constraints depending on their personal context expressed in terms of gender, age, income, and the presence of children. For example, level of constraints to leisure varied between men and women and among groups of women because of the number of children they have. The number of children also mediated the experience of leisure constraints within residential groups

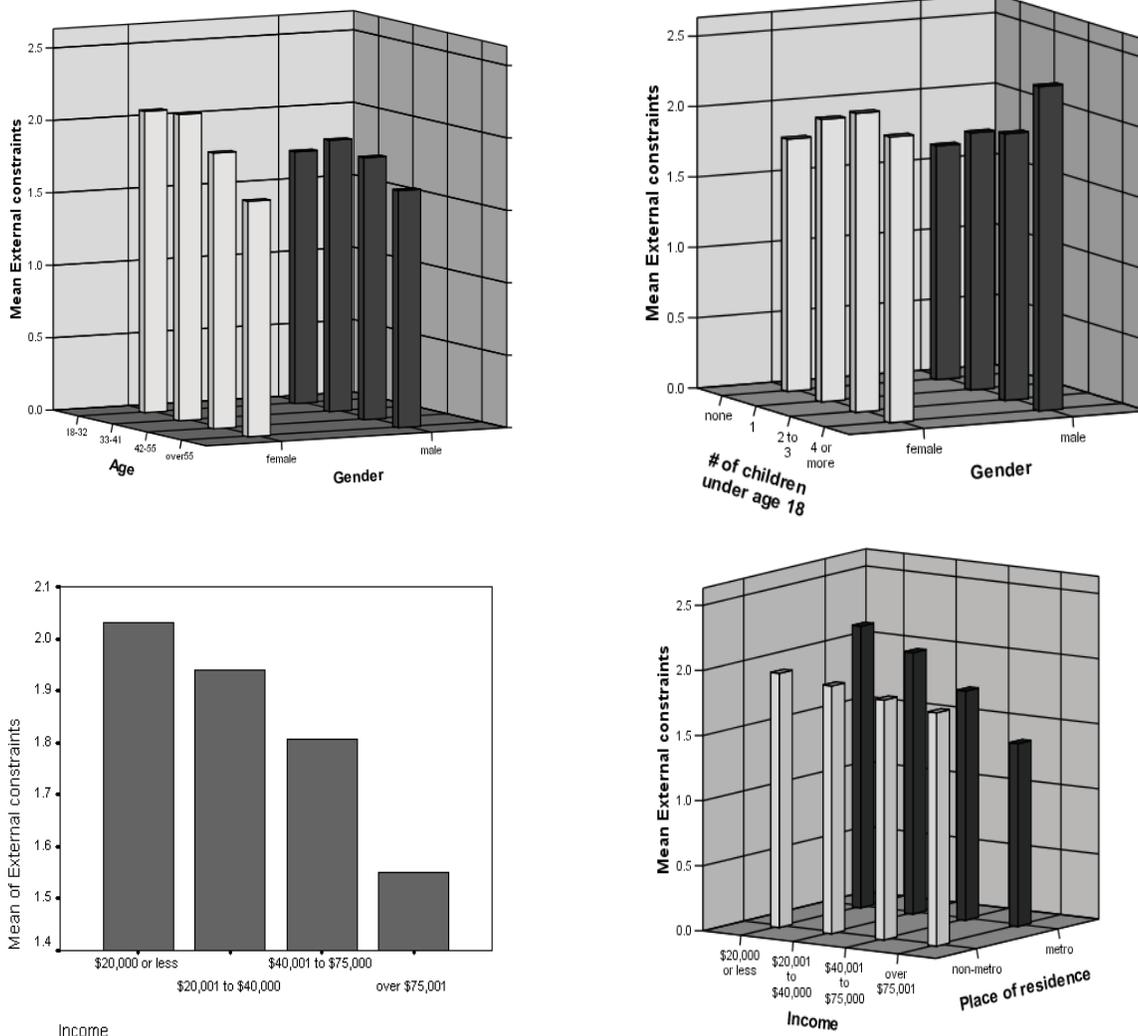


Figure 1.—Variations in mean scores of external constraints.

and across the life course. Increasing income generally alleviated the experience of external constraints, but the effect varied depending on the place of residence. The examination of selected contextual factors provided a more realistic picture of leisure than studies that focused solely on the impact of a single socio-demographic descriptor.

