

LEISURE MEANINGS, EXPERIENCES AND BENEFITS:
A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF YOUNG ADULTS

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2007

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To all of my loving family, friends and educators who have inspired my academic curiosity and instilled in me the willpower to achieve such a milestone

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study could not have been accomplished without the encouragement and assistance from many people in my life. My heartfelt appreciation is extended to all those who offered me help along the way. First and foremost, I must honor my mother in Heaven who instilled me with the knowledge that the pursuit of wisdom will always provide a rewarding life. I am forever grateful for the unconditional love and support of my dear parents Edward and Debra Trujillo. I admire my father, who has worked hard his entire life to ensure that I received the best schooling, and his devoted wife, Debbie, who has been an inspiration, helping me every step of the way and always being there to lean on in my times of need. I am evermore thankful for my advisor and mentor, Dr. Heather Gibson. Without her motivation, guidance and assistance, this study would never have reached its full potential. I also want to thank the faculty, staff and fellow graduate students from the University of Florida that I have encountered during my years as a Florida Gator, especially my dedicated committee members: Dr. Dovie Gamble, Dr. Lori Pennington-Gray and Melinda McAdams. Further, I am thankful for the trust and willingness of the participants of my study, who sat patiently while I interviewed them. Finally, I want to extend a warm gratitude to my wonderful circle of family and friends for all of their love and encouragement, particularly Nicholas Serre, my behind-the-scenes cameraman who was with me every step of the way. I love, admire and am grateful for all of them.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

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August 2007

Chair: Heather Gibson

Major: Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

The purpose of this study was to better understand the meanings, experiences and benefits of leisure among young adults from the Netherlands and the United States. This study also set out to identify the mediating effects of subcultural groupings such as nationality, family, friends, work circles and interest groups in a period characterized by globally connected, interactive new media and technology. Further, a goal of this study was to better understand the social and cultural capital created by the leisure of these young adults to learn whether or not the leisure participation of young adulthood encourages community involvement. Guided by a symbolic interactionist perspective, this study used an ethnographic method, whereby observational data and in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to examine the lived leisure experiences of young Dutch and American adults. Purposive, snowball and theoretical sampling were utilized to ensure that a balanced representation of nationality, gender, age and leisure interests was included in the study. Grounded theory techniques were used to analyze and interpret the data and to develop the relationships among themes. Six interrelated patterns were evident in the data. These were

- Leisure meanings
- Leisure experiences
- Leisure benefits

- The creation of social and cultural capital
- The influence of new media technology
- The life domains of young adulthood

These themes in turn were used to develop a grounded theory of the leisure of young Dutch and American adults. To begin, Dutch and American participants revealed that leisure is understood as meaning non-work, free-time whereby a “fun time” can be experienced. Further, findings suggest that young adults desire a balance of personal and social experiences. The participants revealed that psychological well-being is the most noted benefit of their leisure. Additionally, with the exception of social interaction and informal effects, the leisure of young Dutch and American adults does not generally create social and cultural capital available to society at large. Accordingly, this investigation proposes that when new media technology is used for private entertainment purposes, community-based leisure activities decrease, in turn impacting the amount of social capital created by the leisure of young adults. It is recommended that leisure services utilize new media to emphasize the social and cultural benefits of leisure to young adults in an attempt to further engage these generation Xs and Ys in their communities.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that young adulthood consists of two life domains, those of work and leisure, which are distinguishable by freedom of choice and the element of pleasure. It is argued that family and friends do not constitute their own life domain but rather reciprocally affect both domains of work and leisure. However, the results reveal that it is possible for obligatory work to be viewed as fun and leisurely, in turn creating synergy, a mutually beneficial union of the two pillars of life. Nevertheless, pure leisure persists when young adults have the opportunity to freely choose how and when to experience a “fun time.” Future research is necessary in order to better understand what motivates (i.e. nationality, pop culture, friendships) young adults to choose specific activities in search of leisure experiences.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Do you agree that there are three fundamental aspects to your life, that when taken together encompass the staples of your existence? From a Western perspective, work, family and leisure represent these three pillars of life, all of which demand a balanced portion of our time (Kelly, 1987). Nonetheless, these three dimensions of life do not act independently; rather, each and every one reciprocally affects the other in creating self, community and culture. The time allocated for work/school, family and leisure interconnect and compliment each other, attempting to create synergy, which is a cooperative action of all three elements (Kelly & Freysinger, 1999). However, just over 100 years ago, things were very different.

Amidst a time of deplorable working conditions during the American Industrial Revolution, social activists documented a lack of leisure participation and noted the need for wholesome recreation and shared community involvement among the working classes (Putnam, 1993). Jane Addams, Luther Gulick and Joseph Lee (leaders credited with the formation of the Recreation Movement) ushered in settlement houses and community centers in cities overrun by factories (Fisher, 1981). The new community centers were designed to provide public community services and recreation in the hope of fostering shared neighborhood cooperation among citizens. This social reform effort was guided by the philosophy that leisure creates autonomous, intrinsically motivated behavior that furthers the moral development of the community, as well as of the individual. Putnam (2000) describes how increasing the common good, as well as promoting social values and education through community engagement, became the backbone of the recreation movement. Community centers were utilized as a means of fashioning the ideal citizen through democratic processes that “attempted to create public spaces in which community members could become involved in governance and influence the course of

community affairs” (Glover, 2004a, p.64). Before an increased pace of life, the 20th century was originally marked by an integral connection between recreation, democracy, public good, and broader societal concerns that encouraged leisurely volunteer engagement among community members.

In more recent times, regarding leisure as a commodity to be consumed, as opposed to an interactive experience impacting the balance of life, helps to explain why there has been a decline in the participation of social structures that generate social capital. Putnam (1995) (in his infamous essay, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”) documents a recession in the participation rates of community organizations, political activist parties, and in effect all opportunities for association. Diminishing community involvement gives way to a loss of societal commitment towards shared values, norms and goals. Similarly, Putnam and Gross (2002) reveal a reduction in the memberships of civic organizations promoting social capital such as Boy Scouts of America, The American Red Cross and the League of Women Voters.

Putnam (1995) proposed four reasons that contribute to declining civic engagement:

- The increased pace of life with more pressures and longer working hours
- A decentralization of city involvement due to suburban sprawl
- New electronic entertainment and mass media starting with television
- A generational shift of values from the civic-minded War Generation known as the GI’s to the me-oriented, “idealist” values of the Boomers (Howe & Strauss, 1991).

However, currently it remains to be seen how today’s young adults who comprise Generations X and Y, born between 1961 and 2001, will fair as they begin to take control of society’s positions of power and economic resources. There is hope then for a change in community engagement considering that Generation X are classified as reactives who are socially-minded in addition to Generation Y who are considered to be civics that value collectivism and structure (Strauss &

Howe, 1991). Certainly, Cufaude (2000) suggests that Generations X and Y represent periods characterized by “dramatic increases in choices, flexibility, and more revolutionary change” (p.74).

Nonetheless, even though it seems as if the American leisure services industry has currently been lost to the world of consumerism, it is suggested that there is an evolving desire to revisit the foundational stance that launched the recreation movement (Putnam, 1993). DeGraaf and Jordan (2003) purport, “Parks, recreation and leisure services professionals have an opportunity to make conscious choices about making a difference in our communities by promoting the development of social capital” (p.25). As communities continue to be torn between the well being of individuals versus that of a communal society, there is a need to reunite the two spheres by finding an agreeable solution. The common denominator, believed to possess the potential to empower the individual while appeasing and resolving the democratic concerns of communities, lies within the scope of socio-cultural capital (Putnam, 1995).

Viewing recreational programs as simply entertainment or a commodity to be purchased can then decrease strong citizenship and limit the potential to build social capital (Crompton, 1999). Rudimentary characteristics of leisure services are the ability to bring people together, create social ties and ultimately develop social networks of connected people with shared resources. Inkpen and Tsang (2005) illustrate that in order for relational ties to work as a collective and be regarded as active networks that transfer knowledge, it is necessary that the group of people have had previous relationships, in addition to relatively frequent contact. As technology continues to progress and society moves into a knowledge-based period, the benefits of networking are limitless. As networks continue to become globally-connected due to social

changes influenced by interactive media and the World Wide Web, leisure practices and experiences will persist across socio-cultural boundaries.

However, despite noted cross-cultural integration of leisure experiences, there is a lack of consensus as to whether or not popular culture and new media forms actually increase leisure participation and facilitate the growth of public good. Some scholars report that interactive technologies such as the Internet actually diminish social connections and socially isolate individuals (Kraut et al., 1998; Nie & Erbring, 2000). The potential of leisure to build social relationships may weaken when new media encourages privatized entertainment, causing individuals to socially withdraw from their community (Kraut et al., 1998). Conversely, from a more positive point of view, some argue that when used for informational purposes, new media may actually create leisure opportunities, even if in cyber space, for raised awareness, public expression, political discussion and interaction that were not available before (Dehlgren, 2000; Eijck & Rees, 2000; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Scheufele, 2002; Shah, Cho, Eveland Jr., & Kwak, 2005). Ultimately, new media technology, communication and interaction may increase leisure's ability to foster civic engagement and create social and cultural capital for all society (Shah et al., 2005).

Crumlish (2004) alludes to a trend in digital civic organizing and online nonprofit efforts when he noticed, "the Internet being used more widely by charities and by neighborhood organizations" (p.210). Leisure services offer opportunities for civic engagement through interactive communication, involvement, and autonomous participation in activities sought by the individual. These activities further facilitate civic reliance and open-mindedness, which are two basic democratic practices. Although online community forums are founded on the good intent of active involvement in the process of the experience, they can foster privatized

interaction and commercial interests. Nevertheless, Bagdikian (2004) illustrates how instrumental Internet pursuits have been in activating both public thinking and voting for 18-24 year olds, who traditionally have the lowest participation at the ballot boxes. Further, McCaughey and Ayers (2003) describe the web as, “the doorway to a public sphere” (p.101).

As interactive media becomes more widely available and knowledge becomes more readily accessible through intra-networks of connected people, assimilation and cultural homogenization of leisure experiences are predicted to continue from shared resources. However, significant cultural differences may remain due to freedom of choice and culturally based pastimes. Shamir (1992) argues that with the option to choose, subcultural identities can develop and flourish. As a result, leisure has the potential to resist the forces of globalization and homogenization, and to reinforce subcultural affiliation and heterogeneity within society. Consequently, there is a need to look at the role of leisure in people’s lives. One way of doing this has been to look at the personal, social and cultural benefits of leisure to everyday life. Returning then to the concern for leisure’s role in life, Kelly (1999) reveals the following

Leisure is bound to both the roles and developmental requirements of life. In fact, from this perspective it may be quite central to life, not residual or secondary at all. It is a primary setting for social bonding and expression as well as for human development (p.57).

Although particular types of leisure practices and meanings can vary across cultures, the contextual benefits derived from experiences transcend all social, cultural and demographic boundaries. Because leisure is intrinsically motivated, it can contribute to individuals’ psychological well-being, in ways such as enhanced mental health, personal growth and satisfaction, as well as physiological health, such as an improved physical condition (Driver, 1990).

In addition to the many personal benefits, there is a surplus of social and cultural capital as well as economic and environmental advantages for communities that are a direct result of leisure. These benefits continue to evolve as the world grows and changes with each passing generation and time period. Some examples of social benefits include, but are not limited to: reduced social isolation, community involvement, social mobility, pride in community, environmental awareness and an enhanced world view (Driver, 1990). Pieper (1963) argues that as a benefit to community, leisure is fundamental to the creation of culture. Cultural benefits then extend to include cultural awareness, cultural identity, and cultural acceptance of others. Further, Driver and Bruns (1999) explain the Benefits Approach to Leisure (BAL) as a paradigm for better managing leisure research, services and development. According to BAL the benefits of leisure and recreation are either “an improved condition”, “the prevention of a worse condition,” and/or “the realization of a specific satisfying psychological experience ” (Driver & Bruns 1999, p.354). These three types of leisure benefits have both personal as well as socio-cultural implications.

Statement of the Problem

Discussions about the decline in social capital (Putnam, 1993, 2000), the increase in the pace of life and societal commodification (Godbey, 2003), the trend towards public and private commercialization of leisure (Arai & Pedlar, 2003), the influence of globalization due to new technology and interactive media (Crawford, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Rojek, 2005) and the potential of interactive media to augment social capital (Scheufele, 2002; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001) have largely been presented within a North American, particularly United States, context. With the increasing influence of globalization, interactive technology and the rise of a 24-hour society, where businesses must compete globally and not just locally or even nationally, are Western Europeans experiencing changes similar to Americans in their leisure meanings and practices? In

turn, are the Western Europeans experiencing similar trends in relation to social capital and civic engagement?

Roberts (1997) argues in the UK context that “a destandardization of the life course” in general is occurring in part due to changes in life situations of young people, such as cohabitation and the prolonging of early adulthood as a result of traveling and higher education. In turn, a greater variety of life events are being experienced within young adulthood, and futures are characterized by more uncertainty. Roberts also explains that, “There is no longer a normal situation for a person aged 18, 21, or 25, and this is a symptom of youth’s new condition” (p.3). He reveals how young people, more so than other age groups, are vulnerable to the latest fashion trends that further a consumer culture, and are more frequently involved in a variety of community recreation interests. Further, Roberts reveals that as a result of a common youth culture, “There are no longer any clear social class differences in the kinds of music that young people listen to, what they wear, or the leisure places to which they go” (p.8). However, similar to the North American context, Roberts and Parsell (1994) reveal that educated middle class individuals tend to participate more frequently in structured leisure activities than those from the working class, although the types of pursuits remain the same.

Currently little research has been conducted that examines the changing leisure patterns of young adults, especially within a Western European context. However for a sample of Spanish Europeans, Esteve, Martin, and Lopez (1999) found that effort level, social interaction, and purpose of behavior are the underlying dimensions of leisure meanings. Additionally, Jung and Moleda-Zdziech (1998) reveal that as a result of European cultural policies, media reform and the development of media markets, a co-existence of public providers and global commercial leisure sectors has developed throughout Eastern Europe with minimal regulation. Further,

research into changing European leisure pursuits and meanings has generally been investigated from simply an adolescent perspective (Roberts, 1997).

Until now, no known empirical studies exist that have compared American residents and Western Europeans in relation to leisure meanings and benefits. Moreover, Yuen, Pedlar and Mannell (2005) explicitly state that there is a need for future research to examine social leisure experiences that promote shared meanings and benefits in relation to globally-connected, interactive communications that are largely the domain of the younger generations. Further, Yuen et al. assert

One's understanding of the common good developed through leisure is more meaningful through shared experiences and social learning. Thus far, leisure has been discussed as a context for the development of shared norms and values; however, with further exploration of this context needs to be supported by certain structures that facilitate meaningful interactions, that is, structures that enable free-flowing and collaborative action (p. 513-114).

Yuen et al. argue that shared leisure experiences provide a context to develop relationships that foster social capital, with the potential to raise individual awareness of the common good, as well as the idea that leisure is an intrinsically motivated behavior contributing to social learning. They emphasize the need to explore today's leisure pursuits and behaviors, as mediated by freely interactive, connected technology, by which said "structures" have the ability to support "meaningful interactions."

There are potentially three outcomes to this investigation:

- A study of young American and Western European¹, namely Dutch adults, can make unique contributions to the body of knowledge.
- New knowledge about evolving leisure trends, meanings and subsequent benefits may be discovered using a cross-cultural approach.

¹ The Western European perspective is provided by young adults residing in the Netherlands.

- Data analysis may also reveal the mediating effects of nationality, work circles, family, friends, leisure interests, and most importantly interactive technology.

Much of what the leisure field knows about leisure meanings was conducted in the 1980's. Over 25 years later, the relevance of these definitions and meanings are being questioned in today's information era characterized by globalization and technological change. It is further questioned if these meanings are the same for Generations X and Y, as compared to previous generations of the same lifestage whose leisure meanings are documented in the 1980s studies. Do Dutch young adults hold the same meanings of leisure as young Americans? Is a loss of social capital evident in the Netherlands to the degree that it has been experienced in the United States?

From the knowledge gained, both public and private leisure providers will benefit by better understanding the social dynamics of leisure experiences and the effects they have on continued participation and engagement. Implications for leisure practice include programming and provision benefits to the fields of leisure, tourism, outdoor and community recreation and recreational therapy, especially related to young people. In an attempt to raise awareness of leisurely vacations and the priority of accorded leisure, leisure practitioners would be wise to harness the power of subcultural affiliation through globally-connected, interactive technology to spread knowledge regarding the personal, social and cultural benefits of leisure. Ideally, the goal of this investigation aims for an age when citizens, as well as private providers and public policy makers, fully understand the social benefits of shared leisure experiences and meanings of a global society; so that we can begin to manage the array of socio-cultural capital, increasing civic productivity and public good for both current and future generations.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to better understand cross-cultural meanings and experiences associated with the leisure of young Western adults, namely residents of the Netherlands and the

United States. Further, this investigation aimed to learn about the mediating effects of such subcultural groupings as nationality, work circles and leisure interests in a social time period that has been characterized by rapid information, communication and technological advancement. In addition, a goal of this study was to further understand socio-cultural capital resulting from leisure and to determine if leisure participation increases the amount of community inter-connectedness experienced by these young adults.

