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The social, psychological, and developmental aspects of leisure: Implications for college student development educators

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The social, psychological, and developmental aspects of leisure: Implications for college student development educators

Abstract

Rapid changes of our society have produced a need for leisure education/counseling. Although some colleges attempt to meet this need, most do so through extra-curricular activities programs. Thus, in reality, students receive little or no preparation for leisure. This investigation is an attempt to identify, through a review of the literature, some of the social, psychological, and developmental aspects of leisure. Also identified are student needs regarding leisure education and service programs in addition to career development programs. The study is limited to the relative few empirical research studies on leisure education and explicates literature on associated 11 leisure 11 terms (Appendix A).

THE SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS OF LEISURE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT EDUCATORS

A Research Paper
Presented to
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and Counseling
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In Partial Fulfillment
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by
Michele Dickey-Kotz

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid changes of our society have produced a need for leisure education/counseling. Although some colleges attempt to meet this need, most do so through extra-curricular activities programs. Thus, in reality, students receive little or no preparation for leisure.

This investigation is an attempt to identify, through a review of the literature, some of the social, psychological, and developmental aspects of leisure. Also identified are student needs regarding leisure education and service programs in addition to career development programs. The study is limited to the relative few empirical research studies on leisure education and explicates literature on associated "leisure" terms (Appendix A).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Evident and obvious changes in the United States suggest that the topic of leisure education deserves attention. Research studies have shown that those with an advanced education tend to engage more widely and intensely in recreation and leisure activities (Kraus, 1978; Neulinger, 1975; Murphy, 1981). Kraus (1978) sights one of the effects of higher education as exposing the student to a variety of ideas and experiences, inevitably broadening his leisure interests, thus promoting habits of varied extracurricular

participation. Murphy (1981) contends that educated persons have a greater potential for leisure because they are better equipped to do what they want to do, both on the job and in their free time.

The American College Testing Service self study (1977) compared the value of four factors in predicting participation in a variety of community activities two years after college: (1) major achievement in high school extracurricular activities; (2) high grades in high school; (3) high grades in college; and (4) high scores on the ACT. Three of the four factors were found to have no predictive value. The only factor which could be used to predict success later in life was achievement in "extracurricular" activities (Jennings & Nathan, 1977).

In the same year, the College Entrance Examination was examined for its accuracy in predicting how successful a person might be at a chosen career upon graduation from college. Results showed that "the SATs offered virtually no clue to the capacity for significant intellectual or creative contributions in mature life" (p. 589). There was virtually no correlation between high SAT scores and success in life. It was found that the best predictor of creativity in mature life was a person's performance during youth, in independent, self-sustained ventures. Those students who had many hobbies,

interests, jobs, and were active in extracurricular activities, were most likely to be successful later in life (Jennings & Nathan, 1977). Such studies illustrate the potential need for college and university administrators to re-examine and evaluate their leisure education/counseling offerings.

Matriculated students must cope in a world of constant change -- change which impacts the relationship of work and leisure in their lives (McDaniels, 1984). There is a changing allocation of time and work. As an economic function, work is no longer the single largest meaning in life (Gysbers, 1984; Murphy, 1981; Super, 1984, 1981). Studies show that twenty percent of workers are dissatisfied with their work; therefore, of 100 million workers, approximately 20 million are unhappy with their jobs -- a large enough number to merit considerable attention in attempting to find suitable life/leisure satisfaction. Further with an unemployment rate near 10 percent, another 10 million do not have any job with which to be satisfied or dissatisfied. So a combination of unemployed and unhappy workers may reach 30-35 million (Kallbeberg & et al., 1983). This is the job market college graduates are entering. McDaniels (1984) asks the question, "Could more adequate leisure programs help make their lot more attractive?"

Technological advancements and trends give additional support to the need for leisure education. Today the average work week has dropped to 35 hours a week and this trend is expected to continue with the possibility of a 25 hour work week by the year 2,000 (Murphy, 1981; Super, 1984). Industrial society has set aside certain segments of free time such as evenings, weekends, holidays, and extended vacations (McDaniel, 1984; Murphy, 1981; Dowd, 1984; Loesch, 1981; Kraus, 1978; Hayes, 1981). Youths are being delayed entry into the labor market because of unemployment and because the economy requires greater skills (McDaniels, 1984; Murphy, 1981; Kraus, 1978; Hayes, 1984). There is a rapid and continuing trend toward early retirement and because technology has boosted earnings, people are financially better prepared for it (McDaniels, 1984; Dowd, 1984; Loesch, 1981; Hayes, 1984). "Flextime" scheduling of work is also an increasing trend of American business which is affecting the amount of leisure time individuals have (McDaniels, 1981; Loesch, 1981; Dowd, 1984).

