
Student Analysis of Legends Videos

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Abstract

The videos of the Legends Program (produced by the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Educators) is a readily available resource on the Internet that provides an excellent learning activity for students entering the recreation and parks field. The videos help students identify role models, career paths, legends, and experience living history. This article demonstrates a method for using the videos in the classroom.

KEYWORDS: Mentors, role models, legends, career development, living history

Introduction

The website of the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Educators notes that the Legends Program consists of videotaped interviews of distinguished administrators and educators who have made outstanding contributions to the field of Parks and Recreation. Also, it notes that “interviews record their personal background, professional insights, advice and philosophical beliefs” (AAPRA, 2008). These interviews provide a venue for a learning activity which can help students entering the recreation and parks field to identify role models, career paths, legends within the field, and living history.

Theoretical/Practical Foundation

Role models and mentors are an important part of career development. They can help increase self-esteem, self-image, and help lead to acceptance and confirmation of the ability of the person being mentored (Wright & Wright, 1987; Kram, 1988, Kram, 1983; Ragins & Kram, 2007). In terms of role models, the videos provide students with several opportunities. The Legends are successful people in the profession who have completed or are nearing completion of their careers. Their interviews provide students with the opportunity to gain valuable insights and advice on what leads to success within the profession. As noted by Missirian (1982), Wright and Wright (1987), and Johnson and Ridley (2004), this is often true for women, since there tends to be a dearth of role models and mentors in the workplace. In addition, the exploration of what makes a legend a legend is important for students who may eventually aspire to become legends themselves.

The Legends series offers students the opportunity to examine the career paths of legends in the field to determine how they entered the field and how they advanced their careers. Examination of those who have gone before them often provides valuable insights into the development of their own career path. Since students are usually at the beginning of their career paths without obvious career paths, identifying the career paths of legends in the profession is important for students to help them position themselves within the recreation and parks field. (Kauffman, 2009; O'Donnell, 2004; Ganske, 2005; Kopsike, 2003). In addition, the feedback provided by this activity can help the Academy tailor future interviews to have increased value for students and the profession.

Description of the Learning Activity

The legends videos have been used as a course assignment in the Issues and Legal Liability course at Frostburg State University since the fall 2001 semester. Since 2006, the videos have been available online. In 2009, there were 86 videos from which to choose.

First, the assignment sought to develop a sense of history and to connect students with their heritage. Second, the assignment focused on career development by reviewing career paths of those who have completed or were nearing completion of their career paths. Third, the legends provided role models and mentors for the

students. The fourth learning component examines the concept of a legend and what it takes to become a legend in this field.

Appendix C of the course syllabus outlined what students needed to do for the assignment. First, they needed to review five videos. One of those videos needed to be either Pat Harden or Dean Tice, who had previous associations with the program at Frostburg. For the other four videos, students could review the biographies provided on the Legends website and choose whoever interested them. Second, they needed to log on to the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration website: <http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/Legends/library.htm> and view the videos. Third, they needed to respond to a series of questions that were designed to stimulate thought regarding the interviews.

Conceptually, the assignment questions were divided into two parts. The first part focused on what the student learned from the video just viewed: 1) Why did you pick this person? 2) Was this person a legend? 3) How did this person become a legend and how would you do the same? 4) In regard to their career path, how did they position themselves in the field? 5) What stood out, if anything, in this interview? 6) What did you learn from this interview?

The second part of the assignment focused on the assignment as a whole. Again, students responded to a series of questions: 1) Were there any commonalities or trends among the interviews? 2) Based on your review of the interviews, what makes a person a living legend? If you wanted to become a legend, what should you do? 3) How would you improve the interviews? 4) Looking at your potential career path, what do you need to do based on what you learned from this person? 6) What did you learn from this assignment? 7) What changes would you recommend regarding this assignment?

In addition, students completed a short survey instrument designed by the instructor. It consisted of six statements which complemented the questions raised in the second part of the assignment. Two additional questions asked the students how much they learned from the assignment and if they would recommend it to other students. A four-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to assess the six questions. Data was collected for three semesters from fall 2007 to fall 2008. The results of this survey are reported in Table 1.