Theoretical Rationale

Four theoretical approaches were used to understand the meanings associated with leisure at this point in the 21st century. These are

- Symbolic interactionism
- Social capital
- Lifecycle
- Generational theory

Symbolic interactionism reveals how leisure experiences are shared, and create meanings and symbols that are commonly accepted. Leisure is known to offer many personal advantages, however, with shared leisurely experiences, opportunities for social and cultural benefits emerge.

The amount of socio-cultural capital available to society in part depends on the availability of knowledge and the development of technology afforded within a specific period of time.

Lifecycle and generational theories reveal how cohorts of young adults influence trends in popular culture, ultimately impacting the types of leisure available and the amount of social capital created for society.

Symbolic Interactionism

Leisure meanings, experiences and benefits are not the result of individual action alone. They need to be grounded in a social and cultural framework. A symbolic interactionist perspective is concerned with meaning making constructed from the lived experiences and

relationships of ordinary life. This perspective utilizes social processes for interactions among people, symbols of communication, interpretations of the experiences, and the socially constructed self or selves. Herbert Blumer coined the term “symbolic interaction” in 1937 to reference

the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or "define" each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their "response" is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior. (Blumer, 1978, p.97).

It is commonly accepted among leisure researchers that socio-cultural processes interact with shared experiences to create meaning. Meaning has been defined by Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) as the following

An interpretation of the significance of a situation, act, idea or object with reference to how one should respond. Social interaction and social organization are made possible by the existence of culturally shared meaning. However, the subjective significance of a behavior of other persons to an actor is determined by his individual past experience as well as by his internalized culturally defined meanings. Hence, the meaning of a social situation varies to a certain extent from one person to another even in the same culture. Each participant may have subjective meanings that make social interaction and communication possible. (p.250)

Based on this perspective, individuals react depending on the meanings they derive from a particular situation. In turn this affects the relationships they form. A common language can be a symbol used to attach meaning to a given context. Creating shared meanings is the goal of social interaction. Meaning has to be formed internally and then affirmed outwardly by another sharing the same experience. Just as we act towards others according to the meanings they have for us, we too develop a sense of self based on this interaction (Blumer, 1969). Nonetheless, socio-cultural norms and processes also influence socialization and meaning making over the lifespan. Thus, meaning derived from interaction is created more so by subjective interpretation

than by objective reality (Weber, 1947). Further, Blumer (1969) alludes to the fact that meanings can change and develop over time as interpersonal interactions are negotiated.

Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) reveal that symbolic meanings and benefits associated with pleasurable activities form the basis of leisure. According to Kelly (1999) learned skills, cultural values, and life course development create an environment for leisure that encourages shared meaning. Trujillo and Krizek (1994) illustrate the importance of settings and the symbols that are associated within the context of recreation and sporting experiences. Further, gender-role socialization becomes apparent when individuals are more likely to participate and enjoy particular activities that society associates with their specific gender, such as football for men and gymnastics for women (McPherson, Curtis & Loy; 1989).

Lifestage and Generational Frameworks

Researchers of lifecycle theories suggest that life's journey can be summarized as a patterned series of stages through which all individuals travel from infancy and childhood to late adulthood and retirement. This concept has been explored by researchers from many fields of study including sociology, psychology, economics, and marketing (Cohen, 1987; Vernon, 1966; Wells & Gubar, 1966). Mieczkowski (1990) stated, "One of the most important demographic variables influencing demand is age and the stage in the lifecycle. In fact, the age structure of the population and its changes are of vital interest to tourism and recreation planners" (p.157).

The life stage model of Levinson (1978) reveals distinct trends associated with particular seasons of life. Early adulthood is a stage that hinges on becoming secure in a self-identity and beginning to form serious relationships alongside social change. Levinson et al. explains the first step of adulthood as being the transition to becoming a part of the real, "adult world." Experimenting with new possibilities, making only tentative commitments to any one choice,

and feelings of individuality distinguish what Levinson et al. call the novice phase, from approximately age 18 to 28. After becoming comfortable in the “adult world,” the next step is into the thirties where a more stable life structure is formed, often involving a new home, relationship, career or hobby. Eventually, during the age 30 transition, the pieces fit together and the time comes to settle down and become committed to family, friends, and a community. Erikson (1950) has referred to this period of young adulthood as a period when “The young adult must risk the immersion of self in a sense of ‘we,’ creating one or more truly intimate relationships, or suffers feelings of isolation” (Bee, 1987, p.60). Intimacy becomes important at this life stage because feeling wanted and needed by others leads to self-acceptance and security in one’s personal identity.

The theoretical framework relating to generations focuses on life’s seasons as well as cohorts. Cohorts are groups of people born around the same time period who generally pass through lifestages together while sharing similar life defining experiences. Strauss and Howe (1991) present a conceptual model attempting to explain the effects of generational shifts in the population. As part of their model, they identify social moments with events in history that seem to shape culture and usher in a new phase of time. The key social moments are purported by Strauss and Howe to occur in an alternating sequence between worldly, outer-focused or external crises and inner-focused spiritual awakenings. As a result of the time lapse between the cycle of social moments, termed a saeculum, four generational types exist: idealist, reactive, civic and adaptive. Idealist generations are revealed to reach adolescence or early adulthood during a spiritual awakening and enter late adulthood in a time of secular crisis. Reactive generations are children during a spiritual awakening and reach midlife during a secular crisis. Civic generations reach adolescence or early adulthood during a secular crisis and enter later adulthood during a

spiritual awakening. Adaptive generations are children during a time of secular crisis and reach midlife in a spiritual awakening.

Due in part to the life stage an individual is in when experiencing a social moment, Strauss and Howe suggest that different personality attributes arise in four generational types. Idealists are said to be visionary, individualistic and spiritual, value principle, religion and education, and tend to over emphasize dogmatism. Reactives tend to be rebellious, pragmatic and materialistic, value liberty, practicality and survival, and can be perceived as amoralistic. Civics can be described as heroic, collegial and rationalistic, value community, technology and affluence, and often appear insensitive. Adaptives are characterized by conformity, sensitivity and culture, value pluralism, expertise and social justice, and can be perceived as superficial because of their ability to adapt to any situation.

Strauss and Howe (1991) revealed a relationship between the four seasons, signifying time periods, and the social moments that influence generational shifts. Winter is associated with a crisis, in which culture is threatened by a great external danger. Spring is correlated with a post-crisis high, where culture and social order are viewed optimistically. Summer can be affiliated with an awakening, where a sudden transformation of values occurs. Finally, Autumn can be described as an unraveling, in which culture and society seem to be falling apart along with the existing external structures.

Currently, six generations are said to comprise the world's population. The G.I. generation, type-cast as civics, is a slowly fading generation consisting of those born between the years of 1901 and 1924. The Silent generation, type-cast as adaptives, are those born between the years of 1925 and 1942. The most researched Boom generation, type-cast as idealists, are those born between the years of 1943 and 1960. Generation X, also known as the thirteenth

generation and type-cast as reactives, are those born between the years of 1961 and 1981.

Generation Y, also known as the millennial generation and type-cast as civics, are those born after the year of 1981. Finally, the adaptive Generation Z are those born after the year 2001 to the present; yet not much has been determined about their cohort. Currently, the cohorts encompassing the lifestage young adulthood are members of Generation X and Y.

Strauss and Howe (1991) reveal that Generation X are considered reactives because they experienced childhood during a transformation of societal norms that valued youth, which is considered the season of summer. As children, they were the under-protected, “latch-key” children who were often left to raise themselves. This thirteenth generation, known as generation X, was greatly affected by the changing patterns of work and ethics from the boomer generation. Gen X’ers grew up with working mothers, divorced parents, as well as MTV, PCs, and the Internet. AIDS became the big health concern in the 1980’s as many members of this generation were coming of age. Members of Generation X are known to be pragmatic, entrepreneurial, socially minded, libertarian, and often a-moralistic. They encourage diversity and above all value a high quality of life.

Strauss and Howe (1991) point out that Generation Y are considered civics because they experienced childhood during autumn, a time of divided societal values and hedonistic excess. As children, they were taught to value collectivism and structure, resulting in adults who react against excessive pleasure and emphasize teamwork. Generation Y is also referred to as the Millennials, that is those born between the years of 1981 and 2001. The Challenger, OJ Simpson, Bill Clinton, Brittany Spears and a 24-hour society resulting from interactive, globally connected technology have influenced the Millennials. They have also been affected by September 11th and the War on Terrorism. Stemming from their youth, members of Generation Y are said to value

ritual, neo-traditionalism, confidence, and inclusion. They are known to be hopeful and civic-minded, have a short attention span, and appreciate a compartmentalized work and leisure life. Millennials are considered to be achievement-oriented, concerned with the common good, and continually looking for outlets that foster growth and development of their abilities. A concern for the public good is related to the level of socio-cultural capital available to society.

Socio-Cultural Capital Framework

Social Capital represents the opportunity to increase the public good by actively engaging in communal affairs that impact and benefit both the individual and the general society.

Grounded in sociology, Bourdieu (1986) characterizes social capital as the following

The aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (p. 248).

Coleman (1990) claims that the underlying principles of social capital are the “social-structural resources” that “serve as capital assets for individuals” (p.122). These social structures—such as school, work, family, friends, religion, and recreation—are memberships in groups that allow an individual to single-handedly become more effective and make a bigger difference in a society.

The fact that social capital is an asset offering both private and public advantage is supported by its transferability both individually and socially (Putnam, 1993). This means that the more resources that are available to society, the bigger the “pot” of public good becomes. Though social capital is exchangeable, it cannot remain static because if unused it is an opportunity lost; however, if used, social capital accumulates, generating greater potential, opportunities and possibilities. Social capital is said to increase social cooperation and levels of democratic activity, in addition to improving an individual’s quality of life (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). The presence of social capital is dependant upon the inclusion of such factors

that DeGraaf and Jordan (2003) identify including, “trust, connections with others and diversity of friendships, participation in politics, giving and volunteering, faith-based engagement, and equality of civic engagement across the community” (p.20).

There are many types of social capital in part because there are many forms in which it can be manifested. Social capital can arise from informal socializing and recreating as well as structured, organized associations and affiliations. One-time donations, one-time events and one-time hallmark affairs in addition to new organizations, groups that meet frequently, and societies that have been around a long time are all conducive to fostering the opportunities that can benefit and enhance society. Social capital can be inward looking and like-minded in addition to outward looking with a diversity of interests. This has been referenced as “within group bonding” and “between group bridging” (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Gross, 2002).

Roles, expectations and the transfer of knowledge interact to create and promote the benefits of social capital (Coleman, 1990). Interpersonal relationships function as a result of the norms associated with a known situation within a given community. Hemingway (1999) clarifies this assertion by stating, “Those who enter into a social relation with a person in her/his status as a role occupant have legitimate expectations about the role occupant’s likely actions based on the obligations associated with that role” (p.155). Drawing from symbolic interactionism, particular lifestages and cohorts create roles in society that come to be anticipated just the same as the public expects a doctor to perform specific functions and behaviors. The transfer of knowledge that occurs among individuals trusted and predicted to fulfill their responsibilities to society is an integral component of social capital. The knowledge accumulated from social capital can lead to such benefits as community development,

citizenship, and civic engagement, which is also known as democratic citizenship. Ultimately, the development of networking and social ties leads to an acknowledged and accepted perspective of the “social self.”

Another form of social capital that is accumulated through shared life experiences is cultural capital. Russell (2002) defines cultural capital as, “an individuals’ store of behaviors and knowledge that pays off in terms of succeeding in the culture” (p.328). As a form of capital for community, culture has the power to unite citizens through shared interactions that better allow them to contribute to their society. Cultural resources can best be understood, shared and expressed through the celebration of the humanities, such as literature, art, music, dance, theatre, recreation and socializing. Bourdieu (1986), related cultural capital to class divisions and differentiated between material assets and cultural wealth within a community. He further explained that network differences, which can arise from occupation, lifestage, generation and time period, contribute to class distinctions with different levels of cultural capital.

In sum, the four guiding frameworks provide a foundation, from which to examine the differences and similarities in how Dutch and American young adults from Generations X and Y perceive leisure and its meanings and benefits. Further, this framework aids in the assessment of leisure’s role in contributing to community engagement and the formation of social capital for young people in both the Netherlands and the United States. It was also used to frame the analysis of technological developments to see how they have influenced or changed the leisure and life of young adults.

Research Questions

- **Research Question 1a:** What are the meanings and benefits associated with the leisure of young Dutch and American adults?

- **Research Question 1b:** Do the meanings and benefits differ between Americans and Dutch young adults? If so, how? If not, is popular culture creating a socially homogenized idea of leisure emerging within a globally connected society?
- **Research Question 2:** How are leisure experiences mediated by technological capabilities and sub-cultural affiliations: such as nationality, work circles, family, friends and recreational interest groups in a period of rapid, interactive global connectedness?
- **Research Question 3:** Do leisure experiences create relationships and increase levels of social and/or cultural capital? If so, do they relate to the value young adults place on leisure?

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of literature is presented to lay the foundation for studying the leisure meanings and benefits associated with the leisure experiences of young Dutch and American adults, while analyzing potential forms of social and cultural capital that may result. Included, is a review of literature in the following areas: leisure meanings including personal and social benefits; leisure in the lives of young adults (Generation X and Y); and the influence of culture and the impact of new globally interactive technology on leisure experiences.

Leisure Meanings

Iso-Ahola (1980) reveals that over the years there have been many definitions of leisure. Early on, Riesman, Glazer and Revel (1950) explained leisure as a means of individual distinction and a symbol of the upper class (Veblen, 1899). De Grazia (1962) considered leisure as a utopian state of being. Further, leisure has been identified in relation to its core components such as perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, goal-orientation and relation to work (Neulinger, 1974). Kaplan (1975) identified leisure as autonomous effort serving as a means for personal growth and social service. In the field of leisure studies, leisure has been understood as a component of time characterized by freedom and non-work activity (Godbey, 2003; Kelly, 1999; Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958). Leisure as free time can also be considered as time free from necessity or unobligatory time (Iso-Ahola, 1999), discretionary (Russell, 2002) and residual, leftover time (Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958). Dumazedier (1962) defined leisure as a freedom to choose pleasurable activities when freed from the obligations of work, family and social time. Russell (2002) revealed that in addition to time, leisure can be understood as action and activity (Argyle, 1996) that focuses on achieving a state of mind and being in the “recreation of the spirit.” Kelly (1996) moves beyond time and activity to describe leisure as an experience,

particularly the existential state of enjoyment and gratification. Further, Kelly (1999) understands leisure as a social dimension where leisure participation in communities and subcultures facilitates the social construction of universal meanings and benefits. There are an endless number of ways to define leisure and ascribe meaning; however, the significance comes from determining the personal, socio-cultural, economic and environmental benefits (Driver & Bruns, 1999) that can be derived from leisure behavior.

Personal Leisure Benefits

Leisure has been connected to benefits related to physical health and psychological wellness due, in part, to the idea that increasing wellness in one area of your life, namely the quality and quantity of leisure pursuits, will reinforce health-enhancing actions in other aspects of life (Godbey, 2003). Sustaining and improving health is aided by taking personal responsibility to make changes in lifestyle and increases in individual as well as communal recreational activities (Ardell, 1977). Leisure participation is significantly related to health and optimal life satisfaction because it contributes to developing commitment, control, acceptance, and challenge as well as minimizing stressful life occurrences (Godbey, 2003). Leisure engagements foster social identities and self-actualization, in turn increasing the quality of life (Iso-Ahola, 1999). Mannell (1999) reveals perceived satisfaction to be a construct against which to measure leisure quality and fulfillment. The index that seeks to balance boredom or understimulation, and stress or overstimulation to achieve satisfaction and happiness is referred to as an individual's optimum level of arousal (Hunt, 1969; Iso-Ahola 1980; Murray, 1964).

Social Leisure Benefits

Researchers in various fields of study such as sociology (Bourdieu, 1996; Portes, 1998), economics (Burt, 1997), and political science (Tam, 1998) have all explored the notion of social capital. Within the field of leisure studies the benefits of social capital has gained increased

attention in recent years (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). Leisure services such as those at community centers (Glover, 2004a), neighborhood organizations, and neighborhood involvement including community gardening (Glover, 2004b) as well as recreational facilities such as bowling centers (Putnam, 1995, 2000) have been considered in relation to social capital. Putnam and Feldstein (2006) recognized leisure as a way of bridging communities and cultures. Further, cultural capital can accumulate from leisure activities, such as dancing, that encourage social participation (Urquia, 2005).

Yuen, Pedlar and Mannell (2005) claim that through involvement in social learning shared meanings are created, which in turn foster social capital and the creation of cooperative communities of shared culture. Democratic citizenship and civic engagement (Putnam & Gross 2002) have been documented to arise from community involvement in leisure services (Box, 1998; Hemingway, 1999). However, Blackshaw and Long (2004) critique Putnam's (2000) idea that social capital is available to all members of society, by arguing Bourdieu's (1986) view that "the profits of membership" resulting from networking within civic group affiliations are not accessible to all social classes. Nevertheless, participation in recreational activities has been noted by Arai and Pedlar (2003) to increase the transfer of knowledge (Jones & Symon, 2001), produce social networks (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005;), and create a "social self." Glover and Parry (2005) also suggest that "leisure episodes" encourage beneficial social productivity through the creation of social ties. Additionally, DeGraaf and Jordan (2003), Crompton (1999), Gittell and Vidal (1998) and Fisher (1981) have demonstrated the relationship between the benefits of leisure participation and social capital.

