

Relation between Leisure and Career Development of College Students

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This study investigated the relation between leisure and career development. Data were collected from college freshmen enrolled in required orientation classes ($N = 239$) at a midwestern state university. Results indicated that students who perceived themselves as effective, competent and in control of their leisure possessed a clearer picture of their occupational goals, interests, and talents. Furthermore, students who were more committed to the leisure role displayed more highly developed attitudes toward exploring the world-of-work as well as greater competence for career decision making. © 1998 Academic Press

The psychological benefits of leisure experiences have been espoused by social scientists for over 50 years (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991; Super, 1940; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986, 1988, 1993). The hypothesized beneficial effects of leisure include positive mental and physical health, and increased psychological well-being, self-esteem, happiness, and social interaction (Iso-Ahola, 1994, 1997). Tinsley and Tinsley (1993) suggested that these benefits result from an individual's phenomenological experience in leisure rather than the activity itself. In other words, a person's subjective experience of leisure including both cognition (heightened sense of concentration, challenge, and control) and affect (feelings of freedom, pleasure and competence) can occur in various daily activities in the family and at work (Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Neulinger, 1974, 1981). While it is generally believed that leisure experiences associate with higher levels of positive affect, potency and perceived freedom, it has been shown that some forms of leisure require persistence, effort and commitment,

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characteristics often associated with extrinsically motivated activities or work (Mannell, Zuzanek, & Larson, 1988; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986).

Few scholars have investigated the relation between work and leisure. Those who have reviewed studies in work and leisure have generally used a triadic model to organize the hypotheses and findings (Champoux, 1981; Dubin, 1956; Wilensky, 1960; Zuzanek & Mannell, 1983). The triadic model organizes research and reflection about the relations between work and leisure in three distinct ways. The first relation, usually termed extension or spillover, suggests that a positive relation exists between work and leisure experiences and attitudes (i.e., attitudes acquired in work are so strong they carry over into leisure). The second relation, usually termed opposition or compensation, suggests that there is a negative or dissimilar relation between work and leisure (i.e., work has little intrinsic reward and is compensated for in leisure). The third possible relation, usually termed neutrality or segmentation, suggests a lack of association between work and leisure leaving individuals free to demonstrate independent behaviors in each sphere. While spillover and compensation hypotheses have intuitive appeal largely confirmed by persons' experiences, the hypotheses have been criticized as lacking explanatory power (Chick & Hood, 1996). No unequivocal research differentially supports these theoretical positions (Champoux, 1979; Chick & Hood, 1996).

The present study examined the relation between leisure experiences and the career development of college students. The relations between variables in the leisure and career development domains have become a particularly important theoretical issue following the recent emergence of life-role and multicultural perspectives on careers (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996; Swanson, 1992). Although interconnections among multiple life roles are only now becoming the focus of empirical research, the idea that leisure and career roles reciprocally influence each other was advanced by Super (1957) over four decades ago. Super postulated that participation in leisure broadens an individual's perspective on the world-of-work because it reveals diverse options, develops coping skills, clarifies values, increases self-esteem, and fosters realistic attitudes toward work (Glancy, Willits & Farrell, 1986; Holland & Andre, 1987). In particular, Super believed that participation in leisure activities facilitates the synthesizing process of vocational development. For example, leisure experiences may shape the career choices of college students who use avocational opportunities and role playing to test the realism of their occupational identifications.

Most researchers who investigate leisure experience believe that leisure fosters psychosocial development because leisure provides a means to achieve long-term individual and societal goals (Glancy, et al., 1986; Roberts & Sutton-Smith, 1962; Sherif & Sherif, 1965). Leisure activities furnish important situations and milieus for social development and enable participants to acquire useful skills, construct a psychosocial identity, and formulate future aspirations (Glancy et al., 1986; Munson & Widmer, 1995; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1993). Furthermore, leisure plays an especially salient role in adolescent career development

because it gives teenagers the freedom to explore, test, and receive feedback on possible selves and career directions (Haworth & Smith, 1976; Kleiber & Kelly, 1980; Munson, 1993). The skill and challenge associated with certain forms of leisure help to develop the competence needed to move from childhood and adolescent play experiences to adult work roles (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Kleiber, Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986). For example, leisure activities provide valuable exploratory experiences that enable individuals to investigate occupationally-related activities and to develop the career choice attitudes and competencies needed to make suitable and viable career decisions (McDaniels, 1984; Super, 1984).

Unfortunately, researchers in leisure studies and in career development have rarely investigated the relations between leisure and career development. In one of the few empirical studies of the relations between leisure and career, Hong, Milgram, and Whiston (1993) reported significant correlations between adolescent leisure activities and career outcomes such as adult occupational choices and work accomplishments. The present study aims to further investigate the association of leisure and career by examining relations between leisure and the process of career development among college students.

