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# The Importance of Public Space During the COVID-19 Pandemic with a Case Study of the City of Kalamazoo's Kik Pool

Natalie Baker
*Western Michigan University*, natalie.michigan@yahoo.com

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**The Importance of Public Space During the COVID-19
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Natalie Baker
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents research on the value that public spaces, such as parks and pools, bring to society, with an emphasis on the benefits of public spaces for children. The study begins with a literature review that addresses the effects of shutting down public spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic and describes the impacts on children and parenting styles that resulted from prolonged home confinement. The study then introduces a case study of the City of Kalamazoo's Kik Pool to provide a firsthand examination of how one public space was impacted during the COVID-19 period. Research methods include surveys from lifeguards, interviews with stakeholders, and my personal experience working at the City of Kalamazoo's Kik Pool. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings and recommendations that stem from the analysis.

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**INTRODUCTION**

  The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic profoundly affected almost every part of daily life. With the closing of many schools and work units, COVID-19 created new burdens for families and children. During this period, outdoor public spaces played an important role in the social life of cities. The objective of this thesis is to investigate the value of public spaces through a case study of the Kik Pool in the Edison neighborhood of the City of Kalamazoo during the pandemic period.

  This research was conducted during the Summer of 2021, a period influenced by the COVD-19 pandemic, with the purpose of increasing understanding of the effect of public spaces on society and, more specifically, the value of public swimming pools. The main research methods included surveys of lifeguards who worked during this period, as well as interviews with representatives of the Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Department and Kalamazoo Public Safety, supplemented by a literature review. The goal of the study is to examine the influences of the Kik Pool on children that utilize the pool, as perceived by the employees of Kik Pool. Specifically, this thesis addresses three major research questions:

- Why is public space important?
- How did COVID-19 impact public space, as well as people's physical and mental health?
- How did the environment of the City of Kalamazoo's Kik Pool impact children's behavior?

  Kik Pool has a very special meaning to me. I have worked at Kik Pool, beginning as a lifeguard, since I was seventeen years old. Working at Kik Pool has taught me many life lessons. I will be forever grateful for the time I have spent there. Coming from a middle-class family, I did not know

much about the struggles of others. My eyes were immediately opened to the burdens that others endure. I deeply bonded with some of the guests, and they felt like younger siblings to me, particularly since I don't have any younger siblings. I would often give the young guests rides home and buy them food. Most importantly, I gave them my attention and listened to them. Every year when the summer ended, I worried about some of the guests from the pool with whom I had gotten close. Each summer when the pool reopened, I was so excited to see the guests again, and they were excited to see me. Having these bonds and friendships with the guests made working at the Kik Pool fulfilling. I also bonded closely with the other lifeguards. The other Kik Pool employees and I went through some traumatic experiences and therefore we became extremely close, even hanging out on our time off.

It was the summer of 2021 when everything changed. I was now in charge of the pool, having been promoted to a manager. I had to attend a three-day training in Detroit to become a certified lifeguard instructor. When I returned, I planned a training for my guards. When the pool opened, we noticed drastic changes from previous summers. The behavior we were experiencing from some guests was incredibly disrespectful. We experienced sexual harassment, attempted car break-ins, boys sneaking into the locker room and filming, children sneaking into the pool through the restrooms, fireworks set off on the pool deck, fireworks thrown through car windows, gun threats, a bullet found in the pool, and much more. I was incredibly confused as to why this summer was so different from my previous experiences working there. I began to wonder if the fact that the children had not been in school, receiving structure and discipline from their teachers, had affected their behavior. Ultimately, Kik Pool management was forced to implement much stricter rules than we had in prior summers, including a rule that no children under 17 were admitted without an adult. We added alarms to the bathroom doors (to the outside) and hired a security guard. Once we

established these measures, the poor behavior ceased almost immediately. This experience revealed to me that public spaces such as Kik Pool may have served a heightened function during COVID-19.

As I learned when I began working on my literature review, scant research has been conducted on the benefits of public swimming pools. Given the importance of public swimming pools to communities, the deficit of research related to public pools is unfortunate. With their ability to entertain children for prolonged time periods in limited space, as well as providing health benefits, swimming pools provide unique benefits. My research project begins to address this gap.

Findings from this project should be of interest to several audiences, including leaders of the City of Kalamazoo, particularly those responsible for Parks and Recreation services. The Kalamazoo City Commission may also find this information helpful in knowing the value of the city pool to city residents. On a broader basis, the findings from the research should be meaningful for any public officials and employees who seek to enrich the lives of children through public recreational facilities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The value of public space can be difficult to measure. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its restrictions on public movement, has helped reveal the reasons as to why public space and physical activity are so important to the emotional and physical well-being of children. Children need a space where they are free to be themselves and obtain physical exercise at the same time. This paper will discuss why public space is so important, how public spaces have been impacted by the pandemic, and how parenting styles changed during the pandemic as public movement was curtailed, with a focus on the impact that these changes have had on children.

**Definition and Benefits of Public Space**

Public space is defined as, "Property open to public use. It can be privately or publicly owned. Geographic research on public space examines struggles over the production and transformation of publicly accessible spaces, their use, their political and social meanings, and their relationship to the construction of the public sphere" (Mitchell, Staeheli, 2009,1). Helen Beck (2009, 240-248) explains, "High quality public spaces create positive, lasting economic, social and environmental value in a very wide range of ways."

Beck (2009, 240-248) elaborates,

> The benefits to individuals of high quality, well managed, well-maintained parks and green spaces can include: physical and mental health benefits from exercise and access to nature, saving money due to access to a free public service, educational benefits and contribution to children's development through providing opportunities to explore and take risks, adult personal development opportunities through volunteering to support park activities and initiatives and a general improvement in an individual's quality of life, happiness and wellbeing.

Beck (2009, 240-248) explains that the benefits of the consumption of public space go beyond people utilizing these facilities. Beck goes on to explain some benefits including cleaner air and water, increased tourism, health and wellness, increased property values and, "Community cohesion" Beck (2009, 240-248).

These are just some of the benefits of public spaces. There are many more.

**Public Spaces and Child Development**

Research demonstrates that playing in public spaces and nature is vital for the brain development of children. However, while the importance of public space is well understood, the safety of children in open space is not well-researched. Victoria Derr (2016, 10) explains:

Although city children want more contact with nature, they do not always feel they have enough access to – or freedom within – the natural spaces that are already there. In a recent analysis of its work over these seven years, easily accessible, plentiful, and varied nature within the city is children's top request (inclusive cities and independent mobility are 2nd and 3rd on the list).