Aside from individual and social benefits, leisure participation also offers both economic and environmental advantages (Driver & Bruns, 1999). Leisure behavior has the potential to

provide economical benefits in the form of economic growth and development as well as increased personal work productivity and job satisfaction (Mannell & Reid, 1999). While some leisure behaviors have been shown to have negative effects on the environment (Kuss, Graefe & Vaske, 1990; Liddle, 1997; Pigram, 1993; Shipp, 1993), some scholars have also documented positive environmental benefits from leisure behavior such as increased environmental awareness, preservation, conservation and sustainable development (Aitchison, 1995; Locke, 1997; Nelson et al., 1993); enhanced environmental ethical concern for “eco” recreation and tourism as well as increased public involvement with environmental issues (Frome 1992; Sellars, 1997). While leisure has been shown to have a range of personal and social benefits, studies of leisure over the lifecourse and family lifecycle reveal that some of these benefits are linked to lifestage (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975).

Leisure, Lifestage and Generations X and Y

Researchers have explored leisure in relation to the lifecycle and particular life stage patterns (Iso-Ahola & Jackson, 1994; Kelly, 1982; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975). Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) reveal that while on vacation, different attributes of travel behavior are connected with psychological and socio-cultural factors related to life course needs. As individuals enter early adulthood, energy and physical capabilities have usually peaked, leading to a need for recreational activities concerning fitness, structured competition, and high-risk activities (Jordan, 2001). For young adults, emotional development concerns settling into a personal identity, establishing intimate relationships, and obtaining social and economic independence (Kelly, 1982; Russell, 2002). Godbey (2003) describes young adulthood as beginning in single life with the freedom to please only oneself and culminating in family life, where work obligations and family responsibilities dictate what time can be spent on leisure behavior. Leisure behavior, while at home or while traveling (Scheyvens, 2001), is a major tool

utilized for making relationships and strengthening a social personality as well as discovering a sexual identity at this life stage (Riley, 1988; Roberts, 1997). Bynner and Ashford (1992) found a more significant relationship between attitudes and work behavior, suggesting that leisure tastes are not core identities for young adults. However, they also revealed that from leisure participation, social contacts increase self-confidence and self-images for young adulthood. When generations of individuals simultaneously pass through stages in the life course and experience the same worldly events, a “cohort effect” is created (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

The impact of generations has been explored by many fields of study including business (Bonnici & Fredenberger, 1991 & 1992), marketing (Marconi, 2001), as well as travel and tourism (Rentz & Reynolds 1981, 1991; Penalta, 1992; Oppermann, 1995; Pennington-Gray, Fridgen & Styries, 2003; Warnick, 1993). Various scholars have examined the segmentation of generations in regards to behavioral loyalty and commitment (Cufaude, 2000) as well as workplace culture and the generational impact on leadership roles (Levin, 2001). Acceptance and use of technology as well the facilitation of knowledge and communication is influenced by an employee’s generation (Stockberger, 2003). One key to understanding this relationship is considering the level of familiarity that an individual has in relation to computers. For example, Stockberger (2003) illustrates, Generation X grew up during the time when computers entered the mass market. Therefore, they are said to regard computers more as an efficient tool to increase production than as a form of leisure. Generation Y on the other hand, mostly does not remember a time without computers and therefore views technology as a means by which to stay informed and connected, while investing in the future.

The second half of Generation X and leading half of Generation Y form today’s lifestage of young adulthood. Warnick (2000) found that recreation participation rates varied over time

according to specific ages and generations. Pennington-Gray (2003) illustrated that varying generations encompass different philosophies, reasons and interests for travel. In studies of European countries, Rodgers (1977) and Kamphorst and Roberts (1989), discovered that for the most part, sport participation declined with age and men are more likely to participate in sport than women. Conversely, Lera-López and Rapún-Gárate (2007) illustrate that age is positively related to sport participation, and regularly practicing sport increases with age. However, in regards to sport consumption Lamb, Asturias, Roberts and Brodie (1992) and Lera-López and Rapún-Gárate (2007) found that greatest amounts of sports expenditures were from the youngest age groups. Nevertheless, despite the contradictory findings, age has consistently been a key factor in analyzing the leisure habits of generations and lifestages. However, while life course and generational frameworks provide us with common characteristics and groupings, it is necessary to also understand the influence that culture may introduce into distinct perceptions of leisure.

Leisure, Time Use and Culture

Within the leisure literature culture (Irwin, Gartner & Phelps, 1990; Simcox, 1993), has been presented as a social dimension affecting leisure experiences. Neuliep (2003) reveals that the most important dimension of culture is that behavioral norms are shared. Further, Russell (2002) explains that culture must be passed along generations through a process of socialization. Various scholars have studied the impact of immigration and assimilation on personal identity, finding that work pressures international migrants to be “American,” whereas, recreation environments encourage individuals to celebrate their heritage through traditional leisure behavior (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998; Yinger, 1981). Isajiw (1990) demonstrates that culture is often distinguished through the preparation and enjoyment of traditional cuisine that is then passed down by women from generation to generation. Further, Nash (1982) contends that the

meanings and feelings individuals attribute to leisure experiences, namely wilderness settings, are in part due to the history and heritage of a population.

Living in an era of diversity and multi-culturalism, the term “transnationalism” has come to refer to the fact that eventhough modern migrants assimilate into the host society, they still retain economic, political, social and cultural ties with their homeland (Li & Stodolska, 2006). Haller and Landolt (2005) claim that there is a diversity of transnational patterns of acculturation distinguished by class, nationality and ethnicity, whereby, individuals form personal identities. Li and Stodolska (2006) revealed that the psychological well-being of international Chinese graduate students was affected by transnationalism, but leisure pursuits were mostly affected by length of residence, school studies and legal constraints.

Cross-cultural studies explore differences in relation to time usage and leisure activities pursued. Similar to Kelly’s (1992) comparisons of leisure activities and their perceived importance in the United States and England, Stockdale, Wells, and Rail (1996) found that similar activity groupings emerged from a sample of London and New York residents, revealing that leisure participation trends maintain some degree of constancy cross-culturally. Zuzanek, Beckers, and Peters (1998) studied Dutch and Canadian trends and revealed that while the amount of free time available has either remained static or declined, the amount of working time has increased in both countries. Additionally, Zuzanek et al., found a divergence regarding access to free time and perceived time pressure (Zuzanek & Smale, 1994) depending upon lifestage and social status. A study by economists Hurst and Aguiar (2006) reveals that due to new technologies, time-use diaries show that the amount of time for leisure available to Americans has increased due to a decrease in the amount of time needed for chores.

However, while studying trends such as new technologies and demographic shifts on time usage, Robinson and Godbey (2005) found that compared to actual amounts of time spent at work or with chores, in time-diaries, people's perception of their amount of time spent at work is overestimated. Nevertheless, Wang (2003) reveals that in general Americans work an additional nine weeks longer each year compared to the Dutch. Further, Wang notes that in addition to feeling overworked, the American population wastes a large portion of their available leisure time watching television compared to half as much time that is actually spent socializing. John de Graff has even coordinated a national Take Back Your Time Day to encourage Americans to support shorter working hours and longer vacation time (Wang, 2003).

Leisure Interests and Interactive, Globally Connected Technology

Many researchers in both the communications and leisure literature have documented the impact of new media technologies on leisure behavior. Jeffres, Neuendorf, and Atkin (2003) illustrate the relationship between participation in public spectator leisure activities and mass media use. Through two empirical studies conducted in 1993 and 1996, they found that the more frequently individuals use leisure-related media, the more likely they are to participate as a spectator, suggesting a "symbiotic relationship." Jeffres et al., found that "television is the only medium that shows any evidence of replacement, and even that evidence is weak" (p.181), meaning that viewing television may substitute for another leisure experience such as attending a sporting event. They further illustrate that when media are used for the purpose of entertainment or "expression," similar uses and gratifications are experienced, therefore, substituting for traditional public activities. For example, the experience of online chat and instant messenger forums may substitute for the benefits of recreational church groups. Bagdikian (2004) cites a 2002 Harris Poll revealing, "despite the spectacular rise in Internet use, in the last 20 years reading has remained the most common use of leisure time" (p.62). However, Riley, Baker and

Van Doren (1998) argue the “effects tradition,” by which media influence people’s opinion regarding popular leisure opportunities, such as with travel destinations.

An extensively discussed scholarly theme is the proliferation of controlled choices and options that new media offer, consequently affecting which medium to use depending on which benefits are desired. For starters, through an American time diary study, Wachter and Kelly (1998) reveal how the VCR’s interactive function of recording enables users to manipulate their television viewing to increase both personal and social benefits of leisure consumption. However, they also reveal that the participant’s television viewing patterns and social interaction were essentially enhanced as opposed to significantly changed or altered. Conversely, Lin (1992) reports that as a response to the diffusion of VCRs, more Americans are spending more free time at home, and consequently more private social time with friends and family.

As home-based entertainment has developed further, Kim and Lee (2003) explored how the adoption of DVDs into home theater systems depends greatly on the uses sought. Using a survey design, they found that Americans adapted to DVD players differently depending on whether they were drawn to new types of interactive technology before it reaches the masses, were seeking better sound quality, or were satisfying a need to improve their personal recreation and enjoyment of movie watching. All respondents revealed that time spent on DVD entertainment did not affect the time they spent on other leisure activities. Although DVDs are cheaper, easier and more dependable than the VCR (Vaidhyathan, 2004), it is noted that VHS and DVD viewing are functionally equivalent and therefore in direct competition (Lin, 2001). However, in relation to the displacement of VCRs, Kim and Lee concluded that the DVD and VCR will co-exist until recordable DVD players become more widely affordable, and functional

niches no longer exist. The impact of television as leisure and entertainment has also been affected by the video game industry.

Since the first computer game was invented in the late 1960s, and the advent of at home video game systems in the 1970s, the digital gaming industry has joined the ranks and even surpassed consumer sales of box office movie tickets in the United States in addition to VHS/DVD rentals (ELSPA, 2003). Crawford (2005) explores the relationship between interests in digital gaming and participation in sporting events using survey research. He explains that the first video game, *Pong*, was loosely based on table tennis, and since then, sport-related video games continue to be the best-selling genre. Similar to Fromme's (2003) findings relating to digital gaming and patterns of sports involvement, Crawford's study found no evidence that playing interactive video games decreases sport participation, but it did reveal that "digital gaming can increase an individual's interest and knowledge of sports as a fan" (p. 263).

In addition to Bryce and Rutter's (2001) conclusion that video games are a "sociable" activity, Crawford's (2005) data supports the idea that digital gaming is not an individually isolating pursuit, but rather proves to be an agent of socialization connecting individuals and possibly reinforcing gender stereotypes. Bryce and Rutter (2003) further study the perpetuation of gender-specific roles and skills by digital media gaming. They concentrate on the male-dominated content and topics of games as well as the male domination of public competitive gaming. However, Bryce and Rutter reveal that video game systems have made private at-home gaming available and common for females in addition to the growing number of women participating in virtual, interactive computer gaming networks.

Music has long been associated with youth subcultures. Today, the difference is the impact of communication and information technology. Relating to the art of music and the

enjoyment from listening, Bennett (2005) reveals that, “popular music has contributed to the spread of alternative ideologies about politics, gender, race, the environment, and so on” (p. 333). This widespread proliferation of ideas and choices could not have been possible without the advent of peer-to-peer (P2P) communication technologies such as MP3 file sharing. Net banditry is the idea that downloading is a form of resistance to formal power structures that control intellectual property (Rojek, 2005). Although Internet access is necessary, this idea of unlimited downloading decreases the socio-economic digital divide while fostering a sense of personal empowerment. Bull (2005) illustrated how the use of MP3 players, particularly the Apple iPod, gives users unprecedented interactive control of their private music experience and personal gratification by allowing them to manage their music library to coincide with a particular time and place, in addition to their mood. Using ethnographic research, Lincoln (2005) explored how teenagers use the Internet and music files to transform the environment of their bedroom into a “zone” that fulfills specific needs as well as creates personal atmosphere and meaning.

In addition to file sharing capabilities, the Internet has provided an interactive outlet where individuals can seek and connect to niches of users with like-minded music preferences, better serving marginal subcultures (Vaidhyathan, 2004). Petterson and Bennett (2004) argue that online activity has made possible “virtual” music scenes, which bring together distant listeners of similar interests through fan websites that facilitate the exchange of music as well as open discussions of ideas and beliefs. Further, Mattar (2003) explores the global, subcultural identities of Singaporean residents formed from online leisure communities. His case study, concerning hip-hop music consumers reveals that users from remote locations can now access information, connect to other users, and can globally create shared culture, meaning and

relationships around a music genre. In his ethnographic study, Mattar reveals how subcultural niches now have the online power to transcend local cultural boundaries through the consumption of popular culture; reinforcing Wheaton and Beal's (2003) findings that niche media creates youth subcultures that are then colonized by traditional mass media.

Many scholars have also studied the effects of new technology and media use on civic and political participation, such as the leisure pastimes of volunteering and civic engagement. The research is divided in regard to whether the outcomes of media use encourage local action or are to blame for the documented decrease in democratic citizenship (Putnam, 2000). The literature (Eijck & Rees, 2000; Kang & Kwak, 2003; Scheufele, 2002; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001; Shah et al., 2005; Wilkins, 2000) discloses that when new media are utilized to gain access to information or news and/or to interact with networks or discussion groups, the benefits are said to increase the levels of local participation and in turn generate more public good and social capital. Nevertheless, when new media are used either as a form of entertainment or a socio-recreational activity, the outcomes are documented to lessen the amount of social capital available to society. Variables relating to education, interactive relationships within a community, availability of public broadcast television, public discussions, and political distrust are also said to impact the outcomes and effects of new media use (Kang & Kwak, 2003; Scheufele, 2002; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001; Wilkins, 2000).

Jeffres, Neuendorf, and Atkin (2003) reveal that levels of leisure involvement are positively correlated with levels of media use, furthering the idea that the more aware people are of issues, the more likely they are to take action. Similarly, Shah, Cho, Eveland, and Kwak (2005) discovered that the informational use of new media, namely online community discussion and messaging, encourage civic participation by enhancing the traditional opportunities for civic

and political discussion. However, drawing from Lawrence's (2003) study of virtual leisure environments, it is necessary to question whether or not online interaction has as much meaning and influence as face-to-face encounters. Eijck and Rees (2000) illustrate an overall decline in reading due to private media consumption; however, they also liken the effects to content-specific media behavior such as fiction versus non-fiction. Golding (2000) explains that new information and communication technologies are altering and furthering existing activities as opposed to actually encouraging entirely innovative pursuits. Golding's findings are articulated by Vaidhyanathan (2004) when he states, "But they [peer-to-peer networks] don't do much to build new communities where none exist" (p.60). New media provide interactive tools that can facilitate participation and increase social capital only in communities where actual civic engagement already takes place.

The review of literature lays a foundation upon which to study the leisure symbols, meanings and benefits associated with the leisure experiences of young adults, while analyzing potential forms of social and cultural capital that may result. A foundation for studying the differences and similarities between the leisure experiences of young Western European and American adults, is presented by reviewing general leisure meanings and benefits along with leisure specifically in the life of young adults comprising Generation X and Y. Moreover, literature on the influence of culture, and the impact from new interactive and globally-connected technology on leisure symbols, meanings and benefits was covered.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

Two ethnographic methods, observations and in-depth interviews, were used as the primary data collection tools to study leisure in Western Europe and the United States. The data were collected in two phases. Phase-one focused on the leisure of young Western European residents in the Netherlands. And, phase-two focused on the leisure of young American residents in the state of Florida. The sample of young Western European residents was limited to the Netherlands because of the language barrier, and the sample of young residents from the United States was limited to Florida due to geographical proximity.

Data Collection

The first phase of the data collection took place in June 2006 in the Netherlands. Specific locations included campgrounds, parks, cafes, and public recreational locations. Data were collected and recorded using both observational and interview conventions. In the first phase of data collection, the primary investigator observed Dutch residents engaged in leisure behavior and recorded field notes from observational experiences of leisure activities. Observation was used to capture everyday leisure activities and life taking place naturally in community settings at public locations. Further, participant observations of leisure experiences were conducted with approximately half of the Dutch sample of young adults.

The primary researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with Dutch residents asking them about their leisure and inquiring about the meanings and benefits. All of the interviews were conducted face to face, lasted approximately 25 minutes to an hour in duration, and were semi-structured in nature. All interviews were audio and video recorded for transcription purposes. The semi-structured research guide controlled all interviews. The interviews centered on the following three main questions:

- **Interview question 1:** Tell me about yourself (i.e. birthdate, nationality, education, and background information).
- **Interview question 2:** Now, think about your leisure pastimes (i.e. hobbies and interests) and tell me what it is you love to do (i.e. how often and with who?).
- **Interview question 3:** Why is your leisure so important to you? (i.e. value and benefits)

In order to encourage participants to share more detail about their pastimes, probing questions such as: why, with whom, where, when, how so, how come, and what else were asked. Please see attached Appendix A for the full interview guide.

