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# LEISURE EDUCATION AND THE FAMILY

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## ABSTRACT

Having and utilizing free time is often a problem for individuals and for families. Family leisure education, focusing on lifestyles and leisure, or family wellness and the role of leisure may be a first step in addressing that problem. No other profession is specifically charged with the responsibility of educating for leisure; that charge is unique to the recreation and leisure profession. Families, as individuals and as a unit have significant time available for experiencing recreation and leisure, and their choices singularly and collectively impact on the unit as a whole. By exploring the components of leisure education, especially self and leisure awareness, the professional has an opportunity to assist family members in exploring intra and interpersonal transactions. Since most of the time families spend is off-work time, their primary interactions take place in the home and during free time, and it is during these times that they will come to know each other and come to bond or fragment as a group. The recreation and leisure choices made by each member and the group impact on how the unit will come to be defined. By exploring values, attitudes, behaviors and roles, the professional can help facilitate the meaning of recreation and leisure in the lives of the family unit. This paper focuses on the conceptual and practical design of a family leisure education model that can be used in various recreation settings including those settings which serve people with disabilities.

## LEISURE EDUCATION AND THE FAMILY

### THE FAMILY

The contemporary American family. What picture/description comes to mind? Is there are "typical" American family? Census data indicate there is not. Keller, Howe and Osgood (8) provide the following trends as among those that have changed the structure of especially white,

middle-income American families: (a) decline of extended family; (b) female-headed and single-parent families; (c) dual job-marriages; (d) alternative family lifestyles; (e) divorced and remarriage families. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1) indicate that by 2000 first marriage families, single-parent families and families of remarriages will predominate.

As an agent for socialization, the family constitutes the initial context for individual development.(7) Keller, Howe and Osgood, (8, p. 6) indicate the "healthy family provides its members with a general sense of well-being, companionship, ego worth, security, and affection," playing a vital role in human development. Chubb and Chubb (2) indicate that because the family is often considered the foundation of society, the social effects of recreation most significantly impact on the family. Having and utilizing free time is often a problem for individuals and for families. Orthner (17, p. 133) notes family therapists often indicate that "inadequate time shared together and differing leisure interests are near the top of the list of problems in marriage today". Keller, Howe and Osgood (8) suggest that a family's strengths and weaknesses may be reflected in how they utilize their free time. Crawford and Godbey (3) indicate that leisure services can enhance family relationships. It has been suggested that the family and its recreation and leisure choices are important, however, recreation/leisure services have often focused on age segregated rather than family programs.(12) Orthner (17, p. 139) believes "perhaps it is time for leisure providers to also take more seriously the needs of families in leisure education, programs and counseling".

Crawford and Godbey (3) and Holman and Epperson (6) suggest that leisure is important to family cohesion. However, free time and recreation and leisure choices can also create stress for the family.(1, 4, 15, 16, 17) Multiple relationships and roles, and external sources impact on recreation/leisure choices and decisions. Individual members may have differential preferences for recreation and leisure activities and experiences. Families and family members may find themselves confronted with "ought" vs "want" choices in relation to their free time individually and collectively. Also, members are confronted with recreation and leisure choices that are potentially positive and/or negative to individual members and the family as a unit, such as drugs or selfishness. It is obvious that the issue of recreation and leisure choices is complex, and potentially contributes to the fragmentation or unification of the family.

The family may evolve and change as members move from courtship, through the newlywed phase, into the childbearing/rearing phase, though the child departure phase and mid-cycle changes, through older adulthood and the retirement phase. In the process many things can alter this structure: (a) illness, (b) trauma, (c) divorce, (d) remarriage(s), (e) death, etc. No matter how it evolves the family is never static, but always dynamic, and recreation and leisure choices and decisions must be responsive to this dynamic evolution. Because the family is dynamic, recreation and leisure choices must also be dynamic.

Families may experience patterns of individual, partner and conjoint recreation and leisure participation throughout the family life cycle.

