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WORK AND LEISURE: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN*

ABSTRACT: The notions of work and play are examined. It is suggested that the two not be seen as distinctly different activities but rather as elements that contribute to all activities. Jobs are thus defined as activities heavily laden with the work component while games are activities that are mainly play. The work component is characterized as being purposeful and goal directed while the play component is characterized as intrinsically rewarding, interesting, and fun.

A person is seen to engage in many different activities alloting the one he terms work to prime time and the other activities to leisure time. Repetition of any activity may reduce its play component to the point where it becomes almost entirely work and uninteresting or even boring. At such times he may replace a prime-time activity with another that had originally been a leisure time play activity but which has the potential for earning money. Thus it is important for vocational counsellors to help clients develop leisure time activities for they may some day be used as replacement vocations.

With the introduction of mechanization and automation in industry and with the push by workers for a shorter work week and higher incomes, the understanding of leisure has taken on new importance. First sociologists, followed soon after by economists, psychologists, and vocational counsellors began to study the effects of increased leisure on society, on our activities, and even on our personalities. The number of books and articles on the subject have proliferated tremendously in the last decade.

Concern has generally centered around three problems: that some people have too much leisure, that the people who have leisure waste it, and that leisure is being forced upon us whether we want it or not.

The first problem is caused by resentment. Tied down to our everyday work we look with jealous eyes at the minority groups who have more leisure than we. These privileged minorities include children, the idle rich, handicapped, and unemployables. "Children get too many holidays and too much free time from school." "People on welfare should be put to work or taken off the welfare rolls. They are just plain lazy."

Some of this resentment is caused by the general acceptance of a negative attitude towards work. Even a person who enjoys his job is reluctant to admit this to others lest he be looked at askance. For in our society it is expected that we hate our work.

Swados (1959) for example stated:

> In the case of work, if we grant the possibility that millions of American workers may in truth be terribly discontented

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> with their jobs, doesn't this arouse a consequent suspicion; that the growing white collar classes are reluctant to admit this likelihood, not only because it would disturb the comfortable mass media concept of America as a land of blissful togetherness, but even more importantly because it would do violence to their own self esteem, the basic worth and individuality of what they themselves are doing to earn a living (p. 14)?

And again,

> The hidden bonds of boredom and frustration that link the lives — if they only knew it — of the professional man and the working man are close to the surface in the working pattern of the burgeoning millions of clericals and technicians, which is so similar to that of the numerically declining working class (p. 15).

This generally accepted hatred of work can be traced back to Adam and Eve who, when driven out of the Garden of Eden, were told that they must earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. Their disobedience was converted into guilt feelings, and work becomes the expiation of this guilt.

However, more realistically, work is probably disliked in our society simply because it is necessary and, like all impositions, is resented.

The second problem, that people waste leisure, is derived directly from the same resentment as the first. Stimulated by the massive amount of leisure-time advertising we sincerely believe that we are more capable of utilizing free time than others. "We would not simply lie around. We would travel, enjoy ourselves, learn, do all the things that could *really* be done, but most of all have fun."

The third problem, that leisure is being forced upon us whether we want it or not, derives from our Protestant ethic background that insists that leisure should be earned as a reward for work. Moreover, leisure must not be enjoyed to the fullest lest we learn to hate work even more.

As workers successfully struggle for shorter work weeks and fewer work days per week they become more concerned about not "wasting" leisure time. Often workers have over-committed themselves financially and are forced to trade leisure time for moonlighting jobs. At other times they hang around the house annoying their wives for whom work has not diminished, even though their husbands have more time to spend at home.

As Weiss and Riesman (1961) pointed out:

> A study of the unpredictably scheduled to permit other employment on the additional day off, indicates that this additional day was less of a boon for the workers than they had originally anticipated. The extra day off was not a day off for the children, so there was an empty house during school hours; nor was it a day off for the wife, so there was house-cleaning and vacuuming, with the man in the way. In this plant, a small aircraft manufacturing company in Southern California, the four-day week was scheduled for one week out of four. Though originally anticipated with

> high hopes, it was soon disliked: television, loafing, ball-games, all these were felt to be week-end activities, and fell flat during the work week (pp. 172-173).

The concept of leisure as unobligated time also becomes distorted when we commit ourselves to programmed leisure-time activities including evening courses, workshops, boards of directors of public institutions for the upper middle class, and bowling leagues and home repairs for the working class. Today local governments hire recreation officers to organize activities and solicit people to commit their leisure time. All this because we have not learned to cope with large amounts of "free" time.