Results from our analyses of main effects were somewhat consistent with those studies that have examined the separate effect of income and the presence of children. We found that people with a lower level of income and greater number of children under age 18 are more likely to perceive constraints to art museum attendance on external and internal constraints, respectively. Surprisingly, we found that the place of residence is a

significant factor in explaining people's experience of *internal* constraints. People living in metropolitan areas are more likely to experience internal constraints than those living in non-metropolitan areas. This finding is noteworthy because place of residence has not been incorporated systematically into previous constraint studies. However, there is a need to examine the relationship between the effect of place of residence and the level of awareness or interest. As individuals in large city areas are more likely to be exposed to the facilities, to have more interest, and therefore to pursue more art museum visitation, they might be more likely to confront constraints. People make themselves more vulnerable to a set of constraints as they are exposed to the opportunities (Kay & Jackson 1991).

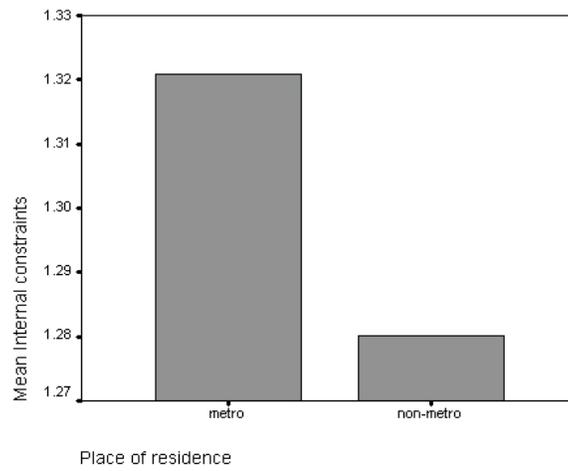
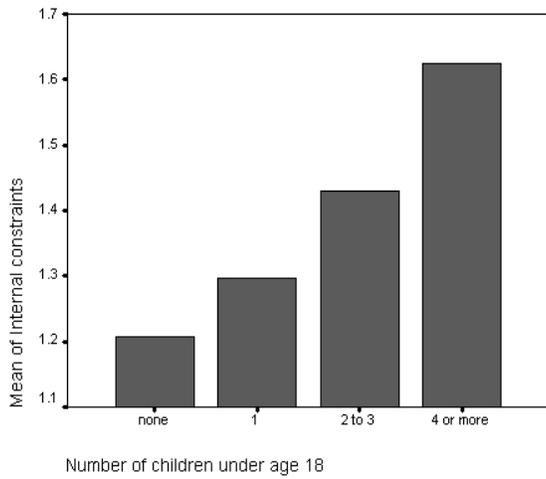
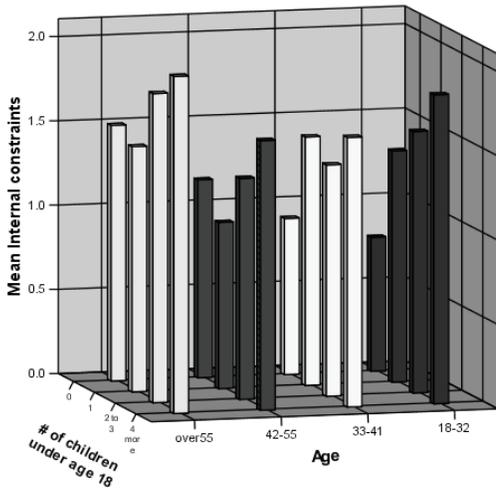
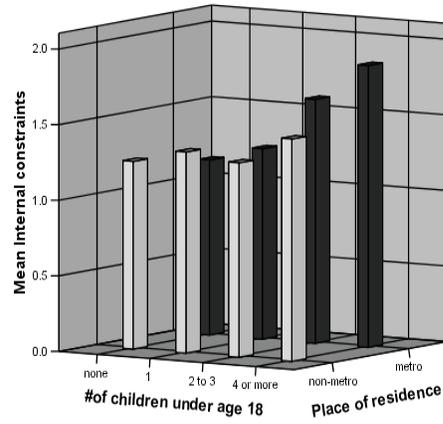
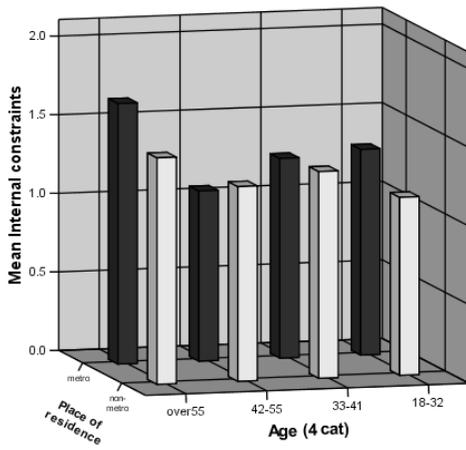


Figure 2.—Variations in mean scores of internal constraints.

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