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**Helping others Evaluate Leisure Time:
The Free Time Test (FTT)**

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**Helping others Evaluate Leisure Time:
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to create a tool that can help adults consider their free time. Research questions are the following. How did the participants describe the FTT? Is there something that should be changed about the free time test? This instrument was initially created as a result of concepts such as free time and worship (Pieper, 1952), free time and work, deGrazia (1962), history of and meanings of leisure (Goodale and Godbey, 1989), the ideas of solitude (Thoreau, 2008/1854), the concepts of nature and beauty (Muir, 1990/1838), and the intensity of high involvement (Ciskszentmihalyi, 1997). After creating the FTT, I began to use this with students; we would discuss the contents of the exam as well as their opinions. Also, I gave the FTT to participants at several conferences as a part of a presentation. The comments continued to be supportive of this exam. The FTT was evaluated, according to ideas of andragogy and adult education, rather than standard procedures of validity or reliability. Each person can determine if this is helpful; there are no correct answers. (Jarvis, 2001). In addition I wanted to create a tool that is free and easily accessible. Eventually I gave this to many of my colleagues and friends and asked for their input and impressions. And, I also created a shorter version, if they felt this was too long. In addition, we evaluated the FTT in one class of my contemporaries which included a professional language expert. They in particular were looking for wording which was confusing. Students in a recent class gave the FTT to fifteen of their family and friends for their output. Lastly, I gave the FTT to all of the students at our college who were enrolled in an English language class. As a result of all of this, 223 questionnaires were returned to me. The purpose of this was not to consider or evaluate their answers to the actual FTT. Rather, the purpose was to consider their reaction to the FTT. On the FTT used in this study, the first part was kept by the participant; the second part is an evaluation of the FTT and was returned to the researcher. The first part of the FTT is kept by the individual in order to promote a self-directed educational experience about their free time. The second part of the questionnaire was returned to the researcher. According to the purpose of the study, the following results reflect the participant's responses. Quotes represent direct statements from the participants, and if there is a number behind a statement or sentence, this indicates how many people indicated this thought or idea. Although we received 223 questionnaires, the numbers will not add to this sum because some of the 50 participants did not complete each question. The Table One is general information about what the individual thought about the FTT.

Introduction

From the beginning of time, people have met to discuss, to plan, and to learn for a variety of reasons (Candy, 1991; Dewey, 1995; Field, 2000; Foley, 2001; Hansen, 2000). This process of learning was also a part of the Greek society called “*scholē*” meaning leisure and school. This ideal learning, guided by Aristotle, was a personal and civil self-improvement program focusing on individual excellence and virtue. The final result of this personal and civil education was a more cohesive society and supportive community. These early roots of self-directed learning (SDL) attest to the power and influence of personal education over the lifetime (Goodale & Godbey, 1988).

A frantic and busy lifestyle characterizes some people and may be a reflection of this modern era. Some may focus their energy and time on work and career; however, work is usually not the most important aspect of our lives. Most people focus their time on their family as well as their personal life, including friends, and some leisure activities. This meshing of interests may cause a collision of time as well as frustration. Therefore, it is important to consider our free time. This postindustrial society can create a climate of frustration and hurriedness. Ongoing news reports, sometimes creating a sensation of significance and impending doom, can multiply these negative thoughts. Adding to this there are continuous conversations, intrusions, and distractions into one’s schedule especially because of ‘modern’ conveniences such as mobile phones, or ‘tablets’ and all of its applications. Therefore, we need more tools to help us to learn about leisure. Leisure offers one the space in order to learn, to be involved in physical activity, time for reflection, and a freedom from paid work (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991).

Literature

Regular leisure-time physical activity plays an important role in the promotion of physical health and well-being of an individual. In addition, regular leisure-time physical activity has also been reported to have a positive effect on the prevention as well as rehabilitation of illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, osteoporosis, cancer and diabetes (Ekelund, Luan, Sherar, Esliger, Griew, and Cooper, 2012). The common decline of physical activity varies significantly as some individuals maintain their physical activity level, while others are faced with limitations due to factors like workload, age, and health problems. Regular leisure-time physical activity has been found to promote physical health and the well-being of an individual and is especially important in the life of children (Sigmund, Sigmundova, Hamrik, and Geckova, 2014).

