

## **Serious Leisure and Self-Directed Learning**

Mark Pritchard, Department of Leisure Studies and Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1273

Ian Patterson, Department of Leisure Studies and Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1273

Gaylene Carpenter, Department of Leisure Studies and Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1273

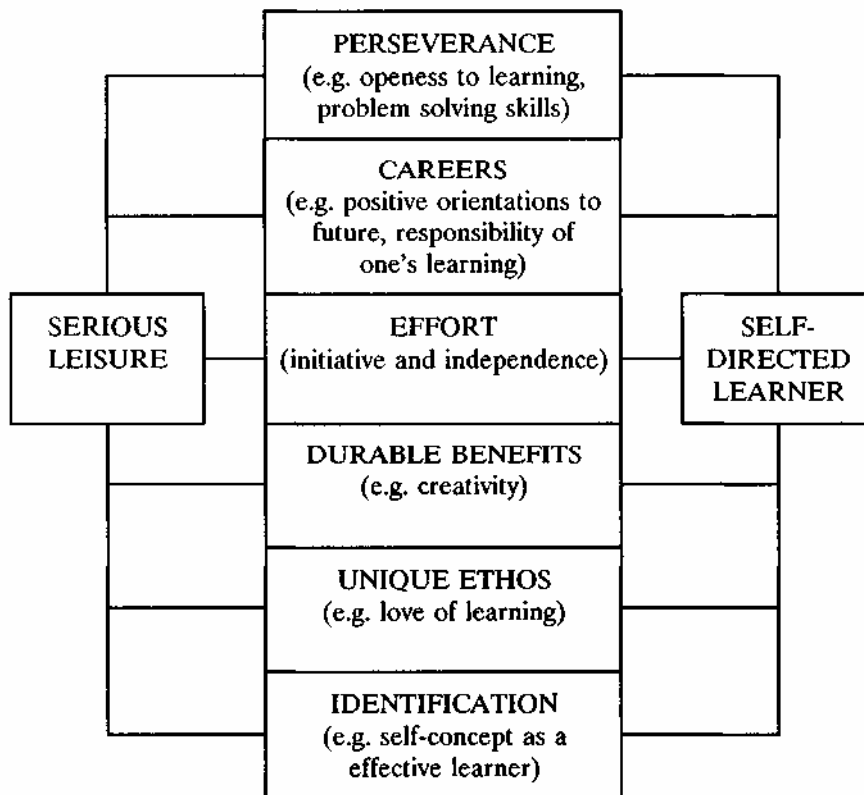
### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1982, Stebbins proposed a continuum for leisure. The two poles were termed *casual* (unserious) and *serious* leisure, and provided a dimension along which individuals could be ranked by their degree of involvement in a particular leisure activity. Qualities that Stebbins attributed to serious leisure included perseverance, careers, effort, durable benefits, unique ethos, and identification.

Other researchers have supported Stebbins' concept of serious leisure. Haworth (1984) corroborated the need to better understand serious leisure and the durable benefits that it can provide. Mannell, Zuzanek and Larson (1988, p. 302) felt that "those activities that are freely chosen, and for which there are also extrinsic reasons for participation, fall into Neulinger's leisure-job category and appear to have similarities to activities referred to by Stebbins as serious leisure". Buchanan (1985) and Tinsley and Tinsley (1986) theorized that commitment was an important component of leisure behaviour. While serious leisure has been discussed theoretically, little empirical research is evident to support its qualities and definition as a legitimate subset of the leisure experience.

Serious leisure is different from casual leisure since, according to Stebbins (1982, p. 267), it involves the "development of skills and knowledge, the accumulation of experience, and the expenditure of effort". As a result of this thinking, serious leisure appears to have a relationship to self-directed learning. Guglielmino's (1977) research found a series of underlying factors which assist in explaining the overall construct of self-directed learning. These factors included enjoyment, risk, independence, complexity, creativity, initiative, and responsibility. The qualities that Stebbins attributed to serious leisure can be seen to parallel Guglielmino's factors of self-directed learning (see Figure 1) which suggests that, indeed in many cases, self-directed learning is an observable form of serious leisure.

**Figure 1**  
**Conceptual Linkages between Qualities of**  
**Serious Leisure and Self-Directed Learning**



As part of the leisure experience, serious leisure is subject to contemporary thinking in regard to the accepted dimensions that define what is and is not leisure. Tinsley and Tinsleys (1986, p. 43) review of the attributes of the leisure experience found almost universal agreement that "perceptions of freedom of choice and intrinsic motivation" were essential elements before an individual will experience leisure. Researchers such as Ellis and Witt (1984) and Iso-Ahola (1979) felt that perceived freedom was the central element that could be used in a definitional approach to operationalizing leisure. Intrinsic motivation was also considered by Witt and Ellis (1985), and was identified as a contributing factor in the construction of the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale. It then seems plausible that this scale's measurement of perceived freedom in leisure can be used to determine if serious leisure shares the common features of the leisure experience.