For example, second marriages and second families produce compounding dilemmas as role ambiguity, decreased free time, conflict, age and interest differences can all affect family recreation and leisure satisfaction.(8) However, "some recreational activities may provide stability in terms of interests and relationships during periods of change. When this occurs, leisure can become a means of family integration and support".(8, p. 16) It is important for the leisure educator to assess families' leisure experiences and recreation and activity preferences from a developmental perspective during different life stages.(15, 16, 17, 22)

Keller, Howe and Osgood (8, p. 23) state "very little is known about the relationships among family members' leisure attitudes, values, interests, and skills and their participation in family leisure activities." They challenge leisure service professionals "to discover creative ways to empower family members to use free time and leisure experiences as a means to strengthen, develop and enrich the family unit during its various cycles, as well as the individual family members during their various life stages".(8, p. 25) Family leisure education, focusing on lifestyles and leisure, or family wellness and the role of leisure may be a first step in meeting that challenge. Through leisure education, the professional has an opportunity to facilitate and enhance family quality of life.

#### RECREATION AND LEISURE

In December 1988 four whales were trapped by ice in Alaska

It was not acceptable that the whales die  
It was not enough that they survive in captivity  
It was necessary to free them.  
That is the potential of leisure to me and the  
force behind human interaction.

When one speaks of leisure education one must be aware of how leisure is being defined. The writer differentiates between recreation and leisure. Recreation is an opportunity to participate in activities that are personally pleasurable and/or challenging. Recreation is an outlet for cognitive, affective, psychomotor and/or social expression. It is also a vehicle through which leisure may be experienced and, as such, may also be an outlet for spiritual expression. Recreation provides an opportunity to find satisfaction and fulfill needs. However, satisfaction of those needs may not be directly attributable to the primary activity one is engaged in. Recreation differs from leisure in that the person is concerned about some gain whether that is intrinsically (self-enhancement, pleasure) or extrinsically (external recognition, status) motivated.

The key to leisure is self: self-development, self-fulfillment, self-determination, self-expression, and self-enhancement. To pursue the essence of self is "to leisure." To engage in the pursuit of self--to try to experience the innermost core of one's spirit is to leisure. To simply or complexly participate in an activity is not "leisureing" unless

one is engaged in expressing and enhancing one's spirit--the very essence of who one is at any point in time. What is found to be central to one's essence, for the most part, will drive one's leisure choices. Maximizing a leisure experience or perceiving an experience to be leisure will depend on what is needed to most fully explore the self.(18) Thus, the writer is in agreement with Neulinger (13) that leisure is indeed a state of being or a state of mind.

Rancourt (17) specifies several conditions that are necessary to be at leisure: self-awareness and self-motivation, time, appropriate environment, and a freely-chosen desire to experience it (leisure). In this sense, then, leisure differs from recreation in that it is purely intrinsically motivated with the purpose of becoming self-fulfilled and enhanced. In leisure, one primarily wishes to experience and enhance who one is.

Recreation and leisure are premeditated on different levels of consciousness. When recreation is premeditated, one decides to participate in an activity for some intrinsic or extrinsic gain, but one may not be aware of or able to communicate what that gain is. However, when leisure is premeditated one is concerned with the enhancement of self, is aware of self, and is able to communicate the need to leisure, or to communicate why one activity is chosen over another in the pursuit of self. Thus, when one is experiencing leisure one is aware that a recreational activity is chosen specifically over other activities, such as work, to enhance oneself. Whereas, when one is recreating, one may not be aware of why a specific recreation activity is chosen over another, or if a given activity is chosen it may be chosen for reasons other than pursuit of self.

Consider cross-country skiing as an example of the recreation and leisure differentiation as discussed in this paper. If cross-country skiing is perceived as recreation one might be engaging in it for the pleasure of it (aesthetics) or for a utilitarian purpose (cardio-vascular endurance). If cross-country skiing is perceived as leisure one might be determining, expressing, fulfilling and/or enhancing one's spirit by exploring the essence of who one is (spiritual self, competent self, artistic self). Though the activity remains constant, it is one's self-awareness that determines its potential to be recreation or leisure. One more activity is offered as an example. One spouse/family member may decide there is a need to spend more time in companionship with the other spouse or another family member(s) who fishes every weekend. So, the first family member begins to fish; a recreational activity that may not even be enjoyed initially for its own sake. But, the first family member does enjoy the companionship of the other family member(s) while fishing. Thus, the activity (fishing) may not directly satisfy the first family member's need, while socializing with the other family member(s) may. One can see that the activity could be changed and the need to socialize or for companionship could still be satisfied. Recreation professionals must be aware that the activity is not always the primary motivation for participation.

