As unhappy employees consider the roots of their job dissatisfaction, an array of factors may be identified. Myriad explanations have been widely investigated in organizational behavior and management research, and scholars have been driven by the meaningfulness of a valid compendium of satisfiers. This information could provide practitioners with the tools to effectively enhance the motivation and performance of their employees. Furthermore, researchers have taken special interest in job satisfaction because of its humanitarian, hypothetical, and fiscal significance to an organization (Balzer et al., 1997).

Recently, growing attention has been given to a new generation of workers known as the millennials (or Generation Y), the term loosely used to describe those born between the early 1980s and the mid-to-late 1990s (Levenson, 2010). With over 80 million members in the United States and Canada (Foot & Stoffman, 1998; Trunk, 2007), the first class of millennials started entering the workplace in the mid-2000s. Today, millennials represent the fastest-growing and most racially diverse segments of the workplace. Because of their increasingly substantial infusion into the workforce, practitioners and scholars have begun detailing the different attitudes, beliefs, norms, and values of the millennial generation. In acknowledgement of the significant differences between the millennials and previous generations, this group is deserving of further attention to identify the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction.

Within the sport management literature, little scholarly consideration has been given to the millennial generation. This generation has been characterized in the popular press and media as entitled and extrinsically motivated by incentives such as pay and recognition. These motives are paradoxical to an interest in a career in sport and recreation, which is recognized notoriously for its limited opportunities for upward mobility, low pay, and irregular and excessive work hours (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010; Van Riper, 2008). Kim, Knight, and Cruthingser (2009) expressed concern that the incompatibility of millennial expectations and industry realities could present managers with problems recruiting new employees. Cunningham, Sages, Dixon, Kent, and Turner (2005) examined the relationships between anticipated career satisfaction, affective occupational commitment, and intentions to enter the sport-management industry among undergraduate sport management students (M age = 21.83), finding that students who participated in internships experienced lower anticipated career satisfaction and intentions to enter the industry when compared to students without internship experience. However, as the researchers noted, it was unclear what factors specifically contributed to the internship group’s diminished feelings about the industry.

In this study, we analyzed the influence of three hypothesized factors on global job satisfaction among members of the millennial generation. This analysis will provide practitioners and scholars with a better understanding of the factors contributing to a millennial’s work performance. With this information, managers can be more attentive to the motives of the newest generation of employees, a demographic becoming increasingly active in the workforce. This information is particularly essential in the sport industry, as sport management programs and sport-oriented internships and practicums are becoming increasingly available to accommodate growing interest among young people (Mahony, 2007). To gain further insight on the work characteristics favored by members of the millennial generation, a survey was conducted with employees (N=135) in the recreational sports department in the southeastern United States. The questionnaire developed for this study contained a total of 12 variables to measure four research constructs of interest. Items were derived from a scale validated by Smerek and Peterson (2007), who investigated the job satisfaction of part-time university employees. Modifications were made to the verbiage to increase relevance to the recreational sports setting, and these modifications were supported by the original scale’s authors. Participants responded to each item using a seven-point Likert-type scale using the anchors strongly disagree and strongly agree. Additionally, demographic information was collected. The selection of three predictor variables (i.e., perceived supervisor effectiveness, work itself, satisfactory pay rate) and one outcome variable (i.e., global job satisfaction) were supported by previous theoretical and empirical research. To evaluate the
measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis was used. As recommended by Satorra and Bentler (1994), the MLM estimator was used in response to the violation of multivariate normality assumption. Satisfactory fit was demonstrated based on multiple fit indices (S-B $\chi^2$/df=1.136, CFI=.990, TLI=.987, RMSEA=.032, SRMR=.052). Additionally, correlations for all pairs of latent factors were significantly different from 1.0, rendering support for discriminant validity. Reliability coefficients ranged from .79 for job satisfaction to .96 for supervisor effectiveness.

To examine the relationships among the factors, structural equation modeling was employed. Good fit of the structural model was confirmed (S-B $\chi^2$/df=1.136, CFI=.990, TLI=.987, RMSEA=.032, SRMR=.052). Direct paths between the independent variables (perceived supervisor effectiveness and satisfaction with pay rate) and satisfaction with the work itself were analyzed. The path from perceived supervisor effectiveness to work itself ($\gamma=.465$) was significant at the .05 level. Additionally, the direct paths between the perceived work environment factors and job satisfaction were tested. All three factors—perceived supervisor effectiveness ($\gamma=.358$), work itself ($\gamma=.546$), and satisfaction with pay rate ($\gamma=.167$)—were significant at the .05 level. No significant demographic differences were found.

As discussed above, the purpose of this study was to identify the factors that are of considerable meaning to representatives of the millennial generation, a group becoming increasingly active in the sport industry. The link between pay rate and satisfaction exemplifies the common-sense notion that student employees relate overall job satisfaction with their pay. However, the relatively weak path coefficient indicates that other factors are more directly related to these individuals’ job satisfaction. The emergence of interactions between leadership effectiveness, work meaningfulness, and job satisfaction is particularly vital to organizations employing a large number of millennials, including the internship programs of collegiate and professional sports teams and recreational sports departments. This study empirically supports the notion that the nature of the job itself is a predictor of job satisfaction (Kahn, 1990, 1992; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Additionally, these findings differ from other scholarship of intergenerational differences, suggesting that millennials employed in the sport industry may be motivated differently than those employed in other sectors (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). In addition to providing directions for future research, the theoretical and practical implications of these findings will be discussed. As members of the millennial generation become increasingly active in the sport industry, scholars and practitioners must consider the possibility that broad generalizations about millennials may not be accurate portrayals of those employed in sport, thereby demonstrating the need for closer investigation within sport management.