Collecting data from Dutch young adults proved difficult for several reasons. For starters, language proved to be a barrier even though the majority of the Dutch speak English. There were times when interviewees were unfamiliar with the term leisure or were unable to express their thoughts asking, “How do you say?” In addition, the target sample was hard to reach because the young adults encountered were normally socializing in groups. This made it difficult to conduct one-on-one interviews. Further, when alone, young adults were either on their cell phone, listening to an MP3 player, studying or eating; and therefore, they were respectfully unapproachable. Consequently, some interviews were conducted while participants were at work as opposed to at leisure. The participants at work were approachable because they were all either receptionists or cashiers and therefore, were able to talk about scheduling an interview when customers did not need assistance. Although conducting interviews proved to be a challenge, collecting observational data was easily accomplished. The reason being, European public spaces such as parks, cafés, bars/nightclubs and recreational facilities are widely used and populated by young adults. This allowed for observations to be easily made within public leisure spaces.

The second phase of data collection occurred during the fall 2006 in the state of Florida. As a point of comparison, community leisure experiences were also observed and recorded,

participant observations of leisure activities were conducted, and similar semi-structured interviews were conducted with young American residents about their leisure pastimes and meanings. The same interview guide was used to collect information. Conducting interviews with the American sample did not prove to be as difficult because prior contact had been made with the participants through social engagements. Participants were then contacted via telephone and interviews were scheduled according to the convenience of the participants and their preference for a location. All interviews took place either in the participant's home or the home of a friend. Being previously acquainted with interviewees instilled an inherent trust in the research process. However, collecting observational data was a bit of a challenge. Young American adults do not frequent green spaces as often as the European sample. Nevertheless, observational data was obtained in select parks as well as restaurants and bars/nightclubs.

Participants

Participants were all young adults who are members of either Generation X or Generation Y and range in age from 18-34 years old. Since this study focused on a cross-cultural comparison between young Dutch and Americans, participants were delimited to those regions and from early adulthood. To begin, purposive sampling was used to target a specific age group and to capture data from participants who reside in the Netherlands and American residents of Florida. Additionally, snowball sampling was used when individuals referred people who they believed met the requirements and would be interested in the study. Finally, as data accumulated, a theoretical approach to sampling ensued to ensure that there was an equal representation of gender, age and interest groups. For comparative purposes, participants were asked to provide background information including birth year, nationality, ethnicity, and education level. In order to ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned a code name and number that was used to identify all interview data. All observational data are also anonymous in nature.

The Dutch sample consists of 12 people with an even mix of male and female participants (Table 3-1). Three Dutch participants are members of Generation X and the other nine are members of Generation Y. In relation to age, two participants were 19 years old, three participants were 22, one participant was 23, two were 24, one was 25, one was 27, one was 31 and one was 34. Ten of the 12 European residents were born and raised in The Netherlands (Table 3-2). One participant was born in Canada and the other non-native European interviewee was born and raised in Singapore, yet they both hold Dutch residency. From the Dutch sample, ten of the 12 participants said they are not religious. One resident claims to be Christian, and the resident born in Singapore claims to be Muslim. Three of the participant's highest level of education was high school. Six participants report either some university experience or a two-year degree. The final three Dutch residents had completed a four-year university degree. Six Dutch participants were currently students, two have graduated and the other four are not in school. Ten participants work temporary or part time jobs and two are employed full time. Two Dutch participants live alone and two interviewees still live with their parents. Three participants live in apartments or dorms with friends and the other five live with a significant other.

In an attempt to gauge activity level, all participants were asked if and how often they exercise, drink alcohol and/or smoke tobacco and/or marijuana (Table 3-3). Three Dutch residents do not exercise at all, with one of the three reporting that he is currently injured. Three participants say they exercise seldom, sometimes or irregularly. Another four interviewees stay active by exercising two or three times a week. Two of the Dutch residents are very active and exercise up to five times a week. In relation to alcohol, one participant only drinks seldom or occasionally. Five more participants say they drink socially. The other six Dutch residents drink

regularly or daily. Regarding smoking, five participants do not smoke at all. Four Dutch residents claim to smoke seldom or socially and the other three participants smoke regularly

The American sample consisted of 12 Florida residents with six females and six male participants (Table 3-4). One American participant was 20 years old. Four participants were 21 years old and three are 22 years old. A further two American interviewees were 24 years old and 25 years old respectively. The final two participants were 26. All 12 participants were born and raised in the state of Florida. Relating to religion, two American participants are non-religious (Table 3-5). Of the participants who currently practice a religion, four are Christians and the last six are Roman Catholics. Seven of the participants' highest level of education is high school and some college. Four participants have some university experience and a two-year degree. Only one American interviewee has earned a college degree. Five of the American participants were students, and the other seven are not currently attending school. Five of the interviewees from Florida work part time, and the other seven work full time jobs. One American participant lived alone and four still live with their parents. One participant lived with friends, two lived with a significant other, and the other four lived with a significant other as well as friends.

The American sample was also asked whether or not they exercise, drink alcohol and/or smoke cigarettes and/or marijuana (Table 3-6). Three participants do not exercise at all. Five of the American participants stay active and exercise two or three times a week. The other four participants are very active and exercise up to five times a week. In relation to alcohol, three participants drink seldom or occasionally. Five participants say they drink socially, and the last four drink regularly or daily. Regarding smoking, one participant does not smoke at all. Seven participants say they smoke socially or occasionally. The other four Americans smoke often or every day. Regularly, the American sample exercises more, drinks less, and smokes more often.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis for the interviews began with the transcription of audio data from a digital video-recorder into MS Word format. First, listening to the tapes in their entirety was used to accurately document the dialogue. Proofing the transcripts was then utilized in order to ensure the content of the conversation. A second thorough listen through was used for inserting qualitative transcription conventions used by scholars to represent specific language and tone implications, including: interruptions in dialogue, content emphasis, tone changes, pauses, verbal aspirations, volume and speed changes as well as parenthesis for estimates of talk and double parenthesis to insert researcher comments. A final thorough analysis included documenting all mannerisms and body language that the camera recorded. A fellow graduate student was utilized for proofing transcripts and confirming the documentation of all non-dialogue. Upon completing the transcription of the data, reflections were used to include preliminary suggestive findings as well as suggestions for improvements and future purposes. Analysis of the field notes from observational data included transcription of a travelogue, proofing of the data, and the insertion of reflections and preliminary findings.

Triangulation of data consisted of integrating the different research techniques, including: observations, participant observations and interviews. All three data collection methods offered powerful insight into the lived leisure experiences of the young Dutch and American adults. Field notes taken during public observations provided the primary researcher with initial insight into the community-based leisure behaviors of individuals from the Netherlands and the United States, particularly from the young adult lifestage. Further, participant observations allowed the principal investigator to actually undertake the leisure activity with the interviewees, in turn providing a real-life comparison of the participant's leisure experience. However, these techniques alone did not include the personal perceptions of the study's participants; therefore,

in-depth, semi-structured interviews were utilized to better understand their personal assessment of their leisure experiences, including its meanings, benefits and relation to their lives. As data were collected and themes began to emerge from observations and interviews, questions were articulated accordingly in order to ascertain the richest responses. Additionally, during interviews, participants' responses were often re-stated back to the interviewee and the investigator requested confirmation of synopsis. This form of member checking within the interviews was utilized in order to uphold trustworthiness within the data and in an effort to include participants' voice. Combining all three research methods (ie. observations, participant observations, and interviews) aimed to provide an unbiased account of leisure experiences and to accurately include the perceptions of the young Dutch and American adults.

Grounded theory methods, as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998), were used to code all observational and interview data in order to reveal concepts, properties and dimensions of meaning assigned to leisure. Categories emerged from open, axial and selective coding. Open coding was conducted in order to name, categorize and describe the leisure phenomena. This was conducted with color-coded highlighters to better recognize leisure meanings, activities and benefits as well as subsequent lifestyle themes. Next, by using inductive and deductive thinking, axial coding related categories and discovered causal relationships. For instance, when specific categories emerged, data were compared in relation to the mediating effects of nationality, leisure interests and interactive technology. This was managed by using themed, in-vivo coded (ie. words and ideas used by the participants) note cards of sub-groupings to create a web of interrelated data. Selective coding then entailed choosing the core category upon which everything else related. Ultimately the relationships among the themes were developed into a grounded theory.

Table 3-1: Demographics of participants from the Netherlands

	Age	Birth Year	Generation	Sex	National origin
#1: Sara	24	1982	Y	F	Holland
#2: Holly	27	1978	X	F	Holland
#3: Beth	22	1983	Y	F	Canada
#4: Erika	22	1983	Y	F	Holland
#5: Mike	22	1984	Y	M	Holland
#6: Tim	19	1986	Y	M	Holland
#7: Sean	31	1975	X	M	Holland
#8: Dave	23	1983	Y	M	Holland
#9: Lily	19	1987	Y	F	Holland
#10: Eric	34	1972	X	M	Singapore
#11: Ryan	24	1982	Y	M	Holland
#12: Mary	25	1981	Y	F	Holland

Table 3-2: Characteristics of participants from the Netherlands

	Religion	Highest level education	Occupation (full time-part time)	Habitation
#1: Sara	none	Some University	Student, Pt. market, reception	With boyfriend
#2: Holly	none	4-yr University	Teacher, Pt. reception	With boyfriend
#3: Beth	none	High school	Pt. retail	With boyfriend
#4: Erika	Christian	Some University	Student, Pt. reception	With parents
#5: Mike	none	2-yr college	FT. retail	Alone
#6: Tim	none	Some 2-yr college	Student, Pt. Kitchen help, retail	With parents
#7: Sean	none	Some University	Student, Pt. retail	With girlfriend
#8: Dave	none	Some University	Student, Pt. Customer service	With friends
#9: Lily	none	High school	Pt. waitress	With friends
#10: Eric	Muslim	High school	Ft. reception	Alone
#11: Ryan	none	4-yr University	Temporary employment	With friends
#12: Mary	none	Some Graduate school	Student, Pt. Customer service	With boyfriend

Table 3-3: Activity levels of participants from the Netherlands

	Exercise (per week)	Drink	Smoke
#1: Sara	1x	Socially	None
#2: Holly	2-3x	Socially	None
#3: Beth	4-5x	Socially	Regularly
#4: Erika	1x	Seldom	None
#5: Mike	None	Regularly	Socially
#6: Tim	None	Regularly	Regularly
#7: Sean	2-3x	Regularly	Socially
#8: Dave	2-3x	Regularly	Socially
#9: Lily	None	Regularly	Regularly
#10: Eric	2-3x	Regularly	Socially
#11: Ryan	4-5x	Socially	None
#12: Mary	1x	Socially	None

Table 3-4: Demographics of participants from the United States

	Age	Birth Year	Generation	Sex	National origin
#13: Marie	21	1985	Y	F	United States
#14: Chris	22	1983	Y	M	United States
#15: Angie	21	1985	Y	F	United States
#16: Tara	25	1981	X	F	United States
#17: Alex	24	1982	Y	M	United States
#18: Luis	22	1984	Y	M	United States
#19: Shane	26	1980	X	M	United States
#20: John	26	1980	X	M	United States
#21: Lin	21	1985	Y	F	United States
#22: Deb	21	1985	Y	F	United States
#23: Jamie	20	1986	Y	F	United States
#24: Pete	22	1984	Y	M	United States

Table 3-5: Characteristics of participants from the United States

	Religion	Highest level education	Occupation (full time-part time)	Habitation
#13: Marie	Christian	Some University; AA	Student, Pt. waitress/bartender	With boyfriend and friends
#14: Chris	Catholic	Some college	Ft. host	With girlfriend and friends
#15: Angie	Christian	Some college	Ft. childcare	With parents
#16: Tara	Catholic	4-yr University	Ft. teacher	With friends
#17: Alex	Catholic	Some college	Ft. warehouse manager	With parents
#18: Luis	Catholic	Some college	Student, Pt. Recreation leader	With girlfriend
#19: Shane	None	Some college	Father, Pt. lifeguard	With parents/family
#20: John	Catholic	Some University; AA	Student, Ft. firefighter	Alone
#21: Lin	None	Some University; AA	Student, Pt. Nanny/retail	With parents
#22: Deb	Christian	Some college	Ft. waitress	With boyfriend and friend
#23: Jamie	Christian	Some University; AA	Student, Pt. lifeguard	With boyfriend
#24: Pete	Catholic	Some college	Ft. landscape design	With girlfriend and friend

Table 3-6: Activity levels of participants from the United States

	Exercise (per week)	Drink	Smoke
#13: Marie	2-3x	Regularly	Regularly
#14: Chris	None	Regularly	Regularly
#15: Angie	4-5x	Socially	Socially
#16: Tara	2-3x	Regularly	None
#17: Alex	4-5x	Regularly	Socially
#18: Luis	4-5x	Seldom	Socially
#19: Shane	None	Seldom	Regularly
#20: John	2-3x	Socially	Socially
#21: Lin	4-5x	Socially	Regularly
#22: Deb	None	Socially	Socially
#23: Jamie	2-3x	Seldom	Socially
#24: Pete	2-3x	Socially	Socially

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Observational data were used to augment the information obtained from the interviews, and combined, the different data sources were used to formulate the themes. Upon analysis, six themes and sub-themes emerged from within the data. To begin, leisure meanings for young adults were identified in addition to the benefits of leisure that are experienced. Next, the specific activities considered as leisure pursuits for young Dutch and American adults became apparent. Subsequently, the mediating influences of nationality, work circles, friends and family on leisure behavior were recognized. Finally, the effects of new media and technology on the leisure experiences of young adults were acknowledged, as well as the consequent impact on community involvement, and ultimately the level of social capital created by the leisure of young Dutch and American adults.

Leisure Meanings

Before beginning the interviews, each participant was asked whether or not they were familiar with the term leisure. Four Dutch participants and one American participant were unfamiliar with the meaning of leisure and could not define the term at the beginning of the session. Therefore, for these participants, they were asked to explain their understanding of leisure at the end of the interview, as a final closing question. The data revealed that leisure meanings are created from how participants understand leisure and how they describe the experience. The data were categorized into three dimensions of meanings, where leisure can be defined as time, activity or experience, and as such reflects common academic definitions of leisure (Kelly; 1996). The Dutch sample most commonly defined their leisure as a component of time, with five out of 12 participants focusing on the idea of free time. For instance, when defining leisure, Ryan, a 24-year-old athlete, revealed that, "In Dutch we call it what you do in

your free time.” This definition suggests that Dutch young adults may understand leisure as an opportunity afforded by time. Further, Dave, a 23-year-old student who likes to go to parks, defined leisure as, “the amount of free time that remains after work and school and other duties. Time in which you are completely deciding what to do by yourself.” This understanding of leisure reflects the notion of discretionary time and as such is characterized by a lack of responsibility and a freedom of choice.

Although leisure was commonly referred to as both free time and by how it is spent, those five participants whose definitions were categorized as time did not identify any particular activities as associated with this time. However, three participants from the Netherlands did associate leisure with the term activity. For example, Mary, a 25-year-old who enjoys culture and the outdoors explains, “I would define it like time I spend in my hobby and like going out and stuff like that. My hobby is culture.” Although she mentions time, Mary focuses more on the idea that her leisure is what she enjoys doing, namely her hobby being cultural activities and going out. Further, Lily, a 19-year-old student who likes to read, defined leisure as, “just a hobby.” These meanings of leisure focus on the activities that are important to the individual.

Aside from time and activity, the experience of leisure is also important in understanding its meaning. Four of the 12 Dutch participants described leisure as the personal experience of pleasure. For instance, Eric a 34-year-old who likes to travel and be with friends described leisure as, “How you enjoy life. How to make yourself enjoy yourself. To spend your time to feel good.” This reveals that free time and activity are not sufficient to define leisure because not all free time activity, such as chores and family responsibilities, are pleasurable. What is essential then, is the sense of enjoyment that accompanies freely chosen behavior. Similarly cited experiences of leisure included relaxing, having fun, being happy, and having a good time.

Although only four participants explicitly defined leisure as an actual experience, a similar feeling of satisfaction is implicit in all of the participants' descriptions of their leisure time. Leisure then is more than selected free time activity. Leisure is a "fun time," as stated by Sean, 31, who enjoys video gaming and clubbing.

Similar to the Dutch sample, definitions of leisure from the Americans can also be classified into the three categories of time, activity and experience. Free time aside from work was mentioned as defining leisure by five of the 12 Florida participants. However, an important element of those responses is that four of the five went on to distinguish free time as personal time or "me time." For example, Deb, a 21-year-old singer/song writer explains leisure as the following

The time for myself to be able to do whatever I want to do. I could choose to be by myself or with my friends or family. I mean leisure to me is just fun time I guess. It is having a day off of work and doing whatever I want to and not having a time limit to do it.

