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An Exploration of Employed College Student Experiences in Work and Leisure

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AN EXPLORATION OF EMPLOYED COLLEGE STUDENT EXPERIENCES
IN WORK AND LEISURE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Katherine Ann Jordan
May 2018

Accepted by:
Dr. Denise M. Anderson, Committee Chair
Dr. Edmond P. Bowers
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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose. On-campus college student employment has been positively associated with extracurricular involvement, academic success, and retention. There is a lack of clarity, however, regarding the types of jobs and job characteristics associated with the positive outcomes of on-campus employment. In addition, it is unclear what else employed students might gain or how they might benefit from on-campus employment as opposed to off-campus employment. Furthermore, since living a balanced life has become an increasingly popular value among Millennials, the lives of employed college students need to be further examined, specifically regarding work and leisure experiences. Therefore, this study explored the work and leisure experiences of employed college students based on the different job programs that exist on Clemson University's campus. **Methods.** Semi-structured interviews were used as the main form of data collection. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed by a team of three researchers. **Findings.** Findings suggest that these participants a) felt they gained various soft skills relevant to their future careers through employment and extracurricular involvement, b) that leisure can be experienced in the workplace, and c) that employment and extracurricular involvement history before college might contribute to boredom and not knowing what to do during unstructured free time. **Future Research.** Future research is necessary to further explore the effects of on-campus employment as well as off campus employment. Additionally, more research is necessary to understand the implications of experiencing leisure in the workplace. Finally, research is needed to understand how

student involvement in extracurricular activities as well as employment might negatively impact one's ability to manage unstructured free time.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background.....	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Definitions of Terms	7
Delimitations.....	9
Dissertation Format.....	9
References.....	11
II. THE ROLE OF ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN CAREER PREPARATION	17
Introduction.....	17
Background.....	18
Purpose and Research Questions	22
Methods	22
Findings	31
Discussion.....	49
Conclusion	56
References.....	57
III. THE MEANING OF LEISURE: DEFINITIONS OF LEISURE AND LEISURE EXPERIENCES IN THE EMPLOYED COLLEGE STUDENT WORKPLACE	64
Introduction.....	64
Background.....	66
Purpose and Research Questions	74

Methods	74
Findings	79
Discussion and Future Research	94
Conclusion	100
References.....	102
IV. COLLEGE STUDENT BUSYNESS AND BOREDOM DURING FREE TIME	110
Introduction.....	110
Background.....	112
Purpose	116
Methods	116
Findings	119
Discussion.....	133
Limitations and Conclusions	139
References.....	141
V. CONCLUSION.....	148
Research Reflections	148
Review of Findings	149
A Need for Future Research	153
References.....	156
APPENDICES	157
A: IRB Approval	158
B: Recruitment Email	159
C: Pre-Interview Survey	160
D: Interview Consent and Guide	165

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.1	Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program.....	25
2.1	Neulinger’s Paradigm of Leisure.....	70
2.2	Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program.....	75
3.1	Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program.....	117
3.2	Summary of Structured Time Commitments	120
4.1	Summary of Research Questions and Corresponding Themes	149

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Traditional undergraduate students are under the age of 24, enroll in college immediately after high school graduation, do not have children, and complete their undergraduate work in four or five years (Center for Institutional Effectiveness, 2004). A traditional college student's "work" is typically thought of as academic work, but due to increases in college tuition, cost of living, and time to degree, college student work also means paid work for many students. According to the most recent available statistics, 43% of full-time undergraduate students were employed in 2015 (College Student Employment, 2017). As many college students are now responsible for academic work and employed work, the impacts employment has on college students need to be better understood.

Researchers have suggested that college students who worked between 10 and 20 hours on campus remained more involved with the campus community and reported high levels of academic success and persistence when compared to those who worked off campus or were unemployed (Astin, 1993; Bozick, 2007; Elling & Elling, 2000; Gleason, 1993). On-campus employment research has focused on relations with other outcomes that can be quantitatively measured such as GPA, number of clubs and organizations involved in, and hours worked, but there are different outcomes related to on-campus student employment that should be examined as these might contribute to campus engagement, academic success, and persistence to degree completion. Since previous

research findings have shown that on-campus employment might be more beneficial than off-campus or unemployment in terms of academic success and extracurricular involvement, this study explored experiences with on-campus employment, extracurricular activities, and leisure experiences in and out of the workplace.

Career Development. People who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to be employed and have higher salaries than those who do not hold a bachelor's or graduate degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Therefore, employers might find that college graduates are more qualified, or at least are more likely to have the appropriate credentials, than their non-college educated peers. Academic work provides one avenue for students to learn information that can be applied to their chosen profession, but there are other ways through which college students can learn skills that are applicable to their future careers. One such way is through employment, specifically on-campus employment.

As previously mentioned, students employed on campus between 10 and 20 hours were more successful in academics and were more involved in extracurricular activities than those who were unemployed or worked off campus. Those who worked on campus 20 hours or less were more successful at synthesizing and applying classroom learning in their work (Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008). Additionally, those who held jobs and internships related to their career interests were more successful finding jobs after graduation (Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000). These researchers suggested that college

students in career related jobs might gain relevant skills that could help them be successful in job searches after graduation.

Furthermore, on-campus employment is associated with student involvement in extracurricular activities which might also provide an opportunity for college students to learn relevant skills that can be applied to their future careers. Extracurricular involvement has been found to contribute to the development of leadership skills, career planning, communication skills, and success in the workplace after graduation (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Huang & Chang, 2004; Kuh, 1995; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). Since extracurricular involvement is associated with on-campus employment, career development in the context of employment and extracurricular involvement should also be further explored.

Learning career specific skills while in college increases employability of graduates (Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). Institutions of higher education have opportunities outside of academic work to prepare graduates for their future professions (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Huang & Chang, 2004; Kuh, 1995; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). While learning career-related skills provides a solid foundation for the future workforce, it is also important for college students to learn how to manage their lives as well as skills that might contribute to their overall work/life balance.

Leisure Experiences. Leisure is often discussed as occurring during free time (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000; Garcia & Ruiz, 2015), yet employed college students have limited amounts of free time. Employment further decreases the amount of free time available to experience leisure. For instance, some employed students may limit their

social activities, a form of leisure, to cope with the conflicting demands of employed and academic work (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). With the increasing importance of work/life balance, specifically within the Millennial generation (Alsop, 2008; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010), it is important to understand how employment contributes to or takes away from work/life balance.

Millennials (born between 1982-1999) value work/life balance and employers have begun incorporating options such as flexible work hours and telecommuting to meet Millennial expectations (Chao, 2005; Schulte, 2015). Other options that might assist in work/life balance include taking short breaks surfing the internet, socializing, and otherwise relaxing during the work day. These opportunities to take breaks during the work day can contribute to productivity and help employees recover from the workday (Coker, 2011; Kim, Park, & Niu, 2016). Creating a more enjoyable and improved work experience is important for employee rejuvenation, but there is limited research on whether this contributes to work/life balance. If time available for leisure outside of work is limited, it is worth exploring whether employees experience leisure in the workplace and under what circumstances.

In addition to leisure occurring in the workplace, leisure can occur during free time. Free time, for college students, can be split between structured (e.g., organized extracurricular activities) and unstructured time. Involvement in structured activities during free time is associated with improved academic performance and enhanced cognitive, physical, and psychosocial developmental outcomes (Eccles, Barber, Stone, &

Hunt, 2003; Mahony & Vest, 2012). Unstructured free time, however, has been associated with issues related to boredom.

Boredom during free time is associated with risky behaviors such as substance use and sedentary behaviors such as watching TV (Panek, 2014; Payne, Ainsworth, & Godbey, 2010; Shinew & Parry, 2005). Those who scheduled and planned their free time (i.e., created structure) experienced boredom less than those who did not structure their free time (Panek, 2014; Wang, Wu, Wu, & Huan, 2012). Experiencing leisure during free time and gaining related long-term benefits might be reliant on the availability of free time as well as how it is structured, a research area in need of further exploration. Developing skills to manage and experience leisure during free time while in college will have life-long implications.

Problem Statement. Research concerning student employment has not fully captured employment reasons, such as financial necessity, and how employment reasons might impact outcomes of employment. Research has focused on outcomes such as GPA, retention, and student involvement, but has not focused on outcomes such as skill development and job preparation among different types of jobs and available work programs. Employment outcomes might be influenced by the type of work students engage in, the level of financial need the students experience and/or perceive, and whether some students hold multiple jobs (off and on-campus) to pay for living expenses. Furthermore, examining the role of leisure in the workplace is necessary in order to more fully understand the benefits of working part-time on campus. Finally, since life is an integral part of work/life balance, examining the role of leisure in life, including

extracurricular involvement, seems necessary to better understand the impact on-campus employment has on employed college students.

Purpose of the Study

While on-campus employment has been associated with positive academic related outcomes and involvement in extracurricular activities, it remains unclear if these experiences are preparing student employees for their future careers. Extracurricular involvement, a form of leisure (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005), has also been linked to the development of career-related skills (Foubert & Grainger; Howard, 1986; Kuh, 1995; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008), but should be further explored. In addition to career preparation in the workplace and in the context of structured leisure (i.e., extracurricular involvement), work/life balance of employed college students needs to be better understood.

Leisure experiences have been found to contribute to recuperation and improved emotional health, which is important to work/life balance (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). The ways in which leisure is experienced differs from person to person and leisure can occur in both employed work and non-work time. It seems necessary to gauge the degree to which college students are experiencing leisure in both employed work and non-work realms. Learning more about the ways in which one experiences leisure during work and non-work time is necessary to contribute to understanding the complexities of the college student work/life balance experience.

Research Questions

This study was a qualitative exploration of how leisure is experienced through an examination of the ways students spend, value, and enjoy their work and non-work time.

This study explored the following questions:

1. What skills are employed students acquiring through their jobs?
2. Are students employed in jobs that align with their career interests?
3. Are students engaging in extracurricular activities that are related to their career interests?
 - a. What career-related skills are students developing through participation in extracurricular activities?
4. How do employed students define leisure?
 - a. What impact does leisure have in their lives?
5. Do students experience leisure through employed work?

In addition, this study also explored experiences and attitudes towards both structured and unstructured free time.

Definitions of Terms

Traditional college students: A traditional undergraduate student is under the age of 24, enrolls in college immediately after high school graduation, does not have children, and completes their undergraduate work in four or five years (Center for Institutional Effectiveness, 2004).

College student work: College student work references employed work in existing literature (e.g., Perna, 2010), but based on statistics that suggest many college students

are juggling employment and academics (e.g., College Student Employment, 2017), college student work in this study refers to academic work as a student (both in and out of the classroom) as well as employed work.

Non-work time: Non-work time in this study refers to the time during the day that the college student is not participating in academic related work or employed work.

Leisure: For the purposes of this study, leisure is defined as both free time and a state of mind. Leisure experience is unique to each individual and therefore it is important to keep leisure as free from one definition as possible. Leisure is typically thought of as anything done during free time, yet there are many ways to experience and understand leisure outside of free time. Key elements that have been determined to be essential to the leisure experience include perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and meaning (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000).

Work/life balance: There is no single definition of work/life balance and definitions often focus on lack of conflict between work and family roles with the support of a partner (McMillan & Morris, 2011), but these definitions are not relevant to traditional college students. Gayle and Lowe (2007) explored the work/life balance concept in college students by referring to it as work/study/life balance. Gayle and Lowe (2007) found that balance among these domains relied on maintaining boundaries and negotiating roles in such a way that a student felt balanced. Following the work of McMillan and Morris (2011) and Gayle and Lowe (2007), work/life balance in this study means that there is little to no conflict between the multiple roles (e.g., student, employee, friend) of an employed student.

Delimitations

This study focused on the experiences of students employed on campus since the literature highlights the multitude of positive outcomes that result from on-campus employment. As a result, experiences of students who are employed off campus were not captured, but should be examined in the future. Additionally, this study relied on one-time semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method. Some researchers suggest conducting follow up interviews when utilizing interview research methods (Polkinghore, 2005; Siedman, 2013). While follow up interviews might be ideal for some studies, they were not conducted due to time and cost constraints. Therefore, this study's findings are delimited to the one-time answers the participants gave during the interview.

Dissertation Format

Following the article format, this dissertation consists of three articles for publication. Descriptions of each article as well as the intended peer-reviewed journal outlets are outlined below.

1. This first article focuses on how on-campus employment and extracurricular involvement might or might not contribute to career development (Research Questions #1, #2, and #3). The purpose of this portion of the study was to understand whether employed students gain career related skills through work and extracurricular activities. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used to address these purposes. This article was written with *The Journal of Higher Education*, *College Student Journal*, *College Student Affairs Journal*, and *NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education* in mind.

2. This article focuses on the leisure experiences of employed college students, particularly in the workplace (Research Questions #4 and #5). The purposes of this portion of the study were to explore the role leisure plays in the lives of employed college students as well as whether leisure can be experienced in the workplace. Semi-structured interviews were used to address these purposes. This article was written with *Leisure/Loisir* and *Leisure Sciences* in mind.
3. This article focuses on the issues of busyness, boredom, and free time among employed college students. The findings from this portion of the study were not intentionally sought with guiding research questions. The findings that are discussed in this article emerged unexpectedly, but were appropriate and relevant to this study. This article was written with *Leisure Studies* in mind.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation summarizes the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study.

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CHAPTER TWO
THE ROLE OF ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT AND EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES IN THE CAREER PREPARATION OF COLLEGE
UNDERGRADUATES

Introduction

In 2016, the employment rate for young adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher was 88% (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Employed college graduates with a bachelor's degree earned around \$17,524 more annually than their peers who have associate's degrees and \$24,128 more annually than their peers with a high school diploma (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In addition, the unemployment rate for those holding a bachelor's degree was 2.7% whereas the unemployment rate for those with a high school diploma was 5.2% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Based on national statistics and related research, earning a bachelor's degree contributes to job attainment and annual earnings (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). However, having the correct credentials for a job (e.g., degree in a related field) does not guarantee an employee is prepared for the job. Employee preparedness, rather, is reliant on work experience and skill attainment, not just the correct credentials.