The reduction in working time has caused dramatic changes in the relationship between work and leisure (Kraus, 1978; Dowd, 1981; Gysbers, 1984). There are greater availability and acceptability of leisure options; and while there is still a prevailing attitude that one must work to earn one's

pleasure, there is a marked decline in Puritanism and the Protestant ethic (Dowd, 1984, 1981; Murphy, 1981; Kraus, 1978). Murphy (1981) believes that because work has traditionally been seen as the basis for self-esteem and identity formation, the shortening work week, year, and work career poses new problems for the individuals engaged in meaningless jobs. As work potentially absorbs fewer hours supplemental ways of receiving satisfaction may be found through leisure pursuits.

Work is losing its hold as central life interest and is becoming meaningless to many employees. These employees are increasingly identifying themselves in terms of their leisure rather than their work (Super, 1983; Murphy, 1981; Moore, 1976). The most startling fact of all is that there are many individuals who have not been well prepared to function in wholesome ways during leisure (Hayes, 1984).

There is little indication that we are well equipped, as a society, to use leisure in socially or ethically profitable ways (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977). Leisure problems emerge as a result of the difficulty people have in coping with technology as experienced through time, the work ethic, and lack of or loss of identity through meaningless jobs (Murphy, 1981). Free time is not a problem in and of itself, it is how individuals experience it (Neulinger, 1981, 1974).

Not enough people, including educators, have totally recognized the hazards of leisure when people are unprepared for it. The natural tendency to use the ". . . creative hands, to design, to improvise, and to express" must be found through leisure outlets if they are not found in work (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977; p. 68).

It is easily understood that individuals who have not been well prepared to function during their leisure in wholesome ways become bored, and therefore seek some form of excitement. In doing so, many of these individuals will attempt to gain pleasure or satisfaction at the expense of others, or at the expense of society in general (Hayes, 1984). There is a separate area of research that indicates that such behavior has been status quo on college campuses.

While the inability to make wise use of leisure is not the sole cause of "leisure problems", there is good reason to believe that if leisure education were put in place on campuses today, there would be fewer incidents of delinquency, vandalism, crime, violence, alcoholism, narcotics addiction, mental disorders, sex-role stereotyping, and discrimination by students (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977; Murphy, 1981; Hayes, 1984). It is gradually apparent an individual's inability to cope with his/her discretionary time has implications for all members of society not just to those who offend (Hayes, 1984).

The correct use of leisure can foster creative and divergent thinking. Most of the intellectual and physical activities students engage in are problem solving, goal-directed, and convergent in nature (Dowd, 1981). Leisure experiences give individuals an opportunity to engage in creative and exploratory activity where the end result is in a satisfying process rather than an end product (Dowd, 1984, 1981). This emphasizes the role of leisure education and leisure counseling as specific services that must be made available to students and society in general to provide the important emotional and physical outlets for those who have little opportunity during their daily routine for self-expression, direct participation in decision-making, or reward from recognition of meaningful contribution to the completion of tasks (Murphy, 1981).

The issue is still unresolved, but there are strong indications that leisure satisfaction could replace or complement job satisfaction (Super, 1984, 1980; McDaniels, 1984; Murphy, 1981). Murphy supports this claim in his concept of leisure activity "substitutability" - a means of satisfying the individual's motives, needs, wishes, and desires through leisure when not satisfied through work or school.

Many individuals lead very unbalanced lives. As a result of this lack of balance, many psychological needs go unmet (Dowd, 1984, 1981). McDowell (1981) discusses a concept he calls "leisure well-being". Leisure well-being is a measure of how well we are prepared to "assume and maintain responsibility for an aesthetic, enjoyable, satisfying dynamic leisure-style" (p. 29). Kelly's (1982) studies advocate leisure as the central source of intrinsic satisfaction, as the key to life satisfaction, a place to grow and expand both in intimacy and identity throughout the lifespan. The increase in self-expression that leisure experiences can provide is another method of restoring balance to life (Dowd, 1984, 1981).