Children not only want public spaces and spaces of nature for themselves, but for animals as well. "Children want access to natural areas for their own play and also for wild and domesticated animals: children consistently express interest in improving habitats for wildlife in urban spaces. This result emerges across demographics within Boulder, including ethnicity, family income and age" (Derr, 2016, 10). Derr extends the importance of children's feelings of well-being to the protection of urban dwelling animals, as perceived by children. "When probed as to why this was important, children said because when others are not cared for, it makes them feel like they might not be cared for either. Feeling safe – a core tenant of child friendly cities – thus needs to extend to others, whether they be people or animals, within a city." It is essential to a child's wellbeing to feel safe and whether they do or don't can impact how the rest of their life unfolds.

**Navigation of Public Space by Children**

A main argument against public space is that young children do not have the mental capacity to navigate public space on their own. However, much research on this subject contradicts this claim. As Valentine (1996a, 65-89) describes, "...Children are imagined as 'innocent',

'incompetent' and vulnerably dependent on their parent(s)." While children may be perceived this way, that is not always the case. Valentine elaborates (1997, 65-89):

> A further major study which has been important in shaping geographers' understanding of children's spatial competence is Hart's (1979) study of children's use and experience of space in an anonymous US town (which he gave the pseudonym Invale). His work demonstrated that children's use of space is a product of negotiation between youngsters and their parents. Fears about traffic, accidents, 'bad influences' and 'outsiders' shaped the nature and range of the spatial restrictions which parents, particularly mothers, imposed on the children in the study. These limitations varied with the age and gender of the child concerned. Despite these restrictions Hart found that much of the children's daily use of space was independent of adults and that children explored, used, experienced, and valued space differently from adults. In this way children are commonly constructed as 'vulnerable' and 'innocent' in public places, despite the fact that statistically children, like adults, are more at risk in private space from people that they know (Cream, 1993, Kitzinger, 1990) and from domestic hazards and accidents (Roberts, Smith and Lloyd, 1992).

It is interesting to think that children are in greater danger in their own homes than they are in public spaces. Valentine also highlights the differences between reality and "public imagination" of these horrifying events. Valentine further notes:

> The questionnaire survey, for example, revealed that parents consider abduction to be the greatest danger faced by primary school aged children (45%) rather than traffic accidents (34%), drugs (9%), gangs (3%) and accidents in the home (1%). And that parents perceive that youngsters are most likely to be abducted by adult strangers (63%) rather than adults

known to the child (16%) or estranged parents (10%). Both the questionnaire and the interview material provided evidence that parents believe that children's safety has deteriorated since they were young and that as a consequence their children are missing out on social and play opportunities (Blakely, 1994, Wyness, 1994).

Often, perception seems like reality, especially to a parent who cares so deeply about their child, but it is important to remember that sometimes our own thoughts can be detrimental. There are proven benefits to children playing in public spaces and parents should not allow their perceptions or hypothetical thoughts to deter their child's development. Valentine concludes his article by explaining:

> At the heart of these concerns is a belief that children are not competent to negotiate space alone because they are unable to understand what danger they might encounter at the hands of strangers and therefore will not take appropriate avoidance action when confronted by potential abductors. In particular, parents claim that children are unable to grasp concepts of inappropriate touch and sexual violence. Some parents also argued that children do not have the social skills or 'savvy' to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' people and consequently are too naive and not responsible or mature enough to recognize potentially dangerous situations and deal with them appropriately.

While this may be true, parents have a duty, or responsibility, to teach their children about some of these topics, no matter how disturbing these issues can be.

There is also a perception that girls and boys navigate public space differently. Valentine states:

> Previous studies have suggested that girls' use of space is more restricted than boys' (Tindal, 1971; Hart, 1979; Bjorklid, 1985; Matthews, 1987). For example, Hart's (1979) study of children in Invale found that girls had less spatial freedom than boys

because parents were concerned about their vulnerability to social dangers and because girls had more domestic responsibilities than boys.

Note that this study was conducted in 1979, and the dynamics of the domestic responsibilities of boys and girls may have changed.

In another article, "Hart and Tindal," Valentine (1971) also found that parents were quite lax about enforcing boys' spatial ranges, turning a blind eye to any transgressions on the grounds that "boys will be boys." Evidence from this research, however, indicates that, "While parents are equally concerned for their sons' and daughters' safety, daughters (and girls in general) were commonly described as sensible, logical and therefore responsible enough to manage their own safety, while boys were commonly represented as easily led, irrational, slow to mature and consequently as less capable of negotiating their own safety than girls" (Valentine, 1997). It is curious that while parents view their daughters as more apt to stay out of trouble, they give them less freedom.

The reasons young people gave as to their fears of appearing in public were quite interesting. Again, according to Valentine (1997, 65-89),

> Previous research suggests that young people are fearful for their personal safety. A North American survey (Zill, 1983) found that 28 percent of respondents aged 7–11 were afraid to go out because of a fear of being hurt by another person; 50 percent said that they had been harassed by adults or children whilst out and 12 percent had been physically attacked by other kids. A similar study by the UK Home Office in 1992 found that six out of ten 12–15 year old children could recall a recent occasion where they had experienced some kind of assault/harassment — and that one in four of these incidents was assessed as genuinely criminal (Barnardos, 1994).

Of course, we don't know exactly what type of neighborhood in which the children who were surveyed for this study lived, which could change responses. It is also important to note that Valentine said that most children believe they are responsible for their own public safety, rather than their parents.

Valentine (1997, 65-89), makes a very interesting case:

Rather than admit to fears, most boys bragged about the dangers in their own neighborhoods and about petty crimes that they had committed. In particular, children from a local authority housing neighborhood in a metropolitan area stressed their knowledge, or in some cases alleged experiences, of local drugs and gang violence. For the boys there is prestige and status in having experienced danger (Quadrel, et al., 1993). Their greatest concern appears to be 'being bashed' by older teenagers and youths, although most argued they were capable of defending themselves and taunted each other as 'chickens.' In several of the metropolitan housing estates, these fears of other local teenagers/youths were strongly racialized. In common with studies of other neighborhoods (Westwood, 1990; Keith, 1995; Webster, 1995a, 1995b; Watt and Stenson forthcoming), the boys identified distinct white and distinct South Asian 'territories' which, they claimed, are aggressively defended against 'outsiders.'

Valentine (1997, 65-89), demarks differences among social-statuses and activities.