One of the most interesting aspects of the concern with leisure is our attempt to define it. It is interesting to note that many of the articles and books on the subject allot the first 10-25 percent of space to an attempt at a definition of leisure. Almost invariably these articles trace the concept to the Greeks and especially to Aristotle. They point out that, among the Greeks, leisure was a state or attitude of being free from the necessity of being occupied. Because of the utilization of slaves for work, free men were able to engage in leisure activities such as politics, debate, education, art, athletics, etc. They were unconcerned with instrumental or production-oriented activities. Thus leisure was a life style expressing the values of their culture.

The second meaning of the concept of leisure, and the one with which we are generally concerned, defines it as spare time or time not committed to instrumental type activities. Dumazedier (1967), for example, defined leisure as:

> Activity — apart from the obligations of work, family, and society — to which the individual turns at will, for either relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity (pp. 16-17).

The key words in his definition are *at will, spontaneous,* and *free.* The kind of activities in which an individual participates is not really the determinant of whether it should be called a work or leisure activity. Rather, the characteristic of the activity and the satisfaction he derives from it are the determinants.

In a recent paper (Day, 1971) the concepts of work and play were compared. I argued that work and play are usually polarized, and that the two activities are considered to be distinct and opposite. Work is defined as an activity whose purpose is the production of goods and whose satisfactions are derived from objects or situations extrinsic to the nature of the task itself. The rewards for work were outlined by Menninger (1964) in what, until recently, was the standard textbook for vocational counselors, Borow's *Man in a World at Work* (1964). In it Menninger argued that work satisfies many psychological needs which cannot be satisfied in other ways. These include an outlet for hostile or aggressive drives, the feeling that work is worthwhile, personal relations with other workers, a chance to be a member of a team, etc.

Vroom (1964) also outlined five motivations to work:

1. they provide wages to the role occupant in return for his services
2. they requires from the role occupant expenditures of mental or physical energy
3. they permit the role occupant to contribute to the production of goods and services
4. they permit or require the role occupant social interaction with other persons
5. they define at least in part the social status of the role occupant.

Now let us compare two athletes competing in a game of tennis, golf, hockey, or football. One is a professional and the other an amateur. Yet, examining only their behavior, there is no way of identifying their status. They both play vigorously and aggressively. They seem to be well respected members of their particular teams. In fact, to identify them, one must ascertain which athlete receives remuneration after the game. The one who gets paid has been working while the other has been playing.

How then can we distinguish work as having the motivations outlined by Menninger and Vroom?

Perhaps we have fallen into a dilemma because we have insisted on forcing the distinction between work and play. We attempted to ascribe an either-or goal to an activity. Margaret Mead, for example, described work as an "activity that is purposeful and directed towards ends that lie outside that activity," as opposed to play, "activity which is self-rewarding (Mead, 1949, p. 163)."

In fact, there are few activities that are purely work or purely play. Most contain elements of both. Jobs, for example, are tasks that are primarily but need not entirely be heavily laden with a work component. Games, on the other hand, are activities which are mainly fun, mainly enjoyable, yet often overly structured and dependent upon rules and demands of others.

Thus of the two athletes, one is playing and the other is working, but the activities are to all intents and purposes the same. One distinguishing factor is that of money, the professional athlete receiving pay for services while the amateur doesn't, but even this distinction is becoming blurred. Many amateurs now receive payment in goods and even cash.

Another distinction may lie in the regard the individual has towards his activity and the status he accords to it. We expect that the amateur would profess to enjoy his activity more than the professional. Professionals, when asked why they do something, often answer "well, it's a living." Amateurs who are not supporting themselves from an activity do it for the fun of it.

Despite the protestations of professionals that work is hateful and unenjoyable, one cannot deny that certain aspects of a job are enjoyable. Even the work component of a job may yield some sort of indirect reinforcement, in the anticipation of receiving something

by selling the product, by displaying it to others, or by status, prestige, or security to be obtained when the task is completed.

In this sense then, an activity is pleasurable to the extent that the anticipated reward is pleasurable. If a painter expects to sell the painting he is working on, he enjoys the anticipation of the pleasure he will derive from the receipt and disbursement of the money as well as the prestige and fame that may follow its sale. The intrinsic or play characteristics of a job also yield satisfaction to the doer. A teacher may enjoy his interchange with his pupils and the writer the creative involvement in his paper. While this may be less obvious with the laborer on the production line it is not entirely untrue. One can find many blue-collar workers who enjoy their labor and not merely the rewards they derive from their jobs.

