

Careers in Serious Leisure

Leisure Studies in a Global Era

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Careers in Serious Leisure

From Dabbler to Devotee in Search of Fulfillment

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Preface

John Berger, an English art critic, novelist, painter, and poet, once asked: "Is boredom anything less than the sense of one's faculties slowly dying?" The fulfillment career, the subject of this book, offers an antidote to the scourge of boredom, by pointing to the many opportunities to realize one's own unique gifts (faculties), talents, and character. In short, to realize one's own potential as a human being. It is probably true that most people most of the time are not bored, for this state of mind is disagreeable enough to drive them to find something more interesting to do. What they find is often only marginally better, however, if the data describing the low level of appeal of modern entertainment television (one of the world's most popular leisure activities) constitute a valid sign. Self-fulfillment is not the easiest road to happiness and well-being, but it may be argued that it is one of the most effective and surefire routes to these goals and their deepest realization.

This book, using the concept of career and the framework of the serious leisure perspective, examines the many signposts marking the fulfillment career. This career begins with an initial interest in a serious pursuit, which, if followed, leads to its efflorescence many years later in amateurism, hobbyism, volunteering, or devotee work. Years later, such careers are the stuff of autobiographies, as their authors look back on how they unfolded (e.g., Booth, 2000). This is a substantial undertaking, leaving thus little space in this book for allied considerations. That is, I cannot examine here such thorny issues as dropping out of school, being unable to afford advanced education, lacking role models in fulfilling activities, and lacking resources with which to pursue serious leisure. Nonetheless, if a person is to find a fulfilling career, there is no gainsaying that these and other antecedent conditions may be crucial.

Be that as it may, such issues have already been considered theoretically and empirically, whereas the fulfillment career spanning many years has not. Outside the field of leisure studies, developmental psychology has come closest of all disciplines to shed light

on the fulfillment career. Unfortunately for the latter, however, it lacks a concept of leisure (e.g., Mannell, Kleiber, & Staempfli, 2006, pp. 112–113), thereby rendering it incapable of conceptualizing the vital role of the ‘serious pursuits’ (serious leisure and devotee work) in self-fulfillment and personality development. Moreover, these pursuits also serve as linchpins in the creation of optimal happiness, well-being, and positive lifestyle (e.g., Haworth, 2004; Stebbins, 2009).

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