Adams (2013) reported that employers were looking for employees with both technical skills specific to the job and soft (i.e., people) skills such as communication, teamwork, and organizational skills. Often these skills come from contexts and

experiences that occur beyond the walls of the classroom. For those college graduates who have struggled to find a job, lack of experience stood out as one of the top challenges to job attainment (LaBombard, 2016). Academic work provides opportunities to gain job related knowledge and sometimes even skills, but gaining job specific experience occurs through employed work. Involvement in extracurricular activities on campus has also been found to improve work experiences post-graduation (Ray & Kafka, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore whether students employed on-campus gained experience and skills related to their career of interest through their employment and extracurricular involvement.

Background

College Student Employment

College students who are enrolled full-time typically have a 12 to 15 credit hour course load, or four to five classes per semester (Complete College America, 2013). In 2015, 43% of full-time undergraduate students were employed; 15% of those who were employed worked less than 20 hours per week and 27% worked 20 or more hours per week (College Student Employment, 2017). Given the percentage of full-time college students who are also employed, it is important to understand how employment influences their lives.

Academic Success. Working off campus, full-time, or both on and off campus (part-time and full-time) has been shown to negatively influence academic success such as GPA and retention while working part-time on campus has been shown to have no effect or positive effects (Astin, 1993; Bozick, 2007; Elling & Elling, 2000; Gleason,

1993). Pike, Kuh, and Massa-McKinley (2008) found that working 20 hours or less on campus positively influenced engagement in academic activities and grades while working more than 20 hours a week both on or off campus negatively influenced academic engagement and grades for first-year students. Kulm and Cramer (2006) found that more hours worked negatively impacted GPA because employment took away from time spent on academics while also depleting the amount of involvement in extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular Activities. The relationship between college student employment and extracurricular involvement has also been examined. Some researchers suggested that the more hours a student worked, the less they participated in extracurricular activities (Kulm & Cramer, 2006). Other researchers reported that working 30 hours or more negatively impacted participation in student clubs and organizations, highlighting that working less than 30 hours had no negative impact on student involvement (Elling & Elling, 2000). Astin (1993), however, found that part-time on-campus student employment had a positive effect on involvement in campus clubs and organizations. Astin (1993) suggested that students working on campus were more involved in extracurricular activities than those unemployed or employed off campus because students employed on campus might have remained better connected with the campus environment.

Research into the effects of employment on extracurricular activities is sparse, yet based on these findings on-campus work might be better for employed students regarding involvement in various activities as well as academic success. Student involvement in

extracurricular activities is also associated with building skills valuable in preparing for future jobs and careers.

Job Preparation. Pike et al. (2008) found that first year students employed 20 hours per week or less on campus could draw connections between their class material and employed work therefore synthesizing their academic learning better than those who were not employed or employed off campus for more than 20 hours. In a separate study, college graduates in more specialized fields who had internships and career-related jobs benefitted from their experiences during the job search post-graduation (Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000). Conversely, involvement in student organizations served graduates in behavioral sciences better than other disciplines during the job search (Sagen et al., 2000). In a survey of employees with bachelor's degrees, current workplace engagement, that is commitment to the mission and values of the company, was two times higher for those who could apply classroom learning in their workplace than those were unable to apply classroom learning (Ray & Kafka, 2014). These findings suggest that depending on the field, career-related employment and student organization involvement may assist in building desirable work place skills.

Student Involvement On-Campus and Job Preparation. Involvement in student organizations can lead to the development of leadership skills, career planning, relational skills, job competencies, and general success in the work-place post-graduation (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Howard, 1986; Kuh, 1995; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). Student involvement on campus is also associated with growth in communication skills, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills (Huang & Chang, 2004). While unclear as to reasons

why, those involved in extracurricular activities as an undergraduate were almost two times more likely to be engaged or committed to the goals and values of their current workplace than those who were not involved as an undergraduate (Ray & Kafka, 2014). Findings from these studies assist in the understanding of the benefits of student involvement and ways student involvement can contribute to job preparation and even engagement later, yet it would be useful to know whether students are involved in career-related clubs and organizations that also contribute to building career-related skills.

On-Campus Employment and Job Preparation. Based on previous research, on-campus employment can be a context in which student employees can apply academic learning, but it is unclear what skills student employees are learning. Additionally, there are various on-campus jobs and work programs and it is unclear from previous research which types of on-campus jobs might be beneficial.

On-campus work programs vary among colleges and universities, but one program, the Federal Work Study (FWS) program, is a work program available to low-income students at 3,400 colleges and universities across the nation (Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program, 2014). The FWS program offers mostly on-campus jobs that are supposed to “reinforce each recipient’s educational program or career goals” (Operating a Federal Work Study Program, p. 27) yet FWS jobs are typically clerical in nature (Federal Student Aid, n.d.; Scott-Clayton, 2017). Additionally, the FWS program has come under the scrutiny of the current presidential administration regarding the continued funding of the program (Scott-Clayton, 2017). Determining whether the FWS program contributes to job preparation seems prudent. Furthermore, since there are other on-

campus jobs outside of the FWS program, examining whether other on-campus jobs contribute to job preparation will also be useful in understanding the effects of and any differences between types of on-campus college student employment.

Purpose and Research Questions

On-campus employed work and extracurricular activities contribute to general skills that are useful in the workplace, but many questions remain unanswered such as whether students gain skills specific to their field of interest through involvement in these activities. The goal of this study was to investigate the experiences of college students employed on campus with the main purpose of understanding whether employed students in different job programs gain career related skills specific to their field. Additionally, this study explored whether students gain skills specific to their field through their extracurricular involvement. As such, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What skills are employed students acquiring through their jobs?
2. Are students employed in jobs that align with their career interests?
3. Are students engaging in extracurricular activities that are related to their career interests?
 - a. What career-related skills are students developing through participation in extracurricular activities?

Methods

Research Design

This study was part of a larger exploratory study that utilized a phenomenological research approach. Phenomenology is used to better view a phenomenon, or lived

experience, as it exists for the individual, not as it exists in theory (Johnson & Parry, 2015). A phenomenological study is also guided by basic assumptions about a phenomenon while also celebrating the unique experiences participants might have that differ from basic assumptions. There were basic assumptions guiding this research, such as college students employed on-campus were engaged academically and participated in extracurricular activities (Pike et al., 2008; Astin, 1993). There is also a lack of clarity and depth of understanding in research regarding outcomes of on-campus employment. Based on the guiding assumptions as well as lack of clarity and contradiction in existing research, a phenomenological framework was deemed appropriate for this study as it was important to understand the lived experiences of employed students. The participants in this study were experiencing the same phenomenon, the phenomenon of being employed on campus while attending college, but were experiencing this phenomenon differently and uniquely based on their past and present differences.

Participants

Participants were 34 students employed part-time through campus employment programs at a mid-sized university in the southeast. Students were employed through the Federal Work Study (FWS) program, University Professional Internship/Co-op (UPIC) program, and/or in general employment opportunities that are unaffiliated with the FWS and UPIC programs. Pseudonyms were assigned and used in this study to protect participant's identities and maintain confidentiality.

The FWS program is available for undergraduates and graduate students who have financial need based on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

application. Students must apply annually to continue with the FWS program. In addition to financial need requirements, students must be enrolled full time and remain in good academic standing. Jobs available through the FWS program are filtered through departments on campus and are part-time jobs only, or a maximum of 20 hours per week. Since FWS jobs are offered through academic departments on campus, students in the FWS program will typically hold a job with office assistant type responsibilities. In addition to on-campus work, participating institutions must support community service jobs off campus by allocating at least 7% of their employment opportunities to these types of jobs (Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program, 2014).

The UPIC program is designed as an internship program through which students gain professional skills typically specific to their chosen career. Interns are mentored by faculty and staff within the participating department and engage in jobs such as research, lab work, educational outreach, program design, and assisting (e.g., mentoring) other undergraduate students. There are over 600 internships available each year and students must apply, take a related course, and complete assignments in addition to their work expectations and requirements. Part-time interns are expected to work 160 hours per semester which averages out to about 10 hours per week over a 15-week semester (University Professional Internship/Co-op Program, 2017).

Other part-time student employment work across campus can be found through the career center listing. Pay and hours vary, though no student may work more than 20 hours per week. Jobs available across campus include jobs in food services, facilities,

campus recreation, libraries, career center, and as on-campus representatives for outside contractors (e.g., Dell and other brands).

All participants were employed through one of these campus employment programs, worked part-time (hours ranged from 1.5 hours per week to 20 hours per week), and all but one was enrolled full-time, with 21 of them enrolled over 15 credit hours. There were 13 UPIC employees, 11 FWS employees, and 10 participants not affiliated with either the UPIC or FWS programs. Ten males and twenty-four females participated in the study with all participants falling between the ages of 18 and 22 except for one male who was 28. The data from the 28-year-old student was included because his experiences aligned with the themes found among the other participants. Additionally, there were four first year students, seven sophomores, twelve juniors, and eleven senior participants. Finally, it is important to note that 10 participants held multiple jobs on and off campus with three holding jobs in more than one employment program on campus (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1
Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program

Work Program	n	Gender		Year in School				Working 2 or more jobs
		Female	Male	First-Year	Soph.	Jr.	Sr.	
FWS	9	7	2	2	0	5	2	3
UPIC	13	8	5	1	3	3	6	1
General	9	7	2	1	3	2	3	3
FWS and General	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	2
General and UPIC	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	34	24	10	4	7	11	12	10

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A for approval letter), the researcher contacted administrators in the FWS and UPIC programs and asked them to send out a recruitment e-mail to the undergraduate staff within each program (see Appendix B for recruitment email). The researcher also reached out to an administrator in the university's recreation center and to instructors of academic classes and asked them to send a recruitment e-mail to the undergraduate staff and students. Participants were scheduled on a first come, first serve basis, while attempting to keep participant samples relatively similar in numbers among all groups (FWS, UPIC, and general). Interviews were scheduled during the last three weeks of the spring 2017 semester, including exam week, as well as the week after exam week ($n = 31$). Additional interviews occurred during the last week of the fall 2017 semester ($n = 3$) to increase the variation of job types within the general employment group. After confirming an interview day and time, participants were instructed to complete an on-line survey that collected demographic and family background information (e.g., year in school, parental education) that was pertinent to the study (see Appendix C for pre-interview survey). The interviewer used survey answers to help guide some of the interview questions (e.g., position held, major, number of credit hours).

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection (see Appendix D for interview guide). Semi-structured interview questions should be clearly connected to the research questions and should progress in a deliberate and natural flow (e.g., Has your employment influenced your career interests?; Have your

career interests influenced where you work or the job you hold?) (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Interviews were in person, one-on-one, audio recorded, and lasted between thirty minutes to one and one-half hour during which the interviewer used an open-ended interview guide to facilitate the interview. Upon completion of the interview, participants were given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

The sample size of 34 was deemed to be appropriate because this number fell within suggested parameters regarding sample size for qualitative research. Creswell (2014) suggested that three to ten interviews are adequate for phenomenological studies. Others have suggested 20-30 participants is an adequate sample size for interviews (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). The sample collectively (N=34) meets Baker et al.'s (2012) suggestion for the number of recommended participants. The sample sizes of the groups (n=14, n=11, n=12) meets Creswell's (2014) suggestion of having three to ten participants as well.

Sample size is also dictated by saturation, the idea that no new information comes to light regarding the phenomenon under study (Bowen, 2008), but some have pointed out the difficulty in conceptualizing and attaining true saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that for interview data collection, saturation is likely to occur when the same questions are asked of participants, data is thick and rich, no new themes emerge, and no new coding is necessary. To understand if saturation occurred, detailed reflection notes were taken after each interview and were often revisited leading the researcher to believe no new themes were emerging towards the end of the data collection process. During the analysis process, the

researcher and co-researchers confirmed that no new information was coming to the fore and felt there was no need to schedule additional interviews. After discussing the characteristics of each group, it was determined that more participants were needed in the “general employment” group who were not employed in the recreation center. Three additional interviews were conducted, following which the research team agreed that no new information had been gathered from these interviews.

Researcher as Instrument

Interviewing is a research method employed to understand a phenomenon or a lived experience (Siedman, 2013). Interviews are not a tool to answer questions, but are used to highlight experiences that may or may not be shared by others (Siedman, 2013). Interviews are useful when observations are not necessary or unlikely to occur and participants can provide context to the information while the researcher directs the focus of the interview (Creswell, 2014). There are some limitations to qualitative interviewing specifically regarding observations and communication. For instance, if interviews are conducted outside of the natural setting of the phenomenon under investigation, participants cannot be observed directly which limits the ability of the researcher to determine whether their recall matches their actions and behaviors. Trust and comfort level with the researcher also influence the way participants respond as well as whether the researcher asks leading questions, which in turn could influence the interviewees comments and answers to questions. Participants also have different capabilities of describing their experiences, some might describe their experiences in detail while others

might not, which impacts the thickness, richness, and interpretability of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Validity

One of the ways researchers ensure validity of qualitative data is to ask open-ended and non-leading questions (Roulston, 2010). By remaining as objective as possible, the interviewer opens the floor to honest answers that are not heavily influenced by the interviewer. Additionally, it is important to speak with several people to generate a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. As such, the interview guide was pilot tested before data collection began by two on-campus employees, one through the FWS program and one through the UPIC program.

Validity also needs to be at the forefront of data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014; Galletta & Cross, 2013; Roulston, 2010). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim which assisted in the validity of the chosen method of data collection. Interview transcripts can be used to provide evidence that the researcher conducted the interviews appropriately and that the findings are not being misconstrued (Roulston, 2010). I maintained a paper trail of all analyses and steps along the way and utilized member checking to ensure adequate representation of the interviewee responses (Creswell, 2014; Galletta & Cross, 2013; Roulston, 2010).