The purpose of this study was twofold. Firstly, to investigate whether self-directed learning could be considered as serious leisure, and secondly, that the propensity toward this serious leisure form could be predicted by the level of perceived freedom to engage in leisure. Gender and age have been investigated as variables within both the self-directed learning and perceived freedom in leisure constructs. Inconsistent findings have been reported concerning the relationship of self-directed learning with age and gender (Brockett, 1985; Finestone, 1984; Long and Agyekum, 1984). Several studies indicated that age and gender were unrelated to the measurement of perceived freedom in leisure (Baack and Witt, 1985; Witt and Ellis, 1985). As there was some disagreement about the influence that these variables have, this study's research design attempted to control for this by including gender and age in a forced regression analysis.

## METHODS

A random sample ( $n = 400$ ) of currently enrolled graduate students at the University of Oregon were mailed two questionnaires in March 1989 - the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (Witt and Ellis, 1985) and the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) (Guglielmino, 1977). Following a second mailing, 147 usable returns were collated to provide a 42.4 percent response rate. It should be noted here that 32 non-respondents were not in the public domain, 13 questionnaires were returned with addresses unknown, and 7 were excluded from the analysis because respondents skipped multiple items of the survey. This reduced the sample size to 348 subjects.

The two self-reporting questionnaires used 5-point Likert scales to record responses. Both instruments were originally developed for use with adults, demonstrating high test-retest and alpha reliability coefficients. Witt and Ellis (1985) found reliability coefficients of 0.90 and 0.91 when using the short form of the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale with two college student populations. Similarly, Guglielmino (1977, 1989) reported high reliability coefficients for the SDLRS of 0.87 and 0.94, respectively.

## RESULTS

Subjects, 77 of whom were male and 70 female, were found to display high overall means for both self-directed learning ( $4.11 \pm 0.44$ ) and perceived freedom in leisure ( $3.73 \pm 0.44$ ). The graduate student mean for self-directed learning, in comparison to previous studies, was found to be at the 80th percentile of the general adult population. The respondents' ages ranged from 23 to 58 years, with a mean age of 31.7 years.

Pearson Product Moment correlations between variables found a significant positive correlation to exist between self-directed learning and perceived freedom in leisure ( $r = 0.331$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) indicating that the higher the propensity toward self-directed learning the greater the level of perceived freedom in leisure. Age was also found to be significantly correlated with the respondents' levels of self-directed learning ( $r = 0.256$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) implying that older respondents tend to display a greater readiness toward self-directed learning.

A forced multiple regression analysis (see Table 1) was used to determine whether perceived freedom in leisure, age, and gender could predict the propensity toward the serious leisure form of self-directed learning. Age and gender were entered into the equation at steps one and two, with perceived freedom in leisure forced into the regression analysis at step three. This hierarchical order of entry allowed the researchers to control for the two demographic variables of influence prior to examining the predictive power of perceived freedom in leisure when regressed onto self-directed learning.

Beta coefficients (see Table 2) show age to be a significant contributor ( $B = 0.665$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) when entered at step one of the predictive equation, explaining 6.5 percent of the variance for self-directed learning. Gender was not found to be a significant predictive variable for self-directed learning, and when forced into the regression equation with age only a slight increment in explained variance for self-directed learning was noted ( $R^2 = 7.7\%$ ). Perceived freedom in leisure contributed significantly ( $B = 0.644$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) in the regression analysis and, when entered with age and gender at step three, explained 17.7 percent of the variance for self-directed learning.

**Table 1**  
**Forced Multiple Regression Analysis for the Relationships between**  
**Predictor Variables and Self-Directed Learning (n = 147)**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Std. error	F-test
Age	0.256	0.065	0.059	22.053	10.14
Gender	0.278	0.077	0.065	21.987	6.03
Perc. freedom	0.420	0.177	0.159	20.842	10.23

## DISCUSSION

The positive correlation between perceived freedom in leisure and self-directed learning appears to be consistent with the theoretical discussion of self-directed learning as a form of serious leisure. Given this contention, the results from the regression analysis lend some credence to the thought that perceived freedom in leisure can assist in explaining the propensity toward a serious leisure form. Having explored the nature of a serious leisure form and its relationship to certain variables allows us to understand the related constructs of self-directed learning and serious leisure in more detail.