One predominantly British South Asian group acknowledged the cultural pressures which also limited their sisters' freedoms to go out alone; whilst another also demonstrated a greater understanding of the sexual element of stranger-danger than parents and schools are often willing to acknowledge, arguing that girls are vulnerable to rape. Like the boys, the girls argued that they are competent at negotiating their own safety in public space,

albeit in a more modest way. In particular, a common argument advanced was that they were safe because they always went everywhere with their friends. Girls from rural areas and from one of the metropolitan local authority housing estates claimed a particular familiarity with their neighborhood, arguing that they felt safe because there were always houses they could run to if they felt under threat. In contrast middle class urban and suburban girls appeared to have less local place knowledge because they spend more of their leisure time indoors or taking part in activities supervised by adults. This activity pattern ties in with Newson and Newson's (1976) claim (summarized in Ward, 1990) that working class and lower middle class children are expected to spend most of their time outside the home, coming in to relax; whereas middle class children are expected to go outside for exercise and relaxation but then are expected to spend time indoors on school work or more creative activities.

Even though this study is a bit dated, the buddy system has stood the test of time. It is still used in schools and by kids in general. Everyone is safer in numbers.

To conclude the boys vs. girls' debate, Valentine (1997, 65-89), states:

Despite these anxieties and being aware of the stranger-danger message the common impression from all the group discussions was that children of both sexes have a strong sense of invulnerability. The evidence of the psychology literature is that this is a product of a sense of control. In this young people are no different from adults (Perloff, 1983). The boys perceive a sense of individual self-efficacy, whilst the girls gain self-confidence from their friends and from knowing the people and places where they hang out. These networks are also an important source of information. Children are usually treated as if they have less knowledge and less experience than adults, yet young people often have well

developed local knowledge of both incidents and rumors of danger and good understanding of local "place ballets" (Seamon, 1979) because of the amount of time they spend in the neighborhood with local friends. In contrast many parents who spend all day working away from home and have few local social contacts are often quite incompetent or out of touch with what is going on in their own area.

It is interesting that children often voice naive stereotypes but when we take the time to study them, children's perceptions are not so different from adults.

**Public Spaces, Safety, and Behavior**

Bessent (2017, 1) discusses the dynamics of creating public spaces for children:

Putting children in an open space with unstructured activities and limited adult supervision can cause problems, especially when you have the whole school using the space at the same time. This makes lunch and break times a period of increased risk for the safety of children.

It is a known fact that children can get a little rowdy in public spaces, such as pools, playgrounds, parks, etcetera. Before discussing this topic, let's define these 'rowdy' behaviors. Bessent (2017, 1), explains:

When we talk about playground behaviour, we are referring to a range of things that children do which can have health and safety concerns. Whilst bullying is something that easily comes to mind, there are fewer extreme behaviours which can also be risky, such as going into 'out of bounds' areas, playing ball games near windows, climbing on walls, or playing physical games in high traffic areas.

Of course, these characteristics can be applied to many public spaces but to simplify things, we are going to discuss playground behavior. According to Bessent, there are three distinct steps to reducing poor playground behavior. The first step is to discourage bullying, by reducing

boredom. Bessent explains, "According to an article in The Telegraph, a report, commissioned by the Royal Bank of Scotland, claims that playground bullying is directly linked to a lack of stimulation and that one sixth of UK children suffer from break time boredom." The solution to this is to create more activities or programs, to keep children engaged. Bessent continues, "According to the same Telegraph article, the charity Landscapes for Learning says that schools that have transformed their playgrounds have seen a 64% reduction in bullying. They've seen vandalism fall by 28%, too." It is common sense that when kids don't have anything to do, they may find bad things to do.

The second recommendation from Bessent is to improve behavior through managing space. Managing space would mean having designated areas for different activities. If we were talking about a public swimming pool this would look like divided sections for swim lessons, water aerobics, lap swimming, and so on. Having these designated areas would prevent confusion and frustration.

The last recommendation from Bessent is to stop rule breaking through providing essential facilities. What Bessent (2017, 1) means by this is as he states:

> Children are great improvisers. If you don't provide them with a ball, they'll use a plastic bottle or a tin can; if you don't give them somewhere to sit, they'll use a wall, a windowsill, or some steps. With the latter, you'll find many schools where there are no seating facilities at all in the playground and yet there are rules forbidding children from sitting on walls, windowsills and steps for health and safety reasons.

To apply this to a public swimming pool, adequate seating, restrooms, canopies, lane lines, etcetera should be provided. According to Bessent (2017, 1), following these three steps yields beneficial results.

A well-equipped school playground can have a big impact on behaviour and safety. Not only does it remove one of the main causes of bullying, but it also helps manage minor behaviour issues that can lead to the risk of accident and injury. When installed, children naturally begin to use the equipment in ways which make playgrounds safer, and which reduces the burden on those staff who are on duty.

Of course, for a pool, this could have a positive impact on the lifeguards so that they could simply focus on rescuing children instead of policing behavior.

**Public Spaces and Supervision**

Supervision is essential in public spaces. It can make or break the experience of oneself and others around. Lauren A. Petrass and Jennifer D. Blitvich (2012, 4) conducted a study at a public swimming pool that, "examined the level of caregiver supervision when children were engaged in active play at public pools".

A six-hour unobtrusive observation period was conducted at six different indoor aquatic venues with caregivers accompanying children aged < 10 years eligible to be monitored. Child behavior, corresponding caregiver supervision, and the willingness of parents to intervene when children exhibited unsafe behaviors all were considered. Environmental factors and pool conditions were also recorded. Chi-square tests illustrated that increased supervision was associated with decreased incidents and lower risk behaviors. Supervision was significantly affected by child and caregiver age, number of children for whom caregivers were responsible, and child swimming ability (Petrass, Blitvich, 2012, 4).

These factors all contribute to the either positive or negative experience one has when going to a public space, particularly a public swimming pool.

Supervision at public swimming pools is one of the most important public spaces because it can become a life-or-death scenario in a split second. For example, as Petrass and Blitvich (2014) note, "Drowning represents the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for Australian children (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AIHW, 2009) and ranks among the top three leading causes of child death worldwide (Taneja, Van Beeck, & Brenner, 2008)."

**Public Spaces and COVID-19**

It has been proven that public outdoor spaces have positive links to physical activity and improved mental health. As Kleinschroth (2020, 318) states:

> Recent acceleration of urban growth rates has put greenspaces under pressure in cities worldwide, despite the well-known health benefits they provide for city dwellers. We contend that the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the vital importance of urban greenspaces as an essential quality-of-life element in sustainable cities.

Balancing restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic was an incredibly tough task for our politicians, but ultimately shutdowns were beneficial in preventing people from contracting illness, but less beneficial for physical or mental health.