But probably the greatest difference between working and playing is the time allotted to those activities. The professional golf player plays golf in prime time and therefore to him that's work. The amateur does it on nonprime time or what we call leisure time and therefore for him it's recreation or a game.

This leads us to the realization that an individual generally indulges in many activities, all of which he places on a gradient of status or worth. One (or more) of these activities is considered to be primarily work, is called a vocation, and is done on a regular basis for which prime time is committed and from which the individual expects to derive a number of satisfactions, most especially financial. Other activities give him other satisfactions, he may enjoy them more, but he considers them recreational or avocational.

Even this distinction is rather blurred for we tend to have a hierarchy of job activities too. There are jobs around the house, the cottage, and the car. There is committed time with the boys that may easily be considered a job rather than fun because it is obligated. Thus the bowling league on Tuesday night may interfere with someone's preference for watching the baseball game on T.V., and he may spend that evening in a bad mood because he cannot get out of his commitment. Bowling, at least for that evening, has become a job.

That is, unless he has a good evening and bowls a 350 game. The interest and satisfaction of bowling an exceptional game may often convert the status of an activity from work to fun. Thus we see that the same activity, regardless of the time allotted for it, is often labelled work or fun depending on the degree of satisfaction derived from the activity itself (as opposed to the anticipation of later pleasures).

Satisfaction intrinsic to an activity is derived from those characteristics of a situation that provide high levels of complexity, novelty, incongruity, unstructuredness, and surprise. These characteristics were termed collative variables by Berlyne (1960) and were said to exist because uncertainty in the stimulus input creates a state of heightened arousal and conflict among possible response tendencies. Berlyne argued that a moderate level of collative variability motivates approach and exploratory behavior and feelings of excitement and interest in the stimulus situation.

Play is one type of response to situations characterized by high levels of collative variability. Motivated by uncertainty, or lack of information, play becomes an information search, practice, and skill training. Play may often take the form of exploratory behavior; locomotion, manipulation, and testing of various solutions may be initiated in the presence of uncertainty, and abandoned when all the uncertainty is resolved or when other environmental stimuli with higher levels of uncertainty become more attractive and interesting to the individual and distract him. Children play more than adults probably because they are more at liberty to choose to react to various environments and are able to abandon uninteresting activities with greater ease. Their behavior is usually termed *fun.* The "idle rich" who have greater flexibility and choice of alternative behaviors also have fun and their amusements are often displayed in the newspapers and magazines to be read by the more "unfortunate" workers.

Play is also a form of learning and rehearsal. Competence is gained with practice and mastery is achieved through exploration and comprehension of environmental conditions as well as one's own abilities. The player enjoys the repetitious practice during which he reduces uncertainty and becomes proficient in responding appropriately and efficiently to a situation. This process of gaining competence and mastery is not confined to children but is ongoing throughout life.

One of the most fundamental factors in the work-play continuum of activity, one that has been generally disregarded, is that an activity does not remain static on the continuum. Rather, with time and repetition the proportion of intrinsic satisfactions derived from a task decreases. As novelty, incongruity, surprise, and complexity are reduced an activity tends to become less fun, less play, and more work. With experience and repetition, collative variability gradually disappears and a task tends to become repetitious, boring, mundane, and generally uninteresting.

At that point, an individual would like to abandon an activity. But, if it is a job, he is forced by economic necessity to carry on for the extrinsic rewards, especially money. Only children, rich people, and other minority groups of whom we are jealous seem to have the possibility of discontinuing an activity when it becomes uninteresting.

Neff (1968) argued that "work is not a 'natural' human activity (p. 8)," and that "part of the process of becoming a worker, therefore, is the intricate matter of learning how to behave with one's peers, subordinates, and superiors (p. 29)." He said that one function of education is that of socialization by which we train children to lay aside some of their own interests and become responsible wage earners, to trade in pleasure principles for reality principles, to distinguish between work and play, and generally take on the accruements of a "work personality."

Mature workers with well formed work personalities are those who are willing to stay in a task after the intrinsic motivation has been reduced. They are willing to put into prime time that activity

which will bring in the greatest economic reinforcement.

Today we find that the younger generation tends to reject the work-in-prime-time game. Youth is often willing to devote some portion of their prime time for a minimal level of financial return, insisting on allocating the rest to recreation and other interesting activities.

Even the adult generation is moving away from the concept of having to devote its entire prime time for five days a week to work. Where once workers on a four-day work week may have felt guilty for having an extra day off when their friends had to work, and became restless with unfilled free time, the practice is becoming so prevalent that they now find they can spend time with friends or with families for a lengthy weekend.