Deb's definition of leisure implies freely chosen personal time that is not work and is not structured. Here a lack of necessity and structured time schedule is of importance. Similarly, Luis, a 21-year-old who enjoys working out defines leisure as, "Down time. Things I don't really have to do that I enjoy doing. It is just your time." Luis reveals that leisure is a time to choose if and how to be productive. There are no responsibilities or requirements to be met. Just as you could choose what activity to pursue, leisure also allows you the opportunity to fill the time by doing nothing if so desired.

Moving then beyond time, two of the 12 participants from the Florida sample described leisure as being activity dependent. Alex, a physically active 24-year-old stated that, "Leisure is what you do on your time when you are not working or doing anything else. Basically hanging out with your friends, chilling out at home, popping open a beer and just relaxing." He reveals

that specifically what activities he fills his free time doing is what defines his leisure. Although the activity can change depending on circumstances, essentially it is the activity of relaxing that defines leisure. Further, Tara a 25-year-old teacher explained, “Leisure is enjoying what you are doing, relaxing. I think leisure can mean many different things. Going on vacation, watching a movie, sleeping for some people, but just relaxing. Nothing too stressful.” Activity is the key component for defining leisure for these individuals, although it cannot be completely separated from time and experience.

The remaining five American participants’ definitions of leisure were classified as an experience. For these respondents, the essential element for the meaning of leisure revolved around the perceived experience. For instance, Shane, an un-wed 26-year-old father of a four and five year old, who likes computer games stated

Leisure would be a steady income without having to work and just enjoying life without working or anything. Just basically the same life as being retired is what I would call leisure. No work, a steady income of money and just do what you want to do.

In sum, his definition of leisure is the experience of enjoying life without having to work. He equates a life of leisure to being retired. Another example where leisure was defined as experience came from Marie, a 21-year-old student who likes to go to bars and friends houses. She explains, “Leisure is just a stress-free environment. Leisure is something that a person truly enjoys, and it is pleasurable and it is time consuming and relaxing all at the same time I guess. So, it is fun for me.” Marie reveals that the true meaning of leisure is the experience of achieving psychological well-being and inner happiness.

Leisure definitions are not uni-dimensional but rather encompass all three elements of time, activity and experience simultaneously. Initial responses from all of the Dutch and American participants centered on “what you do in your free time,” but when elaborating, interviewees commonly described feelings of pleasure and relaxation experienced in their free

time activities. An important finding would be moving beyond the idea of leisure as free time to understanding leisure to be a “fun time” where one is not working, yet actively involved in a pleasurable experience.

Leisure Benefits

Within Leisure Studies, the saying goes that, “The benefits of leisure are endless.” However, when participants were directly asked to identify the benefits of their leisure, responses were grouped into six categories for the Dutch and eight categories for the Americans. In order to assess importance and have the ability to compare results in relation to benefits, each participant’s response was assigned a rounded total value of ten points that were then divided between each benefit they identified. For example, participant six mentioned five benefits in his interview, with three relating to psychological wellness, which received six points out of ten, one regarding social interaction earning two points and the final stated benefit describing the escape of daily life awarded the final two points. It is understood that the use of numbers such as these goes against the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. However, this method was chosen for comparative purposes to ensure that all answers were equally acknowledged regardless of how much or how little a respondent answered. The sum total of each stated benefit was then used to assess the relative importance of each effect in regards to the benefits of leisure for young adults.

The number one stated benefit for young Dutch adults was psychological well-being. This benefit included opportunities for fun, peace, enjoyment and happiness. The second most stated benefit of leisure for the Dutch sample was social interaction and cultivating friendships. However, closely following were the benefits of relaxing and also escaping daily life. Not far behind those was the benefit of self-development and accomplishment; meaning leisure is often learning something new or enriching oneself. The final benefit to the leisure of young Dutch

adults, only stated by two participants, was increased physical fitness. Please see Table 4-1 for more detail on the stated benefits from the leisure of young adults residing in the Netherlands.

Analyzing then the benefits identified by the American sample, all six Dutch categories were also mentioned by the Americans as well as an additional two categories labeled “stress-relief” and “alone time.” However, the number one stated benefit for the American sample, not at all mentioned by the Dutch, was the relief of stress caused by work, school, and home responsibilities. Close behind in second place, similar to the leading Dutch response, was the acquisition of psychological well-being followed by relaxation and self-development/accomplishment. Surprisingly lower than the Dutch ranking, the Americans placed social interaction and cultivating friendships and social skills fifth in the list of stated benefits, followed closely by the idea of escaping daily life. Next, although unstated by the Dutch sample, two American young adults acknowledged the benefit of being alone and not interacting with family, friends or colleagues. Finally, physical fitness was only described by one of the 12 American participants. This lack of attention to the physiological benefits is similar to the responses from the participants from the Netherlands. Please see Table 4-2 for more detail on the stated leisure benefits of young American adults.

Driver (1990) classifies stress management and relaxation as psychological benefits of leisure. However, for the purposes of this study stress relief and psychological well-being are categorized separately due to the overwhelming number of responses from the participants. It is important to note that relieving stress was not mentioned by even one of the 12 Dutch participants. This difference is possibly due to the fact that the United States is notorious for a more high-paced society, with longer working hours and less vacation time; whereas, the culture of the Netherlands is traditionally characterized by a more laid back, easy-going lifestyle. It must

also be noted that if stress relief was categorized as psychological well-being instead of its own component, then both samples would have the same number one stated benefit to leisure, that of psychological well-being.

The acknowledgement of social interaction and the cultivation of friendships is another important difference between the stated benefits of the two samples. The Dutch more commonly revealed that strengthening friendships was a perceived benefit to their leisure, whereas, it was prioritized to a lesser extent by the Americans. Further, those from the American sample that did perceive building friendships an important benefit also included the acquisition of social skills in their response. This finding may relate to the fact that the majority of Dutch participants resided in Amsterdam, largely a commuter city, yet grew up outside the city in smaller villages, therefore, they may have less current or regular interaction with their school age friends. Conversely, the majority of American participants were raised in the city they still reside in and therefore, frequently associate with the same friends from their youth. Consequently, building friendships is not as prominent a benefit of leisure for the Americans.

It is also significant to note that the Dutch more often cited escaping reality and daily life as a leisure benefit. This is interesting considering that more Americans' cite leisure as relieving daily stress, yet is not so much thought of in terms of escaping reality. This may relate to the nature of the activities participated in by each of the young adults. However, this area was not explored due to the overwhelming number of activities pursued by each participant and the subsequent benefits that could be implied. Finally, it is important to note that physical fitness was a highly understated benefit amongst both samples of participants. Further, the young adults recognized social benefits, yet there was no mention of any perceived cultural benefits of leisure.

Psychological benefits take the most prominent role for leisure benefits in the minds of young adults from both the United States and the Netherlands.

Leisure Activities

Cross-culturally, there are few differences between the leisure activities engaged in by the two groups of young adults (Table 4-3 and 4-4). In general, the chosen leisurely activities of all participants are relatively similar. The data revealed that the most common leisure pastimes for these young adults revolve around unstructured experiences including “hanging out with friends,” going out to bars, clubs, cafés and/or restaurants, entertainment such as listening to music and/or watching TV/movies, and finally sports and hobbies. For both samples, “hanging out” typically constituted going to friends’ homes, socializing and drinking and/or smoking. Dancing, drinking and again socializing most commonly characterized “going out.” Here it is important to note that Dutch respondents were more inclined to go out to clubs and cafés as opposed to Americans who favored bars and restaurants.

Regarding leisurely entertainment, all but three Dutch participants listed listening to music as a chosen activity, whereas, only three of the 12 American interviewees mentioned listening to music as an actively pursued experience. This is interesting considering Americans recognize music as a part of their daily life, mainly while driving a car, yet do not necessarily regard it as a leisurely activity. Conversely, only five respondents from the Netherlands selected watching TV as a chosen leisure pursuit compared to ten out of 12 Americans. This finding may relate to the number of cable channels available to the two countries considering that 30 was the most common number of channels a Dutch participant had at home compared to a well over 100 channel average for Americans. Further, this could also be a cultural difference in regards to the centrality of television in American life (Wang, 2003). Lastly, sports and hobbies contained the most variance between the groups, yet a similar pattern among men and women from each

country was apparent. Participating in and/or watching sports and playing video games were predominantly male-oriented activities; whereas, females more frequently cited shopping, getting sun and humanistic pursuits of expression such as writing, drawing, reading and/or singing.

In comparing the Dutch sample to the Americans, a few significant differences emerged relating to chosen leisure activities. Participants from the Netherlands frequently cited going to parks, going to the theater and/or going to museums as leisurely activities, whereas, the entire American sample never once mentioned any of these culturally based experiences. To illustrate, Beth, a 22-year-old residing in the Netherlands, who likes to exercise stated

I like to go to the park. The parks in Amsterdam are beautiful, and there are so many of them. They are so big that everyone goes to the park. You just have your own spot in the grass, where you can just enjoy being at the park with the sun beating down on you. Everyone else is just relaxing. And normally I have these stick things that I play with and I listen to music and sing and nobody cares. It is great. Like, it's awesome.

Observational data further confirmed Beth's explanation of park going in Amsterdam. Moreover, observational data noted that possibly due to good weather, not only were the parks crowded, but also that there was a surprisingly large population of young adults recreating or lounging on blankets in the sun. Further, the majority of park-goers were in groups of two or three people who seemed to be "hanging out" with others, eating, drinking and/or smoking. In addition to groups of young adults, numerous individuals came to the park alone to sunbathe, read/study, and/or listen to music. This observation is vastly different to the parks studied in America. It was observed that not only were Florida parks not as populated as those in the Netherlands, but they were mostly visited by families and older adults. The few young adults that were observed at the park mostly came alone and did not come prepared to spend the afternoon in the sun. Instead, the purpose of their visits to the parks was to either exercise or walk their dogs and then leave.

Even though going to parks was not mentioned as a leisurely activity by the sample of young American adults, ten out of 12 American participants, as opposed to three out of 12 Dutch participants did acknowledge going to the beach for similar purposes such as getting sun and socializing. However, going to the park was described as a typical weekly activity, whereas, beach going was more so noted to be an infrequent, seasonal pastime for the Dutch. These variations in park behavior may be attributed to different weather patterns between countries as well as geographical distance. Dutch participants frequently noted a lack of good weather and affirmed similar statements to Dave, a 23-year-old student who explained, “That is the problem also in Holland. As soon as it becomes nice weather, you have to drop everything, just go to park, because you never know when it’s going to come again.” Conversely, Florida is located in close proximity to the beach and has weather that is notoriously nice and warm, and therefore, may be taken for granted by American young adults.

Leisure and Life: Work/School, Friends and Family

Both the Dutch and American samples revealed that leisure time is constituted by a comparable amount of alone and social experiences; similar to Iso-Ahola’s (1980) contention that leisure is motivated by two dimensions, seeking and escaping the inter and intrapersonal. Certain participants lead lives full of social interaction and crave personal leisure time whereas, others feel a void of social interaction and consequently pursue more leisure that is socially engaging. However, both samples seek a harmonious balance of self and others in order to fulfill the desired needs of internalizing and socializing. To illustrate, Ryan, a 24-year-old Dutch athlete explained

I think both is important. I like seeing friends, but I like being alone also so you have some time to relax. When I go cycling, sometimes I do it alone and I just go for a ride and clear my mind. And then, well, if you do field hockey or something you are more on a team. It is a different type of leisure time.

Dutch participants more commonly stated that they already have this necessary personal/social balance in their lives, whereas, Americans more often described a desire to attain such a balance.

For example, Jamie, a 20-year old female student lifeguard said

I wish I had more of a social life. I spend a lot of time alone. I like my alone time, but I wish I had more social time too. You know it kind of gets old being at home a lot, but I don't really have the means sometimes to go out, and rather than risk certain things, I would just rather stay at home. But they are both, I think they are both pretty important to me.

The "risk" that she refers to is that of the legal consequences and subsequent costs from underage drinking, which are not relevant in the Netherlands. Jamie's statement also introduces a significant constraint to American's leisure related directly to the lifestage of young adulthood, that of the legal drinking age.

Although most American participants believe they have more than enough leisure time, if not too much free time in general, they do not feel as if they are filling their unstructured time doing all that they wish to do due to time and money limitations. The Dutch also mentioned lack of money and time as constraints on their leisure. Conversely, Dutch participants more commonly felt that they have just enough or not enough leisure time and continuously desire more even though they typically get twice as much vacation time compared to Americans. From their understanding, residents of the Netherlands often live to work as opposed to working to live and valuing the quality of life. Sean, a 31-year-old online gamer states, "I know the Dutch complain a lot. I don't think they appreciate their leisure. I think they take a lot of stuff for granted, as any western developed country usually does. They take their vacations for granted." Dutch participants also compare their very structured work ethic against that of the slower-paced, southern European countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece. Despite all constraints to leisure, both the Dutch and American sample of young adults claim to make enough time for leisure in order to balance the various aspects of their lives.

The data revealed that leisure pursuits for young adults are often dependent upon social groups and shared experiences. Although work has traditionally been defined as the opposite of leisure, the findings reveal that leisure can be found in work as well as work circles. Most importantly, shared leisure experiences among colleagues can strengthen working relationships, in turn aiding to blend the distinction between work and leisure. To illustrate, Holly, a 27-year old teacher from the Netherlands explains

I think it is important those moments to share without the children at my job for example because it's quite a hard job to work with these kind of children. It's good to have relaxing moments as well to tell each other your story of the happenings of the day. To unload is good because you are with people who feel like they know what you are doing the whole day and it feels good. It is necessary. And also to see each other in a different role instead of being just this teacher that is always angry or something like that.

Holly reveals how shared leisure pursuits can prove to unite co-workers while also creating a more comfortable working culture. Typical leisurely interaction with colleagues for both Dutch and American participants constituted going out after work to eat, have a drink and chat about common experiences. However, the majority of interviewees, aside from those participants who knew their colleagues before working together, explain that interaction with co-workers normally happens on an infrequent basis and is not central to their idea of leisure.

Referring back to Kelly's (1987) three dimensions of life, family constitutes the last pillar. With the exception of those participants still living at home, the data reveal that on average, both American and Dutch participants see their family around two times a month. However, siblings are often seen more frequently because they are close in age and fall into the realm of friends. Although family time can be leisurely, in general, participants consider visiting family an obligatory free time activity that usually constitutes dinner and chatting at their parent's houses. Aside from activities chosen during childhood such as sports and hobbies, participants note that

family does not influence daily pursuits of leisure and recreational activities as do friendships.

For example, Angie, a 21-year-old American who likes to shop describes

Well I believe with all of my best friends, I mean, I believe that we are really extremely close. Like sisters almost and we do all of the same things pretty much all the time. Our leisure is pretty much gathered around each other.

Although typical leisure experiences are based on friendships, often developed during their youth, family is mentioned by both groups as shaping vacation and holiday time for young adults. This can be attributed again in part to financial constraints of being students, employed part time or in low paying positions characteristic of young adulthood, as well as the fact that being young adults they have not yet created their own families or entered the child rearing stages of the family lifecycle.

When asked about vacation and holiday time, Dutch participants most commonly described going abroad with their families to visit other countries, villages and/or beaches. For example, Dave, a 23-year-old student who enjoys clubbing stated, "Usually we (my family and I) go to Greece most every year for well one month, and just hang beside the beach and that. Kind of enjoy the sun, which is very rare in Holland." American responses related to vacationing also referred to family experiences, yet were described as infrequent and were limited mostly to going to an in-state beach for a week or traveling to visit out-of-state family. However when questioned about future vacation plans, both samples of participants most commonly described a desire to travel with best friends or significant others as opposed to families. To illustrate, Chris a 22-year-old American who enjoys alone time at home explains

If I could take a vacation now, I would probably want to go to Japan or China or Greece or Egypt. One of those. All I know is that I would probably want to go some place where civilization was a lot older, just to see something different than I normally see. That is why I think going East instead of the Mediterranean. I think if you go farther East you would really get a complete culture shock and I think that is why I really want to go down there. I think I would not mind going with Lauren my girlfriend. I would not mind going with my friends but I just know it is not feasible. At least not any time when we are

young. You know, if we are older in our 40's and we decide to make a trip like that, maybe we could do it; but I don't think right now any of us would ever save up the money for that, which kind of sucks because you want to enjoy it while you are young. Not too much when you are older. It is nice to enjoy it when you are young, that way when you get older you can say I did that.

Chris' response illustrates a need to experience different cultures with a cohort of his peers. It also shows major differences between Americans and Dutch in so much that in relation to time, they have a month to travel as opposed to a week, and that priorities vary in relation to money and social expectations. It must be further noted that when questioned about vacation/holiday time only one Dutch female out of all 24 participants referred to her vacation time as simply time off work spent leisurely at home, compared to the overwhelming response of traveling away from home. For instance, Tara, a 25-year-old American teacher who enjoys watching movies stated, "Because to me, vacationing is traveling somewhere that I have not been or somewhere other than a relative's house." It seems then that for Generations X and Y vacationing is synonymous with traveling more so than just "at home" holiday time off of work. This finding may be attributed to the lifestage of young adulthood, which is characterized by adventure and experimentation. However, this finding may also be due to popular culture and mass media influences that encourage "taking back your vacation" to travel to exotic destinations (Universal Studios advertising campaign, 2006).

