Research Statement
H. Joey Gray, Ph.D.

My current and future research interests are generally in two areas motivated by my personal interests and teaching experience. I desire to incorporate my research interests with my teaching aspirations to craft a career that is a unified whole. I want my research to be useful to the community, academia, and my colleagues as we educate future generations. I hold the belief that research is not an island unto itself but is a means to gain practical information for implementation. More specifically, I am fascinated by the art of pedagogy and the complexity of youth development. From a pedagogical perspective, I seek to find innovative ways to engage students brought up in a technical age which is greatly divergent from the upbringings of most faculty today. My second line of inquiry, youth development, is an area that cannot be over-analyzed as more children than ever before become morbidly obese resulting in numerous health problems. Additionally increasing numbers of children lack opportunities for healthy, safe recreation and often turn to delinquency instead.

Over the past ten years in academia, I have been fascinated by scholarship in pedagogy and each year I find more unique areas I wish to study. My pedagogical interest began with grading practices and student evaluations of instructors are areas receiving sporadic attention within Recreation. I view my responsibility to teach college students with great earnest; thus, I sought to understand more about faculty grading practices and student perceptions of teaching evaluations. My research efforts in these areas have resulted in three publications. My most recent publication explored innovative ways to engage students to read course assignments through the use of an audio book. The reading habits of students are often a challenge for college professors. Today’s students are more technologically savvy than ever and in an effort to keep up with the technology age, my research explores ways to engage students with the technology they seem to love. My future plans include recording a new version of the textbook, incorporating the use of the kindle; as well as conducting a national study to explore the similarities and differences among recreation programs at various universities.

My second line of inquiry focuses on youth development and obesity. The role of recreation in generating emotional strength, healthy habits, and pro-social behaviors in at-risk youth is gaining momentum, and funding potential within the research community. Thus, I seek to explore innovative recreation activities for communities to support healthy youth development. Additionally, I have recently concluded data collection exploring the Wii-Fit and youth physical fitness. A manuscript is underway for the Youth Wii Fit study and I have
presented on this research at NRPA and TAHPERD. As related initial investigations into youth development, I published an article with Dr. Jonathan Plucker that examines the factors which comprise early academic and athletic talent, fueling children’s desire to stay involved in structured recreation activities. Both my practical experience and current research has fueled my future research goals. I plan to utilize intervention techniques to improve self-concept of at-risk youth and promote youth development through recreation.

My future research agenda will expand upon my previous research and current interests. Exploring various recreational activities to foster positive youth development both physically and emotionally is a passionate area of research for me. My pedagogical research will continue to allow me to stay connected with my students and to encourage myself and others to always strive to be better in the classroom. Both lines of research will compliment current issues used in my teaching, provide relevant information for the community and my peers, and provide innovative methods to reach both youth and my students.