Qian, Yarnal, and Almeida (2013) emphasize the value of leisure time, and that there is less stress within individuals who have more free time. One important issue is the scheduling and content of free time. Based on Chelladurai (1992) there are two approaches toward physical activity: activities organized, prescribed or supervised by someone else, and activities in which one is free to make his/her own decisions.

Also, it is appropriate to consider the motivational factors that are involved in this choice of free time. Lindner and Kerr (2001) focused on several studies with school children in Hong Kong. These studies show the importance of motivation for healthy behavior. For example, in sport participation, it is influenced by an interaction of issues such as self-confidence, experience, personal choice, or level of conditioning.

Leisure time activity as sports, conditioning exercises, household tasks such as yardwork, cleaning and home repair, and other activities. Furthermore, physical activities can be light, moderate or heavy intensity; those that are willful or compulsory; or those that are daily or weekend activities. The health-related components of physical fitness include cardiorespiratory exercise, muscular endurance and strength, and flexibility. Children should be encouraged to have one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily (Chun, Lee, Kim, and Heo, 2012).

Sanghee, Younghill, Byunggook, and Jinmoo (2012) showed evidence that having positive leisure experiences helps people handle stress by providing a time for a review of one's life as well as to discover other interests. Waters and Moore (2002) showed that social leisure activities contributed more to the meaning of leisure than solitary leisure activities. However, results also demonstrated that solitary leisure activities play a significant role in maintaining psychological health and provides a sense of personal identity.

Adding to this there are three ways that conditions may result in leisure that can promote well-being and work-life balance. According to Waters and Moore (2012), leisure activities reduce stress and help people cope with difficulty. Leisure activity serves as a preventive mechanism helping to ward off poor health and risky behaviors before they occur. Their conclusion is that leisure can contribute to physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health through prevention, coping and transcendence.

Some writers focus on leisure activities that can be effective on health and well-being. They suggest to work closely with students or clients to discover new leisure interest and activities. The aim is to help the client identify an 'ideal' leisure lifestyle, and then assist the client to bridge the gap between their current and ideal leisure lifestyle. On the other hand, many adult behavior patterns are learned in childhood or influenced by childhood experiences. Some of this refers to the idea of leisure counseling. Although leisure counseling did not take hold as many wanted, it did leave readers with a variety of ideas that therapists and others in the health profession can use. Carl Rogers introduced person-centered therapy as an alternative to psychology at that time. Its main assumption is that people are intrinsically motivated to reach their full potential (Rogers, 1969). Reflecting this idea we need tools that facilitate authentic, empathic, and unconditional regard. In addition many educators incorporate self-reflection and personal critique in order to gain insight and change (Brookfield, 2000, 1985; Jarvis,).

Adding to this is Iwasaki, Mactavish, Mackay, and Ristock (2006) who discuss the "creation of leisure space," this space can create a sense of perseverance and empowerment. The second is leisure time can offer a positive diversion from stress and a context for rejuvenation and renewal. In this way leisure has provided a positive alternative for deflecting stressful thoughts and an opportunity to recharge with a

different perspective. Also, leisure can impact the individual in a positive way and reduce stress. The first is the importance of developing leisure enhancing attitudes and engagement in childhood. The second suggests that to do this it is important to understand the social and family context. Thirdly, developing positive leisure choices can show the importance of understanding those patterns of child leisure behavior that predict constructive leisure attitudes and engagements in adulthood.

Self-directed learning has the potential to promote change (Danis, 1992, Merriam, 2001). Some learners have helped to change their personal health and lifestyle as a result of its emphasis of learning throughout the lifespan (Connelly, 1998). Also, SDL is the natural way for adults to learn (Knowles, 1984), and this personal learning is evident across all cultures (Lamdin, 1997). SDL is more than an activity of discovery or homework; it is actually a part of the human experience, and a normal part of each adult's life (Confessore, 1992). Self-directed learning promotes life satisfaction, helps one to gain specific information, and occurs in leisure (Merriam, 2001).