Learning Outcomes

The first objective sought to develop a sense of history. Often examination of the past helps students connect with their future. In part, the legends represent the history of the field. On four out of five interviews reviewed (80.9%), students indicated that after watching the video, they had a much better understanding of the recreation and parks field (Table 1). In discussing Robert Hall, one student commented that "I learned quite a bit about the development of NRPA and its move toward international relations and the goal of influencing national legislation." Another student noted that "I learned how the MWR program has grown. I learned some key points for professional development if I were to pursue a career with MWR."

The second objective focused on career development and helping students to position themselves for their future careers (Kauffman, 2009). With the legends having

TABLE 1: Summary Table of Student Responses to Living Legend Videos¹

	Percent Strongly Agree	Percent Agree	Percent Disagree	Percent Strongly Disagree
1. I believe that this person was a living legend (N=191)	36.2	51.8	12.0	-
2. The video makes an excellent case as to why this person is a living legend (N=189)	18.0	54.0	26.0	2.0
3. The interviewers did an excellent job of interviewing the subject (N=191)	15.3	56.6	26.1	12.0
4. I gained valuable insights regarding my career development from this legend (N=139) ²	20.1	64.0	15.1	0.8
5. I gained valuable insights into what I need to do to prepare myself for my career. (N=133) ²	18.8	67.7	13.5	-
6. After watching this video, I have a much better understanding of the recreation and parks field. (N=188)	18.1	62.8	18.1	1.0

Notes:

¹ Data was gathered for the following semesters: fall 2007, spring 2008, and fall 2008. Normally, each student responded to five legends.

² Questions #4 and #5 were included on the spring and fall 2008 survey instrument and not the fall 2007 instrument. This resulted in a lower N.

completed their career path, they often provided valuable insight on how to advance student careers. Eighty-four percent of the student responses (84.1%) agreed with the statement that they gained valuable insights regarding their career development (Table 1). Similarly, in 86.5% of the student evaluations, they agreed with the statement that they gained valuable insights regarding what they needed to do to prepare themselves for their careers. Many students noted passion, hard work, and education as being important in their career development. One student noted that "From this interview I learned that people who have a true passion for a field seem to be vastly more successful." Another student noted that "I learned that hard work is important, and your peers can have a big influence on how far you can go in your career." In discussing Pat Harden's career path, one student noted that "The most important thing that I took away from this interview was that a career path is not always a straight line."

Third, role models and mentors are an important part of career development (Wright and Wrights, 1987, Kram 1988, Kram 1983, Ragins and Kram, 2007). One student noted this in the following response. "Harden went into great detail about midway through the interview about how to develop one's self, professionally." Another student recognized the importance of the legend serving as a mentor and role model.

"I learned that creating an image is necessary for advancement. Recognition by the professionals within my field will give me the advantage I need. I understand that it is important to have a mentor or someone of significance to look up to and strive to become on their level and beyond. It is important because they have been through what I am currently going through and can give me the knowledge and motivation to do the best. I also understand that developing many professional contacts are a necessity because it allows for the input and awareness of other professionals within my field who can be valuable resources."

Role models for women are important since mentoring for women is often different than for men and there tends to be less mentoring relationships between sexes (Missirian, 1982; Wright & Wright, 1987; Johnson & Ridley, 2004). The need for this became evident to the instructor through the video selection and comments of the women in the course. One female student commented on Pauline des Granges that "I enjoyed hearing the interview because she gave a unique perspective, and she was also a pioneer for women's programs." Another student's comment regarding Patricia Delaney suggested the difficulty which women often have within the workplace. "I learned from this interview that females in recreation and parks were accepted more easily than in other fields." And another female student found that "Patricia is a great legend. I can look up to her, too."

The fourth learning component examined the concept of what it takes to become a legend. Students were asked if they thought that this person's accomplishments were sufficient for them to be considered a legend in the profession. Most students (88%) felt the legend reviewed was actually a legend. However, 12% of the student responses disagreed with the statement (Table 1). A second question focused on whether the video made a good case why the person was a legend. Although seven out of ten (72%) of the

students agreed with the statement that the video made a good case, almost three out of ten (28%) of the students indicated that it didn't (Table 1).

Conclusion

The Legends Program is a resource that is available to anyone with a connection to the Internet. The use of the videotaped interviews is a way to connect previous generations in the recreation and parks field with the next generation. Studying the field's heritage often provides the keys to understanding the future. The Legend tapes are one way to create linkage between the past and the future.

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