The only study on this topic that we could identify (Bachiochi, 1993) reported that leisure salience as measured by the *Salience Inventory* (Super & Nevill, 1986) was unrelated to career development as measured by the *Career Development Inventory* (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan & Myers, 1981). In particular, Bachiochi reported that leisure participation correlated $-.08$ with career planning attitudes and $.00$ with career exploration attitudes; leisure commitment correlated $.00$ with career planning attitudes and $.13$ with career exploration attitudes. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from these data because this study used only 56 participants who ranged in age from 17 to 29. In this investigation we sought to extend Bachiochi's study and to add additional variables from the leisure and career domains. Based on previous theoretical literature, we hypothesized that leisure experience correlates significantly to the career development of college students. In particular, we expected to find significant relations between three indicators of leisure experience (i.e., leisure salience, time spent in leisure activities, and leisure efficacy) and three indicators of adolescent career development (i.e., vocational identity, career maturity, and career exploration).

METHOD

Participants

The participants consisted of 239 freshmen students enrolled in a midwestern state university. One hundred forty-three female and 96 male students, with an average age of 18.3 years (range = 16–31), were recruited from the orientation classes in the College of Arts and Sciences, during the fall semester of 1995. Orientation classes consist of entering freshmen. Seventeen majors were repre-

sented among the students. The most common majors were pre-med (13.4%), psychology (12.6%), and criminal justice (11.3%). The ethnic distribution of the participants was: 84.1% white, 10.9% African American, .8% Hispanic, .4% Asian, .4% Native American, .4% Pacific Islander, and 2.5% who listed themselves as "other." Additional information gathered from the participants showed that 60.3% did not have a full or part-time job, 17.2% worked 10 to 19 h per week, 11.3% worked over 20 h per week, and 8.4% worked between 1 and 9 h per week.

Measures

Leisure experience was operationally defined by the measures of leisure salience, activity, and efficacy. Career development was operationally defined by measures of vocational identity, career maturity, and career exploration.

Leisure salience. The leisure participation and leisure commitment scales, from the *Salience Inventory* (SI; Super & Nevill, 1986) were used to measure the importance of leisure in participants' lives. The SI measures the relative importance of five primary life roles: student, worker, citizen, homemaker, and leisurite. The first four are defined as follows: (a) "Studying: taking courses, going to school, preparing for class, studying in a library or at home; also independent studying, formally or informally"; (b) "Working: for pay or for profit, on a job or for yourself"; (c) "Community Service: activities with community organizations such as recreational groups, Scouts, Red Cross, social service agencies, neighborhood associations, political parties, and trade unions"; (d) "Home and family: taking care of your room, apartment, or house; fixing or cleaning up after meals; shopping, caring for dependents such as children or aging parents."

Leisure activities in the SI are defined as "taking part in sports; watching television; pursuing hobbies; going to movies, theater, or concerts; reading; relaxing or loafing; being with your family and friends." The SI measures the importance of the leisure role in terms of participation and commitment. The participation scale is the behavioral dimension and assesses "what you do or have done recently" in each of the five roles. The commitment scale measures the degree of affect or commitment an individual has toward the roles. It asks "how do you feel about" the five roles. Scores on the leisure participation and leisure commitment scales can range from 10 to 40. Nevill and Super (1986) reported internal consistency reliabilities of .80 for high school, college, and adult samples. Coefficient α reliabilities of .86 and .94 were obtained for the participation and commitment to leisure scales, respectively, in the present sample. A recent review of the literature on the SI reported extensive evidence for its content, construct and concurrent validity (Niles & Goodnough, 1996).

Leisure activity. Leisure activity was defined as intrinsically motivated out-of-class activities (including informal and more formally organized extracurricular activities) that college students do for their own enjoyment and by their own choice and not to fulfill class requirements or earn grades and credits (Hong et al., 1993). The content of the leisure activities scale represents the leisure activity

categories of Csikszentmihalyi and Larson's (1984) experience sampling study of adolescents and the three categories developed in a factor analytic study by Ellis and Rademacher (1987) that incorporated Csikszentmihalyi and Larson's data. Categories included: expressive activities (e.g., sports and games, arts and hobbies, and listening to music), relaxed activities (e.g., socializing, reading, and watching television), and learning activities (e.g., thinking and contemplating). In a procedure similar to that used by Munson and Widmer (1995, 1997), participants recorded hours per week (i.e., the seven days prior to completing the instrument) spent in various categories of leisure activities by circling none, less than 5, 5 to 10, and more than 10. No inferences were made regarding the reliability of this measure.