Human development seems to be an area essential to the understanding of the nature of leisure expression throughout the lifespan. The student development theory holds that at each life stage certain developmental tasks attributed to that stage must be mastered for development to proceed normally and on schedule (Bloland, 1984, 1981). According to Hurlock (1975) there are nine basic developmental tasks for the traditional student ranging from "accepting one's physique and developing a sex-appropriate self-image" to "crystalizing basic values."

McDaniels (1984) emphasizes a six-stage developmental approach to leisure: Awareness, Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Involvement and Reassessment, and Reawareness and Re-exploration. The largest proportion of the undergraduate student body on most college campuses falls into the Exploration to Implementation Stages of McDaniels' model.

Chickering and Havinghurst (1981) defined the developmental tasks of "choosing and preparing for a career" as perhaps "the most challenging developmental task of all" for these stages of the life cycle (pp. 32-33). If Chickering and Havinghurst are correct, the majority of the undergraduate student body is faced with mastering this critical developmental task.

Chickering (1984) believes that traditional aged college students need to develop their identities and self-confidence. However, during these stages, education receives a disproportionate emphasis as the most important activity in the lives of the students. Leisure activities may be the only other opportunity for facilitating other types of cognitive and social development (Loesch, 1984, 1981).

McDowell (1984) offers what he feels comprises a relevant list identifying the functions of leisure. The list consists of eight statements which appear to validate the potential for

leisure to help students accomplish the developmental tasks they are confronted with during this life stage.

McDowell (1984) also discusses the four components of leisure well-being: coping with interruptive behaviors; awareness and understanding the impact of leisure upon one's life-style; knowledge of the breadth and balance in leisure; assertion in making time and right attitudes for leisure. These components are major issues facing students on college and university campuses (Kraus, 1978; McDowell, 1984). Perhaps the one that leisure offers the most potential for is "coping". Included as interruptive behaviors in leisure are "boredom; compulsiveness; unsureness; flightiness; excuses; guilt; obligation; unmotivation; drink, drugs, and spending; "I can't" syndrome; unrealistic planning; etc. (McDowell, 1984). By developing and maintaining proper skills, knowledge, resources, and self-responsibility of each of the aspects of leisure well-being, McDowell contends, students can continue smoothly through the developmental stages of the life span.

If leisure is thought of in terms of its potentiality for personal development and as an integral component of career, then leisure becomes as important in its own right since both work and leisure are seen as components of career (Bloland, 1984, 1981). Because of this, both become important

educational and developmental goals for the collegiate institution. It is the student development movement that currently provides the most influential rationale for the educational contribution of the student affairs practitioner (Bloland, 1981; Gysbers, 1984; Chickering, 1984).

Student development educators need to focus on the interaction between work and leisure at various periods throughout the life span (Gysbers, 1984). Gysbers contends that career development is assumed to be a part of the larger concept of human development; therefore, research has provided a role of leisure for the career development professional.

Miller and Prince (1976) described student development as the utilization of developmental theory in the implementation of campus programs of planned out-of-class educational interventions with the intent of bringing about developmental change and growth in college students. They continue to say that "human development is a continuous and cumulative process of physical, psychological, and social growth" (p. 5).

Leisure activities need to be explored as potential interventions used to promote student and career development on the college campus. Noting that work plus leisure equals career, Bloland (1981) devised a list of the occupational contributions leisure has made to student occupational

awareness and total career development. Included among these contributions are: vocational exploration; development of vocational competencies; supplementary to work; compensation for lack of job satisfaction; practice of interpersonal skills; extension of vocational skills; and vocational try out or apprenticeship.

The campus environment is rich in resources which students can use to explore or try out occupational roles, learn or extend occupational skills, and compensate for lack of job/school satisfaction (Bloland, 1981). The little attention that is given to leisure is provided by the student activities and on-campus recreation programs (Kraus, 1978; Bloland, 1981). Research has shown that the educational or developmental results of involvement in campus leisure activities have not been examined nor has the logical relationship between work and leisure been considered for its developmental potentiality.

The function of college career services has taken on wider dimensions - moving from that of job placement to career planning, to career development and lifestyle planning which will inevitably include leisure education and/or counseling (Blaska & Schmidt, 1977). Two campus roles for leisure most closely related to the tasks of the career development specialists are: (1) to help students explore and evaluate

leisure pursuits, both for on campus participation and for eventual use after graduation and (2) to help students enhance work-related skills, understanding, and self-knowledge (Bloland, 1981).

