Why Does It Matter?
The Value of the CPRP Certification

Michael Mulvaney, Ph.D., CPRP
Department of Recreation Administration
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920
Phone: (217) 581-6589
Email: mamulvaney@eiu.edu
Session Overview

- Role of Certifications in Public Parks & Recreation
- Background of CPRP & Study
- Role of Employee Motivation & Its Impact on Job Performance
- Findings from CPRP Study
- Making Sense of the Data – What Does It Mean & Putting It into Practice
- Wrap-up/Questions-Answers
Certifications

Why Do It?
Certification in Public Parks & Recreation

1) **Personal:**
   - Sense of achievement, increased marketability and job mobility

2) **Professional:**
   - Evidence of commitment, credibility, competence, etc.

3) **Consumer/Public:**
   - Evidence of accountability, increasing consumer confidence
Certifications in Public Parks & Recreation

- For well over half a century, parks and recreation professionals have been seeking certifications.

- Most common certifications for the public park and recreation professional:
  - Certified Parks & Recreation Professional (CPRP)
  - Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI)
  - Aquatics Facility Operator (AFO)
“2012 State of the Industry” survey indicated ~25% of agencies require applicants to have the CPRP certification.
Background of CPRP

Regularly identified as the primary (general) professional certification for public park and recreation professionals, the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification provides evidence that a professional has “a full complement of entry level knowledge and what it takes to be a solid, entry level professional”.
CPRP Education Requirements

- Bachelor’s degree in recreation from accredited program
  - OR
- Bachelor’s degree in recreation with +1 year FT experience
  - OR
- Bachelor’s degree with +3 years FT experience
  - OR
- Associate’s degree with +4 years FT experience
  - OR
- HS degree with +5 years FT experience

Students who have not yet graduated from an COAPRT accredited program with a major in recreation, park resources, and leisure services but are in their final semester on campus may be able to qualify for exam status.
CPRP Exam

- Computer-based exam
- 150 Items
  - 125 scored
  - 25 validated for future exams
- Exam Content:
  - Finance (11%)
  - HR (23%)
  - Programming (33%)
  - Operations (33%)
- Exam pass score varies, but generally around 85/125
- Certified candidates must maintain certification every two years with 2.0 Continuing Education Units (CEU).
CONCERN
Few scientific efforts have actually focused on the effects (on performance) of the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification.
Does having the CPRP certification impact an employee’s job motivation which, in turn, impacts their job performance?
The Role of the CPRP for Public Park & Recreation Professionals

CPRP

Employee Motivation (Job Self-Efficacy)

Job Performance

Job position (entry, mid, director, executive level)
Years employed in position
Type of agency
Demographic Characteristics
Job Self-Efficacy – What is it?

- Job self-efficacy concerns individuals’ beliefs in their capability to perform a given task, role, job, etc.
- Dynamic
- Regularly correlated with subsequent (job) performance, prompting researchers to advocate for training that is focused on monitoring and enhancing employee self-efficacy
Background of Study

- Over 1,700 public park and recreation professionals from Illinois were invited to participate in the study.

- Online survey:
  - Participants’ job self-efficacy was measured using a 10-item scale
  - Items are scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. A sample item was, “I have confidence in my ability to do my job.”
  - 8-items were used to collect demographic-related information of interest to the study. Variables included: Sex, Race, Income, Years Employed w/the Agency, Type of Agency, Job Position, and Certification Status.

- 347 participants responded to the survey, yielding a 20% response rate and producing a precision of at least +/-5% (e.g., the true population value is within +/-5% of the sample).

- Statistical procedures were employed to test the research question
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to $34,999</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 to $74,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 to $199,999</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 or more</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry level position (0-5 yrs. exp.)</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid level supervisor (5-10 yrs. exp.)</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper level mgmt. (+10 yrs. exp.)</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive level position (+10 yrs. exp.)</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Sample Value</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Certifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AFO</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Certification(s)</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRP</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRS</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Trainer Certification(s)</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground Safety Certification(s)</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turf Certification(s)</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency Description</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation/Forest Preserve Dist.</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park District</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Recreation Association</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (University, Not-for-Profit, etc.)</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yrs Worked w/Agency</strong></td>
<td>10.9 years (8.65=SD)</td>
</tr>
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Employees who had the CPRP certification displayed higher levels of motivation compared to those employees without the CPRP certification.

- Average Self-Efficacy Score (non-CPRP Certified Professionals): 40.5
- Average Self-Efficacy Score (CPRP Professionals): 42.9
Certification Status & Job Self-Efficacy: Study Findings

- Professional and demographic characteristics did not significantly influence employee motivation.
  - Income and Years worked w/agency provided a modest influence.
    - Higher income levels moderately influenced/related to higher self-efficacy
    - More years worked w/agency influenced/related to higher self-efficacy
What Role Could the CPRP Certification Play in Your Agency’s HRM Functions?

- HR Planning
- Legal frameworks
- Employee recruitment, selection, & placement
- Training & development
- Performance management and appraisal systems
- Compensation and/or benefits
- Other areas?
Reflecting on the Findings

- The findings provide support for scholars and practitioners’ testimonials that have previously advocated for the value of general certifications in the field of public parks and recreation.

- Additional research is needed with different and larger samples.
  - Park districts represent the norm in the state of Illinois, but public park and recreation departments managed within municipal or county government are the predominant type of public recreation organization in the United States.

- The findings from this study raise new questions:
  - Research on other outcome measures (i.e., job performance)
  - Role of specialized certifications
Putting the Research into Action

The Value of the CPRP Certification
Strategy #1: “One Size Does Not Fit All”

- What works for one agency, may (or may not) work for yours

- Agencies must focus on customizing the rationale to the agency’s priorities

- **TIP:** Perform an audit of your agency’s culture & work environment to determine the appropriateness of a certification requirements or policies.
Strategy #2: Stats Alone Won’t Work

- Statistics alone can not make the case for the CPRP certification.

- Quantitative AND qualitative data needed.

- Agencies should answer the following questions:
  - What is the mission of the agency? What does that tell us about what we should be doing?
  - What are the guiding values within our agency? Based upon our values, where does the CPRP certification fit in our agency?
  - How satisfied is your agency with the current workplace culture? Where do you want it to be? What role could a CPRP requirement play in changing/reshaping that culture?
Strategy #3: Avoid Unreasonable Proof

- Don’t place the CPRP certification under an unreasonable burden of proof

- If skepticism persists even after the facts & costs have been identified/promoted, deeper issues may be occurring (i.e., fears, attitudes, values, etc.):
  - Common issue #1: Staff don’t need the certification; what they really need is more experience.
  - Common issue #2: What about that person who has the “it” factor, but just isn’t CPRP certified?
Strategy #4: Training

- In many instances, managers’ attitudes and the general work environment have been shown to be even more important than specific policies.

- Prior to embracing a certification culture, the agency must ensure staff will be supported in their professional development.
Strategy #5: Promoting Collective Action

- Research has repeatedly shown that when staff are involved in the development phase of projects, policies, programs, etc., they develop a stronger sense of ownership and acceptance.

- As a result, the agency should get staff involved in the development and coordination of any certification program or culture shift within the agency.

- **TIP**: Develop a committee to review the CPRP and other relevant certifications and their role in the agency and its operations.
Strategy #6: Documentation

- Agencies must develop procedures and policies to maintain long-term consistency.

**TIP:** Employee handbook(s) covering the CPRP certification expectation/requirement should be developed.
Strategy #7: Statement of Support

- An open sign of support by the agency is needed.

- A common practice involves management developing a statement acknowledging the importance of certifications for their employees.
Questions?

Thank you!!