Leisure and Media Technology

Regarding the use of interactive media, it is noted that as a whole, Dutch young adults more often use new technology for informative/utilitarian pursuits; whereas, the majority of American young adults were more inclined to use new media for private entertainment purposes supporting pop culture. However, in relation to the impact of new media technology on leisure pursuits, data reveal three possible categories of effects, being: no change to the leisure activity or experience, the enhancement of the leisure experience, and the replacement or substitution of

leisure activity. Activities such as reading, playing sports, going out to bars and clubs, drinking/smoking, hanging out at friends' houses, and outdoor/water activities are essentially unaffected by new interactive technology, with one exception being communication devices such as cellular telephones, instant messaging and emailing. These capabilities have made making plans simpler but have not actually changed the nature of the pursued activities. However it is interesting to note that Dutch participants more frequently claimed to text and message friends as compared to the American who prefer the more intimate feel of talking on the phone. Jamie, a 20-year-old American student who enjoys going to concerts illustrates this difference. She said

I call. Sometimes I get frustrated with text messages. It takes longer. I think it takes longer to call than it does to text, but if I feel like saying a whole lot I will call, but if I just feel like saying one or two things and not having a full out conversation, I'll text. I definitely call more than I text though.

The majority of American participants share similar views on text messaging, because a text is only used if necessary and is not the chosen communication medium.

Next, there is a grouping of leisure activities where the ultimate experience has been improved due to new interactive technology. These activities mainly correspond with popular culture for both the Dutch and Americans and consist of listening to music, sports viewing and watching television and movies. Internet downloading and the advent of MP3 devices such as the Apple iPod have greatly impacted the experience of listening to music. To begin, Mary a 25-year-old Dutch participant who plays a musical instrument reveals, "I also use MP3s because you can take more." Portable MP3 devices allow individuals to choose what music to listen to as well as providing the opportunity to have a collection of all their music in one easily accessible location. Further, Shane, an American, 26-year-old father who likes Internet gaming explains, "I use my iPod out mowing the grass, cleaning up sometimes in the yard, or sometimes at work." The use of portable music devices can change the experience of obligatory chores into leisurely

activities. One important distinction between populations is method of transportation. While the American sample all drive cars and listen to the radio or compact discs when commuting, Dutch young adults normally walk, ride bikes or take public transportation such as trains and buses where the use of MP3 devices is most frequently cited to enhance the experience.

New technology also enhances the experience of television and movie viewing. For starters Internet downloading, cable television, and movies on demand have greatly increased the amount of programmed choices available and have afforded the ability to surpass global boundaries and availability of scheduled programs. To exemplify, Sean, a 31-year-old Dutch video gamer states

Downloading some stuff but not much because you know, I am really into movies but I want good quality and good sound and usually the stuff on the Internet is not that good, and I have a whole video store to get stuff from so I usually wait until stuff comes out. But sometimes some shows we don't have here, like we used to have The Dave Chappell Show and The Daily Show. I am a real big fan of The Daily Show, and they don't have it here so I'll usually download that.

In addition to an unlimited amount of choices available, due to pay-per-view movies and sporting events, it is no longer necessary to go to the theater or attend sporting events in order to share in the leisure experience. Faith Popcorn (1991) coined this trend of increasing at home leisure activities and finding security by "nesting" with the term "cocooning." Shane, the 26-year-old American father further illustrates the allure and benefits of cocooning

At the game, you can't really see the views you see on TV. No smoking section. Cheaper drinks. You know, you are in the comfort of your own home. It is nice to be in the arena, but I am the kind of person that would rather watch it at the house.

Not only do new advances in media allow you to experience the pastime at home, it also provides more features and interactive capabilities not available to traditional spectating. Digital video recorders, or DVRs, are another example of how new interactive technology are enhancing leisure pursuits. John, a 26-year-old American who plays the drums describes, "DVR gives you

more control over what you want to watch. You don't have to sit through the commercials." The advent of DVRs has allowed for individuals to decrease unpleasant television viewing as well as affording the opportunity to "make the television around my schedule," as Jamie, a 20-year-old student lifeguard reveals. Similar to Wachter and Kelly's (1998) findings regarding the benefits of VCRs, data reveal that due to the advantages of DVRs, it is no longer necessary to be at home in front of the television at a certain time in order to catch a regularly scheduled program. Instead, it is possible to program a DVR to record your favorite programs that can then be watched at one's leisure. Here it is important to note that DVRs are not as widely available and affordable to participants from the Netherlands as they have become in the United States; therefore, currently the DVR is new technology only enhancing the entertainment of Americans.

The third and final category of activities impacted by interactive media is the substitution of traditional leisure pursuits. Examples of replacement include, but are not limited to, online Internet video gaming, blogging and "myspacing." Angie, a 21-year-old American who spends many hours each week on the website myspace.com, an interactive site to search for and communicate with friends as well as create a profile of personal expression, reveals

I mean if there were no Internet or cell phones or anything I don't know what I would be doing in my leisure times a lot of the time. I mean I would still be hanging out with friends and stuff like that, but there is a lot of open space that I don't know. Would I still be playing kick ball? I don't know. I'm not really sure.

The advent of interactive online leisure activities has all together eliminated certain leisure experiences such as outdoors and culturally based recreation from the lives of young American adults. However, there are only two significant examples of interactive media substitution from the entire sample of Dutch participants; whereas four out of six American males substitute playing online video games on a daily basis and three out of six females substitute leisure time "myspacing" on the computer.

Leisure and Socio-Cultural Capital

In general, the data revealed that for both the American and Dutch leisure pursuits do not tend to involve young adults in their community. Only three out of twelve participants from the Netherlands were involved in any sort of leisure that created socio-cultural capital within their communities, with all three being musical and/or theatrical performers in community groups. However, the leisure pursued by the Dutch did commonly place them within community settings, such as parks and cafés, in turn creating informal social capital. When directly asked about community involvement, the majority of Dutch responses referred to a lack of interaction with their neighbors and an overall lack of a sense of community. This again may be attributed to collecting data in a largely commuter-based city and many of the participants were raised in the surrounding villages and had moved into town.

However three out of the 12 Dutch participants did feel that they were involved in their community. Two of those three interviewees equated community involvement with a political ideology relating to being open-minded and aware of their environment. To illustrate, Dave, a 23-year-old who enjoys going to parks explained, “Yes, I think so. I think I know pretty much what is going on, and I have my opinion of things, so I think I am very much involved.” The only other Dutch participant who felt at all involved was Sean, a 31-year-old video gamer who stated

Define involved with your community. I’m more involved with my friends you know and making sure they’re okay. And yeah, I guess I am not with my neighbors and stuff who I don’t really know or who I just greet on the stairs when I am coming up to my house. It is not that kind of involved with the community, but I am part of the community so I feel kind of responsible. I make sure my own actions are you know responsible. I try to give a good example to my friends and family and the people around me I guess. It is not like I go to neighbor meetings and stuff like neighborhood meetings, but yeah I try to be as good of a person as I can be for other people but mainly my friends and my family.

Sean's explanation of community involvement relates directly to his personal social circle and can be associated with being an average "Good Samaritan" as opposed to the traditional American ideals of volunteering and community engagement. Further of the nine participants who claimed to not be involved in their community, only three specifically noted that they did not volunteer or perform any service to the community. The other six uninvolved participants simply referenced not knowing their neighbors and an overall lack of community interaction. This finding may relate to the young adult lifestage, whereby participants have not yet entered the family lifecycle where the presence of children often connects families to communities.

Data revealed that with the exception of one participant who is in a band and performs in community shows, none of the leisure activities chosen by the American sample actually created formal benefits that contributed socio-cultural capital for their society. However, there were instances of leisure such as clubbing and going to bars and restaurants that connected participants to others on an informal level. Further, the majority of the Americans also claimed to not be involved in their community, yet their understanding of community involvement differed from those from the Netherlands. Seven out of the twelve participants believe that, other than paying taxes, they actively do not do any type of community service, that is helping people in need, or benefiting anything outside of their community of friends and family. The other five participants stated that they are engaged in their community, yet their ideas and experiences of involvement also differ and reveal an active sense of citizenship.

Only one of those five who claim to be involved actually chooses to give his time and risk his life once a week as a volunteer firefighter during his free time. The understanding of another two participants that believe they are involved relate back to the Dutch idea of being an average

“Good Samaritan” by being a courteous citizen and doing their part for society. For example, John, a 26-year-old who enjoys the outdoors explains

I mean yeah. I consider myself like a Good Samaritan of sorts. Like you know I donate. I donate things whenever, you know, money to certain causes or whatever and just uhh, like I am not heavily involved in the community but I probably do as much as the average person does. Maybe a little bit more. I could use being a firefighter as an excuse. I mean to justify the answer to that question well then sure. In that case I do a lot more then the average person but I am getting paid to do it so it is not community service or anything.

John’s response ties in the ideals of a good citizen in addition to the idea of work providing a context for community involvement and civic engagement. Along similar lines, but at the same time slightly different, the last two American participants explained that they are involved in their community through their work and not their leisure activities. To illustrate, Angie, a 21-year-old who enjoys shopping described

I work for a community center, so I am constantly uhm in and out of there doing what I have to do, when it comes to providing activities and parties and organized functions for the community and the people in that area.

It is important to note that over half of the American sample of young adults has jobs or occupations that involve them in community settings. Nevertheless, the American sample of young adults generally believes that they are not engaged in community affairs.

Although it appears that in general, the leisure of young Dutch and American adults does not contribute any seemingly external benefits to the public good, the emerging like-minded social capital resulting from friendship groups must be examined. Putnam and Gross (2002) differentiate these types of social capital as “between group bridging” versus “within group bonding.” Holly, a 27-year-old Dutch teacher who loves to travel explains

No my (sport) teammates are a different thing. Then I also have my friends that I like to go eat in restaurants with once, twice a week. It’s what I do with my best friends. So that’s my thing, and then I go to school and have my colleagues. So it is all different groups and they don’t interact. My close friends are from high school, yes. Because some of them I did not grow up with. I lost contact with some of them. We went to primary school and then to different secondary schools, and then two friends I have are from university.

Similar to the majority of responses from the Netherlands and the United States, Holly's description of her friendship groups reveals that there is a relative lack of "between group bridging." Similar to Ryan, a 24-year-old athlete from the Netherlands, Pete, a 22-year-old American who also enjoys athletics noted, "I am not really friends with the people on my hockey team." Pete reveals that although he is a member of this leisure group, those relationships do not link into his group of peers, which he considers to be his actual group of friends. Further, data revealed that in general, the participants' leisure engagements revolve around and are dependent upon a reclusive circle of friends. For instance, Luis, a 22-year-old American volunteer fire fighter stated

A lot of my friends I know of from like my old neighborhood I grew up in, and I went to high school with or school with since we were little, and I have a lot of friends from work. So it is pretty much the same group of people, just different situations and atmospheres I guess.

This finding is potentially a reason for the lack of formal benefits created by the leisure of young adults.

Nevertheless, the data revealed that for both populations, the "within group bonding" of friendship circles generates informal social capital, even though it does not typically translate to produce public good that is available to society at large. For example, Sara, a Dutch 24-year-old who likes to go to the theater states, "I think it is kind of relaxation to go with some friends and watch a game. It is a good thing and it brings people together and it's something positive."

These inward looking benefits resulting from social circles include, but are not limited to, the strengthening of friendships, the possibility for networking, the creation of new relationships and/or friendships and simply interaction in social group settings. To further illustrate, John, a 26-year-old American drummer mentions

Like there are three guys I play in a band with. I hang out with them; go to band practice or go to a bar afterwards and see them out. You know, whatever, and just meet people through them. I don't just go up to random people and strike up a conversation.

The leisure pursued by circles of friends contributes to the overall socialization of young adults into adult society, whereby new relationships are formed from meeting friends of friends, which in turn expands friendship groups and increases the potential of networking. Regarding the specific activities chosen by friendship groups, Chris, a 22-year old American who enjoys video games explains

I like to drink because it knocks down a lot of barriers. You don't have to worry about the ice breakers with people. Pretty much if you drink with a person you pretty much get to know them for who they are without any social barriers or being weird.

Chris illustrates that through drinking, a leisure activity highly pursued by young adult populations, "within group bonding" consequently occurs as a direct result of social interactions. However, again it is important to note that although the leisure activities of young adults do produce like-minded patterns of social-capital, they do not support a diversity of interests, which contribute to the creation of "between group bonding" and formal social capital.

Summary

In sum, the data revealed that leisure for young adults is considered to be non-work, free time activity, yet the meaning is understood as a "fun time" experience. Respectively, new media and technology in addition to the Dutch and American lifestyles affect the specific activities that young adults pursue. Social groups such as family, friends, work circles and interest groups further impact leisure pastimes. However, young adults frequently engage in unstructured leisure activities, particularly "hanging out" at home with friends, due to lifestage constraints such as time/opportunity and money. Psychological wellness is the most noted benefit of leisure for young adults from both the Netherlands and the United States. Still, it must be mentioned that stress relief was the number one most stated benefit of leisure for the

American sample, yet was never stated as a benefit for the Dutch. Finally, although social capital resulting from the leisure of friendship groups is experienced informally, overall, the leisure activities of young adults do not accrue social and/or cultural capital that is transferable to society at large.

Table 4-1: Stated leisure benefits of participants from the Netherlands

Participant ID #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Psychological well-being	1.0	0.0	2.8	5.0	10	6.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	3.4	5.0	2.0	38.5
Social interaction/ friendships	3.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	2.0	22.2
Relaxation	2.0	2.0	4.2	5.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	2.0	21.0
Escaping daily life	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	3.8	0.0	3.3	1.7	5.0	2.0	19.8
Self-development/ accomplishment	1.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10	0.0	1.7	0.0	2.0	16.1
Physical fitness	1.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	02.4

Table 4- 2: Stated leisure benefits of participants from the United States

Participant ID #	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Stress-relief	2.0	2.5	2.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	2.5	10	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.8
Psychological well-being	2.0	0.0	4.0	3.3	2.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	2.5	3.3	5.0	0.0	22.6
Relaxation	2.0	0.0	2.0	3.3	0.0	2.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	5.0	20.6
Self-development/ accomplishment	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	5.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	18.5
Social interaction/ friendships	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	11.0
Escaping daily life	2.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	3.3	0.0	0.0	10.3
Alone time	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	07.5
Physical fitness	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	02.5

Table 4-3: Leisure activities of participants from the Netherlands

	Leisure activities
#1: Sara	Go to theater and concerts, listen to music, spend time/visit with friends, go out, go to cafés, drink, shop, visit cities, take walks, swim, sleep, watch TV, go to the beach, watch football
#2: Holly	Read books, watch television, listen to music, shop, play basketball, handball, swim, go abroad, camp, go to clubs, dance, drink, eat out, go to movies
#3: Beth	Exercise, go to park, listen to music, sing, watch, TV, watch movies, smoke joints, hang out with friends, go to concerts, camp, eat out, watch soccer, relax
#4: Erika	Sing in group, art, music, read, go out to eat, go to casinos and clubs, cook, go on computer, instant messaging, drink, shop, go to city, hang out, travel, go to theater/play
#5: Mike	Think, hang with friends, go to park, play football, relax, drink a beer, watch football, go to theater, smoke a joint, watch TV, listen to music, read, go abroad, do nothing, swim, visit family
#6: Tim	Poker, street football, reading, drinking, smoking, socializing, going to city, hanging out on terraces, going to parties, going to clubs, listening to music, chilling
#7: Sean	Going to clubs, partying, drinking, dancing, read, play football, online gaming, watch football, travel, spend time with girlfriend
#8: Dave	Go to park, do nothing, drink, chat, go to club, kick-box, weightlifting, Internet blogging, instant messaging, hang out, go to music festivals, enjoy the sun, go to beach, reading
#9: Lily	Read, go to park, listen to music, drink, hanging out on terraces, be with friends, talk, get sun, go to parents, camp, go to theater, shop, sex
#10: Eric	Drink, travel, go out with friends, play sport like tennis, badminton, backgammon, travel, go to museums, cook, use Internet, instant messaging, watch TV, chat with friends, people watch, go to city, go to parties, exercise
#11: Ryan	Sports, rowing, field hockey, running, cycling, going out to eat, clubbing, reading, watching and attending sports games, travel, hike, drink, watch TV, go to the beach/park, go to movies, go to museum
#12: Mary	Culture, theaters, museums, music, playing an instrument, walking, hiking, going out, read in garden, go to beach, go to parties, eat out, enjoy nature