> Being outside in fresh air is among the most important leisure activities for improving human well-being and is also among the most popular. In a study across five European cities, Fischer et al. (2018) found that 94% of respondents were active users of parks. We hypothesized that during the COVID-19 lockdowns, short-distance outdoor activities were likely to be even more popular than before the pandemic because of the perceived constraints of the various stay-at-home orders and lockdowns (Kleinschroth, 2020, 318).

The hypothesis Kleinschroth made is curious. I myself noticed more people out walking. As Kleinschroth (2020, 318) further notes, "By providing urban residents areas to exercise and

socialize regularly, greenspaces promote physical and psychological well-being, which in turn improves resistance to, as well as the ability to cope with, new pathogens."

The COVID-19 Pandemic has called for many shutdowns, including temporary closure of public spaces, including pools, parks, playgrounds, and more. Shutting down these public spaces has impacted people in a number of ways. According to research, COVID-19 Pandemic has caused sleep disturbances, sedentary behavior, and decreased opportunities for children to partake in physical activity. These changes have long term effects on children including detrimental changes to their cardiometabolic and psychological health (Bates, 2020, 138).

Because these public spaces have closed, the responsibility falls onto parents to make sure their children are getting the recommended amount of exercise and sleep. Additional complications include school and school related events (Bates, 2020, 138):

> Social restrictions including remote learning and 'shelter-at-home' recommendations have made it difficult for children and adolescents to engage in physical education, sports, or other forms of school-related or community-based organized physical activity. Additionally, parental limitations due to working from home or loss of childcare may create challenges in finding ways to keep their children physically active. A survey of 1,472 Canadian children/adolescents found that only 3.6% of kids (5–11 years) and only 2.6% of adolescents (12–17 years) were meeting the recommended guideline of achieving 60 min of moderate-vigorous physical activity/day during the COVID-19 pandemic [9 Moore, S. et al., 2020, https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-020-00987-8]], down from the reported 12.7% meeting the guidelines reported in 2019 [21 Rhodes, R.E. et al., 2019, 19]]. Similarly, a survey of 97 South Korean parents found that 94% reported a decrease in their child's engagement in sports or play during the COVID-19 pandemic

[**22** Guan, H. et al., 2020, 4]]. Furthermore, a study of physical activity levels before (October 2019–March 2020) and after (April 2020) the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic reported Croatian adolescents (mean age 16.5 ± 2.1 years) were not meeting physical activity guidelines due to COVID-19 restrictions, and those living in urban environments experienced a greater decrease in physical activity levels than rural environments [**8** Zenic, N. et al., 2020, 10].

The absence of school and school related physical activity is detrimental physically of course, but also mentally. As Poletti (2020, 20) states, "In 2020 school closures caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic suddenly built a wall of social isolation for children and adolescents, representing a serious risk for their mental health and academic skills (Sohrabi et al. 2020).

Xiang (2020, 531) also found evidence of Covid-enhanced mental health issues in children.

It is well-known that reduced PA and prolonged SB are linked to both negative physical and mental health outcomes, such as loss of muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness, weight gain, psychosocial problems, and even poor academic achievements. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the negative impact may extend to adulthood. Nonetheless, >70% of 1.6 million adolescents failed to achieve sufficient PA globally in 2016 (Xiang, 2020, 531).

PA refers to physical activity and SB refers to sedentary behavior.

Xiang (2020, 531) continues:

We analyzed data from 2426 children and adolescents (boys, 51.2%; girls, 48.8%) with valid data on PA and SB. Overall, the median time spent in PA decreased drastically, from 540 min/week (before the pandemic) to 105 min/week (during the pandemic), yielding 435 min reduction on average. Of note, during the pandemic, prevalence of physically

inactive students extensively increased from 21.3% to 65.6%. Screen time considerably increased during the pandemic in total (+1730 min [or approximately 30 h] per week on average). Screen time during leisure was also prolonged, indicating that nearly a quarter of students engaged in long screen time for leisure."

It is no surprise that screen time increased. Children are unable to hang out with friends, go to school, play sports, etc., so they spend more time on their electronic devices communicating with friends.

A decrease in use of public space inherently leads to an increase in the use of private space. As Jasinski (2020, *https://doi.org/10.37705/TechTrans/e2020020*. ) notes:

At this point, it must be noted that the pandemic has visibly increased the value of private space, which provides both invaluable safety from the epidemic and the mental comfort which is indispensable during isolation. When city squares and streets become empty and people crowd in their homes, they find shelter in their own, private gardens, vast roof terraces or vacation cabins (not to mention private islands), which shield them from others, who constitute potential sources of infection.

It is much easier and safer to stay home and simply use electronic devices to stay in contact with friends and family than to potentially expose yourself by seeing them in person.

Jansinski, (2020, *https://doi.org/10.37705/TechTrans/e2020020*. ) continues:

The fear of becoming infected not only invokes anxiety over contact with strangers and the desire to flee the city but it also changes the way people travel: they walk rather than take a tram, ride a bike instead of going by bus, choose a private car over a train… During a pandemic, the erosion of public space is accompanied by the privatisation of travel, where the car is no longer just a vehicle but also a fairly safe shelter.

The increase in prices for homes and vehicles are likely related to effects of the pandemic (Lea, 2022).

**COVID-19 and Parental Stress**

The pandemic has heightened inequities between people and has especially impacted children. COVID-19 has also had a major impact on parents. Parents have suddenly taken on additional responsibilities including teaching and childcare. These additional roles have put strain on parents and even marriages. Patrick (2020, 146) explains:

The emergence of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had a sudden and profound effect on communities nationwide. As cases and deaths due to the novel virus increased, protective measures such as physical distancing were enacted to mitigate the virus' spread,[1] (Johns Hopkins University. Maps & trends: cumulative cases. Available at: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/cumulative-cases. Accessed June 24, 2020) resulting in abrupt closures of schools, childcare, community programs, and workplaces. These changes have resulted in social isolation, psychological distress among adults,[2] (McGinty EE., et al., 2018, 2020, 93-94) and substantial economic distress,[3] (Kirzinger A., 2020, 1) with the highest level of unemployment since the Great Depression." (Patrick, 2020, 146) It is no wonder that children are having a more difficult time in schools, socially, and behaviorally.

In addition, "The United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization estimates that 1.38 billion children are out of school or child care and do not have access to group and outdoor activities, team sports, or playgrounds as a result of the pandemic (cited in Cluver et al. 2020)" (Chung, 2020, 1-12).