During the process of data analysis, I employed the assistance of two coders who coded and categorized the transcripts based on their interpretation of the data. This process assisted in theme confirmation and led to deeper understanding of the different experiences between each group of participants. Finally, it is important to note the role

researcher bias played in this research process; this acknowledgement also contributes to the validity of the project (Creswell, 2014).

Subjectivity and Reflexivity. It is important to understand how I, as the researcher, am situated in the context of college student employment, extracurricular activities, and career development. As a college student, I was employed off campus and learned valuable lessons that were specifically related to my career interests. I learned soft skills such as communication, customer service, and time management which are useful in any workplace, but I did not learn career specific skills. I honestly did not think about searching for an on-campus job.

Additionally, I was involved in a club within my major, but my involvement did not contribute to learning more about my career or gaining career related skills. Based on my past experiences, I have relatively little preconceived notions about on-campus work experiences and the value of extracurricular activities since I was not really involved in either, nor did I ever consider being more involved. Due to my lack of involvement in on-campus employment and extracurricular activities as an undergraduate student, I was unable to compare my experience with others which helped me remain open and interested in the different experiences of the participants. However, it remained important to practice reflexivity due to my subjectivity as a researcher (Johnson & Parry, 2015).

The process of reflexivity “documents the personal experiences, ideas, mistakes, dilemmas, epiphanies, reactions, and thinking connected with a qualitative study” (Johnson & Parry, 2015, p. 46). This process serves as a personal debriefing tool and can

be used to address thoughts in later interviews while also serving as an opportunity to keep researcher subjectivity from influencing data collection and analysis.

Journaling was the primary method through which I practiced reflexivity. Maintaining notes on ideas and thoughts as they came throughout the study as well as debriefing after each interview kept my subjectivity in balance, while also serving as a tool to help me understand the experiences of participants (Watt, 2007). During the data analysis process, journaling provided a space for me to continue to record thoughts, feelings, and any ideas that developed while analyzing the data.

Data Analysis. After interviews were transcribed verbatim, they were checked for accuracy via listening to the recording and reading transcripts at the same time and then corrected where necessary, which adds an additional layer of validity (Creswell, 2014). Having read through transcripts once, transcripts were then manually coded, categorized, and themed by three researchers (Roulston, 2010), two of whom were unfamiliar with the research which assisted in validity through intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2014). Interviews were coded by determining thematic patterns and identifying ideas that represent these thematic patterns. After coding, clear examples of each code were used to determine if any relationships existed between the codes. Then, the data were assessed for thematic patterns, categorized, and themed (Galletta & Cross, 2013).

Findings

This study explored whether employed students in different types of jobs gained skills pertinent to career development and whether extracurricular activities contributed to career development. To better understand the themes, general descriptive findings for

each program as well as whether students were employed in jobs that directly contributed to their career development are discussed.

Program Specific Findings

Federal Work Study (FWS). FWS jobs are known for being office assistant type jobs that are clerical in nature. As previously noted, FWS jobs are based on financial need. The participants shared that once they learned they qualified for FWS, they submitted one resume into the system and selected jobs that they were interested in on an annual basis. Then, the students waited for communication about whether they were hired. According to these participants, waiting for a response sometimes took an entire semester; therefore, some took it upon themselves to approach employers asking if they needed a FWS student.

Another relatively consistent characteristic of FWS jobs is the ability to work on homework while on the clock. While all but three participants were able to work on homework during their working hours due to the nature of the job, all the participants appreciated the flexibility their FWS job had around their academic schedule.

Qualifying for a FWS position means there is a certain level of financial need. All FWS participants had to work to pay for bills, including loan interest, and five participants worked two or more jobs. Additionally, FWS participants had been working consistently since early in high school because it was an expectation in their household and so they could go out with friends occasionally. Work for these participants had been and continued to be a salient part of their life. Of the 11 FWS participants, only one of

these participants held a job that was directly related to his academic major and career interests.

The University Professional Internship/Co-op Program (UPIC). The UPIC program creates opportunities to learn skills relevant to a student's career interests. Participants in the UPIC program held jobs that required advanced skill sets and offered many leadership and collaborative opportunities with peers, faculty, staff, and community members. Of the 13 participants interviewed, only one held more than one job. These participants were more concerned with helping their parents with bills than feeling they had to work to pay bills. Like the FWS program, the UPIC program is also flexible with academic schedules which was a perk that participants mentioned. Unlike the FWS program, being able to work on homework during working hours was not an option for UPIC participants. Participants in the UPIC program were also employed in internships that were closely related to their field or career interests. Like the FWS program, there is a formal application process for the UPIC program, but none of these participants formally applied for these jobs. Professors approached them or vice versa about working in the program, reviewed their resumes, and then were transitioned into the internship. Once in the UPIC program, a student's employment can roll over into the next semester assuming satisfactory progress.

General. Participants employed through general on-campus employment were employed through the recreation center, the development office, campus facilities, as a resident assistant, as a first-generation mentor, and as a proctor for an on-line class. Three of the students working at the recreation center worked more than one job, with one of

them also employed through the UPIC program. Additionally, the students working in the development office and as a resident assistant held FWS jobs and the class assistant held another job off campus. The jobs at the recreation center also required an advanced skill set like the UPIC program as these jobs required certifications and training. The other participants were not required to have special certifications or skills. Participants agreed with the sentiments of FWS and UPIC program participants that these jobs were generally flexible with their academic schedules. Like the UPIC program, recreation center employees knew an employee at the recreation center, which helped them in the hiring process. For all the general jobs, working on homework was not discouraged while on the job, but job duties and responsibilities typically kept participants from doing so.

Finally, participants in the recreation center felt their jobs closely aligned with their career interests in general even if they were not directly related to their major. The participants working in the development office and as a resident assistant felt their general employment jobs did not align with their career interests, but they felt they were gaining skills that would be useful in the future. The participants who worked in campus facilities and as a first-generation mentor also felt that their work was not connected to their career interests, but were gaining skills they felt would be useful in their future careers.

Themes

The following themes are presented with corresponding research questions. Even though some participants worked multiple jobs, the experiences discussed focus on on-

campus employment experiences. Additionally, names mentioned in the text are pseudonyms that were assigned to each participant.

What skills are employed students acquiring through their jobs? Participants were employed in a variety of jobs and felt they were developing important skills that could be applied in their future careers, but not all participants gained skills they felt were specifically relevant to their career interests. Two skill related themes emerged: a) skills that were universally transferable and b) skills that directly related to career interests.

Universally Transferable Skills. Skills that are universally transferable are those skills that can be applied in any work situation such as being able to work with others. For this sample, these universally transferable skills tended to be soft skills, also referred to as people skills or interpersonal skills (Robles, 2012). Participants felt they gained communication, time management, and leadership related skills through their employed work.

Communication. As a pressroom assistant, Eleanor (UPIC) works closely with other pressroom assistants, industry professionals, faculty, and staff. A large part of her job duties relies on understanding what others expect and want which has helped her learn “a lot about dealing with people in the workplace.” Referencing an issue that occurred in the work place with a fellow employee, Eleanor also felt she had learned “how to act in certain situations” which she felt was an important part of communicating in the workplace. Likewise, Tony (UPIC), a nursing informatics intern, often interacted with faculty through his position and felt “faculty here are really, like, receptive and

they're open to like, ideas" which contributed to his ability to communicate with his superiors.

As a sports referee, Tom (general) interacts with players on the field. Through his interactions on the field, Tom has learned "communication skills and like, handling situations that are tough, like a player yelling at me." Tom emphasized that he tries "to be as nice to players as possible when I talk to them about anything" and "always try to answer the best I can."

Like Tom, maintaining professional communication is also important in Mark's (UPIC) job. Mark maintains in-person and email communication with professionals in the industry as well as faculty on campus. Through his various communications, Mark has learned the difficulties of interpreting e-mail communication but appreciates this experience and thinks "it's a nice experience talking to professors and trying to send professional emails."

Professional communication is also a job requirement of Dan's (general) job as a student caller soliciting alumni donations. Dan receives "a list of what they were involved in" while in college and "sells" the university. He will also "talk a lot about football" because this tends to build a connection between him and the person he is calling. One of the biggest takeaways from his job is "just being able to communicate with different kinds of people."

Leslie (FWS) works as a tour guide in a historical house on campus. As a tour guide, she interacts with visitors of all ages which has given her "the experience with people and like interacting with them and having to take something and put it on like a

million different levels.” Leslie emphasized this job has “taught me how to interact with people.”

Cindy (FWS), a student assistant, echoed Leslie stating, “I can work with so many different people when I’m actually in the workforce.” Cindy’s work supporting faculty and staff has given her the opportunity to work with “a broad range of personalities” particularly noting that co-workers were from “everywhere...Florida to Chicago.” These work experiences helped her build communication skills necessary to feel confident in future workplaces and with diverse groups of people.

As highlighted by these participants, work experiences with fellow co-workers, visitors, students, and potential donors gave these students opportunities to build communication skills. They recognized the value and importance of learning communication skills as these skills can be applied in future jobs.

Time Management. As a lab technician, Sarah (FWS) said “time management is definitely a major thing” that she has learned through her work. Her work consists of prepping labs so she has learned time management by understanding when certain tasks need to be completed, how long these tasks take, and how to multi-task and maximize time. For example, “it takes a certain amount of time for a liter of media to sterilize...that’s the first thing I need to get done. And while that’s working, I can go wash dishes or I can go do tips...time management is major.” Sarah also felt her “time management skills are ace” because of her experience as a lab technician.

Jimmy (FWS), a shop assistant, echoed a similar sentiment in that he has learned “self-management...I mean there’s a lot of time that I have to be self-efficient and figure

out what I'm going to do and make the most of my time" while at work. For Sarah and Jimmy, work expectations led to gaining time management skills whereas for others time management was a byproduct of working.

Grace (general), a climbing wall specialist, felt that being employed facilitated the development of time management skills. For instance, "when you work while you are doing all this other stuff [school] it helps you in time management because you are going to have a test the day after you work but you can't just call in sick because you have a test the next day. You have to learn to study beforehand and then go to work."

Another climbing wall specialist, Beth (general), agreed that employment in general "taught me to prioritize, almost triaging my life. Like, what needs to get done right now?"

Ed (UPIC), a graphics design studio assistant, also felt that being employed helped him because "work keeps me structured." In discussing his schedule, Ed plans ahead because "I have these 4, 3, or 2-hour windows that I could get things done...now I work, now I have school studies." Interestingly, Grace, Beth, and Ed mentioned they did not have a job during their first year in school and that they performed worse academically without a job. Ed emphasized that "I don't do well with too much free time because there was one semester I didn't work...I kind of fell apart. I was like 'Freedom? What's this?' I can do all these things I want to do."

For these students, being employed, not necessarily the job duties, led them to build time management skills that can transfer into their future careers. Working, whether

job responsibilities or being employed, contributed to developing time management skills for these students.

Leadership. Leadership was a consistent theme in the UPIC and general samples, but not the FWS sample. Participants employed through UPIC and the recreation center held leadership roles and therefore gained leadership skills, while jobs for the FWS sample did not consist of leadership positions or opportunities.

As a club sports manager, Melissa (general) was often by herself on the intramural fields and had to make decisions regarding safety and player issues. Melissa stated being a club sports manager:

helps me become more independent in the sense that, like, I have to make a decision and I can't ask, like, what do you think? Is this the right thing to do? Sometimes I just had to make the decision and I couldn't really backtrack on what I said had to go. And so, I definitely feel like that it [job] gave me more confidence in making a decision.

Leadership was also something Carly (general) felt she had learned as a lifeguard because she has also had to make decisions on her own, much like Melissa. Carly felt lifeguarding was "good leadership" because she is "learning what to do in certain situations" and must take charge when someone needs first aid.

As a mentor, Lee (UPIC) takes on the task of reaching out to professors and other mentors as well as coordinating social events to better assist her mentees. She is driven to work with other students because "it's valuable and good for retention" as she often works with mentees who "come running...and they are like 'oh my god'...I don't know

what's happening." Lee strives to take control of the situation and advise her mentees so they do not run into more academic crises. Lee has found that her mentees see her as someone they can call on for help and she is willing to give back since she has been there before.

Molly (UPIC) also has a leadership role through her job as a magazine editor. As the editor, she has worked with different teams, delegated tasks, and ensured deadlines were met. She also mentioned that she never had to "sit people down saying that they aren't really doing like, what I asked them to do" which further highlights her role in a leadership position. Through her job responsibilities, Molly feels "more comfortable in a leadership position" which is "something that I kind of tend to shy away from" suggesting the development of important leadership skills that she may not have been able to gain elsewhere.

Communication, time management, and leadership are valuable skills that can be applied in work and non-work situations. These participants found that through work, even if the work did not tie directly to their career interests, they were able to gain skills that they thought were valuable and relevant to their future.

Skills that directly relate to career interests. Skills that directly relate to career interests are skills that are more tailored to specific careers that can help applicants stand out in a job search because they have relevant skills. Most of the participants who felt they were gaining direct career related skills were either in the UPIC program or employed through the recreation center, though two FWS participants gained relevant technical skills.

John (FWS) is a mechanical engineering major and works in the machine shop on campus machining parts. He would “like to go into manufacturing and so it would be good to have an idea of how I can effectively design something that can actually be made.” While he has general shop maintenance duties like cleaning and organizing, he also has opportunities to work with students, faculty, and staff in designing and machining parts. John feels “it’s good experience...I’m learning a lot about the machining side of it” and that in the future he “will be the one making the drawings and talking to a machinist.” Through his job he is learning what it is like to be the machinist and gaining that perspective because through this he is learning how a part can “be designed so it’s machinable.”