**Table 2**  
**Beta Coefficients for Predictor Variables on Self-Directed**  
**Learning (n = 147)**

Variable	Value	Std. Error	Std. Value	t-value	Prob.
Age	0.665	0.234	0.219	2.849	.005
Gender	5.107	3.476	0.113	1.469	.144
Perc. freedom	0.644	0.155	0.316	4.155	.0001

Constant = 149.62

In addition, the results gave some indication that age plays a part in predicting the propensity for serious leisure. As people become older, we can expect them to become more self-directed in their learning pursuits in both leisure and educational settings. Brockett's (1985) research supports this finding with a significant positive correlation between self-directed learning and age.

The link between leisure and education has always been a strong one. Kando (1975, p. 22) pointed out that encyclopedic definitions of leisure have "traditionally incorporated education, scholarship and philosophy". This in itself suggests the presence of self-directed learning in leisure, and indicates that leisure should not be regarded as a frivolous, unstructured form of activity that can be seen as a simple alternative to work. If, as the results suggest, that self-directed learning is a form of serious leisure, then leisure programmers and educators need to be aware of the link.

Further research is required to ascertain the appropriateness of the qualities that Stebbins has assigned to serious leisure, and whether or not these qualities are as prominent for different forms of serious leisure. The motivational make-up of serious leisure also poses some interesting questions for research, particularly in relation to serious leisure's placement in Neulinger's intrinsic-extrinsic motivation paradigm (Mannell, Zuzanek, and Larson, 1988).

## REFERENCES

- Baack, S. and Witt, P. 1985. "Predictors of perceived freedom in leisure of Baptist church members". Leisure Sciences. 7: 401-420.
- Brockett, R. 1985. "The relationship between self-directed learning and life satisfaction in older adults". Adult Education Quarterly. 35: 210-219.
- Buchanan, T. 1985. "Commitment and leisure behavior: a theoretical perspective". Leisure Sciences. 7: 401-420.
- Ellis, G. and Witt, P. 1984. "The measurement of perceived freedom in leisure". Journal of Leisure Research. 16(2): 110-123.
- Finestone, P. 1984. "A construct validation of the self directed learning readiness scale with labour education participants". Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.
- Guglielmino, L. M. 1977. "Development of the self-directed learning readiness scale". Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.
- Guglielmino, L. M. 1989. "Reactions to Field's investigation into the SDLRS". Adult Education Quarterly. 39(4): 235-240.
- Haworth, J. T. 1984. "The perceived nature of meaningful pursuits and the social psychology of commitment". Society and Leisure. 7: 196-216.
- Iso-Ahola, S. E. 1979. "Basic dimensions of definitions of leisure". Journal of Leisure Research. 11: 28-39.
- Kando, T. 1975. Leisure and Popular Culture in Transition. Saint Louis: Mosby.
- Long, H. B. and Agyekum, S. K. 1988. "Self directed readiness: assessment and validation". In Long, H. B. (ed.). Self Directed Learning: Application and Theory. Adult Education Department, University of Georgia.
- Mannell, R.C.; Zuzanek, J.; and Larson, R. 1988. "Leisure states and flow experiences: testing perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation hypotheses". Journal of Leisure Research. 20(4): 289-304.
- Neulinger, J. 1981. The Psychology of Leisure. 2nd ed. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.
- Stebbins, R.A. 1982. "Serious leisure: a conceptual statement". Pacific Sociological Review. 25(2): 251-272.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. and Tinsley, D.J. 1986. "A theory of the attributes, benefits and causes of leisure experience". Leisure Sciences. 8: 1-45.
- Witt, P. and Ellis, G. 1985. "Development of a short form to assess perceived freedom in leisure". Journal of Leisure Research. 17(3): 225-233.

**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Sixth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research**  
**May 9-12, 1990**

**COMPTE RENDU DU**  
**Sixième Congrès Canadien de Recherches en Loisir**  
**Le 9-12 mai, 1990**

**University of Waterloo**

***Leisure Challenges:  
Bringing People, Resources and  
Policy into Play***

***Les défis des loisirs:  
agencer les personnes,  
les ressources, et les décisions***

**Editor/Le rédacteur: Bryan J. A. Smale**

**©Ontario Research Council on Leisure 1990**  
**©Conseil Ontarien de Recherche en Loisir 1990**

Copyright © 1990 Ontario Research Council on Leisure/Conseil Ontarien de  
Recherche en Loisir

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used  
in any form without written permission of the editor or ORCOL.

Printed and bound at Graphic Services  
University of Waterloo



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only).  
Please note that this document is copyrighted and CREDIT MUST BE PROVIDED to the originator  
of the document when you quote from it. You must not sell the document or make a profit from  
reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside  
of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the  
database by the Lifestyle Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>