Based on Deater-Deckard (1998, 314–332), parental stress is defined as a psychological reaction when parents experience parental demands that are inconsistent with expectations

(expectations of self or from others) or when parents do not have the resources to meet these demands (as cited in Holly et al. 2019). Parental stress is conceptually distinct from other forms of stress that a parent might experience (e.g., marital or work stress), although they are often associated (Chung 2020; Holly et al. 2019). It is no wonder that parental stress has increased over the past two years. "Since March 2020, 27% of parents reported worsening mental health for themselves, and 14% reported worsening behavioral health for their children." They elaborated by saying, "Worsening mental health for parents occurred alongside worsening behavioral health for children in nearly 1 in 10 families, among whom 48% reported loss of regular childcare, 16% reported change in insurance status, and 11% reported worsening food security." This goes back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs that says that unless our basic needs are met, we cannot go on to live healthy lives. (Patrick, 2020, 146) also shared, "In addition, families with children disproportionately live in poverty,[5] (Semega J., 2019, 1) potentially increasing the risk of economic distress through acute job loss and related difficulties sustaining basic needs, such as food security and reliable child care. Each of these stressors, in turn, may increase psychological strain on families. Government agencies[6] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Keep children healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak. 2020. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children.html. Accessed June 19, 2020) and professional organizations[7] (American Academy of Pediatrics. *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry: Press Release*. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2020) have expressed concern that children, in particular, may be at increased risk for psychological disturbances." It will be interesting to see overtime, how the pandemic affected children in the long run.

Another factor that increased parental stress included the closure of schools and work. As (Chung, 2020, 1-12) states,

> Schools and workplaces were closed and parents had to balance telecommuting with parenting responsibilities. Coupled with the high degree of economic uncertainty and reduced social support, these circumstances are hypothesized to increase parenting stress. …Many parents are attempting to work remotely from home while caring for children. Parents with school-going children also face new demands of home-based schooling. These demands are even greater for parents who must additionally care for older adults or children with chronic behavioral problems, special needs, or disabilities.

Caring for a special needs person can be particularly challenging in a global pandemic. Parents who previously depended on families, churches, schools, and neighbors for caregiving support, financial help, and social interactions found themselves cut off from these support systems (Weems et al. 2020). In addition to reducing families' access to external supports, this social isolation can have mental health consequences.

A recent review of studies on quarantine have found that loneliness, depression, and other psychological health impacts are among the most common outcomes of quarantining and other physical distancing measures (Brooks et al. 2020; Chung, 2020). Chung (2020, 1-12) notes that other periods of trauma have similarly increased the stress of parenting:

> Previous studies have shown that large-scale events such as economic recessions, wars, and natural disasters can be detrimental to parenting. For instance, during the Great Recession of 2008, a large decline in consumer confidence was associated with increased levels of harsh parenting and spanking among parents in the United States (Brooks-Gunn et al. 2013). In their meta-analysis of studies looking at the effects of war exposure on

parenting, Eltanamly et al. ([2019](#)) found that war-exposed parents showed less warmth and more harshness toward their children.

Studies of Chung (2020, 1-12) found that, "Parents who were more impacted by COVID-19 experienced more parenting stress ($b = .22, p < .001$) than those who felt they were less impacted by COVID-19, and parents who experienced more parenting stress indicated that they had used more harsh parenting ($b = 2.63, p < .001$) and felt less close with their children ($b = -1.34, p < .001$) in the past weeks." When parents are more worried about meeting basic needs, they don't have the time or mental capacity to parent as well as if they had their basic needs met.

As parental stress increases, researchers have warned about the increased risk of family violence and child abuse during this period when families remain at home with reduced community contact and external social support (Brown et al. [2020](#); Campbell [2020](#)). Child protection services (CPS) across countries impacted by COVID-19 are reporting an increase in cases and referrals of child abuse (Agrawal [2020](#); Channel News Asia [CNA], [2020a](#); Chung, 2020). This is so incredibly sad and may have enduring effects. "Deater-Deckard ([1998](#))'s review of existing studies found that parents with higher levels of parental stress were more likely to be authoritarian, harsh, and negative in their parenting and less responsive and close with their children. Newer studies conducted in the United States found that higher parental stress was associated with fathers and mothers' higher use of corporal punishment (Jackson and Choi [2018](#)) and more negative mother-child interactions." (Crnic et al. [2005](#)) (Chung, 2020, 1-12) It is possible that parents who use harsh punishments will not have as healthy a relationship with their children; that would cause immense tension in a household. As defined by Chang (2003, 598), harsh parenting includes:

> …Coercive, aggressive, and emotionally charged disciplinary practices such as caning, spanking, yelling, or shouting at children. Given its high coerciveness and negative

emotionality, harsh parenting has been found by research to have a direct and negative effect on children's subsequent developmental outcomes, including internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Gershoff et al. 2018; Pinquart 2017).

**COVID-19 and Social Inequity**

Covid-19 is anything but fair. Because of social and racial inequities, different communities have been impacted in varying ways. It is no surprise that COVID-19 exacerbates inequities. As Kantamneni, 2020, 119 states:

> For individuals from vulnerable or marginalized backgrounds, educational systems, labor markets, and workplace environments often perpetuate systems of oppression, power, and privilege, resulting in them experiencing marginalization and discrimination within these systems and obtaining poorer educational and vocational outcomes (Flores et al., 2019). Times of crisis often reinforce and exacerbate disparities because resources are limited, and people are fearful. This pattern is occurring with COVID-19, which has triggered increasing unemployment and major economic losses.

COVID-19 has impacted everyone, in different ways, but it has placed extra stress and hardship upon populations that are already marginalized. Fortuna (2020, 443) notes:

> COVID-19 has had disproportionate contagion and fatality in Black, Latino, and Native American communities and among the poor in the United States. Toxic stress resulting from racial and social inequities have been magnified during the pandemic, with implications for poor physical and mental health and socioeconomic outcomes. It is imperative that our country focus and invest in addressing health inequities and work across sectors to build self-efficacy and long-term capacity within communities and systems of

care serving the most disenfranchised, now and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic.

It is important that we recognize these disparities and do everything we can to lessen the gaps among different segments of people.

## COVID-19 and Online Learning

Online learning has also had detrimental effects on the mental health of our children. Bates (2020, 138) states:

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has infected millions worldwide [1,2] (Sohrabi, C et al., 2020, 76) 2. COVID-19 Map-Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. Available online: https://mashupmd.com/ covid-19-map-johns-hopkins-coronavirus-resource-center-7/ (accessed on 20 July 2020).] and impacted many more. By the end of April 2020, an estimated 1.5 billion children (age 5–12 years old) and adolescents (age 13–17 years old) transitioned to remote learning following school closures [3, [Couzin-Frankel, J. et al., 2020, 369]]. The school closures, coupled with additional socio-behavioral adaptations (e.g., social distancing, quarantining, etc.), are impacting the lifestyle activities of children and adolescents across the 24-h day.

