

RLST 6020 Mid Term Exam

Fall 2003

Essay Choice 2B

At the base of everything lies our perception of it. How we perceive our leisure is critical to our leisure experience. We function within the boundaries of the passage of time. The importance of time's passage and how we relate time's passage to our leisure experience is different for all individuals. It seems that any who take on the act of trying to define concepts that have different definitions to everyone end up with different end products. Scholars of leisure have tried to explain the importance of time to their field. Most have finished with very different end products.

George Barton Cutten believed that free time was the open doorway to crime, debauchery and vice. Cutten thought that it was man's instinct to use his leisure poorly and that he was incapable of bettering his situation on his own. Cutten believed the industrialization of society and the numerous unskilled jobs that came with it would lead to the decay of civilization. Cutten felt that since so much free time would be had by those least likely to understand its worth that they would commit crimes and engage in delinquent behavior out of sheer boredom.

Howe & Rancourt (1990) believe that time constraints in leisure cease to be problems if one perceives some freedom of choice. As long as one chooses what to do in one's time, it becomes discretionary time, and this leads to a leisure

experience. Howe and Rancourt tell us that Neulinger (1981) believed “perceived free time” to be an important milieu, in which many but not all persons probably feel that their behavioral choices as being least constrained and are most likely to have the opportunity to experience leisure” (Howe and Rancourt, 1990).

Ellis and Witt (1991) tell us that Neulinger (1981) “...believes that to equate leisure in terms of the time and activity approaches to be objective, because criteria external to the experience of the individual can be used to determine what is and is not leisure.” However, Ellis and Witt state, “under the time view, leisure is conceptualized as time left over after the necessities of life have been taken care of.” Further, they tell us that this definition is fraught with problems “...because what is necessity to one is not necessity to another, making the time view subjective rather than objective.”

Kleiber (1999) defines leisure as “the combination of free time and preferred experience”. Using this definition, Kleiber states “...leisure extends freedom beyond discretion, lack of obligation, or the vacuity of simple non-work time and includes the absence of worry and a sense of opportunity and possibility. We recognize the context of leisure when time is really felt as free...distinguishable from that devoted to obligation or necessity...”

Hemmingway (1988) tells us that de Grazia and Aristotle believe “time...is not a determining characteristic of leisure. It is instead the nature of the activity that permits leisure’s coming into being.” Hemmingway tells us that de Grazia has “...instead suggested that the very idea of “free” time comes into question when we fail to use it rightly and that the moral quality of our lives diminishes with the decline of leisure. No matter an increase in free time, without attention

to and education in the right use of leisure our lives will not achieve...the creation of a cohesive community bound by the principals of civility” (de Grazia, 1964).

More will undoubtedly be written on the relation of time to leisure. I wonder what difference it makes to the leisure participant whether that experience is taking place in “free time” or in “time that has obligation attached to it”. I believe that attitude will determine one’s outlook. Let us take for instance a man at work. Clearly this is obligated time. The man, let us name him James, works as a proofreader for a large publishing house. James has always enjoyed reading, and (since he is a perfectionist) loves to correct grammar. James gets to read and correct grammar all day long. He couldn’t be happier. Since James is performing his most enjoyable pastimes at work, it cannot be a leisure experience – or can it? Does it make it less leisurely for James because he is performing his job AND participating in his leisure?

What about the family that created a game out of washing dishes or folding laundry? Because they have made the activity fun, for them it has taken on characteristics of leisure. But the dishes are clean and the clothes are folded. Does this mean it wasn’t a leisure experience after all? Maybe man is too slow and dimwitted to tell the difference between leisure and work. But consider this...if perception is everything, and if man cannot tell the difference, is there a difference after all?

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