In summary, free time can be a forum to learn what is necessary in order to improve one's life and especially one's health. This is a time which must be guarded, or other distractions in our society or lifestyle will replace it. This can be a time for physical activity, personal reflection, and time for retirees to pursue their unique interests. There are a variety of tests and measures that help to determine the extent of one's free time. These are somewhat based on measures of quantification from previous exams, they are costly, and seemingly out of reach of the general public. The Free Time Test (FTT) is an attempt to create a tool to be freely used without being measured or evaluated, reflecting the ideas of SDL and lifelong education.

Methods

The point of this paper is to create a tool to assess free time use and meaning. The purpose of this study was to create and evaluate a tool that may help adults consider their free time. Research questions are the following. Are there any questions that participants especially like? Are there any questions that participants do not like and should be removed? Is there something we should do to change the free time test?

I wanted to create a tool that adults can easily access. This instrument was initially created as a result of theoretical perspectives from various classes and lectures. These questions were based on concepts from authors such as Pieper (1952) (free time and worship), deGrazia (1962) (free time and work), Goodale and Godbey (1988) (what is leisure), Thoreau (2008/1854) (the idea of solitude), Muir (1990/1838) (the concept of nature and beauty), Csikszentmihalyi (1997) (highly involved in one's activities). In the Appendix Two is an explanation of each question. After creating the FTT, I began giving it to students; we would discuss the contents of the exam. Also, I gave the FTT to participants at several conferences.

Eventually I gave this to many of my students, contemporaries, colleagues, and friends and asked for their input and impressions. In addition, we evaluated the FTT in one class of my contemporaries which included a professional language expert.

They in particular were looking for wording which was confusing. In the beginning of this research I invited a variety of people to participate in this study. I asked approximately 600 people to take this FTT – over various social media outlets. Surprisingly, only one person completed the FTT; there were four others who shared various comments about the test. I also asked ten people who are colleagues on this sport and recreation college – none of them had time to return the questionnaire! As a result of all of this, 216 questionnaires were returned to me. The purpose of this was not to consider or evaluate their answers to the actual FTT. Rather, the purpose was to consider their reaction to the FTT. So if you notice the FTT used in this study, the first part is the actual FTT which was kept by the participant; the second part is was an evaluation of the FTT and returned to the research team.

Results

Table One is the form that we used while giving the FTT. We changed and corrected the FTT due to the answers on this form. This Free Time Test has been evaluated according to the issues of content analysis. Because it has been tested on 223 people who have also indicated their ideas for the FTT we have a more reliable and valid instrument. (Table 1, Appendix).

In Table Two you see the final product of the FTT after changes have been made (Table 2, Appendix).

Discussion

Free time is an important element of our lives. There is the potential during the free time to change and to impact one's life. As a result of the literature we see that this can be time for thinking and reflection, time for physical activity, time to reflect on the past, time to create various strategies in order to change one's life. Therefore it is of interest to learn, to evaluate, and to change more about one's free time. My participants stated that during the FTT that they were able to think about as well as to change their thoughts about their free time. 126 stated that the FTT was very helpful or helpful.

Searle, Mahon, Iso-Ahola, Sdrolias, and van Dyck (1999) show the long term effects of leisure education as a sense of independence and psychological well-being among the elderly. According to this study leisure education increases self-control and contributes to psychological and physical health. Leisure activities are important to enhance a sense of independence by focusing on the evaluation of one's activities. At the same time, older people need to continue to exercise due to the loss of muscle tissue during the aging process. Leisure activities can be used as a tool to enhance older adults' sense of control and competence. For example balance or flexibility exercise may increase the ability for walking, nordic walking, or gardening with one's grandchildren. Similarly, Cho and Yi (2013) discuss how adults need to learn recreational leisure activities for rehabilitation and wellness. A variety of leisure and recreational activities for elders such as exercise class or travel destinations can lessen

the impact of depression and isolation. Park, Kim, Cho, Chung, and Lee (2014) have shown that 30 minutes of moderate or higher intensity physical activity per day and a low-fat diet can lessen the risk of coronary heart diseases for seniors.