With the recreation and leisure differentiation made, leisure education can now be addressed. There will be times in the leisure education process when the leisure educator will be suggesting varying

recreational activities, teaching different recreational skills, and helping family members become more aware of various resources; there will be other times when the leisure educator will be facilitating growth in self-esteem and self-actualization through leisure experiences.

## LEISURE EDUCATION

Leisure education is not a new concept, but perhaps it is a concept whose time has come. "History shows that authority always regarded free time as a social problem and the late President Hoover once said 'the future history of this civilization will not depend upon what a man does at his work, but what he does in his time off'". (9, pp. 147, 152) Godbey and Parker (5) indicate education influences the choices we make and the leisure we experience. Martin (9, pp. 145-150), in discussing the psychological and emotional unpreparedness for free time, states that:

we have considerable evidence that responsibility for creative adaptation to free time lies primarily with our inner resources. In the Jan. 1963 Illustrated London News, Arthur Bryant said the following: "In most of us today, understanding, awareness, perception, and capacity are only 5% developed. As a result, we go through life missing about 95% of all we should be enjoying and achieving for ourselves and others".

Educating for leisure is as necessary as educating for work or jobs. Rettie (19) declares the educational process is barely tolerable in preparing people for jobs, while doing almost nothing in preparing people for good lives. He believes a fear is instilled in the learner from the first days of school, a fear of being unconstructive and economically nonproductive.

Some writers, having assessed that society is in fact changing and that education must take on new dimensions in educating people for that society, have proposed that educators more closely examine leisure as a viable element that deserves more consideration than it thus far seems to have received. As has been previously stated, the concept of educating for leisure is not a new concept; the Cardinal Principles of Education, adopted, as one of its principles, educating for worthy use of leisure. This principle has unfortunately received little attention since its adoption. In 1972, the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE) issued a national policy and position statement entitled "Education for Leisure," and in 1980, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) issued its "Position Statement on Leisure Education" outlining NRPA's position relative to the impact of leisure on the quality of life.

### Mundy-Odum Model

The theoretical framework of the Mundy-Odum (11) Leisure Education Model is based on Mundy's (10, p. 2) belief that:

Leisure education . . . can best be defined in terms of process rather than a content area to be learned. Leisure education is viewed as a total and continuous developmental process through which an individual develops an understanding of himself, leisure, and the relationship of leisure to his individual life and the fabric of society. The ultimate outcome of the process is to enable an individual to enhance the quality of his life in leisure.

The prototype leisure-education model of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators is composed of five component areas: (a) leisure awareness, (b) self-awareness, (c) decision-making, (d) social interaction, and (e) skills (10). For the purpose of this paper these five components plus a resources component will be used as a guiding model for family leisure education.

### FAMILY LEISURE EDUCATION MODEL

In designing a family leisure education model, the writer has adapted and adjusted the Mundy Odum (11) Leisure Education Model.

This writer believes that awareness, knowledge and comprehension of self is the first step in the leisure education process. By its definition the family is a group and a group is composed of more than one self. Thus, as a family comes together to learn about itself, it is dependent upon individual members to share selves. Through various exercises, games and discussions, (see Mundy & Odum (11); Stumbo & Thompson (21), individuals may explore and share such things as interests, values, philosophies, needs, strengths, weaknesses, goals, likes, dislikes, wishes, roles etc. Each of these can be addressed in reference to the individual generally, and specifically in relation to the family. For each individual has many roles within and outside of the family. Characteristics of those roles and their perceived effectiveness may not always overlap from one group to another (i.e. work, basketball, family). That is, what is perceived as a strength at work or basketball may not be perceived as such at home. Also each element should be addressed by individuals in reference to self and in reference to the family; i.e. individual interests, strengths, needs, etc. Through exploration and discussion of selves the family has an opportunity to better know itself.

The next step is to facilitate an awareness of recreation and leisure and the meaning of each to individual members and the family as a whole. Through various exercises, games and discussions, members share such things as activities they like and dislike, have an interest in, are good at (strengths) or not so good at (weaknesses); individual, family and societal factors that influence activity choice and participation; activities they like that make them think (cognitive), feel (affective), move (psychomotor), interact (social); or contribute to their spirituality; environments they most like to experience and activities they like to experience in those environments; seasons they most like and activities they most associate with those seasons; societal and family

factors that influence their choices, etc. Again, the focus is on members individually and then the family as a whole.