Katherine (UPIC) is also learning valuable skills directly related to her career interests in graphic communications. While Katherine has yet to decide on specifics of her future career, she certainly wants to remain in the graphic communications field. She works as an assistant in a studio that is available for students, faculty, and staff to use. Her job requires her to work with and teach patrons how to use specific design programs which has been helpful in learning skills because showing others “makes you better at it because you learn little things about it.” She also has learned “shortcuts and practical things with problems you run into” which has improved her knowledge and skills with these design programs. In fact, “before doing this job, I didn’t know how to use Premier [graphic design software] at all, just the video stuff. I really didn’t know how to do Photoshop and Illustrator.” Not only is she helping others learn, but she has “actually

learned new things as well” that are directly tied to her career interest in the graphic communications field.

Another participant, Mark (UPIC), has learned skills applicable to his future career and his internship experience has helped him narrow his career interest. As a microbiology major, Mark interns with a campus organization that focuses on clean water initiatives in developing countries. Through his involvement in the organization he has learned he wants to focus on “water...waterborne diseases...epidemiology and making sure that water’s clean enough for people to drink all around the world.” Mark has been working with a team that designed a water monitoring system which will be “implemented down in Haiti” next semester and give them “real time data” to let them know “if the quality of water is good enough for them to drink.” In fact, his water monitoring and testing experience through his job helped him land an internship for the summer “doing water quality samples...I’ve already sort of done that before through this...the internship.”

While participants above were involved in work that aligned with their majors and career interests, Joshua (UPIC) was involved in work that he would like to continue in combination with his career interests, even though his job did not align with his major. Joshua is a video production assistant and a management major. He also wants to be a pastor in the future and already volunteers at a local church. He sees his future in video production shooting Christian films so he “hopes to use that skill” in the future. Through his internship, Joshua has met industry professionals who have “taught me how to shoot

more creatively...taught me how to reveal...artsy stuff.” Additionally, he has worked on several different projects:

editing...work in the software...I just use the footage...doing some special effects...isolating the visual character and then make the whole photo 3-D and then make a video out of it...live production that’s basically control camera or if it’s live events I also just go out and shoot...live interviews...they’d let me help with cameramen.

These different projects have helped Joshua build a foundation in the necessary skills for him to be successful in his future video production pursuits.

Another participant, Claire (general), holds a job that may not seem directly tied to her career interests on the surface, but she sees a direct connection. Claire is a nursing major and lifeguards at the recreation center. She notes “there is a direct correlation between lifeguarding and nursing” because there have been “incidents that first aid is necessary and it’s been really fantastic to be the one who gets to administer first aid.” Lifeguarding has given her the chance to learn and practice skills that directly translate to patient care. Another important piece of patient care is caring about the safety and well-being of patients:

Most of what lifeguarding teaches me is a correct mindset, it teaches me that my role is to protect and care for people because if you don’t go into lifeguarding with that mindset, if it’s just a job for money, you are not going to be a good lifeguard...I’m watching these people because I care about them...I think that’s

one hundred percent of what nursing is. Because the number one thing is you have to have compassion.

Claire, through her work as a lifeguard, has gained skills and insight that are valuable and applicable to her future career in the medical field.

Beth (general) is also employed in a job that, on the surface, is not connected with her career interests yet “the longer I spend in this role the more skills I realize are transferable to my next step in my education and career.” Beth is a recreation supervisor and intramural manager at the recreation center and is pursuing an academic path as a lawyer. Her job responsibilities concern administrative duties such as scheduling, supervising, and training others. Beth noted that her job has “helped me with, especially what I think will help me like in law school and everything, it’s just problem solving and analyzing things from different angles.” In addition to being able to critically think and analyze, being knowledgeable about language and specific wording is essential to her future career as a lawyer:

language is a huge key word in that job...you have to be very careful of the specific words you use...and it’s attention to detail, knowing your policies, knowing the rules and how to apply it to each situation...so it [job] inadvertently became a very good, like, tool for me to use that I could apply in law classes and I assume in law school later on.

One way she practices using correct language through her job is “we’ll have to write up certain reports...and you have to be very concise and very clear on what your point is” which is directly applicable to her future career.

As highlighted by these findings, participants gained technical and soft skills that were directly transferable into their future career interests. While not all jobs were specifically in the field of interest, these participants were gaining experience that helped them build on their relevant work experience that is a critical step in career development. Another avenue through which students can build on career interests is through extracurricular involvement. The following findings address how extracurricular involvement contributed to career development for these participants.

Are students engaging in extracurricular activities that are related to their career interests? Extracurricular activities, as present in this sample, included involvement in on-campus organizations such as sororities or fraternities, service fraternities, activism clubs, and intramural sports. Since extracurricular involvement can also provide opportunities for students to gain career related skills, participants were asked about what clubs and organizations they were involved in outside of employed and academic work time. Out of the 34 participants, seven were not involved in any organized extracurricular activity (FWS: 4; UPIC: 2, General: 1) and 14 (FWS: 2; UPIC: 6; General: 6) of the remaining 27 participants were involved in extracurricular activities that were connected to their career interest. For 52% of those involved in organized extracurricular activities, extracurricular involvement was tied to career interests. Of the 14 participants involved in extracurricular activities that directly tied to their career interests, 10 were also employed in a career-related position. These students' extracurricular involvement experiences highlight the drive of some students to maintain involvement in their field of interest outside of work and academics. Two themes related

to extracurricular activities and career interests emerged: a) getting specific experience and b) learning more about the opportunities in the field.

Getting Specific Experience. Leslie (FWS and general) is employed as a tour guide at a historic house on campus (FWS) and is employed as an intern (general) with her duties specifically geared towards event planning on campus. Both jobs allow her to build skills directly related to her career interest in event planning. Outside of work, she holds a leadership position in an event planning association on campus. Through this organization, Leslie planned, organized, and implemented multiple events and banquets that contributed to her continued career development. In the planning phases Leslie “had to reach out to all the people to see if they would even speak and so I had to learn to take rejection, which is new.” Leslie also comes across “people who are willing to give back because they knew what it took to get to where they were” while organizing events. Part of reaching out to people in the event planning industry means she is making connections with “different people from across the industry” who discuss varying challenges and success related to event planning. Additionally, Leslie has had the opportunity to see the “full blown ugly truth” that sometimes accompanies the behind the scenes work of planning an event. Ultimately, her involvement in this association has opened her eyes to the realities of the industry:

It’s just different to meet all of the people and figure out why they are where they are at because a lot of us don’t end up where we want to be automatically or we think we should be, like, just fresh out of college...like no, it took them like 6 to

10 years and so it just reaffirms you, like okay I don't have to go straight into my dream job after graduation, I will survive, I will get there.

Kaitlyn (UPIC) is majoring in marketing and has a marketing related internship. As a first-year student in the marketing program, she is not quite sure what she wants to do as a career, but is learning more about the versatility of marketing through her internship and her involvement on a committee in student government. Her committee involvement "has been a nice way to get my feet into student government...and it's, like, relevant." She further explains that her responsibilities are tied to marketing and:

That's why I wanted to do it...it ties into, like, how my internship in marketing because, like, public relations [referencing committee involvement] is a lot of, like, marketing too. So, it's been cool because it's just, like, I value because I know that it's...something that I'm interested in.

As a graphic communications major, Eleanor (UPIC) is interested in anything related to graphics. She found an improv organization that she can be involved in as both an actor and as an Ad Manager, which requires her to use her graphic communications knowledge. Eleanor "makes all the promotional items...make sure all the programs are printed for the shows and all of, like, the social PR kind of stuff." She enjoys giving back to the organization because she gets to "use all of my graphics skills, I guess, to make the posters, get them produced and like...promote things." She is able to practice what she is learning in class like "how to stage things when you present information to people, like, on flyers, or like what gets people's attention."

Learning About Opportunities in the Field. Claire (general) is a nursing major and is involved in a nursing organization. Through her involvement with this organization she has met professionals in the nursing field and learned more about nursing in general:

They bring in different facets of nursing and the nursing field and we get to listen and learn more about what we could do in nursing and what all nursing has to offer...just different things that are going on in nursing and ways to be involved. Her experience in meeting with professionals has helped her understand that the nursing field has much more to offer than she originally thought. In fact, Claire “wouldn’t have known that you could become a nurse practitioner and be able to be so versatile in what you could do” if it were not for her involvement in this organization.

As a biological sciences major, Michelle (UPIC) is interested in the medical field and became more involved in an on-campus organization, through which she is also an intern, that focuses on the health of developing countries. Outside of her internship in this organization, she is in a leadership position and gets to work with medical equipment which is directly tied to her career interests. While she is mainly delegating and ensuring project deadlines are kept, she has “benefited so much, learned so much, met so many people that I wouldn’t have met otherwise and obviously learned a lot about nonprofits and helping others.” Michelle also feels that “being able to talk about these kinds of things in an interview is definitely going to be great...overall it’s just been the best decision I’ve made in college.”

Jimmy (FWS) is a construction science major and is involved in two construction related clubs. Through these organizations, he is building skills and gaining knowledge that are directly applicable to his career interests and that he is not getting through his FWS job. Jimmy acknowledged that involvement in these clubs are “good on my resume and it’s fun.” He has also met with industry professionals and has gained access to construction sites. In referencing a regional stadium that is currently under construction, club members “went and got to tour and it’s like we got to see it like mid-construction and like all access” which was a valuable learning experience. Jimmy also plans luncheons and invites industry professionals who “offer a lot of resources...it’s helping me, kind of, with my future.” As far as extracurricular involvement goes, Jimmy noted “there’s nothing really wrong with sometimes having something that’s just for yourself, especially when it’s, like, helping your career.” Jimmy uses his extracurricular involvement to learn more about his field of interest.

Discussion

The findings from this study provide insight to the specific skills on-campus employed students are gaining and how extracurricular involvement contributes to the development of career related skills and knowledge. Additionally, the findings highlight an important issue with on-campus employment. Despite the programmatic claims of the FWS program, FWS employees are not building skills specific to their career interests.

On-Campus Employment

On-campus employment provided these participants, regardless of job or job program, with the opportunity to develop important soft skills that are valuable for work

in any field. Communication, time management, and leadership, the skills most mentioned by participants, are among the soft skills that employers are looking for among new hires (Adams, 2013; Robles, 2012). These skills have been found to improve one's ability to work with others in increasingly diverse workplaces which in turn has contributed to the overall success of the company or organization (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Chuang, 2013). Communication skills are also associated with job success among youth aged 15-29 (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015). The findings from the present study suggest that on-campus employment prepares students to enter the workforce with desirable soft skills that are sought out by employers. Previous research has highlighted that employment in internships and co-ops during college led to hard and soft skill development that increased employability upon graduation (Sagen et al., 2000; Silva, et al., 2016). These findings from the present study add to this existing research by highlighting specific skills students are learning through their on-campus employment in internships. The findings also provide evidence that experiences in on-campus employment outside of internships (i.e., FWS program and other part-time employment on campus) might be contributing to the development of soft skills that employers value.

In addition to soft skills, employers seek applicants who, in combination with soft skills, have technical skills and practical experience related to the job (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Additionally, in a more recent study, employers agreed that having a combination of general soft skills, like communication, and the ability to apply knowledge learned was important to them when looking for the right job candidate (Hart Research Associates, 2015). According to the current study's findings, participants in the UPIC program and

those employed through the recreation center gained a broad range of skills, general and more career specific, that are most desired by employees. Participants employed in other jobs in the general group and those employed through the FWS program did not gain technical skills related to their career interests.

While jobs may exist in the FWS program that relate to career interests, this finding is worrisome for several reasons and warrants further investigation. For these participants, the jobs that required little to no skills also failed to provide participants with relevant technical skills that they felt can be used in future workplaces. Specifically, regarding the FWS participants, these participants had perceived and real financial need that required them to work but were unable to hold jobs specific to their career interests. The issue is that these students may be entering the workforce with less experience than their peers who held jobs related to their career interests. While well intentioned, the FWS program, according to these findings, is seemingly leaving the lower skilled work to those in financial need instead of creating job opportunities that require advanced skill like the UPIC program and some jobs within the general employment program.

The implications of this work experience inequality are immense if this holds true in the FWS program across campuses nationwide. With the current national issues concerning income inequality and student debt (Scobey, 2017; Scott-Clayton, 2018), it is imperative that graduates are prepared for higher skilled work that pays a return on their investment in their college education. Further examination into the FWS program and career preparedness in on-campus employment is needed to better understand the skills students are gaining as well as the job opportunities available. For instance, what types of

jobs and departments in the FWS program are more likely to offer career related work experience. Additionally, future research that tracks types of jobs that FWS students acquire after graduation could lead to a better understanding of whether the program is adequately preparing students for successful careers.

Participants employed through the UPIC program and the recreation center were employed in jobs that were related to their career interests and they felt they were gaining a combination of soft skills and skills specific to their chosen career path. These findings reiterate the role internships play in career preparedness. Internships provide work experiences that are job or career specific and afford the intern opportunities to learn, grow, develop professionally, and make connections in their field (Hora, Wolfram, & Thompson, 2017; Hurst, Thye, Wise, 2014). Both the UPIC program and the recreation center jobs provided practical work experience that is connected to career interests. While not officially an internship, the organizational structure and work environment at the recreation center provided unique learning opportunities for these participants that can be found in internships.

Former interns have reported more success on the job market and better job satisfaction than their non-intern peers (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Future research should continue to track the types of jobs students acquire after graduation and the role internship experiences played in their hiring and/or career success. Additionally, many degree requirements now include successful internship completion, yet these on-campus internships within the present study did not satisfy internship degree requirements. These participants were completing additional internships and practicums

which may present students with undue financial hardships and challenges. Ascertaining the reasons why on-campus internships do not meet internship requirements and addressing these issues seems like a logical step in the continued advancement of on-campus internship opportunities. The internships through the UPIC program were paid, which is often not the case in off-campus internships, and flexible with student scheduling. Utilizing existing on-campus internships to satisfy degree requirements could eliminate some of the pay and time constraints associated with acquiring traditional internships. Additionally, creating more on-campus internship opportunities would serve a larger number of students and increase career development and ultimately employment success post-graduation.