Rimmer and Kahnweiler (1981), in a study of undergraduate college students, found that they tended to view education, the future, work, leisure, and the self as interrelated, a finding which lends support to the notions of integrating leisure awareness into career planning. In a study of leisure and work orientations of 516 university students Weiner and Hunt (1983) found that, although positively oriented toward both leisure and work, the respondents possessed a stronger orientation toward leisure. Both studies provide support for the enhanced role of leisure in career and lifestyle development.

However, a 1980 study (Weiner, Payne, & Remer) sampled 382 college catalogues to see to what extent these institutions had adopted the responsibility of leisure education. They found that, although 79% of those responding claimed to offer some type of life/work planning, only 16% offered leisure planning or counseling. This finding seems ironic when one considers leisure as an essential component of life style. The researchers concluded that colleges and universities give insufficient attention to leisure planning.

Two other surveys (Readron, Zunker, & Dyal, 1979; Haviland & Gohn, 1983) failed to identify any concern with leisure planning on the part of career centers of students.

SUMMARY

The research portrays the reality of today's work as serving our collective needs more adequately than it serves our needs as individuals. Work has become increasingly more specialized, depersonalized, and collectivized; it is difficult for most people to gain a satisfactory measure of worth through their work (Moore, 1976). The conclusion the researchers seemed to make is that we should expect to express ourselves as individuals largely outside of our work.

These technological advances and the changes that are a result of them will impact not only work but leisure as well. The research shows that an increase in productivity may expedite the restructuring of work patterns so that people work less. As work potentially absorbs fewer hours, leisure activities can and will be viewed as alternative ways of seeking fulfillment not attained through work. In this era of change, the researchers emphasize that career guidance and education will not only have to address the needs of displaced workers, but it will have to assist others in coping with periods of uncertainty and transition.

The summary of findings on the work/leisure connection suggests some major changes over the next decade for both aspects of one's career. Until now, career counseling and education has not been much assistance because leisure has not been related to work. New programs combining leisure and work need to be a part of career development.

The researchers discuss several recommendations, one of which is a design by Weiner and Hunt (1983) which includes a three-way involvement among the departments of recreation and leisure studies, counseling, and the career development/counseling center. Other suggestions range from: colleges and universities promoting the concept of leisure development by employing specially trained and qualified staff to give full-time attention to the problems, needs, and resources for education for leisure (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977; Dowd, 1981); to developing a new concept of leisure counseling (Neulinger, 1981; Loesch, 1981, 1984; McDowell, 1981; Peevy, 1981).

The researchers ask that the impact that leisure has on the student development process be recognized and respected. The philosophic justification of leisure is built into the design of holistic education, student development theories; it is an essential component to a well-balanced program of education. The research presented here appears to be saying

that if we educate the student vocationally and not avocationally the job is but half done.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Balance - aesthetically pleasing integration of work and leisure; steadiness and equalization that results in life's opposing forces of frustration and satisfaction.

Career - totality of work and leisure one does in a lifetime. (McDaniels, 1984).

Career development - the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical economic, and chance factors that combine to shape the career of any given individual over the life span (McDaniels, 1984).

Holism - education of the whole person, involving curricular and extracurricular activities; cognitive and affective domains of education.

Leisure - that portion of an individual's time which is not devoted to work or work-connected responsibilities or to other forms of maintenance activity and therefore may be regarded as discretionary or unobligated time. Leisure implies freedom of choice and must be seen as available to all, whether they work or not (Kraus, 1978).

Leisure activity substitutability - the interchangeability of recreation activities in satisfying

participants' motives, needs, wishes and desires (Murphy, 1981).

Leisure lack - the chronic absence or relative infrequency of positive leisure experience (Neulinger, 1981).

Life span - refers to the stages of human development throughout the length of life.

Job satisfaction - affective state; represents an overall liking or disliking held by a person for a particular job.

Self-fulfillment - happy with one's position or achievement; calm or secure with satisfaction of one's self or lot.

Student development - the application of the concept, philosophy, underlying theories, and methodologies used to meet the needs of students.

Work - a conscious effort, other than having it as its primary purposes, either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing for oneself and/or oneself and others (McDaniels, 1984).