Table 4-4: Leisure activities of participants from the United States

	Leisure activities
#13: Marie	Tennis, go out to bars and to friends houses, draw, paint, drink, drinking games, dominos, cards, going to restaurants, smoke cigarettes and pot, talk, eat, sex, watch TV, go to movies, have friends over, beach, magazines, water activities, laying out, read, party, hang out, camping, chat over coffee, relax, do nothing
#14: Chris	Go out, have friends over, stay home, talk, eat, smoke pot, watch TV, play video games, relax, chill, go on the Internet, go to bars, go to movies, go to restaurants, go to beach, have a party, sleep, cook, fish, boat, masturbate, sex, bowling, dodgeball, watch sports, drink
#15: Angie	Go to friends houses, go out to bars or clubs, dance, hang out, chat, joking, drink, sleep, shop, watch football, go on the Internet, instant messaging, read, write, talk on phone, spend time with parents, beach, vacation, ice skate, bowling, relax, lay in sun, swim, eat, watch TV, drinking games
#16: Tara	Relax, watch movies, travel, drink, hang out with friends, read, sleep in, watch TV, go on the Internet, go out to bar, dance
#17: Alex	Hang out with friends, poker, fish, watch TV, drink, sex, relax, video games, naps, "bullshitting", beach, eat, swim, exercise
#18: Luis	Work out, play sports, football, watch sports, boxing, run, swim, cook, hang out, smoke, watch TV, watch a movie, go for walks, sleep, video games, hunt, drink, pool, darts, go to dinner, beach, surf, dive, fish
#19: Shane	Sports, hang out with buddies, the beach, watch TV, computer games, online gaming, chat, drink, smoke, go to bars, party, pick-up football, snorkel, jet skiing, hike
#20: John	Beach, canoeing, surf, boat, bike, basketball, play drums, listen to music, play cards, go on Internet, instant messaging, play video games, watch movies, poker, go to bars, Frisbee, watch TV
#21: Lin	Go out with friends, dance, drink, hang out at a friends house, read, go to the beach, exercise, go out to dinner and a movie, kayak, smoke cigarettes, lay out, talk, watch sports
#22: Deb	Go out, drink, dance, talk, party, sleep, watch movies, have friends over, go on Internet, music, sing, karaoke, write songs, bowl, bars, hang out, visit family, go to the beach, relax, goof around, cards
#23: Jamie	Shop, lay out by pool, getting sun, reading a book, listening to music, going to concerts, watch TV, hang out with friends, relax at home, go to bar, play pool or game, go to dinner, sleep, explore
#24: Pete	Athletics, swim, chill with friends, drink, bowling, hockey, masturbate, cook, go to bars, pool, talk, smoke pot, poker, watch TV, sex, fish, play football, go to beach, Frisbee, volleyball, eat

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The data revealed six main themes regarding the leisure of young adults living in the Netherlands and the United States. These themes are

- Meanings of leisure
- Experiences of leisure
- Benefits of leisure
- Creation of social and cultural capital
- Influence of new media technology
- Synergy of young adulthood's life domains

In reflecting upon the themes and their interconnected patterns, I propose a grounded theory of young adult leisure (Figure 5-1). It is argued that the creation of leisure meaning is a process that is not only culturally based, but learned through the process of socialization (Blumer, 1969). Accordingly the results of this investigation draw on a symbolic interactionist perspective to suggest that the leisure of these young adults are influenced by their Dutch and American cultures respectively, in addition to the shared understanding within friendship groups of the intrinsic nature of leisure experiences.

To begin, young Dutch and American adults understand that in order to have leisure, non-work/"free time" is required. However, freedom of choice is also important since spare time does not totally define leisure for these young adults because family/friend obligations and chores take up a portion of their "free time." Yet, when non-work time is available and all personal obligations are accounted for, free time affords the opportunity for a leisure experience. Interestingly, the leisure meanings held by young American and Dutch adults confirmed Kelly's (1996) discussion about the categorization of leisure as time, activity and experience. Kelly reveals that while many people define leisure as free time, it is not always synonymous with leisure because free-time activities may encompass behaviors such as chores that are by nature

not considered to be leisure pursuits. This reflects the participants' feelings that not all free time could be considered leisure and that some of it was obligated to accomplish various non-leisure tasks. Kelly also explains that activity alone cannot be considered leisure because every individual has differing ideas as to what constitutes leisure. This thinking led Kelly to suggest that leisure may not be best defined as activity but it might be better understood as an experience, thereby focusing on an existential state of enjoyment that characterizes the leisure experience.

Although the data relating to the leisure definitions of young adults could be categorized into Kelly's (1996) three classifications, they reveal different patterns than those that are typically discussed in the scholarly literature. To explain, for the leisure meanings of young Dutch and American adults, there are two requirements. Certainly there is the pre-requisite of free time or non-work time, but they also categorized this experience as "fun time," similar to Kelly's existential state of enjoyment. The experience is created through leisurely activities, yet the specific activity does not define the meaning of leisure. Instead, young adults understand leisure as their perceived free/non-work time when they have the relative freedom to choose an activity upon which to experience a "fun time," regardless of it being a personal or social pursuit.

There are then, two intervening variables that seem to subsequently affect the leisure experiences and Dutch and American lifestyles respectively. These two variables are the specific activities chosen by the young adults as well as the influence of new media and technology on the resulting experiences. Further, the lifestyle of the Dutch and the Americans impacts the availability of free time in addition to the leisure activities pursued and how interactive media affects them. Regardless of the activity chosen or the medium pursued, young Dutch and American adults understand leisure as a "fun time" experience. This "fun time" is characterized by the leisurely experience of pleasure, satisfaction, and/or happiness.

Another aspect of leisure for these young adults reveals that the “fun time” experience of leisure can be classified along two dimensions, the personal and the social. Personal can be thought of as “me time” and the social as “we time,” similar to Kelly’s (1996) dual perspective of leisure being both existential and social. Some individuals’ lifestyles encourage them to pursue more social pursuits in turn creating social experiences, whereas other individuals are over-stimulated with social matters and crave private activities and subsequently personal experiences. Social experiences can then be divided into three categories being, family, friends and community groups such as work circles and interest groups. A noted difference between the Netherlands and the United States is that Dutch young adults feel that overall, their lives already contain this desired balance between what Kelly terms existential and social experiences. Conversely, Americans tend to reveal that they desire either more alone time or more social engagements depending on their typical daily habits. This finding is a good illustration of Iso-Ahola’s (1980) proposition that all leisure can be understood in terms of seeking and escaping the intrapersonal and the interpersonal. For example, Iso-Ahola would suggest that young Americans who are desiring more “me time” would be motivated to escape the interpersonal and seek the intrapersonal during their leisure, while those seeking more social experiences would be motivated by a need to seek leisure experiences that would promote interpersonal connections and escape the intrapersonal.

Further, it is interesting to note that although the young adults from the Netherlands seem to sense what Iso-Ahola (1980) refers to as an optimum level of arousal relating to social experiences; in general, the Dutch believe that overall, they work too much and do not have enough leisure time in their lives. On the other hand, American young adults perceive that they have enough leisure time in their lives, and if anything, they could see themselves taking on

more responsibility in terms of school and/or work. However, due to lifestyle constraints such as a lack of opportunity, time and/or money, the Americans believe that they are sometimes unable to pursue their activity of choice, in turn manifesting feelings of uneasiness relating to the leisure in their lives. These findings can be attributed to differing ideologies between the two countries. In the capitalistic, career-driven American society young adults grow up recognizing the importance of work and social status (Sylvester, 1999); whereas, the Dutch culture recognizes the benefits of leisure and holiday (vacation) time in turn stressing the inherent value of leisurely experiences to their citizens.

Moving forward, despite the amount of leisure time available, the specific activity chosen and the experience being personal or social, Dutch and American young adults recognize similar benefits accruing from their “fun time” experiences. The young Dutch and American adults readily understand that the benefits of their leisure consist of psychological well-being and stress relief, relaxation and escape from daily life, social interaction and accomplishment and self-development. It is interesting how all of these benefits relate back to the basic leisure needs identified from classic socio-psychological models such as those of Murray (1938) and Maslow (1970). Centering on achievement and affiliation, Murray presents a catalogue of needs that are hypothesized to motivate a person’s actions. Further, Maslow’s systematic theory of motivation centers on his hierarchy of needs, whereby, lower level needs must be satisfied before concentrating on fulfilling higher order needs.

Maslow’s model places basic physiological or biological needs as the foundation of the hierarchy. Once these have been fulfilled, an individual seeks to satisfy safety needs. The third tier concentrates on love and belonging from family, friends and relations. Next, once love has been established, the need for esteem and achievement are forefront in one’s mind. Finally, once

all other needs have been fulfilled, self-actualization and the desire for meaning are the ultimate motivators of behavior. Maslow's model further illustrates that higher level needs are less frequently realized. With the exception of the need for personal relationships and esteem, both Murray (1938) and Maslow's (1970) need models neglect socio-cultural desires such as environmental sensitivity, the creation of cultural identity and an enhanced worldview. This is similar to the young Dutch and American adults who are relatively unaware of the social and cultural benefits, apart from social interaction, of their leisure behavior. These findings then provide evidence to suggest that socio-cultural benefits per se are not motives but potential outcomes of leisure behavior, particularly with activities that are community based. Regardless, the benefits of leisure affect the overall occurrence of social capital experienced by the Dutch and American cultures respectively. This experience of social capital works its way back into the lifestyles of young adults, subsequently impacting activities pursued, media utilized and ultimately the nature of the "fun time" leisure experience.

Consequently, another theme in the data refers to the social capital that is being created within the Dutch and American societies resulting from leisure behavior. For both young adult populations, informal social benefits, similar to Maslow's love and belonging needs, such as the cultivation and/or strengthening of friendships and the connection of individuals to society through leisure experiences are evident. Putnam (1995) considers social capital based on networking and bonding from friendship groups, yet illustrates the problem with these informal connections is that there is frequently a lack of bridging between groups and, therefore, a failure to connect members among varying social groups and formulate the formal benefits of networking. A focus on informal social capital seems to typify the social networks of these young adults, as there seems to be an overall lack of contribution to the public good from the

young adult population. The few instances of community involvement that were mentioned by the Americans were a result of work behavior as opposed to leisure pursuits. Further, there was a complete lack of community engagement on the part of young adults from the Netherlands, with the exception of them considering an open-minded awareness of society and the attempt to be a “Good Samaritan” as constituting involvement in their community.

In 1995, Putnam used explanatory factors to accredit 50 percent of the decline in civic engagement to a change in values caused by the generational shift from civic-minded, GIs to me-oriented, Baby Boomers. According to Strauss and Howe’s (1991) cohort theory, generational ideals are cyclical and Generation Y is predicted to uphold similar values of collectivism and community consistent with the War Generation, denoting a swing back to social capital. However, the results of this study show that although young Dutch and American participants may encompass a civic-minded attitude, these values are sometimes evident in work behavior but are not translating into community involved leisure pursuits. Possible reasoning for this disconnect between theory and findings may be attributed to a function of lifestage/age. For example, Bee (1987) reveals that for young adulthood, intimacy is a significant motivation for free time, thus encouraging informal, isolated friendship groups consistent with the findings. Nevertheless, as these young adults begin to form families, have children and enter the more established phases of the lifecycle, will they be more connected to community?

Another possible explanation for the decline in the creation of social capital by the young adult populations, may center on the decrease in community recreation noted by Putnam (1995) as a result of what Popcorn (1990) describes as the cocooning effect, whereby through the 1990s the trend was to center leisure behavior around the home. Among the young adults in this study who seemed to epitomize the home-based trend, two further explanations may also be influential.

First, the noted financial constraints of young adulthood encouraging at home, “free” leisure pursuits. The other justification relates to the findings that illustrate how the vast developments in interactive media and technology have caused significant changes and substitutions in the leisure patterns of young adults. For example, individuals, particularly American young adults with at-home access to cable television and the World Wide Web, are more susceptible to replacing community recreation for similar individualized home-based entertainment such as the participants who view sporting events at home instead of attending the games, rent movies at home instead of going to the theater and network in cyberspace instead of interacting in public settings. This finding is similar to that of Jeffres, Neuendorf, and Atkin (2003) who documented the replacement of traditional social leisure pursuits when at-home media is used for entertainment purposes, in turn furthering popular culture.

Additionally, new media affords opportunities to communicate in real time via the Internet, in turn creating sub-cultural groups in cyber space. The problem then is that the Internet caters to these pop culture, computer-based entertainment groups in terms of providing mediums within which to exchange ideas and experiences, yet it does not necessarily promote actual face-to-face communication and interaction in community settings. This finding supports Kraut et al., (1998) and Nie and Erbring (2000) who purport that media facilitates private pursuits of leisure in turn decreasing social connections and further isolating individuals from their communities. Further, participant responses revealed that the Internet and new media technology can encourage individualized pursuits of leisure, such as television movie watching, video gaming, instant messaging and/or “myspacing,” online shopping, website browsing and downloading music. Much of this is due to the infinite array of possibilities available that can be personalized and

made user-specific whereby individuals are able to manipulate the activity pursued in order to create the experience they seek.

Regardless of the levels of social capital created, the findings reveal positive relationships among leisure behavior, work/school, family and friends. Another theme that the data illustrated is that shared leisure experiences can aid in strengthening working relationships as well as family ties and friendships. This is partially due to the fact that relationships carry over from one life domain to another. Kelly and Freysinger (1999) explain this as the blurring of the boundaries of the life domains of leisure, work and family in post-modern times. Young adults can experience this by finding pleasure in work, fostering friendships at work and by interacting in recreational settings with family members. Further, work circles as well as family and friends can influence the nature of leisure activities chosen as well as the overall experience of leisure. It must be noted then that as Kelly and Freysinger explain, leisure, work and family/friends interconnect and compliment one another; in turn creating a cooperative action referred to as a synergy of life that is a harmonious, mutually advantageous union of all three life domains.

Although it is understood that various elements of life interconnect and reciprocally affect one another, it must be noted that the lives of young Dutch and American adults can be divided into two domains, being that of work and leisure. This contrasts with Kelly's (1987) idea that life consists of three dimensions, which are work, leisure and family. A possible reason for this variation is that this study focuses solely on the lifestage of young adulthood, whereby for the most part participants have moved away from home, yet have not begun their own family, and in turn have not been ushered into the family lifestage characteristic of the 30's. Indeed, this finding can be used as evidence that these young adults are engaged in the developmental task of individuation whereby, starting in adolescence they are expected to separate from their family of

origin and to develop their own separate identity (Erikson, 1950). The data show that family is not regarded as a third pillar of life, but rather as an overlapping component emerging within both dimensions of work (i.e. society) and leisure (i.e. self). This argument is further understood when the element of friendship is presented considering that friends are such an important influence on the lifestyle of young adults. However, they too are not considered as a dimension, but rather as an element impacting both the leisure and work time of young adults. What determines whether the family/friend interaction is considered to be work as opposed to leisure is dependent upon the element of choice. When family and friend time is obligatory such as holidays, birthdays and favors, it can be considered as a chore and is not characteristic of the voluntary nature of pure leisure. On the other hand, when the time spent with family and friends is freely chosen and anticipated, it is typically a pleasurable or “fun time,” which can then be classified as true leisure time.

Essentially, this study reveals that for the lifestage of young adulthood, work and leisure encompass the two dimensions of life, yet are identified by freedom of choice and the experience of fun (Figure 5-2). This life model is proposed particularly for Generation X, noted to be libertarian advocates of free will and Generation Y who are said to appreciate a compartmentalized work and leisure life (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Work, be it one’s job and/or family, friend, or personal responsibilities, is a necessity; whereas leisure, the other life domain, is characterized by a freedom to choose how and when to have a “fun time.” Pure leisure results then when an activity is freely chosen and is considered to be fun; whereas, pure work results when an activity is mandatory and is not considered to be fun. Nevertheless, not all leisure activities that are freely chosen are always pleasurable due to contextual constraints such as opportunity, time, money, stimulation, and environmental issues. Similarly, obligatory activities

can sometimes be pleasurable, in turn creating synergy, a mutually beneficial harmony between the two life domains of work and leisure. It is proposed then that the life of young adults hinges on the two domains of work and leisure that are distinguishable by the facet of choice and the element of pleasure.

Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge in various ways. To begin, it appears that since the late Baby Boomers and the early members of Generation X were studied in the 1980s and 1990s, not much has changed regarding leisure meanings (Kelly, 1996), social experiences (Iso-Ahola, 1980) and civic engagement for young adults (Putnam, 1995). The leisure patterns, pertinent issues and psycho-social tasks are pretty much the same. For example, although leisure is noted to create informal relationships, the results of this study show that young residents of The Netherlands (a sample of Western Europeans) are experiencing a shortage of formal civic engagement (i.e. social decline) similar to the America sample of United States residents from Florida. It is also apparent that the young American and Dutch adults are relatively unaware of the social and cultural benefits afforded by leisure behavior.

One implication of these findings for practice is that leisure and recreation researchers and practitioners should concentrate on creating a greater awareness of the formal benefits of community based leisure among the young adult population in the attempt to increase structured community based participation that can create social capital. It is noted that currently young adults do not consider the formal potential for social and/or cultural capital when choosing which leisure activity to pursue. However, if these benefits were more commonly acknowledged, would the leisure pastimes of young adults be more thoughtfully and selectively chosen, in turn increasing formal social involvement and the amount of social capital available to their societies? Future research is necessary to determine the effects on leisure pastimes when young adults are

made aware of potential social and cultural benefits resulting from civic engagement, because it may encourage those adults to join more social groups and become more involved in their community and social affairs, similar to the time of The Recreation Movement at the start of the twentieth century.