Finally, employment opportunities on campus should be intentionally created and structured to meet the career development needs of students enabling all employed college students to gain career skills outside of the classroom. Colleges and universities are already providing employment opportunities, but it is time these opportunities are re-evaluated for their contributions to career development and preparation. Future research should focus on the structure needed to provide more focused learning experiences in the workplace as well as best practices that already exist. Additionally, research could tease out the nuances that exist within different employment programs on campus in hopes of identifying areas in need of improvement.

Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

Participants were fairly involved on campus through Greek life, intramural and club sports, activism organizations, and student associations. This finding is supported by

the literature citing students employed on campus are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities on campus (Astin, 1993; Elling & Elling, 2000). Of the 27 participants involved in extracurricular activities, 14 were involved in extracurricular activities that were connected to their career interests, which served as an additional space outside of the workplace and classroom setting to hone career-specific skills and knowledge.

Participants involved in extracurricular activities related to their career interests gained career specific skills and learned more about their field and job options, and even made connections with professionals. Extracurricular activities can be a great opportunity for students to get involved or increase involvement in their field while learning more about their field of interest and building relevant skills. Other researchers have also found that extracurricular activities provide opportunities to develop relevant work skills and knowledge (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Howard, 1986; Kuh, 1995; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). Those not employed or those who are not employed in jobs relating to their career interests could use extracurricular activities to supplement their college learning experience through activities related to their field of interest. For those who are already employed in career related jobs, extracurricular involvement could enhance their learning experience and expand opportunities to build career related and general life skills. Future research should focus on opportunities available to be involved in career related extracurricular activities, how students learn about these opportunities, and barriers to involvement in hopes of determining ways to facilitate career development through extracurricular involvement. Additionally, as leadership and support varies in on-

campus clubs and organizations, clubs and organizations that are successful in maintaining involvement in the field could be used to help guide others in best practices to ensure involved students are making the most of their learning experience.

Limitations

This study relied on the willingness of students to reach out to someone they had never met, meet with that person, honestly talk about their personal life, and then agree to member checking. Therefore, the participants who contacted me were more willing to participate which introduced self-selection bias. The experiences of those who were unable to participate, uninterested in participating, or were unaware of the opportunity to participate were not included in this study further highlighting that these results are not generalizable. Additionally, taking the initiative to be involved in such a time-consuming study speaks to the general nature of these participants to be more involved. Regarding the types of jobs examined, there were plenty of jobs that were not included in this study. This limits the understanding of the work experiences of those employed in on-campus jobs. Finally, 10 participants held more than one job, which indicates they may be gaining career specific skills in jobs other than their on-campus jobs. We discussed their work experiences and those presented in this paper were specific to their on-campus jobs, but their total work experiences could have influenced their insight to skills they were gaining as well as muted possible skills they were gaining in an on-campus job if they enjoyed and valued their other job more.

Conclusion

On-campus employment and extracurricular activities provide colleges and universities unique opportunities to contribute to the overall success of college students. College students need to graduate with skills that are deemed valuable in the workplace, all of which can be developed and honed through various opportunities outside of the classroom, specifically through employment and extracurricular activities. As more students continue to work while getting an education, it is imperative that students are getting the most for their money. On-campus employment has been shown to provide benefits such as academic success and engagement on campus. Therefore, employment and engagement opportunities on campus should be tailored to meeting the career development needs of the student body. As college becomes more expensive, the legitimacy and importance of earning a college education is coming to question. Some maintain that college graduates will get a return on their investment in their college education (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Others disagree, citing the decline in employment and wage differences between college graduates and non-graduates (Long, 2015). By preparing college students for the workforce through employment opportunities and extracurricular activities in addition to academics, institutions of higher education can increase the likelihood of employment success of graduates thus ensuring that graduates are receiving a return on their investment.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE MEANING OF LEISURE: DEFINITIONS OF LEISURE AND LEISURE EXPERIENCES IN THE EMPLOYED COLLEGE STUDENT WORKPLACE

Introduction

There are multiple ways to understand and define leisure (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). To study leisure, it is necessary to have a definition of leisure to give context to readers as well as to better understand and interpret findings. One of the more commonly used definitions of leisure is the idea of leisure occurring during free time activities, also called leisure time activities (e.g., Amireault & Godin, 2015; Aran, 2014; Beggs & Elkins, 2010).

There are problems with defining leisure as free time. One problem is that not all free time is leisure and that not all leisure occurs during free time (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). By perpetuating this idea that free time and leisure are one and the same (e.g., leisure as free time, leisure time physical activity), leisure has become something that only occurs after work or is reserved for weekends, thus instilling the idea that we reward ourselves for our work with leisure (Rojek, 2010). There are other definitions of leisure and different ways and times that people can experience leisure. Exploring how leisure occurs in different contexts that are not necessarily bound by the idea of free time might provide a better understanding of leisure and ways to facilitate and promote leisure in a variety of contexts.

One such way to investigate leisure is to examine it in the context of the work place. Arguably work is the antithesis of free time and it may be difficult reconciling

work and leisure, but it could be possible for leisure to occur during work. For instance, if leisure is thought of as a state of mind (e.g., deGrazia, 1962; Neulinger, 1981), then it is possible to enter a leisure state of mind during work even if work is obligatory, extrinsically motivated and not necessarily freely chosen. Being able to experience leisure during work would make work more enjoyable and potentially an arena where people gain some of the benefits of leisure. Being able to enjoy work and experience leisure during work might be an important contributing factor to work/life balance, which is important to the Millennial generation (born 1980-2000) that is projected to make up over 30% of the labor force by 2024 (Monthly Labor Review, 2015).

News outlets often proclaim that we live in an overworked and overly busy society (Neighmond, 2016; Petrecca, 2017), but Millennials are said to seek out and value work/life balance (Chao, 2005; Schulte, 2015; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Suggestions for improving work/life balance for Millennials include flexible work hours and telecommuting, which are meant to give workers opportunities to take time off that better fits their lifestyle (Chao, 2005; Schulte, 2015). Changing the structure of time away from work or the location where employees can work is not realistic for every company. It is imperative to determine how the workplace environment can be utilized to improve work/life balance.

The purpose of this study was to provide a foundation in understanding the work/life balance of employed college students; to explore whether college students employed on-campus could experience leisure in the workplace and under what circumstances. Employed college students were examined in this study because they are

part of the Millennial generation (born between 1982 and 1999) who are already re-shaping how we view work, mainly by hoping and expecting to find enjoyable work while also expecting to have time off and flexibility in their work schedule (Schulte, 2015; Twenge, et al., 2010). There is a lack of consensus regarding the exact birth year range of the Millennial generation, though the Pew Research Center recently announced the new birth year range of Millennials to be from 1981 to 1996 with post-Millennials being born after 1996 (Dimock, 2018). However, literature used to inform this study relied on birth year ranges that are reflective of this study's sample. What follows is a brief review of relevant leisure literature to set the stage for an examination of and discussion on the leisure perspectives and leisure experiences in the workplace of employed college students.

Background

Leisure as Free Time

There are several ways to understand leisure such as leisure as a state of mind, free time, activity based, determined by the quality of the experience, and as a dimension of life (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). Leisure as free time is a commonly used definition and research tends to focus on leisure as specific activities during free time (e.g., Godin & Shephard, 1997; Ragheb & Beard, 1982) or that leisure and free time are the same thing (Garcia & Ruiz, 2015). In its most basic definition, leisure as free time is time that is free from obligations, but this definition begs the question of whether one can truly be free from obligations. Time and whether that time can be truly free of obligations is shaped by choice as well as social structures.

The idea of “free time” originated in the most privileged sector of society. Our earliest leisure philosophers (e.g., Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato) had time available for thinking and contemplating, the earliest definition of leisure, because they were wealthy and had little to no obligations or constraints. While their definition of leisure was centered around leisure as a state of mind, they achieved their state of mind because they had time available and chose to do so (Goodale & Godbey, 1988).

Reflecting on other sectors of society, we see this played out among the wealthiest populations. Veblen (1899) dubbed the wealthy as the “leisure class” due to the availability of time and resources to devote to pleasurable activities. While Veblen (1899) had a rather grim view of the leisure class (i.e., leisure meant throwing lavish parties and doing nothing else), his understanding of leisure occurring during time free of obligations was apparent. Finally, leisure as free time became a more common understanding due to the rise of labor unions.

Before labor unions, the working class did not have free time as it was reserved for the wealthiest in society. Workers lobbied for better working conditions, which included more limited hours of employment, in hopes of having time free from work. During the early 1900’s, the United States began responding to the need to provide places for the working class to spend their free time, thus the parks and recreation movement was born. People finally seemed to have time to spend doing things that were enjoyable (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Therefore, the concept of “free time” was created by those who perhaps had the most time constraints since they felt a need to be free of those

constraints occasionally. As we move forward into the present, this idea of free time continues to grow more complex.

According to findings from the American Time Use Survey, full-time college students experience an average of four hours per day for leisure and sports with another two hours labeled as “other” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). These findings suggest that full-time college students, on average, have four to six hours every day that are considered free from obligations. Variations in time spent on academic work, employed work, and self-care, however, can impact the amount of free time as well as the quality of free time students experience daily. For instance, it is estimated that 70% of traditional and non-traditional college students are employed at least part-time, 25% are employed full-time and enrolled full-time, 40% of those employed are working at least 30 hours a week, and 19% have children (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, and Price, 2015).

College students are no longer fulfilling the student role. With the increasing cost of college tuition and living, more college students are turning to paid employment to make ends meet. Other college students are returning to college later in life after having assumed even more life roles. Available free time decreases with the increase in obligations and responsibilities, which could be interpreted as a decrease in leisure if defining leisure as free time. If leisure is a state of mind, perhaps leisure can be experienced outside of free time which could mean that opportunities for leisure do not decrease as more responsibilities and obligations are assumed.

Leisure as a State of Mind

de Grazia (1962) discussed how leisure and free time are not one in the same. Free time occurs outside of work and according to de Grazia “Anybody can have free time. Not everybody can have leisure” (p. 8). de Grazia discussed leisure in a way that made it seem almost unattainable unless one had the motivation and ability to achieve doing something “for its own sake or at its own end” (p. 15). de Grazia felt the drive to understand and differentiate between free time and leisure because he felt that “leisure cannot exist where people don’t know what it is” (p. 8). This statement begs the question of whether college students can experience leisure and reap the benefits of doing so if they do not even know or understand what leisure is. Further, de Grazia (1962) questioned “What makes people do what they do with their free time?” (p. 9) which is also one of the driving forces behind this research and can be influenced by various constraints. de Grazia also felt that there are two types of people: those who are unable to attain true leisure but might get tastes of it occasionally and those who have the imagination and love for thinking that allows for leisure. Furthermore, de Grazia suggested that people who have leisure can work and have other obligations and that leisure can even be experienced while at work. This concept is further highlighted by Neulinger (1981).

Neulinger (1981) discussed leisure experience as existing on a spectrum, that there are varying degrees of experiencing leisure. Leisure is a result of a combination of perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation. To highlight the spectrum of the leisure

experience, Neulinger developed the leisure paradigm ranging from pure leisure to pure job (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Neulinger's Paradigm of Leisure

Perceived Freedom = Leisure			Perceived Constraint = nonleisure		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Pure Leisure	Leisure-Work	Leisure-Job	Pure Work	Work-Job	Pure Job
(intrinsic motivation)	(both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation)	(extrinsic motivation)	(intrinsic motivation)	(both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation)	(extrinsic motivation)

Source: Adapted from Neulinger, 1981

Pure leisure occurs when there is complete freedom of choice in the activity and it is intrinsically motivated. The paradigm of leisure walks through leisure-work, leisure-job, pure-work, work-job, and pure job. Neulinger's paradigm considered that work itself can be rewarding and offer opportunities for leisure, which is particularly relevant to the Millennial generation. For instance, pure leisure, leisure-work, and leisure-job represent leisure state of mind since there is perceived freedom. In leisure-work, one can experience leisure while working if there is perceived freedom as well as self-determination. Leisure-job is more extrinsically motivated, but with the added perceived freedom, it is possible to experience the leisure state of mind. Pure-work, work-job, and pure-job, however, occur in the non-leisure state of mind due to perceived constraints. Pure-work is intrinsically motivated, but since there are perceived constraints no leisure is experienced. Work-job is a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while pure-job is solely extrinsically motivated. Varying degrees of perceived freedom and constraint largely contribute to whether an individual may experience leisure in work.

Neulinger (1981) stated that one could be immersed in an activity, but if it is required, the activity cannot be leisure. Perceived freedom, however, lies within the eye of the beholder. There could be components of freedom in college student employment, especially if the employment is not required. deGrazia (1962) discussed how leisure is a state of mind and those who are imaginative and love ideas can experience leisure in all they do, which suggests that some may be more likely to experience leisure any time during the day regardless of whether they are working. Neulinger (1981) also believed leisure is attributed to state of mind, therefore given the appropriate state of mind, or the capability to achieve that state of mind, perceived constraints would not always limit one's ability to experience leisure. Work, then, is not only a time to work, but could be a time to experience leisure as well. Pieper (1952) understood the value the mind and spirit played in one's ability to experience leisure.