Decision-making is necessary in order to make choices, and choice is a key element in most definitions of leisure. If one is going to enhance one's own and the family's quality of life, one must be able to make optimal choices, thus, one must be able to make optimal decisions. The key to this component is helping participants to identify problems and potential or existing conflict in relation to recreation and leisure choices for themselves and for the family. Through exercise, games and discussion, participants will be assisted in identifying problems, alternative solutions, and the impact of alternative solutions. Participants will further be assisted in choosing optimal solutions, implementing them and evaluating them. The two-pronged focus in this component, as it has been, is to assist the individual with his/her decision-making style, and to assist the family with compromise, consensus and its decision-making style.

If one is aware of self and leisure and has strong problem-solving, decision-making skills, one must still be aware of resources and their implication for experiencing recreation and leisure. In this component, through exercises, games and discussions, participants could be asked to identify various resources available in their home and community through which certain activities can be experienced. Participants might also be asked to identify different barriers to using or utilizing given resources. Individual and family resources such as transportation, time, finances, equipment, etc. will impact on the recreation and leisure choices made, and could also be discussed in this component.

Many recreation activities involve social interaction and social interaction involves communication. Thus, a key element of this component (social interaction) will be communication. There are numerous exercises and games that a leisure educator could use to improve or enhance communication skills. Through other exercises, games and discussions, participants could explore and share what they perceive their and the family's strengths and weaknesses are relative to social interaction. Other elements that could be explored in relation to social interaction include: environments (homes, churches, indoor, outdoor, etc.), types of activities (sports, crafts, etc.), types of groups (two, three or four, small group, large group, etc.), and nature of social interaction most enjoyed (cooperative vs competitive, or peer, family, spousal, etc.). It ought to be interesting for family members to explore and share this component as social interaction and the ability to effectively and honestly communicate is vital to any relationship.

Finally, the leisure educator must be prepared to teach or to guide participants to where they could learn various recreation skills (tennis, pottery, dance, etc.), so that they are able to optimize their recreation and leisure experiences. Participants should be able to identify those skills they do or do not possess.

Families, as individuals and as a unit have significant time available for experiencing recreation and leisure, and their choices singularly and collectively impact on the unit as a whole. Leisure education has the potential to facilitate intra-family interaction and



optimal recreation and leisure experiences.

## CONCLUSION

No other profession is specifically charged with the responsibility of educating for leisure; that charge is unique to the recreation and leisure profession. By exploring the components of leisure education, especially self and leisure awareness, the professional has an opportunity to assist family members in exploring intra and inter-personal transactions. Since most of the time families spend together is off-work time, their primary interactions take place in the home and during free time, and it is during these times that they will come to know each other and come to bond or fragment as a group.

The recreation and leisure choices made by each member and the group impact on how the unit will come to be defined. By exploring values, attitudes, behaviors and roles, the professional can help facilitate the meaning of recreation and leisure in the lives of family members, and show how recreation and leisure choices impact on the family unit, and on its quality of life.

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FAMILY LEISURE EDUCATION MODEL

I. SELF-AWARENESS

Self & family

Philosophy  
 Values  
 Attitudes  
 Behaviors  
 Roles  
 Needs  
 Interests  
 Strengths  
 Weaknesses  
 Likes  
 Dislikes  
 Goals

II. LEISURE AWARENESS

Self & family

Recreation  
 Activities (like,  
 dislike, have an  
 interest in, are  
 good at [strengths],  
 are not so good at  
 [weaknesses], that make  
 you think [cognitive],  
 feel [affective], move  
 [psychomotor], interact  
 [social], or contribute  
 to you spiritually  
 Environments  
 Seasons  
 Societal & Family  
 Factors

III. DECISION-MAKING

Self & family

Identify  
 Problems and  
 Conflict  
 Examine  
 alternatives  
 Choosing best  
 alternative  
 Implementing  
 choices  
 Evaluating  
 choices  
 Decision-making  
 Styles

IV. RESOURCES

Self & family

Identify Resources  
 Identify Barriers

V. SOCIAL INTERACTION

Self & family

Communicate  
 Strengths & Weaknesses  
 Environments  
 Activities  
 Groups  
 Nature of Interaction

VI. SKILLS

Self & family

Identify  
 Strengths &  
 Weaknesses  
 Teach and/or  
 facilitate the  
 learning of  
 Recreation skills