The findings also revealed that for young Americans, the contribution of formal social capital might occur more readily as a result of work as opposed to leisure. This finding implies that in regards to community involvement and democratic citizenship, we might want to focus on the life domain of work more so than the potential of leisure. It is apparent that community based jobs of young adults appear to offer more of an opportunity for creating formal social capital as compared to their community based leisure experiences. This finding may be associated with the lifestyle of young adults in that they tend not to be connected to community through children or family in the same way that individuals in other life stages tend to be. Thus, an important implication may be that if we want to encourage community participation among this age group that it might be better to focus on their work environments and to identify the contributions that they could make to community through careers and jobs. This implication seems particularly pertinent to the young US adults.

The Dutch also seem to have some lessons that they can teach the US in terms of valuing time for leisure and vacations. For starters, the Dutch typically have three weeks more vacation time from work than Americans, allowing for the relaxation and regeneration necessary for individuals to more fully contribute their best to society. Also, the leisure of the young adults from the Netherlands is typically more socially based in the community as opposed to that of the Americans. In turn, there are more opportunities available to create formal social capital resulting from the benefits of the leisure of young adults, in turn creating a healthier lifestyle that

is available to all society. In order to increase community-based leisure that creates public good, future research is necessary to determine what influences and motivates young adults to pursue socially engaged leisure pastimes. A potential stimulus may well be what social activities are considered to be “trendy” as a result of interactive media and popular culture. Nevertheless, new interactive technology presents media through which leisure’s potential contribution to social capital can be relayed. For example, sub-cultural affiliations can be utilized to convey the array of benefits from socially interactive leisure pursuits to the young adult population. To heighten the needed awareness, it would be wise to harness the global power of the Internet, as well as the national power of radio and television for the Dutch and American populations. Thus, instead of having a negative effect on social capital (Putnam, 2000) it may be that for the younger generations in particular that interactive technology can be used to foster social capital.

Another set of findings that may have implications for western societies in particular relates to the impact that new media and technology can have on leisure behavior and the creation of a 24-hour, globally connected society. As a result of the protestant work ethic, countries such as the United States and the Netherlands tend to hold a work before leisure ethic. This results in societies that feel rushed, over-worked and not relaxed because of a need to compete globally and feel financially productive. This may be why the most acknowledged leisure benefits from the Dutch and American participants related to improving psychological well-being, experiencing relaxation, generating accomplishments and escaping daily life. However, Dutch participants reveal that reaping these benefits in protestant countries tends to differ vastly from the ideology of the slower-paced southern European countries such as Spain, Greece and Italy. In such southern European countries, personal health and wellness is more highly regarded as the essential elements contributing to overall life satisfaction. With the

afternoon siesta, these countries ensure that every day is balanced in regards to work and leisure time. To further investigate these assumptions it is recommended that future research should compare young adults from a southern European country with the findings of this study.

Certainly, these results may help to support the premises of such grassroots movements as Take Back Your Time that are advocating for more leisure and vacation time to alleviate the negative health effects of stress, sleep deprivation and poor nutrition that seem to be linked to time deprivation. Perhaps the physical health benefits of the Mediterranean diets are only one part of the explanation, perhaps a slower paced lifestyle also contributes to the lesser incidence of heart disease among the southern European countries.

If I were to do a follow up of this study, there are several aspects upon which I would focus. For starters, I recommend that future studies incorporate a more diverse sample in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, generation and social class. For instance, is the leisure of young adults dependent upon being born into Generation X as opposed to Generation Y? Further, American studies should be conducted in differing states and cities in order to determine the regional effects associated with different parts of the country. For example, the differences between southern culture and that of the northeast. I also suggest that the mediating effects on the leisure of young adults created by the presence of a significant other (boyfriend/girlfriend) should be explored. Most importantly, I recommend that future studies focus on the relationships between new media technology, leisure behavior and community engagement of young adults. For example, are community-based leisure activities affected when young adults use new media for entertainment purposes? Further, does the use of new media technology decrease the level of community involvement of young adults? Finally, future studies may want to focus on the creation of social capital when young adults are aware of the

potential social and cultural benefits of their leisure compared to when they appear unaware of the benefits.

Limitations and Delimitations

There were potential threats to the purity of data that must be acknowledged. First, extraneous problems such as technological malfunctions occurred, causing data to be lost. To explain, small portions of several interviews went missing when recording stopped without warning due to lack of disk space, prior to another disk being inserted. Further, two data disks were actually broken in transport home from Europe. However, in order to best decrease the chances of data being lost to technological malfunctions and user error several strategies were employed, such as using non-rewritable DVDs, charging the camera batteries every day, using both an audio recorder and video camcorder, and checking that all equipment worked at the start of the interview. Nevertheless, sound quality was not fully ensured in all cases due to wind and/or loud background noise such as talking; thus, small portions of a few interviews were inaudible.

Another important limitation to note was that five of the participants, four Dutch and one American, were unfamiliar with the term leisure prior to the interview; and therefore, the concept of the term leisure had to be described to them by the interviewer prior to questioning, possibly influencing their definitions of leisure. Further, due to language differences, participants carried varying interpretations for the wording and meaning of interview questions; yet, in an attempt to increase internal validity, simple, every-day language was used and generally the same questions were asked of each participant. Nonetheless, due to the semi-structured nature of the research, it was not possible for every participant to be asked the exact same questions, in turn making data analysis more of a challenge when comparing results.

In qualitative research, data collection should continue until the data has reached saturation. However, the two samples were limited to twelve participants due to time and monetary constraints; yet more participants' responses may or may not have yielded new data. Further, when participants knew that they were going to be a part of a scholarly study, the "testing effect" seemed to occur, especially for the Dutch sample, whereby participants gave answers and used language that they otherwise would not. To increase the purity of data, participants were advised to offer truthful behavioral patterns and meanings with the acknowledgment that the researcher was not looking for a particular response and that there were no right or wrong answers. Building rapport between the interviewer and interviewee helped to increase the trustworthiness of the data. However, this was easier done among the American population where prior contact had been established and therefore interviewees were more inclined to reveal open and honest results. Several of the Dutch participants were reserved at the beginning of the interviews, possibly limiting their responses, but the more they talked about themselves, the more they seemed to open up and divulge as the interviews progressed.

In order to best increase external validity and best represent such a heterogeneous population theoretical sampling of participants of varying age, gender, and leisure interests were targeted; thereby ensuring as far as possible that the sample reflected individuals and their perspectives from as diverse an array as possible. With such a small sample size, the problem of qualitative data is then a matter of whom it can be generalized to. It is questioned if this study can represent the ideas from the lifestage of young adulthood as a whole. It is possible that the sample population observed and interviewed do not accurately represent the general American and Western European populations. Further, it is questioned if the results of this study are transferable to Dutch and American individuals with varying family backgrounds and

upbringings. However, it must be noted that the strength of qualitative methods lies in the validity of the data rather than extensive generalizability of the findings (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2002). Thus, the value of this study may lie in providing some in-depth insights into the leisure and lives of two groups of young adults in the first decade of the twenty-first century. While, the patterns uncovered may reflect those of the young Dutch and American adults, the findings should be generalized with caution to groups with similar socio-demographic characteristics.

Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that for young Dutch and American adults, leisure meaning is created when non-work free time is available and pleasurable pursuits are chosen in an effort to experience an intrinsically “fun” time. Further, the young Dutch and American participants consistently acknowledged the main benefit of personal and/or social leisure experiences as encompassing the achievement of psychological well-being, while tending to neglect leisure’s potential for creating socio-cultural capital. It is hypothesized that by creating individualized, sub-cultural groupings that do not materialize into social settings, there may be a relationship between new media technology and the declining levels of community engagement for young adulthood. However it must be noted that Dutch young adults less frequently use new media for entertainment as opposed to informative purposes. Further, findings note that the Dutch participants are more regularly involved in leisure activities that place them within community settings, thereby creating greater informal relationships impacting the social capital of the Netherlands. Consequently, a positive relationship between informative purposes of new media technology and community-based leisure pursuits is hypothesized.

Nevertheless, for both young adult populations, there is an overall lack of participation in leisure pursuits that encourage democratic citizenship and create public good for society. Within

the American context, it seems that for the young adults in this study, the life domain of work more so than leisure creates opportunities for community involvement. It is important to recognize that for the young adult lifestage, life is simply a balance of work and leisure, whereby family and friends reciprocally affect both dimensions as opposed to constituting a separate life domain traditionally accepted within the field of leisure studies. Ultimately, for young adulthood, leisure and work are distinguishable by a freedom of choice and by the experience of a “fun time.” However, lifestage constraints such as opportunity, time and money can cause freely chosen activities to not be considered pleasurable. Further, a synergy of work and leisure is possible when obligatory activities are enjoyed and considered to be pleasurable. Nevertheless, pure leisure accrues when young adults have the power to choose how and when to experience a personal or social “fun time.”

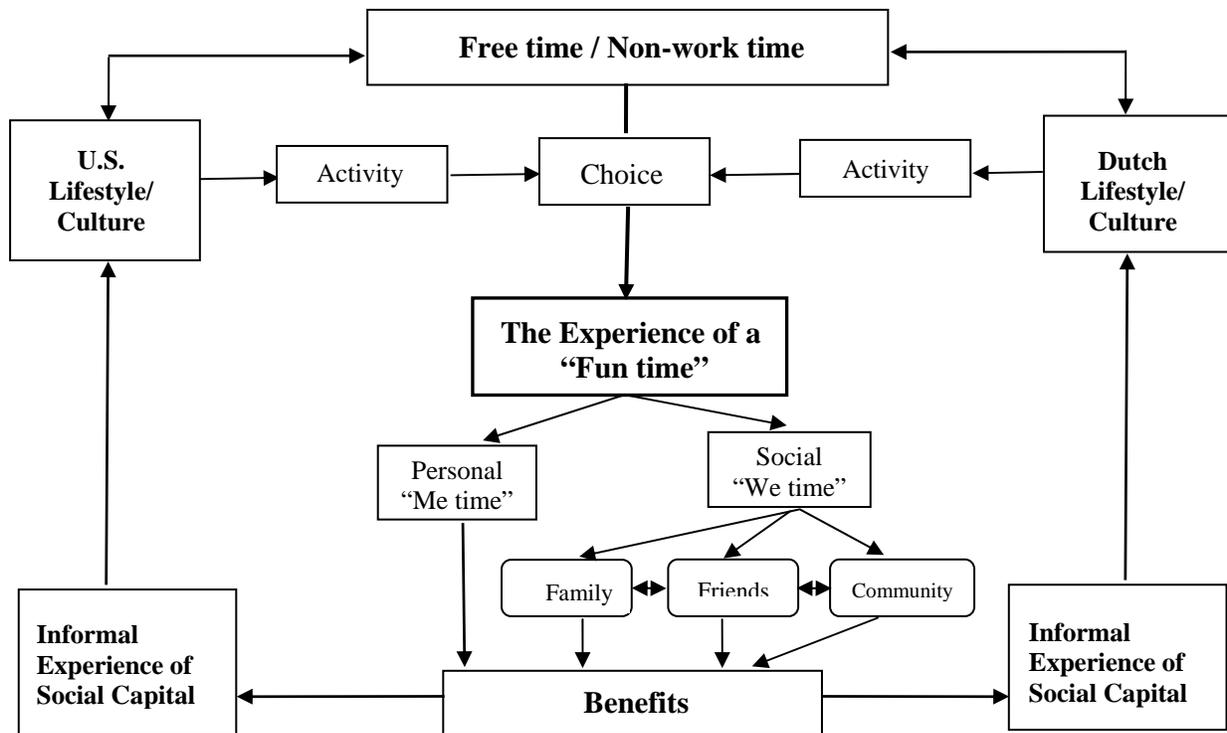


Figure 5-1. Proposed Grounded Theory of the leisure of young Dutch and US adults

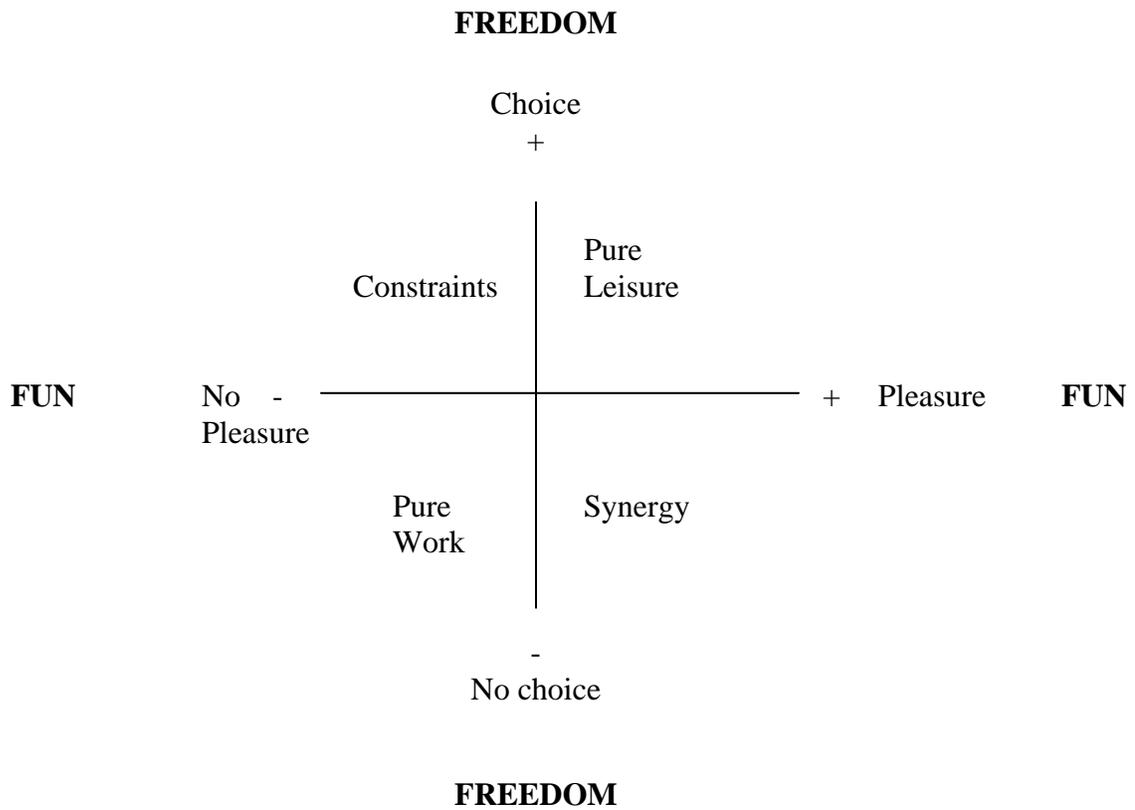


Figure 5-2. Two-dimensional model of leisure and life for young adulthood

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Leisure Meanings, Experiences and Benefits:
A Cross-cultural Analysis of Young Adults

1. Tell me about yourself?

Probe: What is your name, age, birth origin, gender, and highest level of education
Please provide me with some background information about your work, leisure
and family life.

2. What is it that you enjoy doing for leisure?

Probe: How do you define leisure?

What kinds of leisure do you participate in?

What are your favorite things to do? (i.e. sports, games, vacationing and traveling
and/or personal expression such as art, music, dance, meditation, etc.)?

Where and when do you participate: at home, in your community, outside
of your regular environment?

With whom do you interact and how important is socializing with your
leisure?

What are some things (activities) you like to do on a regular basis?

What are some things (activities) you like to do on an irregular basis?

What are some things (activities) you would like to do more often? What is
preventing you?

How does new technological capabilities affect your leisure?

Do you feel more or less active?

Do you feel more or less connected?

Do you feel more or less informed?

How does your leisure impact you social networks?

Are you actively involved in your leisure subculture?

As a result of your leisure, are you actively involved in your community?

3. Why is your leisure important?

Probe: How does leisure make you feel?

What do you value about your leisure? (What is important/ unimportant?)

What role does leisure play in your life? (family/friends life, work/school life,
community/subcultural life)

Do you closely identify with people of similar leisure interests?

Is leisure as important in your life as your family and work time?

What are benefits you associate with leisure?

Do you believe your leisure values are different than _____(Americans or
Western Europeans)?

4. Please share with me what leisurely dreams you wish would come true.

Probe: What would you do?

Where would you want to go?

Would you want anyone with you? If so, who and why?

Why is it important?
What is preventing you?

What else you would like to add? What are your closing feelings about leisure?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Lauren Trujillo was born on April 25, 1984 in Tampa, FL, where she spent all of her childhood and teenage years. With a Catholic school upbringing, Jessica graduated from the Academy of the Holy Names in May 2002, as a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society and President to the Ambassadors Club. She entered the University of Florida in August of 2002 and earned a B.S. in recreation and event management by the summer of 2005. Jessica graduated summa-cum-laude and went on to become a graduate assistant for Special Events and Meeting Planning, Commercial Recreation and Fundamentals of Tourism for the 2006 school year.

Upon completion of the dual-enrollment program in 2007, Jessica will be receiving a M.S. in tourism and recreation with a specialization concerning the benefits of leisure for young adulthood. Personally, Jessica loves to have fun, smile, laugh and learn while trying new experiences. She enjoys the adventure and activity of the outdoors, socializing and meeting new people, reading for pleasure, watching exciting movies, making jewelry and of course traveling to novel destinations. After graduation Jessica will be beginning her career in the leisure services industry, but she intends to return to school and is hopeful of earning a Ph.D. and one day becoming Dr. Jessica Trujillo!