The reduced work week has created important changes. With increased leisure time and better education, people have often become very proficient at a secondary or avocational activity. Also, the proliferation of occupations has allowed the possibility of deserting a job when the activities therein have been reduced to work and to introduce other activities into prime time, earning money at them.

For example, an individual whose prime time activity is spent at a general medical practice but has always been interested in art has found the time to take courses in art appreciation and aesthetics. Recently, he was awarded a bachelor's degree in art and is now lecturing at the art gallery and conducting tutorial classes at the university in prime time taken from his practice. Should his medical practice become routine and boring, and should the opportunity present itself to obtain a position as lecturer in art, there is no doubt that he would interchange the time of these two activities, relegating his medical practice to spare-time activity and shifting his art activities to prime time. His vocation will have changed.

This flexibility in vocational change casts some doubt on the validity of the "square peg" theories of vocational choice. These theories, and Holland's (1966) theory is a prime example of the "square peg" theories, insist that individual personalities have definite shapes — thus square pegs into square holes and round pegs into round holes.

But the simple sliding of people from one vocation into another and back again when the opportunity presents itself suggests that personalities do not change, but rather that roles are developed suitable to each activity and that these roles may exist side by side. A person when he is golfing acts like a golfer, and when counselling acts like a vocational counsellor. If both of these activities yield intrinsic and extrinsic satisfactions he may perform both, one in his committed prime time and one as an avocation. Without changing his personality he may abandon his counselling career for the professional golf circuit for many reasons: he can't find a job as counsellor, golf may be more exciting, he believes he can earn more at golf, or he feels he can't advance in status or prestige in counselling. These and many other reasons may ease him out of a counselling career and into a golfing career. The converse may ease him out of a golfing career

and back into counselling at any time. In fact, it is becoming common to find people who alternate between careers, spending a half year at each or possibly five or ten years at a professional sport career and then moving gradually into coaching, selling beer or insurance, or opening a restaurant.

People who have the flexibility of career change have become very choosy. They insist on deriving more than mere financial gratification from a prime time activity. Since an individual has a finite number of types of satisfactions he can derive from all his activities, he tends to insist on deriving as many as possible of these satisfactions from his prime time activity — his career. Otherwise he changes careers. On the other hand, one who is locked into his job and is fearful of changing, or has no marketable activity to which he can change, tends to become discontented and to hate his job. He fights for shorter work hours and tries to convince himself that the committed time is really not prime, but the time that he spends with his family or at other leisure activities is in reality much more important.

In actual counselling practice it therefore becomes important for the vocational counsellor to concern himself with the degree of flexibility in his client rather than his personality profile. The counsellor should concentrate on ascertaining the ability of the client to move about among activities and his ability to derive satisfaction from each. He should be concerned with the willingness of the client to carry on many satisfying activities and to recognize that each of them may yield similar, yet distinctly different satisfactions. The counsellor must also make it his task to direct a client to developing many activities without regard as to their immediate usefulness as a vocation. In these quickly changing times today's vocation may be automated out of existence, tomorrow's and today's hobby may become tomorrow's career. It therefore is extremely important to arm people with alternatives, so that they don't look to one major activity as the source of most of their satisfactions, extrinsic and intrinsic.

RESUME: On a fait l'examen des notions de travail et de jeu. On suggère de ne pas les considérer comme deux activités différentes de façon très distincte, mais plutôt comme des éléments inhérents à toute activité. On définit ainsi les occupations (jobs) comme des activités principalement constituées par la composante travail, tandis que les jeux (games) sont des activités dont l'élément principal est la gratuité. Ce qui caractérise le travail est le fait qu'il est effectué avec un but prémédité, tandis que le jeu est intrinsèquement gratifiant, intéressant et amusant.

Une personne peut s'engager dans plusieurs activités différentes, allouant d'abord son temps à celles qu'elle considère comme du travail avant de l'allouer aux activités de loisir. La répétition d'une activité peut en réduire son caractère de jeu ou de gratuité à un point où elle devient ennuyante et fait presqu'entièrement figure de travail. Devant une situation de ce genre, la personne peut substituer à une activité à laquelle elle accordait d'abord son temps une autre qui en était initialement une de loisir mais qui est susceptible de servir de gagne-pain. Il s'ensuit qu'il est important pour les conseillers d'orientation d'aider leurs clients à se développer dans des activités de loisir qui pourraient éventuellement leur servir pour gagner leur vie.

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