It will be interesting to see how the behavior of these children is different from other children who did not grow up during the pandemic.

## CASE STUDY: KIK POOL

This study is based on a personal case study of the Nicholas Kik Pool, located at 1018 Walter Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan. I was employed at Kik Pool from June 2018 until August of 2021. Over this time, I was a lifeguard and pool manager.

The Kik Pool opened in 1971. According to Kate Diamond (2018, 1) on the KzooConnect blog, "The pool was named on behalf of Nicholas Kik, the former director of the department who longed to facilitate a community center that would allow residents to meet new people, learn to swim, and help people to cool off in the summer." Diamond also mentions that the pool offers water aerobics classes, lessons, and is available to be rented for parties. She goes on to say, "Those looking for a workout can take advantage of the fifty-meter pool, the more daring can take a plunge into the diving well, and the shallow end is perfect for families and those looking to cool down during the summer months. There is even a concession booth and a place to enjoy snacks on deck as well." The opportunities don't end there, though. The Kik Pool, "Brings about 25 jobs for those looking to learn life skills in aquatic management and lifeguarding…", each summer, says Diamond.

Because of the age of the pool, Kik Pool requires constant upkeep and repairs. Recreation Manager Ashton Anthony, of the Kalamazoo Department of Parks and Recreation shared, "With the cost of chemicals, staff, and repairs the pool is heavily subsidized but we are fortunate to have the backing of City Administration and Staff to help keep it going each year." Two years ago, the pool underwent a major renovation including new paint and some new equipment.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This study centers around Kik Pool during the summer of 2021. To explore the dynamics of Kik Pool I used three research methods. The first was a survey I conducted of the lifeguards who worked at Kik Pool during this summer. The survey was conducted in two waves. The first wave was conducted in person prior to the official opening of the pool. The second wave was conducted electronically after the close of the pool at the end of the summer. The open-ended questions queried employees about their impressions of the benefits of working for Kik Pool, as well as

collected basic demographic information (See Appendices 1 and 2). The first wave of questionnaires received 16 responses, and the second wave received 11 responses.

The second research method was video-taped interviews with two employees of the City of Kalamazoo who had in depth knowledge related to the benefits and challenges of the operation of Kik Pool. The first interview was with Ashton Anthony, who is the City of Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Director. The second interview was with Scott VanderEnde, who is Executive Lieutenant for the Operations Division of Public Safety of Kalamazoo. The interviews were transcribed (see Appendices 3 and 4). Within the context of the literature review, the surveys and interviews were analyzed, with common themes identified.

The third method was participant observation, a research methodology in which the researcher is immersed in the daily life of a community. In my role as manager of Kik Pool, I was present at the pool daily, observing the behavior of my fellow employees and the guests. This experience provided me with comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the participants and activities of Kik Pool during the summer of 2021.

**FINDINGS**

Through analysis of the literature, interviews, and survey findings, I was able to uncover three common themes. The first common theme I was able to conclude was that structure is necessary in a child's life. Structure provides a routine and children thrive on routines; Routine improves children's behavior. Regarding the implementation of more rules, Executive Lieutenant Scott VanderEnde said, "I do (think it helped). In our follow up conversations with staff at the pool, they noted that it did help, and I think some of the issues went away."

The second common theme I identified is that public spaces have a positive impact on mental and physical health when paired with structure and rules. Executive Lieutenant Scott VanderEnde

said, "I do see value in having a pool available to everybody in the neighborhood." I am glad to know that members of the police force also see this value, and that hopefully they can positively influence city leaders if asked for their opinion of public spaces.

The final theme that I found was that the COVID-19 Pandemic was detrimental to mental and physical health to not only children, but parents as well. When I asked my former boss at the Kik Pool his opinion if COVID-19 impacted the children's behavior this past summer, his response was, "I just think that a lot of kids, especially being in Kalamazoo, they were fully virtual and not getting it. The reasons behind that are my beliefs on that but like being fully virtual for a year, entire school year and then coming out of winter and then spring into summer like, these kids just wanted to go outside and do something and do something with their friends. And a lot of times just ended up causing trouble. So, I 100% believe that was a contributing factor."

My own experience at the City of Kalamazoo's Kik Pool confirms these themes. During my first two years at the pool, in 2018 and 2019, guest behavior was acceptable. It wasn't perfect but was not bordering on dangerous. The pool was closed during the summer of 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. When the pool re-opened in the summer of 2021, guest behavior was atrocious. We conjecture that the reason behind this degraded behavior is that children had not been in schools, which is where they are provided structure; therefore, children had to relearn how to behave properly in public. Once Kik Pool implemented stricter rules, particularly prohibiting children under 18 without an adult guardian from using the pool, the behavior improved. It can also be noted that some of the children making unacceptable behavioral decisions no longer came to the pool. So, it could be argued that the behavior didn't change; it just changed the characteristics of the clientele. Many lifeguards were upset that some of the children could no longer come to the pool, simply because they did not have a guardian willing to accompany them. This was an

extremely hard predicament for myself as the manager because I, of course, felt for the children who were now unable to use the pool simply because they didn't have someone above 18 to come to the pool with them. The pool may be a safer place for these children to spend their days. However, as a manager, I had the responsibility to implement rules that provided the greatest benefit for the most people.

## DISCUSSION

This study should interest policy makers and City of Kalamazoo employees. It shows the value that public spaces have on their community, particularly children, and it demonstrates the importance of the Kik Pool to the City of Kalamazoo. This study should encourage policy makers and City of Kalamazoo employees to create more public spaces.

The literature review was extremely interesting and fun to conduct. I uncovered relevant information regarding the value of public spaces, although, as stated in the introduction, there is a deficit of research that relates specifically to public swimming pools. The interviews with Ashton Anthony and Executive Lieutenant Scott VanderEnde nicely complimented my findings. The literature review, questionnaires, and interviews were mutually reinforcing, and largely led to similar findings. The main difference between the literature review and the questionnaires and interviews was that while the literature emphasized the importance of structure for children, the personal interviews noted that a major difference in the change of behavior at Kik Pool might have been more closely related to the prohibition of children without adult guardians from using the pool. To what extent actions prohibiting pool use changed participant behavior is difficult to determine.