From Dearing (2007) we learn how past records of human–environment interactions can provide valuable information for deriving strategies for improving one’s life. This shows us the importance of looking at history in order to gain important information for our future. Similarly Stott, Stott, and Wiles (2009) discuss how communities can learn from history, and Chen and Pang (2012) invite us to learn from the past because our current culture has such an influence on us. Bowl and Tobias (2005) discuss how learning from the past enables us to organize our future. Fredrickson (2000) focuses on the importance of consideration of the past – how one’s past can give affective experiences about one’s future. Often we are repeating in the future what we have enjoyed in the past. A study of history is a well-established phenomenon in all branches of knowledge, and this can also extend to one’s personal life.

We must be careful that our leisure time has the essential amount of physical activity. A large extent of research on physical activity records important information on the lack of physical activity. Although this indicates a problem it does not present a solution. In this research we offer a possible solution for the increasing failure of physical education due to the lack of planning or organizing of one’s free time (Hamrick et al., 2013).

The participants indicated they mainly liked questions 1, 4, 5, 10, and 14. Therefore it is of interest to perhaps add to, or to embellish these questions. Likewise, they indicated they mainly did NOT like questions 3, 8, or 11. Also indicating we should change or augment these three questions.

This thinking about one’s activities helps the individual to make some new decisions about their use of free time. One participant stated, “I will start to do more sports in my free time.” And another said, “I will think more about what I would like to do, and I won’t use excuses like I am too busy.” Interestingly, the most popular question was one concerning reflecting on one’s past during childhood.

We learn important lessons in the context or situation of one’s daily life (Lindeman, 1928/1961). Although vocational education can help the learner arrive at specific knowledge, true education is that which will reflect one’s individuality and uniqueness. He states education should extend beyond the classroom to incorporate self-expression, recreation and leisure. Therefore when we create some perspective for adults it should focus on their practical and daily life. My participants were sharing about their individual choices and their own activities.

Self-planning is the predominant means of adult learning because of a variety of reasons (Tough, 1971). The learner knows what is the best course of action, or feels he/she would lose time by consulting someone else, may not trust others, or they may be more highly skilled than others. The learner decides details of the learning activity and is prepared to pay the cost. Similar to Houle’s (1961) stimulators, Tough found that most learning projects include four or five other human resources and most of these are amateur, especially friends, neighbors, or acquaintances. Non-human resources are also paramount in this process from television, to specific books, and

other printed material like pamphlets or newspapers. Similarly the FTT allows the individual to choose and to plan their own activity of how they would like to change.

Since most educators are familiar with pedagogy, Knowles (1984) defined andragogy in contrast with pedagogy. He outlines the familiar hallmarks of andragogy: the learner is self-directed, the vast experiences of an adult are an important part of one's education, the learner is at a stage in life where he/she is ready to learn, adult learning is problem centered, and the adult is internally motivated. The FTT reflects ideas of andragogy by allowing the individual to fill out the exam in their own style. Also the FTT is not standardized so there is no impression of being compared to another individual.

Similar to Lindeman's (1928/1961) connection of education to art, Knowles (1984) describes andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. This art and science of learning allows for the individual learner to incorporate one's unique culture and various ways of learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). The facilitator will encourage active participation from learners and incorporate one's life situation into the learning process. Andragogy's informality allows the learner to be actively involved in the program and parameters of the learning experience. As a result of this research I have seen the free time test can enable the individual to evaluate and improve his/her free time. This self-directed learning can help foster lifelong learning as to how to use one's free time to ameliorate problems in their life, family, community.