Leisure efficacy. Gecas' (1971) *Self-Efficacy Scale* was adapted to measure leisure efficacy. Self-efficacy generally "refers to people's assessments of their effectiveness, competence, and causal agency" (Gecas, 1989, p. 292). Gecas's scale, based on Osgood's semantic differential technique (1962, 1964), asks respondents to rate themselves as they ordinarily think of themselves on 12 pairs of adjectives: powerful–powerless, honest–dishonest, good–bad, confident–lacks confidence, kind–cruel, strong–weak, dependable–undependable, wise–foolish, do most things well–do few things well, brave–cowardly, generous–selfish, and worthy–worthless. In prior research, the stimulus for this rating has been "in general" or "at work." We used the stimulus term "in leisure" to assess individuals' self-evaluations of themselves in the leisure role. The sum of the 12 adjective pairs produces an overall leisure self-efficacy score, with higher scores indicating more effectiveness, competence, and control of leisure. The coefficient alpha reliability of this scale for the present sample was .86.

Vocational identity. The *Vocational Identity Scale* (VIS), a part of *My Vocational Situation* (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), was used to measure the extent to which participants possessed "a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, personality, and talents" (Holland, Daiger & Power, 1980, p. 1). The VI includes 18 items such as "I need reassurance that I have made the right choice of an occupation," "I don't know what my major strengths and weaknesses are," and "I need to find out what kind of career I should follow." The response format is true/false. A total score for the VI is obtained by summing the responses marked false. The greater the number of false responses, the higher the vocational identity. Coefficient α for the present sample was .91. A review of research on the VIS strongly supports its content, criterion, and construct validity (Holland, Johnston, & Asama, 1993).

Career maturity. Career maturity was indexed by attitudes toward career exploration and by decision-making competence. Two scales from the *Career Development Inventory* (CDI; Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981) were used to measure exploration attitudes and decisional competence. The *Career Exploration Scale* measures one's inclination or attitudes toward using exploration opportunities and resources. Twenty items ask individuals to rate their use of various sources of career information and to evaluate their

usefulness. Low scores indicate that individuals are not concerned about using good sources of occupational information. The *Career Decision-Making Scale* includes 20 brief sketches of persons making career decisions and asks the respondent to select what they believe to be the best alternative. The scale score indicates knowledge of the principles and practice of career decision making. Low scores suggest less competence at making career choices. Super et al. (1981) reported internal consistency using Cronbach's α for the exploration and decision-making scales to be .80 and .62, respectively. For this sample the coefficient α reliability was .79 for exploration and .63 for decision making. A recent review of the literature on the CDI reports extensive evidence for its content, criterion, and construct validity (Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

Career exploration behavior. Sixteen items from the *Career Exploration Survey* (CES; Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983) were used to measure career exploratory behavior. The items asked participants to "indicate how much you have behaved in the following ways over the last 3-4 months with respect to your career" on a 5-point Likert scale (little, somewhat, a moderate amount, a substantial amount, and a great deal). The 16 items included the nine environmental exploration and five self-exploration items and the items, "Systematically searched for an outlet for my abilities," and "How many occupational areas are you investigating?" Coefficient α for this sample was .89. This measure of exploratory behavior has been used extensively in prior research (e.g., Blustein, 1988; Blustein Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Toman & Savickas, 1997).

Procedures

Questionnaires were administered by freshman orientation instructors in the College of Arts and Sciences. Participants were informed that the study examined the relation between the activities of college students and their career development. They also were informed that the results of the study would be available to those who requested it, that participation was voluntary, and that there would be no penalty for not participating. Those who agreed to participate were asked to read and sign a human subjects consent form that had been approved by the university. The battery of instruments took approximately 30-40 minutes to complete.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations for all the study variables appear in Table 1. A canonical analysis was performed to test the hypothesis that the participants' leisure experiences were related to their career development. The analysis produced two significant canonical correlations ($p < .01$). The magnitudes of the correlations indicated that the first pair of canonical variates were moderately correlated ($r = .37$); the second set of variates also were correlated ($r = .26$). Correlations between the variables and their canonical variates are reported in Table 2. Inspection of the magnitude of the canonical variates indicated that the first canonical factor was best represented by leisure

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients
for Leisure and Career Variables ($N = 239$)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LE	LA	PL	CL	CB	VI	CA	CD
Leisure efficacy	47.2	6.2	—							
Leisure activities	27.1	4.1	.13	—						
Participation in leisure	28.0	6.3	.22	.10	—					
Commitment to leisure	30.9	6.9	.23	.09	.72	—				
Career exploration behavior	40.7	11.9	.21	.15	.07	.06	—			
Vocational identity	10.7	4.8	.36	.05	.01	-.00	.16	—		
Career exploration attitudes	49.3	8.1	.11	.03	.17	.15	.28	.05	—	
Career decision making	11.5	3.2	.06	-.01	.11	.16	-.01	.05	-.07	—