Pieper (1952) claimed that "Leisure is only possible when a man is at one with himself" (p. 27). He further emphasized that leisure is a receptive attitude of the mind and spirit leading to "steeping oneself in the whole of creation" (p.28). Pieper, deGrazia (1962) and Neulinger (1981) understood leisure to be a state of being, a state of mind that leads to the leisure experience, but Pieper specifically suggested that self-awareness and the ability to be is integral to experiencing leisure. In Pieper's philosophy of leisure, he also discussed the role personality plays in experiencing leisure, much as deGrazia did. Leisure is for those who are more open to experiences and "leave the reins loose" (Pieper, 1952, p. 28). For a college student to experience Pieper's leisure, the student needs to truly know who they are and how they fit into the world, which might not be possible

since college student developmental theory suggests that college students are developing identity and self-awareness (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Therefore, it seems prudent to understand what leisure is to today's college student and the different contexts through which college students experience leisure.

Research supports the claim that leisure can lead to positive outcomes (e.g., Kleiber et al., 2011), yet leisure experiences are individual experiences. Since leisure does not have a single definition and can be experienced differently, attention should be given to understanding leisure at the individual level specifically when, where, and how leisure is experienced as well as the ways and under what circumstances leisure experiences contribute to work/life balance.

Work/Life Balance

Work and life imbalance means that there are demands in all aspects of life that can create feelings of being overwhelmed, overworked, or overloaded (Guest, 2001). No time or energy is left to take care of aspects in life that allow for rejuvenation, such as leisure (Guest, 2001). Life outside of work involves relationships, leisure, personal maintenance, recreational activities, and even sleep. Feeling balanced in work and life means being able to spend the amount of time and energy that you need and want to spend on responsibilities and interests. Gropel and Kuhl (2009) also suggested that need fulfillment is an important aspect to experiencing well-being that can result from work/life balance. Furthermore, work/life balance can be shaped by choices and constraints that are at the individual and organizational levels (Gregory & Milner, 2009).

Different from previous generations, Millennials have a strong desire for work/life balance (Alsop, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). There is an expectation for flexible working hours, be it taking time off for personal needs, taking small breaks during the work day, or working from home. Work has also begun to bleed into non-work time, with the increase in access to the internet along with general expectations to be available for work blurring the lines of leisure and work (Cole, Oliver, & Blaviesciunaite, 2014). While some may think having the flexibility to work outside of the office might be a positive, others might experience it as negatively impacting what has in the past been their leisure (Cole et al., 2014). In addition to creating time and opportunities outside of work and the workplace for leisure, determining ways that leisure and work can occur simultaneously or during working hours might improve work/life balance, especially for Millennials. Research supports the idea that having breaks during the work day has positive outcomes such as increased productivity and rejuvenation (Coker, 2011; Kim, Park, & Niu, 2016).

For instance, Coker (2011) found that workers who took frequent but short breaks from work surfing the internet were more productive than those who took no breaks and those who took a few, but long breaks. Other research has shown that taking small breaks (i.e., micro-breaks) and relaxing or socializing during the workday helps workers recover from the demands of the workday (Kim et al., 2016). Outside of research, some workplaces have implemented strategies to give employees breaks during the workday and improve overall work experiences. Google, for instance, allows dogs at work, provides the opportunity to take exercise breaks and even provides fitness programs on

the work site, encourages work time to dedicate to personal projects, and promotes building relationships with co-workers (Google Careers, n.d.). Societal work expectations are not reflective of this idea that work can and should be an enjoyable experience. Since people spend so much of their lives working, it is essential to determine ways that employees experience leisure in the workplace to encourage and facilitate leisure experiences during the work day.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways employed college students define leisure while also learning whether they experience leisure in work contexts. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do employed students define leisure?
 - a. What impact does leisure have in their lives?
2. Do students experience leisure through employed work?

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized an exploratory qualitative research design. Since this study was an exploration into the leisure experiences of employed college students, this study was a phenomenological study. A phenomenology is guided by assumptions about a phenomenon yet focuses on the lived experiences of individuals thus illuminating how experiences might differ from existing assumptions (Johnson & Parry, 2015). The basic assumption guiding this study was that leisure can be experienced through work, but not for everyone. Since the participants were all employed on-campus, they were

experiencing the same phenomenon; the phenomenon of being an employed college student. Due to the different job duties and work experiences of the participants, they experienced the phenomenon differently, therefore, a phenomenological research approach was deemed appropriate.

Participants

Participants were 34 students at a mid-sized university in the southeast and were employed part-time through on-campus employment. The two employment programs that exist at this university are the Federal Work Study program (FWS) and the University Professional Internship/Co-op program (UPIC). In addition, general employment opportunities exist on-campus that are not affiliated with the FWS or UPIC programs (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2
Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program

Work Program	n	Gender		Year in School				Working 2 or more jobs
		Female	Male	First-Year	Soph.	Jr.	Sr.	
FWS	9	7	2	2	0	5	2	3
UPIC	13	8	5	1	3	3	6	1
General	9	7	2	1	3	2	3	3
FWS and General	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	2
General and UPIC	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	34	24	10	4	7	11	12	10

FWS. The FWS program is a financial need based program. Undergraduates and graduate students must apply annually to work in the FWS program through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Jobs in the FWS program are typically associated with clerical type work often with the opportunity to work on school work

during paid hours. Employees are paid hourly and meet the federal guidelines for minimum wage, which at the time of the study was \$7.25 (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). While most FWS jobs are physically located on campus, participating institutions are required to allocate at least 7% of their employment opportunities to community service jobs in the surrounding community (Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program, 2014). There were 11 participants (8 female and 3 male) who were employed through the FWS program.

UPIC. The UPIC program offers internships that provide professional development opportunities for students in their chosen field of study or career interests. Faculty and staff provide mentorship, training, and supervision in jobs such as research, lab work, educational outreach, program design, and peer mentorship. All undergraduate students are eligible to apply to over 600 internships annually. Interns are also required to enroll in a related academic course, complete assignments, and work 160 hours per semester. In addition, wages begin at \$10 per hour and raises are available up to \$16 per hour (University Professional Internship/Co-op Program, 2017). There were 13 participants (8 female, 5 male) who were employed through the UPIC program.

General employment. On-campus work can also be found in areas such as food services, the student recreation center, facilities, libraries, career center, and the tutoring center. Pay and hours vary, with part-time work being capped at 20 hours per week per university policy. There were 10 participants (8 female, 2 male) that were employed through general employment opportunities on campus.

Data Collection Procedures

Once Institutional Review Board approval was granted, recruitment emails were sent to administrators in the FWS and UPIC programs who then forwarded the email to student employees. To reach participants from the general employment pool, recruitment emails were sent to faculty as well as an administrator in campus recreation, who also forwarded the email to their students and student employees respectively. Interested and eligible students emailed the researcher directly and interviews were scheduled on a first come first serve basis for the final three weeks of the spring 2017 semester (n = 31). Additional interviews were scheduled for the last week of the fall 2017 semester as well (n = 3).

Before arriving to the interview, demographic, family background, and general academic and employment information was collected via an online survey. This information was used to inform the researcher of pertinent information that was relevant to the interview questions. The primary method of data collection was the semi-structured interview. In a semi-structured interview, the interview is guided by predetermined questions that are connected to the research questions (Galleta & Cross, 2013). Interviews occurred in person, were one-on-one, were audio recorded, and lasted between thirty minutes to one and one-half hour. Participants were given a \$20 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview. Member checking occurred through participant review and confirmation of interview summaries.

Sample Size. There were 34 total participants which aligned well with recommendations in the current literature regarding sample size in interviewing. For phenomenological studies, three to ten interviews are deemed adequate (Creswell, 2014).

For interview methods in general, 20-30 participants have been suggested as a good sample size (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). Collectively, this sample exceeds both Baker et al.'s (2012) and Creswell's (2014) suggestions for sample size. Separated into groups based on work programs, the sub samples also meet or exceed Creswell's (2014) suggestion of three to ten participants as each had at least ten participants. Saturation also plays a role in determining sample size though some have noted the challenges to determining and obtaining true saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Detailed reflection notes provided a way for the researcher to determine whether new information was coming to light towards the end of the data collection process. Saturation was thought to have occurred, but during the data analysis process, it was deemed necessary to obtain more interviews specifically in the general employment group to gain a greater variety in types of jobs within this group. Three more interviews were conducted, after which the research team determined no new information had been gathered from these interviews.

Trustworthiness and Data Analysis

Since the researcher was the primary measurement instrument, trustworthiness of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation needs to be addressed. Roulston (2010) recommended asking open-ended and non-leading questions to remain as objective as possible. Additionally, participants were asked the same questions from the interview guide. Interviews were also audio recorded and then later transcribed verbatim. Finally, based on suggestions for validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research, member

checking was used to confirm the interpretation of the interviews with each participant before data were analyzed (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Roulston, 2010).

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and three researchers coded and categorized the transcripts based on their interpretation of the data (Roulston, 2010). This allowed for the primary researcher, who was also the interviewer, to confirm whether themes existed and provided the opportunity to gain a broader perspective on how to situate findings and what they might mean.

Findings

This study explored how employed students define leisure and whether they experience leisure in the workplace. To better understand the themes, general descriptive findings for each program are discussed, followed by the themes as they relate to the research questions.

Program Specific Findings

FWS. Jobs in this FWS program were consistent with common characteristics of FWS jobs. Jobs in this sample were generally clerical and student workers had the opportunity to work on homework while on the clock. Job tasks generally did not take advanced skills sets to complete and were not challenging but they enjoyed and valued the work they were doing because they were helping others and they liked the workplace culture. Additionally, participants in the FWS program were working out of financial necessity as they were financing their college education through a combination of loans and scholarships with limited to no financial assistance from family. As such, five participants worked two or more jobs, both on and off campus.

UPIC. Internships within the UPIC program required knowledge of specific skills and provided the opportunity to advance skills sets. These jobs also provided leadership and collaborative opportunities with faculty, staff, peers, and industry professionals. Participants enjoyed and valued the work they were doing because of the skills they were applying and learning, the interactions they were having, and connection to personal and professional interests. Only one participant held more than one job and these participants did not appear to be working out of financial necessity. These participants were not responsible for paying for their college education though some noted they used their income to relieve their parents of some of the financial burden of college expenses.

General. Participants employed through general on-campus employment held positions in campus recreation, the development office, campus facilities, residence halls, a first-generation mentorship program, and as an on-line class assistant. Of the seven participants who worked in campus recreation, three held more than one job, one of whom was also employed through the UPIC program. Additionally, the participant working in the development office held a FWS job, the resident assistant held a FWS job, and the class assistant was also employed off campus. Depending on the job requirements, jobs in the general category required a range of skills. For instance, those employed in campus recreation were required to be First Aid/CPR certified. Other jobs, like the campus facilities job or the online classroom assistant job, did not require specific technical skills. Generally, these participants also enjoyed and valued the work they were doing.

Themes

Participants were asked to define leisure and to provide examples of their leisure. They were also asked to describe how leisure made them feel. Once participants discussed their understanding of and experiences with leisure, they were asked whether they experienced leisure in the workplace. The following themes, matched with the research question, were: a) leisure is stress relief and restorative, b) leisure contributes to mood and ability to juggle multiple roles, c) leisure can occur through work experiences, and d) leisure can occur during work.

How do employed students define leisure? Since there is no single definition of leisure, participants were asked to talk about what leisure is to them as well as how leisure made them feel to better frame the discussion around leisure experiences in the workplace. It became clear that for these participants leisure was more about a state of mind, not necessarily free time, and leisure helped relieve stress and led to restoration.

Stress Relief and Restoration. For Denise (FWS), leisure occurs in nature. Denise thinks “for some reason, I picture leisure, I picture people strolling in the park, like, that’s just a leisure act to me...I guess leisure and nature go together.” When further prompted, Denise explained leisure is “calm and like, you are floating on the river...everyone is laughing and having a good time...you are not thinking about all the adult things.” Denise even sees the value leisure has on her health because “if you don’t have any, like, relaxing time, you are probably going to die a lot sooner.”

Tony (UPIC) also felt leisure provides an escape from responsibilities noting that leisure is “really calming and soothing and, like, it’s a lot of distraction as well. It’s a

time for you to forget about your professional and academic responsibilities...you're focused on you and whatever hobby or, like, activity that you enjoy doing." Mostly, leisure helps Tony manage the stressors of his responsibilities:

It's [leisure] like stress management. Especially like running, that's my stress reliever...that's my time I set aside to not do school work because sometimes it's hard to, like, take home your work...it's not something that stays here in this building. It's just tough too, like, managing these roles and responsibilities.

Further highlighting the role leisure plays in managing stress, Tony sees his leisure as "a positive way to relieve, like, tension and stress."

Leisure as a stress reliever was something that Keisha (FWS) felt as well. Shopping and traveling were two things that came to her mind when discussing leisure. Keisha noted that her leisure experiences help her "release some stress...it kind of makes me feel like, okay, everything is not bad." Leisure helps to "get away from everything that was stressing me out and it makes me feel better about myself." Keisha emphasized that leisure is essential for her to "de-stress, look at everything I have done or everything I have to do and realize like okay, I can get all this done, I just needed a minute to get myself together and then go back into it." For Keisha, leisure provides her the opportunity to take a break, relieve stress, and gain perspective on her next steps.

For Melissa (general), reading a book was the first thing that came to mind when discussing leisure. Reading a book provides necessary "alone time, just kind of destressing from whatever is going on." Through leisure "a weight is literally lifted off. It's kind of like I can breathe better, I feel better – I don't have a headache anymore. I

physically feel better.” The positive feelings she gets from leisure help her “start afresh with whatever is on my plate now. I have this moment of peace where I’m like ‘I don’t have to do anything immediately’.” Melissa also highlighted her self-awareness in using leisure as a stress management tool, noting “if there have been a few days and I’m super stressed I’m just like ‘okay I have to take a step away from this’. I have to do something else, anything else, to get my mind off of it – I just got to relax or de-stress.”