The FTT is an open ended questionnaire. This tool is based on concepts of SDL (Caffarella and Merriam, 2000), humanist counseling (Rogers, 1969), and self-reflection (Jarvis, 2001). All of the questions are based on previous writings of leisure philosophers as Pieper (1952) (free time and worship), deGrazia (1962) (free time and work), Goodale and Godbey (1988) (what is leisure), Thoreau (2008/1854) (the idea of solitude), Muir (1990/1838) (the concept of nature and beauty), Csikszentmihalyi (1997) (highly involved in one's activities). Content analysis from 233 participants created a valid and reliable tool. This FTT may be used to enable adults to consider their free time. This open ended questionnaire will allow the individual to pause and consider their leisure. Often overlooked our free time can be more than spontaneous action controlled by others, or tiredness due to lack of physical activity. It is the time to reclaim our lives.

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Appendix

Table 1. ~~~~~

Please give your opinion! (This part of FTT will be returned to the researcher.)
 What did you think about this test? () waste of time () more or less so-so () helpful () very helpful
 How would you improve this free time test?
 I really like question number: because:
 I do not like question number: because:
 Any other ideas or comments:
 FTT has been compiled by....You can email your thoughts
 The following demographic data is only for measuring the reliability/validity of the FTT.
 What is your age? _____ What is your nationality? _____
 Male () Female ()
 Check all that apply for you: I am working full time () I am a student () I am retired () student and work ().
 Check all that apply for you: I am single () married () partner () I stay at home with children () I have children () I am widowed () I have grandchildren ().
 Thanks for your help!

Table 2.

As a result of the answers and the research this is how we have changed the FTT. Note that according to the research we felt we should do something new or different with the highest positive answers and the highest negative answers.

Free Time Test(FTT).

This is an exercise to help you to think about your free time. Complete the questions in anyway you want. I recommend for you to write your answers and then to share them with another person, who knows you, for their feedback. At least read through each question, write down or think about your thoughts. Feel free to skip any question you feel is not appropriate for you.

(option to insert a picture here)

Activities you love doing.

1. List the activities you enjoy participating in during your "free time." Describe what you "love" doing. If you had a day where you could freely choose your activities, how would this day look?
2. Which of these activities have you NOT participated in during the past month?
3. Consider the free time of this past weekend, Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. This is almost 30-40 hours of available time depending on your situation. How was this time spent? If you want to go into detail you can fill in a schedule hour by hour.

(option to insert a picture here)

Think: How much free time do you really have? What would you like to do with your free time? Do you feel that you are wasting time?

Learning from the past.

4. List the activities you enjoyed as a child. Describe more about your childhood activities.
5. What has happened with these activities, is there anything you would like to continue from this time of play?

Think: Children are natural at play. If they are safe and healthy they are happy almost anywhere. Do you remember a time like this in your own life?

(option to insert a picture here)

Learning from others.

6. Name one activity you are involved with but had to learn, or were influenced by someone else.

Think: Is there something new to learn, such as a new class or some new activity?

7. Who do you spend free time with? Who do you enjoy being with? Are these relationships adding to your time or taking away?

8. Is there someone who has been a positive example for you, or a negative example for you in the use of free time and in what way?

9. Will you go to some activity alone? Can you be alone and still enjoy this time?

Think: One day all of us will be alone, how will this affect you and your use of free time?

What is our response when we see someone at some social event and they are alone?

(option to insert a picture here)

Inspirational free time.

10. Is there anything you do in your free time that is especially meaningful? This may be similar to #1. (For example, meaningful conversation, volunteering, music, reading, being with people you love, animals, sports, etc.)

Think: If you do not have anything in this category – think about what would you like to do?

11. Does your free time consist of time alone to think, or for inspiration, or religious activity, or personal worship?

Think: What do you think about this question? Is it appropriate for you?

Dangerous free time.

12. Are there activities in your free time that may have some negative influence on you or others?

Think? Is there something you are doing that you should stop? Or, is your free time used by yourself or others in your life to promote something negative?

(option to insert a picture here)

Let's start something new.

13. What is anything that you want to change about your free time?

14. Is there any new activity you would like to learn?