Note. Correlation coefficients higher than .13 are significant at the .05 level; those higher than .21 are significant at the .01 level.

efficacy in the leisure space and vocational identity and career exploratory behavior in the career space. The second canonical variate revealed that commitment to and participation in leisure were related to career exploration attitudes and career decision making.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a significant association between leisure experience and career development. College students who described themselves as effective, competent, and in control of their leisure had a clearer picture of their occupational goals, interests, personality, and

TABLE 2
Correlations between the Variables and Their Canonical Variates

Variables	Canonical variate 1	Canonical variate 2
Leisure		
Correlation coefficients		
Leisure efficacy	.93	-.29
Leisure activities	.37	-.17
Participation in leisure	-.02	.81
Commitment to leisure	.06	.94
Career		
Career exploration behavior	.52	.19
Vocational identity	.91	.10
Career exploration attitudes	.15	.66
Career decision making	-.18	.71
Canonical correlation results		
Canonical correlation coefficient	.37	.26
α level	.01	.01

talents. This suggests a moderate degree of consistency in agency beliefs across life roles in that a sense of agency in the leisure role seems to covary with a sense of identity and life direction in the career role.

Those freshmen for whom the leisure role was more salient also displayed a greater degree of career development as evidenced by their higher scores on career exploration attitudes and career decision-making competence. However, these same students may not be fully applying their better developed career choice attitudes and competencies because these were unrelated to vocational identity. Career exploration attitudes and career decision-making competence each had nonsignificant zero-order correlations to vocational identity of only .05. Thus, well-rounded "leisurite" college students appear better prepared, yet less inclined, to make career choices. The zero-order correlations for the variables in this variate were quite similar to the correlations reported by Bachiochi (1993). Career exploration attitudes correlated .17 to leisure participation and .15 to leisure commitment. Thus it appears that leisure salience has a minor, yet positive, relation to career development. While a sense of agency may generalize across life roles, role-specific attitudes and beliefs may not generalize across life roles. In theorizing about the relations between leisure and work, the three main positions argue for segmentation (independence among the roles), compensation (gratify unfulfilled needs in a compensatory role), and spillover (similar behavior in different roles). From the limited data set in the present study, it appeared that a sense of efficacy and agency extends between career and leisure domains but domain-specific coping attitudes and competencies may be segmented. Certainly, much more study of this hypothesis is required before firm conclusions can be drawn.

The period between 15 and 25 is one of exploration, a time for seeking information about occupations, selecting career alternatives, deciding on a particular occupation, and starting to work (Sharf, 1992, Super 1957). The later years of this stage, particularly years 18–22, and sometimes referred to as "youth" (Kleiber & Kelly, 1980), are viewed as a transition period from childhood to adulthood. Self-definition continues to be a major issue during this period and should include extensive experimentation with lifestyles and career directions (Kleiber & Kelly, 1980). College students in this study (a majority of whom were entering this period called youth) who perceived themselves as competent in their leisure activities also demonstrated a more clearly defined vocational identity. This was an important finding in that it was not the amount of time, nor the importance (participation and commitment) assigned to leisure that was significant, but the perceived competence associated with those activities. Implications of this finding suggest that if leisure is to make a significant contribution to career development of college students, then it is not enough for counselors or student personnel workers to simply help students fill "free time" with activities. The challenge is to help them find meaningful, or "transitional"

activities (Kleiber et al., 1986), in which to develop effectiveness, competence, and control.

College students who are highly committed to leisure and who demonstrate good career process skills (i.e., positive exploratory attitudes and decision making), but who also remain uncommitted to an occupational choice may be using leisure counterproductively or as a means of delaying the process of growing up. In situations like this, Kleiber and Kelly (1980) indicated "the experience of leisure as freedom from constraint and a desire for immediate pleasurable experience may have a countersocializing effect in delaying entry into the work force and traditional life systems" (p. 112). These students may need to balance leisure with student and work roles in order to develop and function more effectively during their college years and beyond.

Additional research needs to be conducted on the relations between leisure and career development. In general, longitudinal research is needed on college students to determine the long-term outcomes of leisure participation on educational achievement, occupational adjustment, and adult happiness. More specifically, and as a follow-up of this study, two possible avenues should be considered. First, research should examine the career outcomes (listed above) of those who perceive themselves as efficacious in leisure pursuits and who concurrently demonstrate high levels of career maturity, versus those who do not. Second, those committed to leisure and who exhibit good career process skills, yet who delay making career choices, should be studied to determine if they become as achieved, successful and happy as individuals who identify with an occupational choice earlier.

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