## LIMITATIONS

Every research project has limitations, and this one is no exception. One limitation was a lack of research on public swimming pools. Instead, I had to rely on more general knowledge related to the use of public spaces. A second limitation was that while the first wave of the lifeguard survey was conducted in person, the second wave was conducted electronically. The first survey was administrated during the lifeguarding three-day training from June 4 through June 6, 2021, during which I taught the lifeguards techniques related to saves, CPR, and first-aid. At the end of the training weekend, I conducted the final exam. After the lifeguards finished their exams, they had to wait for the others to finish. While they were waiting, I handed out questionnaires. Because they had nothing else to do, most of them filled out my questionnaire. I received 16 responses out of 20 lifeguards. Eighty percent is a fairly high response rate. At the end of the summer, I conducted my second survey electronically, because I was studying abroad in Italy. The second questionnaire received 11 responses (55%). I believe the decline in responses was due to the fact that I was not physically present. The differences in response rates between the first and second wave of surveying of lifeguards may have led to sampling bias, in which the respondents who complete surveys are different in unknown ways from those who complete surveys.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings related to this case study led to several recommendations related to managing public spaces. First, I recommend rules being enforced in all public spaces; the structure will improve behavior. Public space managers should not wait to enforce rules until they need them, as we did at the Kik Pool. Perhaps if we had enforced the rule that any child under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult from the beginning of my time working there, children would have caught on to the rules and the behavioral challenges we faced at the beginning of summer may have been

prevented. Of course, we will never know that for certain; however, it is my belief that it may have helped. I recommend using a proactive approach to stop problems before they begin.

My second recommendation is for the City of Kalamazoo, specifically: I recommend more public spaces be added to the City of Kalamazoo. This paper demonstrates how important public spaces are to the city; therefore, the Kalamazoo should provide more of them. Not only should they provide the spaces, but they will also need to provide the means to manage the spaces effectively. Managing the spaces properly includes providing certain areas where particular activities can occur. This might include designated areas for tennis courts, basketball courts, playground equipment, benches, etc. As this paper discussed, if space is not managed properly, children will find their own ways to manage it, which might not lead to the best outcome.

My final recommendation relates to future research on public spaces. It was challenging to find research specifically related to the importance of public swimming pools. I recommend more studies be conducted to analyze the value of public pools to cities and families. Public swimming pools provide a unique area of recreation for children and families; gaining further information on their value and best practices for management is important.

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## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Why did you take this job?

What experience do you have lifeguarding?

Is it your first year working at the Kik Pool? If not, how many years have you worked here?

What are the benefits of working here?

 What are the cons of working here?

What are the top three benefits to the guests at the Kik Pool?

What is your age?

What is your race?

What is your gender?

## APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE 2

What was your favorite part of the summer?

Tell me about a positive interaction with a guest.

Tell me about a negative interaction with a guest.

How did guest behavior change with the enforcement of new rules, security, alarms, etc.?

Do you believe the enforcement of new rules, security, alarms, etc. improved guest behavior?

Do you feel like you had a positive impact on the guests lives? If so, how?

Will you return as a guard/manager next year? Why or why not?

**APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT, ASHTON ANTHONY**

Q: All right. Could you state your name and position please?

A: Yep, Ashton Anthony, the recreation manager for the City of Kalamazoo.

Q: Perfect. And how long have you worked for Parks and Recreation?

A: Oh, just over seven years. Okay. Yep.

Q: And would you categorize this summer as a normal summer?

A: No, I, I would say that this summer was not normal. We had quite a few more guests ready to get out of the out of inside, it seemed like a lot of cooped up because of COVID. Which led to a lot more behavioral issues and things like that. We'll get into that more.

Q: Sure. So can you describe some of this behavior?

A: Yeah. So we had a lot of disrespect and just not respecting authority, I guess. So our staff down there, as you know, I mean, we have a couple managers and then pool staff, lifeguards and guest services. And I witnessed firsthand. And then obviously, the staff witnessed much more than I did just blatant disrespect, calling names sexually harassing physical altercations.

I know there was some issues with cars and breaking into them and destructive property of plumbing and the list goes on. So yeah, it was not normal. And not to make it all negative. I mean, we had a rough season when it comes to that. But I think that it was a great thing that we were able to open and absolutely provide back to the community. But we had some challenges, and I think we'll get stronger moving forward because of those honestly.

Q: I agree. Okay, so how did guess behavior compare this year to previous years?

A: So I think there's always gonna be horseplay, it's a pool, summer, it's outside, people are gonna be running around, you're gonna have to, you know, enforce the rules a little bit. But this year, just seemed like, there was just a complete disrespect for authority. And a lot of times, and I

don't want the entire community and people that come to the pool to go down for a few bad apples. But I mean, you know, everybody wasn't not paying attention, the rules are or thumb rules, but it definitely was a good handful of kids, they would come in older kids, teenagers even, just don't listen. And I mean, I was down there a handful of times, and even said something to some kids a couple of times myself, which I, I don't think I've ever had to do. And this year, I came to that and we had to bring in extra help for that. So it was just constant constant every single day, something but just a four year old to get through it with the behavioral issues and COVID. And just everything combined, his struggle that makes makes it challenging.

Q: So what rules were implemented?

A: We got to a point where we had to make it more with the parents who have to bring their children and either sign them in depending on their age. We also brought in some security staff and just general park staff to help enforce rules. We had some the capacity limits lowered from the get go and all throughout the entire summer, we'll just just be with the behavioral issues and the COVID. We just couldn't bring them up to full capacity. I know we added security doors, because we were having break ins and and that happens on a yearly basis seems like kids will always break into those stores that we're talking about here. But this year more. So most. So yeah, just adding on to the rules, we already had to try and tightening up a little bit. We don't want it to be like a juvenile home feeling. We want it to be fun. But we also want it to be safe. And safety, as you know, is number one priority.

Q: So did the guest behavior change with the implementation of these rules?

A: I think it helped that they knew we're serious. They knew we were going to be cracking down and making sure again, we're trying to keep a safe environment. It helps with not allowing entry to some of those gaps that were causing some of the issue. And then yeah, I mean with the

added. So the security, having that presence alone will help quite often, a lot of times they wouldn't have to do anything other than just be there. And then also with the police presence that we failed. I mentioned that earlier. We worked with the police quite a bit and they were down there on rotation. And just having them on site along with the security. I think that helps combat a lot of issues before they even become issues.

Q: Absolutely. So do you think COVID played a role in this behavior?

A: My personal opinion would be yes, I just think that a lot of kids especially being in Kalamazoo, they were fully virtual and not getting it. The reasons behind that are my beliefs on that but like being fully virtual for a year, entire school year and then coming out of winter and then spring into summer like, these kids just wanted to go outside and do something and do something with their friends. And a lot of times just ended up causing trouble. So I 100% believe that was a contributing factor, not the only one but…

Q: Is there anything else you want to share about the Kik cool this summer?