Michelle (UPIC) thinks of leisure as more of a solitary experience “like going to yoga or taking a walk or something more calming.” She enjoys spending time with friends, but does not necessarily associate these experiences with leisure because “I definitely value my alone time and if I don’t have it then I get cranky. Sometimes I’m just like ‘okay, I need to be alone right now’ and that’s what I think of as leisure.” Michelle further explained “I’m very busy and stressed all the time...when I think of leisure I think of really just calming myself...like a destress and like a recharge...like a cleansing feeling.” For Michelle, leisure is vital to her day to day functioning because “if I never take that time to kind of breathe and take a minute and just, like, be a human, than I’m less productive, less successful, less good at communicating.”

Beth’s (general) leisure is connected to being outside and for her, leisure is “just a break from my mind, because I have to learn so intensely...I think it’s important to appreciate things around you, to let yourself kind of chill, and then dive back in a little bit more well-rested.” Leisure also gives her “a chance to reflect and know what you need to do next.” Beth acknowledged that she can restore her energy through leisure – “If I do

run myself into the ground, I give myself a minute to rebuild – you can't run yourself into the ground again if you're already on the ground, so I have to stand back up.”

For Joshua (UPIC), leisure can be cooking, working on video production, praying, and walking. These activities help Joshua rest because during leisure he tries “to focus on the present because the past is gone and the future is coming but it's not there yet – all I can do is enjoy the present.” Joshua's focus on the present during leisure helps him “because I really enjoy having rest because my life is very busy...I value those times that I'm able to take my mind off work and just enjoy my life.” Joshua's leisure experiences help him feel “more relaxed and just more charged” which helps him feel more productive. Joshua noted that leisure “increases my productivity because if I don't have rest, I would just be drained and exhausted. So, I do value that [leisure] because it increases my productivity.”

For these participants, leisure was a personal experience, but they explained leisure in very similar terms and had a clear grasp of what leisure was to them. Leisure played a role in helping students manage their stress which gave them opportunities to restore the energy they needed to continue tackling their responsibilities.

What impact does leisure have in their lives? Participants were asked whether they had enough leisure and how leisure impacts their lives. Out of the 34 participants, 22 participants felt they had enough leisure in their lives. Regarding the impact leisure had on their lives, responses were overwhelmingly similar in that these participants knew and recognized leisure as being essential to their mood and overall feelings of being able to juggle multiple roles. These responses also aligned with how they defined leisure

emphasizing that these participants were thinking about leisure in terms of stress management and restoration.

Harvey (general) finds that leisure is integral to his overall sense of balance. Leisure helps him “not let college overwhelm me” and gives him a “sense of balance between work, school, and personal life.” Harvey noted that he feels “very well balanced – I’m not like stressed out about classes or anything” because he enjoys his work as a mentor, his academic classes, playing rugby, and being with friends. For Harvey, “leisure is a part of life in itself...if you don’t have leisure, you kind of don’t have life.” Harvey further explained that “without leisure, you don’t really have that quality of life” that helps him maintain a sense of balance between all his responsibilities and relationships.

Anna (general) also recognizes leisure as an important piece to feeling balanced and maintaining a positive mood. When asked why leisure was important to her, Anna stated that without leisure “you get burned out – you go crazy and things become less valuable to you...I think it’s important to figure out what is leisure to you...and realize, like, why that’s what you go to for leisure over other things.” Anna recognizes the importance of leisure in her daily life – “I’m very selfish in my leisure time so I always try to make a little bit of time in the day...you can’t just, like, build it up over the weekend.” Expanding on how leisure helps her feel balanced:

I notice I’m more level headed when I’m making decisions...I make much more conscious decisions. Whenever I take time to myself and have leisure, it actually teaches me, like, how to be grateful for things...it just kind of allows me to just kind of regain, like, my conscious and mindfulness.

For Anna, leisure helps her gain and maintain a more balanced perspective on her responsibilities.

Leslie (FWS) works three jobs on top of being a full-time student and she feels that she does not have enough leisure in her life. Leslie would “always like more time to relax...I am always running like crazy.” Not having enough leisure “contributes to the amount of stress...but there are small things that I will do, when I find time to - like my hour at the gym.” Leslie explained “If I actually make it there [the gym] 3 to 4 days a week, I feel like a brand-new person, but then the weeks that I don’t, I am just like ‘oh my God’.” Leslie also reads for leisure at the end of the day which if missed, impacts her rest:

I don’t sleep as well. It’s like my brain hasn’t had the time to unwind so I am like tossing and turning all night, but it’s still like I am so tired I can’t focus enough to read. It’s just one of those, like, you make yourself too tired and you are just like up all night.

Ultimately, Leslie thinks leisure “is very important...there is just a point where you need recovery time.” Leslie recognizes the importance of leisure to help her maintain a sense of balance with all her responsibilities and even though she does not have enough leisure, she understands that having leisure is important and tries to fit leisure in and “at least 60-70% of the time I am able to have at least an hour each day.” Leslie might not always feel like she has balance, but she understands and recognizes the role leisure plays in helping her feel good throughout the week.

John (FWS) also understands the role leisure plays in helping him manage his responsibilities. On days that he is unable to experience leisure, John feels “tired, tired” but when he can experience leisure John feels “relaxed, like, I can get everything done...like I’m on top of it.” Even though John does not experience leisure daily, John noted “I definitely get enough leisure, I make sure of that, that’s part of my – I think it’s part of how I stay so too not stressed out.” John highlighted that he plans leisure breaks into his day:

I have plans to, like, do this and I’m going to do this for so long, and then I’m going to take a break...I just set alarms. Or like when I could tell, like, when I’m like my hands are starting to hurt from writing, or my eyes are starting to strain, I know it’s time to take a 30-minute break.

Being able to fit in leisure breaks “helps to manage stress. I think it all makes me a better student, because, I mean, I’m able to stay not stressed out so then I can do better work.” For John, leisure is “very important” and plays a critical role in helping him manage the stressors of daily life.

To manage her busy schedule, Michelle (UPIC) points to the enjoyment she experiences in her scheduled activities as well as her ability to find leisure in household tasks. Michelle finds “leisure-ness in, like, cleaning and doing my laundry...so I’ll do that if I have a busy week or a busy day. It’ll make me feel, like, a lot calmer...it’s considered leisure for me.” Additionally, Michelle noted that “it’s good that during my busy, like, scheduled things I am enjoying myself because I think if I was doing things I hated, I would need more, like, leisure.” Michelle expanded “I guess I, like, have a very

balanced life so there's, like, many things that I consider leisure." Michelle experiences leisure through a variety of ways, which contributed to her sense of living a balanced life.

Based on their responses, participants recognized the positive impact leisure has on their lives. They recognized that having leisure helped them function better which led them to consciously seek out leisure experiences.

Do employed students experience leisure through their work? After participants discussed how they understood leisure and the impact leisure has on their lives, participants were asked whether they experienced leisure in their employed work. All participants had to pause and think about this question because as many mentioned, they had never thought of leisure as something that could happen during work. However, many participants acknowledged they had experienced leisure during employed work (FWS: 9; UPIC: 8; General: 7). Two distinct themes emerged regarding leisure experiences and work: a) leisure occurs through work experiences and b) leisure occurs during work.

Leisure occurs through work experiences. Leisure occurring through work experiences seemed connected to how enjoyable, engaging, and meaningful the work tasks were. While not all activities that are enjoyable, engaging, and meaningful are leisure, these feelings are associated with the leisure experience (Kleiber et al., 2011).

Amber (general) cleans and maintains athletic facilities. During leisure, Amber experiences "happiness and security" which she also experiences in her work. At work, she sets goals for herself and she enjoys finishing or meeting these goals. Amber explained "every time I'm given a goal, or something to finish, I want to finish it and

impress them...my goal is to make the least amount of work for somebody else.” This sense of accomplishment that she gets from meeting and exceeding expectations is leisure to her because “I chose to do it and then I got other things out of it”, like the happiness she gets from leisure.

Meagan (FWS), a local elementary school tutor, really enjoys her job – “it’s not one of those jobs where you’re like ‘I don’t want to go to work’ you know? Honestly, I would consider that leisure because it’s not like it’s difficult...when I’m there it goes, like, fast and it’s not bad at all.” Time fades away while she is working because she enjoys her work. Meagan emphasized “I like working with kids...it’s so nice to be able to go, you know, and have kids just love you.” Meagan also finds meaning through her work with the students and “I feel like I am actually doing something” highlighting the sense of value she gets from her work experiences.

Leisure for Anna (general) is relaxing and helps her to de-stress. As a recreation supervisor and intramural manager, she experiences leisure “because I actually love the work that I’m in, so to me, it doesn’t necessarily feel like work.” Echoing the sentiments of Meagan, Anna finds meaning in her work, which helps her experience leisure:

there are a lot of times and a lot of what I would say impactful moments in campus rec that you just can’t like plan out...because you’re giving a tour or maybe it’s a first-generation person trying to go to college and they are seeing, like, all the university has to offer and talking about, like, your experiences and it’s just those moments that, to me, like means something, and that is the same kind of euphoria that I get out of my leisure.

While Anna had “never thought I could call it [work] that [leisure] but thinking about it now, I definitely believe I can” because of her level of enjoyment and meaning she finds through her work responsibilities.

As part of her job responsibilities, Kristen (UPIC) works with students who are interested in studying abroad. Kristen sees value in studying abroad because “I think it’s, like, very important and you get, like, such a different perspective when you study abroad...I think that what study abroad is is really cool, so I like doing everything I can to support it.” Seeing value in the work she does helps her to “enjoy going to work...and like interacting with students...and I’m not like stressed when I’m at work.” Leisure for Kristen is about enjoyment and fun, which she experiences while working which she also considers to be leisure.

Like Kristen, Lee (UPIC) works with other students as a peer mentor and finds her work to be leisure. Lee pulls energy from her work with her mentees – “when I talk to my mentees and I see that they have big dreams and hopes...I am like this is good, this is great, glad they are doing great, I am doing great, everything is great!.” For Lee, her job is fun and she considers it to be leisure “especially talking to my mentees...I was like ‘I’m getting paid for this? Just to talk to people?’ perfect, your job is to make friends.” Her work is also meaningful to her:

I got so much help my freshman year and so I want to do the same, I really value it a lot and it is important...it is my job to stop the panic, like, ‘no, we want you to stay, there are a lot of people who would like for you to stay’.

Lee's job is fun, enjoyable, and meaningful which for her, creates opportunities for leisure experiences.

The participants that experienced leisure through their work responsibilities were not necessarily engaged in work that they saw themselves doing for a career. These participants did, however, enjoy and value the work they were doing which could influence the degree to which they felt they were experiencing leisure. The value they got from their work was connected to doing something for someone else, that is, they felt they were helping someone out, giving back, or making a difference in someone else's life. Amber, for instance, found value in cleaning, doing maintenance, and putting up and taking down signs for an event because she knew she was being helpful. Lee and Kristen found value in their work because they were providing guidance to fellow college students. Anna valued her work because she was promoting health and wellness in others which is important to her while Meagan found value because she was making a difference in the lives of children. While they had different jobs, they all enjoyed and valued the work they were doing, specifically in assisting other people.

Leisure occurs during work. Leisure occurring during work refers to leisure experiences happening while working that are not directly tied to the work responsibilities. For instance, some experienced a break since they did not have to focus on other responsibilities while others enjoyed the social interactions with co-workers.

As a lifeguard (general), Carly experiences leisure at work because "it's a nice break, just like sitting there and like watching people." Carly further explained that lifeguarding is something she "really looks forward too...I will be like 'good – I have to

sit here for two hours and like not do anything.” For Carly, her job as a lifeguard provides her the opportunity to take a break from all her other responsibilities, which to her, is leisure. Carly even expressed that working on Sundays are important for her too since “Sundays are a hard day for me to focus on school because I just had fun on the weekend...hopefully next semester I will get that again.” Working provides Carly a needed break during the week while also helping her to re-set from the weekend which, to Carly, is leisure.

Katherine (UPIC) interns at a studio on campus and while she enjoys her work, she experiences leisure mostly through her interactions with co-workers. Leisure for Katherine centers around feelings of stress relief and not thinking about school. Whenever there is downtime while on the clock and “when I don’t have any pressing assignments to do and other people are talking or sometimes if a class gets cancelled I’ll stay at work longer just because I’m having a good time.” When asked whether she felt that was leisure, Katherine agreed that it was – “Yeah, I think if I’m not, like, working on schoolwork and other people are talking...it does feel like leisure.” Expanding on her thought, Katherine noted “we have a really good time. If nothing is going on, we’ll all talk, we’ll play games together...they’re like your friends, you almost get to hang out with them.” Having these fun interactions with her co-workers “helps to pass the time and makes you feel almost – I feel excited when I get to go to work.” Katherine can experience leisure at work, but her leisure experience centers around social interactions with her co-workers that have less to do with the work itself and more to do with the

people she enjoys being around which helps her relieve stress and escape from academic worries.

Mia (FWS) also finds leisure in her job through social interactions with co-workers. The office is “such a relaxed environment” that when there is little to do as a student assistant, “it is kind of like social hour.” Mia also feels connected with the office staff through these social interactions because “I do know about their home lives and interests and that kind of thing...when there’s a lull, sometimes you just need to get out of your desk and walk around, you can go talk to people – ask them about their lives and what’s going on.” Having this kind of environment in the work place “enhances the work environment as a whole.” Mia wants “to go to work because I’m super excited to tell my manager I got a good grade...and she’s eager to tell me congratulations.” While Mia’s work (e.g., answering phones) does not provide her with a leisure experience, the culture at work is such that Mia experiences what she understands to be leisure in her daily interactions with co-workers.