A: Um, I, I guess I don't want to talk all negative because I think it was a it was a struggle of the year. But I think we had great staff that were that fought through and just constantly, it was issues or something pop up every day, but they continue to come to work, which I'm so appreciative of. And I just love that we were able to open the doors because although we had those challenges, we had a ton of kids and families come to that pool and enjoy the pool, we had a lot of compliments. I was gonna say complaints, but a lot of compliments actually. And we saw some some great numbers at the pool and aqua fitness is just growing exponentially. We had a lot of group rentals because pool space is really down. So we had to keep cool books like open close, as you know.

And then just open swim and we had a lot of opportunities for our camps to come and there's just a great year. So a lot of troubles but a lot of great things. And like I said with those troubles, I think we're going to be able to grow from them, and it'll just be great. Moving forward.

Q: Yes, for sure. Well, thank you so much for your time.

A: Thank you.

## APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT, EXECUTIVE LIEUTENANT VANDERENDE

Q: Alright state your name and position please.

A: Scott VanderEnde and I'm the Executive Lieutenant for Operations Division. So I oversee the patrol officers and protect the city council.

Q: And are you familiar with the Kik Pool? I am Yes. Okay. And how often were you called to the Kik Pool this past summer?

A: So I got some data from our analyst. We went there to the Kik pool from the time the pool is open to time it was closed. So just through that type of thing was June 9 through August 15. Yeah. So during that time period, we went there a total of 38 times. It wasn't always for crime. A lot of them were our direct patrols or foot patrols that we did out there. And we did that in response to the staffs request to have officers present there because of issues that they're having during the summer.

Q: Absolutely. And what type of situations did you encounter when called to the pool?

A: So we went there, I think for a variety of issues. Mostly they were juvenile related. Juvenile issues such as harassment, disrespectful towards the staff, towards other people that are in the pool, I think there's maybe some fighting going on destruction of property. Kids were getting into the pool through like the emergency exits.

Q: Sure. And how did this behavior impact your department directly?

A: So we did an analysis to see how many times we went out there like so we went out there 33 times for direct patrols. We spent about 16 hours of our officers time was spent in those situations at Kik Pool. I don't think that's terribly too much. But again, that's 16 hours of officers

not being on regular patrol, you either respond to calls for service, that type of thing, because they're at the Kik Pool.

Q: So do you think this behavior would be different if the pool was in a different location?

A: No. I thought about that. I think the location is a good location. Because it's easily accessible, right? Yes, there are some issues with some of the juveniles that were there this summer. But when we look at the bigger scope of it, you want a lot of juveniles to be able to go to the pool, right? So I think if you if you take it away, make it harder for people to have access to either riding their bikes or walking there. But I don't think that's the right situation. So I'm, I'm okay with it. Especially it's right next door to our headquarters. So it's not very hard for our officers to get there. It's centrally located in the city. So I think a lot of different neighborhoods can also access it. So overall, I'm pleased with the location of it.

Q: Okay. So do you think different hours or different activities might have made a difference in the behavior?

A: What are the hours, like 2pm - 7pm? Was that open swim? Okay, so I think those are, it was a good hot afternoon, you want people to be in the pool. You know, another issue that KPS was talking to a lot is on fire hydrants, okay? Because it gets so hot in the afternoons they open the fire hydrants, the kids can play around in the streets, which is dangerous, and it takes away fire service. So I think those hours in the hot afternoon, and again, you want to have it this pool in an area where the kids can easily get to the pool. So they're not out playing in the street on the on the fire hydrants, they have access to the actual to the pool and utilize the pool.

Q: Okay. So do you think the implementation of additional rules that we had throughout the summer helped this behavior

A: I do. In our follow up conversations with staff at the pool, they noted that it did help and I think some of the issues went away. Rules aren't a bad thing. You need to have some, some guidelines, we want everybody to access the pool, enjoy the pool, but you got to do it in a safe manner in a way that you know, you have a few people that are causing issues. But you don't want to take away from everybody else being able to go to the pool and join the pool, right? So that no one can have a pool if there's a few people in there. So you need to have those those rules and those guidelines set in place. And I don't think they were, you know, too tough or out of line. The restrictions that they put in place, I think they're actually appropriate, especially we think talking about one of the guidelines was to have responsible adult or a parent check in the child or sign into the child, you know, in a pool situation, you know, That is a accidents can happen, something and you won't be able to get a hold of a garden, especially the garden is not going to be there in the pool with the kids at the time. So I think that's completely appropriate to have to have that. And it also, you know, puts a little a responsibility on that garden, know that I'm checking this child and I'm responsible for this child was here. And it gives the staff an avenue to reach out to somebody say, Hey, your kid was misbehaving today. You know, we gave him a warning, maybe they can't come back tomorrow or something. However, that works.

Q: Yeah, for sure. And in your opinion, did COVID impact the behavior.

A: So I think COVID has impacted the behavior of a lot of juveniles in the city of Kalamazoo. Okay. And that's just my personal opinion, we have a lot of juvenile crime going on in the state of Kalamazoo, outside of just kick pool, more than usual, more than usual, more violent crime, more theft, that type of stuff. So I think it's just kind of keep pools like little subset of all the juvenile crime that we have going on in the city. And I do think that I think COVID kind of set us back a little bit with that. And, you know, part of it when we had kids that were not in school for an entire

year, they didn't have that structure, the rules, so forth. And now, you know, they kind of went their own ways for a year. And now society's coming back together. It's almost like people forgot how to interact with each other. You know, and the fact that that there are rules, and there are consequences for we do. So it's kind of like a reset button. And we need to reestablish those rules and those guidelines and so forth.

Q: So in your opinion, what is the value of these public spaces?

A. So I like it a lot. Growing up myself, I used to go to a public a pool, from Grand Rapids. So we went to Richmond pool all summer with my family. And it was it was nice, I was able to ride my bike there. So I do see value in having a pool available to everybody the neighborhood. I used them when I was growing up in Grand Rapids. I see it here. I like it. I think you know, if there's opportunity to expand, I know Lachrome Park is having a splash pad put in. So you know, help get that neighborhood needs to have the ability to cool off during the summer,

for sure.

Q: Alright, and is there anything else you'd like to share?

A: No, I don't think so. I appreciate you coming and talking to us about it. I think I think April is something that needs to have. And we seem to do it in a manner that is protecting the employees and the other systems that are there. Absolutely.

Q: Well, thank you so much for your time.

A: Thank you.