For Cindy (FWS), a student assistant, social interactions at work can be leisure “because it [social interactions], like, calms me down, makes me feel like I can breathe...I feel leisurely but it makes me feel like I can get through the day.” Cindy further explained “sometimes I’ll come in and be, like, really sad...and then, like, my co-workers will talk or have a funny story and when I leave, like, I’m happy and I feel better and I feel like I can do it.” Like other participants, Cindy’s work environment was “fun...everything was very open and you could have, like, conversations and, like, people were laughing.” These conversations helped her to connect with others from different

backgrounds and learn about their experiences – “I love that I got, like, way different views of, like, school and everything.” Cindy’s work environment creates space for her to experience what she considers to be leisure through her interactions with co-workers.

For these participants, experiencing leisure in the workplace was contingent upon the work environment or culture. Participants experienced what they considered to be leisure while at work, but not through their specific job duties. Enjoyable social interactions facilitated their leisure experiences and were rooted in the general agreeableness of their co-workers and supervisors. These participants also valued their work, though value came mostly from them learning transferable skills like working with others, organization, and leadership. While these participants experienced leisure at work differently than their peers who experienced leisure through work responsibilities, these participants shared the feelings of enjoyment and value which appears to be important to their leisure experiences in the workplace.

Discussion and Future Research

The findings from this study provide further insight into the leisure experiences of employed college students. Specifically, what leisure means to them, how leisure impacts their lives, and under what circumstances they experience leisure experience in the workplace. While not generalizable, the findings from this study can be used to further explore leisure in the workplace and potential implications for work/life balance.

Leisure

Participants felt that leisure provided them with stress relief and gave them the opportunity to restore their energy. The idea that leisure is anything you do in your free

time did not emerge. Seven participants (FWS: 4; UPIC: 3) mentioned that they felt they did not have much free time, which limited the amount of leisure, but participants also noted that not everything they did during their free time (i.e., time outside of employed work and academic work) was leisure. Leisure could be reading a book, hanging out with friends, walking alone, or running alone; anything that helped them escape worries about responsibilities. Leisure participation and experience research often focus on the idea of leisure as free time (e.g., Molina-Garcia, Castillo, & Queralt, 2011; Kim, Sung, Park, & Dittmore, 2015), but these participants discussed leisure in terms more associated with leisure as a state of mind in that they could give their minds a break from worrying and thinking about all they had to do which in turn helped them relax, de-stress, and recharge.

The idea that people can be free of obligations and responsibilities fails to recognize the varying roles and responsibilities that bleed into all areas of daily life. Furthermore, the idea that leisure can be experienced through obligations and responsibilities such as work is lost when leisure is discussed in terms of free time. As we age, we naturally take on more responsibilities and employed college students are juggling multiple roles such as student, employee, friend, and family member, just to name a few. Leisure gave these participants an *escape*, the responsibilities and obligations remained, but leisure helped give their minds a rest from thinking about everything that was on their plate. This finding is valuable information because there is a distinct difference between *time free of* and *a break from* obligations. Since these students will gain more responsibilities and obligations throughout their lives, knowing how to get a *break from* and already recognizing the importance of taking a break will help them

cope with and manage the stressors of life in the future. Moreover, some participants experienced a *break from* their roles and responsibilities while at work, through the work tasks or because of social breaks. This finding, when examined through the lens that leisure gave these participants a break, sheds light on one of the ways that employers can create a work environment where *breaks from* can occur, which is discussed further in the next section.

Sonnentag (2012) highlighted the role taking a break from work related stressors plays in overall well-being and productivity. Others have recognized the need to unplug from stressors and prescribed nature walks or hikes (Charles, 2017; Root, 2017). Having leisure as a *break from* responsibilities played an important role for students in maintaining balance, managing stress, and improving productivity.

These participants exhibited a depth in their understanding of leisure that is more reflective of leisure as a state of mind and being. Pieper (1952) suggested that self-awareness assists in the ability to experience leisure. Through their descriptions, these participants demonstrated an awareness of not only what leisure was to them, but how leisure ultimately impacted their daily functioning. This finding further illuminates the relevancy of examining leisure through a more meaningful lens. Furthermore, these findings support de Grazia (1962) and Neulinger's (1981) ideas that leisure is more about a state of mind while also, perhaps, debunking the idea that leisure can only be experienced by a select few.

Leisure in the Workplace

Based on their age at the time of data collection in 2017(18-28), these participants are part of the Millennial generation (born between 1982-1999). Millennials have been found to value leisure experiences more so than past generations and desire work/life balance (Twenge et al., 2010). People who overwork themselves (i.e., lack work/life balance) tend to get run down and overly stressed which ends up negatively impacting health and well-being (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Overworking has even resulted in death (i.e, Karoshi) in more extreme cases (Ke, 2012). Accepting and valuing the role that leisure can play in providing a break from obligations and responsibilities is an important step in maintaining leisure involvement throughout life. Part of that falls on the shoulders of leisure researchers and practitioners to continue re-evaluating the leisure experience and ways to promote and enhance leisure experiences in daily life, including in the workplace. Parr and Lashusa (2010) emphasized the importance of understanding how people define and experience leisure which ultimately helps leisure providers develop and deliver better programs and services. Responsibility also lies at the individual level to know how to take care of oneself so that being a productive and healthy member of society becomes natural. With the help of researchers and practitioners, leisure can become better woven into daily life, ultimately leading to a society that values the importance of taking a break from responsibilities and obligations in the workplace in addition to outside of work.

Of the 34 participants, 24 experienced leisure in the workplace through the work itself and by taking breaks by engaging with others. This finding also muddies the leisure

as free time definition because employed work does not fit into the idea of free time.

Work is not 100% intrinsically motivated and is obligatory, to varying degrees based on financial need, but most participants felt they had experienced leisure in the workplace.

The majority of FWS participants, those who felt more obligated to work, experienced leisure in the workplace. This finding highlights Neulinger's (1981) paradigm pertaining to how perceived freedom, enjoyment, and constraints impact the leisure experience at work. Leisure experience can occur in the workplace when there is perceived freedom as well as a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to work. While the work was more obligatory for some than it was for others, participants felt that they had flexibility in their work schedules as well as varying degrees of choice in what jobs to apply for. Having a flexible job may be important to experiencing leisure in the workplace which could be in part due to the perception of freedom that is attached with flexibility in scheduling. Likewise, feeling as though there were multiple options when applying for jobs may assist in appreciating the work more, which in turn might influence how one feels about the degree of freedom they had in choosing their job. Further examination of what perceived freedom can look like in job choice and job duties as well as motivations connected to the need to work and work duties is necessary to understand how leisure can exist in the workplace.

Interestingly, of the 24 participants who experienced leisure while working, 18 participants felt they had enough leisure in their lives. Recall that the participants who felt they had enough leisure in their lives felt more balanced and capable to manage the demands of their multiple roles. Having leisure experiences at work can add to overall

feelings of getting enough leisure and greatly contribute to long term health and well-being. People can spend up to 52 years in the workforce before reaching the full retirement age of 67 (Social Security, n.d.), therefore it is important to be able to have breaks during the work day as well as from work itself. Workers are already not taking vacation days because they feel the need to produce and feel that vacation is frowned upon by their bosses (Project: Time Off, 2017), but this can decrease the productivity of employees. As several participants noted, leisure helps them feel more productive, and creating space for and promoting leisure in the workplace could improve the health of the employee, workplace health, productivity, and ultimately lead to a societal change in how we value ourselves and our health. Research supports the importance of taking breaks during the work day in relation to worker productivity and recovery (Coker, 2011; Kim et al., 2016).

Additionally, researchers have noted the importance of creating a positive work environment (Luthans & Church, 2002), which was pertinent to participant leisure experiences in the workplace as well. Workplace flexibility and being able to develop connections with co-workers are part of positive work environments that are valued by Millennials (Graen & Grace, 2015). Some organizations (e.g., Facebook) have taken note of Millennial workplace expectations by providing opportunities to take breaks, building in flexibility, and generally creating a fun work environment (Guzman, 2013). More research is necessary to determine whether work environments, such as those previously mentioned, facilitate leisure experiences. Furthermore, research determining what workplace changes or adjustments can be made to facilitate leisure experiences.

Differences between job requirements and company finances can limit or lend itself to leisure experiences in the workplace. For instance, some job responsibilities must occur during the specified workday as well as in person. Being able to create a built environment conducive to leisure experiences in the workplace is also costly. Determining what small and large-scale changes can be made to promote a workplace culture that can lead to leisure experiences during the workday is necessary to provide realistic suggestions on ways to create a work environment that not only attracts Millennials, but contributes to work/life balance through leisure experiences as well.

Limitations

As with many qualitative studies, limitations such as number of participants, length of interviews, number of interviews per participant, and sampling/recruitment procedures limit the generalization of the findings. Also, specific to qualitative research, researcher interpretation of meaning can present challenges in accurately expressing the experiences of participants. Member checking was a strategy used to reduce the amount of researcher bias in interpretations as well as to increase the validity of the findings. To address some of these limitations, future research should focus on casting a wider net when sampling from employed students and increase the number of participants to gain an even broader understanding.

Conclusion

Leisure is a complex phenomenon that continues to evolve with the changing needs and expectations of society. It is increasingly important to re-evaluate the ways leisure is experienced, under what circumstances, and how leisure experiences can be

promoted and facilitated in multiple facets of life, not just during free time. As evidenced by members of the future workforce, leisure can be experienced during the workday which could influence long term health and well-being. More research is needed to examine leisure experiences in the workplace to better understand the implications. Based on the increasing interest in workplace culture and the Millennial generation, research is needed for understanding the needs and wants of Millennials. This study contributed to the body of research surrounding Millennial expectations in the workplace by specifically examining leisure experiences in the workplace and provided ideas from which to draw for future research. Finally, as the generation following Millennials enters the workforce, it will be interesting to see whether work/life balance continues to be a core value and how society continues to adapt to the evolving work values of our labor force.

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CHAPTER FOUR

COLLEGE STUDENT BUSYNESS AND BOREDOM DURING FREE TIME

Introduction

College students today have more free time, specifically time outside of academics and related activities, than they have had in the past (Babcock & Marks, 2010). College students with few leisure skills (the knowledge, interests, and technical skills necessary to participate in various leisure activities) experience boredom during free time that can lead to risky behaviors such as alcohol and substance use as well as sedentary behaviors such as watching TV and surfing the internet (Panek, 2014; Payne, Ainsworth, & Godbey, 2010; Shinew & Parry, 2005).

Studies focusing on free time management, free time motivation, and boredom during free time have highlighted the necessity of having leisure skills (Caldwell, Baldwin, Walls, & Smith, 2004; Chen, Yarnal, Hustad, & Sims, 2016; Hickerson & Beggs, 2007; Wang, Kao, & Wu, 2011). Having leisure skills and an awareness of leisure opportunities, for instance, led to a decrease in boredom and risky behaviors during unstructured free time among adolescents (Caldwell et al., 2004) and a shift towards participating in more meaningful leisure experiences during free time among college students (Chen et al., 2016). There is also evidence that college students who engage in structured free time activities might experience boredom less than those who have more passive free time experiences (Hickerson & Beggs, 2007; Wang, Wu, Wu, & Huan, 2012). Being overscheduled in structured extracurricular activities, though, has been linked with reduced leisure among adolescents (Brown, Nobiling, Teufel, & Birch, 2011;

Quist, 2007) which ultimately might impact one's ability to know what to do when faced with unstructured free time.

The availability of unstructured free time in college is impacted by academic studies, extracurricular involvement, and employment. Employed college students might not have as much free time available as their non-employed peers and with the rising cost of tuition and living expenses during college, many students seek term-time employment which can decrease the availability of free time. It is estimated that college students have an average of 20-28 hours per week that can be considered free time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), but 43% of full-time undergraduate students are employed, reducing the amount of available free time for employed college students (College Student Employment, 2017). Employment, then, can impact time available to explore leisure interests and build the skills necessary to know what to do when faced with unstructured free time.

This study, as part of a larger study on the effects of term-time employment on college students, explored the role employment plays in free time attitudes and leisure experiences during unstructured free time. Life experiences before college regarding level of involvement in employment, free time activities, and parental influences were also explored as these might influence attitudes towards and behavior during unstructured free time.

Background

Structured and Unstructured Free Time

Free time, or time that is free of obligations and responsibilities (Haworth & Veal, 2004), can be filled with both structured activities and unstructured activities. Free time is also thought of as discretionary time, that is, time outside of obligations during which there is choice in individual decision making. The way individuals spend their free time depends on interests, skills, and available opportunities. Interests and skills develop over time and are shaped by past experiences. In childhood, for instance, unstructured free play is encouraged during free time, as there are many positive developmental growth and learning opportunities that occur through free play (Hurwitz, 2012; Larson, 2001; Quist, 2007).

Unstructured activities, like play, occur during free time and can have positive developmental outcomes such as cognitive, social, emotional, and identity growth for children and adolescents (Larson, 2001). Lessons and skills learned through childhood play might contribute to lifelong learning, resiliency, and the ability to know what to do during unstructured free time as new interests are discovered (Ginsburg, 2011). While unstructured time provides a context for growth and development during childhood and adolescence, unstructured time can also be a time during which negative activities and behaviors occur.

Boredom during unstructured free time opens the door to activities that provide little to no benefit and even might be harmful. Risky behaviors among college students such as alcohol and drug use or more sedentary behaviors such as watching TV and

internet surfing occurred during unstructured free time (Panek, 2014; Payne et al., 2010; Shinew & Parry, 2005). Leisure education programs that developed an awareness of existing leisure behaviors, leisure skills, and leisure values among adolescents and college students assisted in combating boredom during unstructured free time and may lead to a positive use of free time (Caldwell et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2016). Additionally, organized afterschool opportunities like sports, service clubs, academic clubs, and band also provide structured opportunities that might combat boredom during free time.

Involvement in structured afterschool activities (i.e., extracurricular activities) during adolescence is associated with improved academic performance and positive developmental outcomes in the cognitive, physical, and psychosocial realms (Eccles et al., 2003; Mahony & Vest, 2012). Researchers reported that adolescents who engaged in a diverse array of organized and structured free time activities fared better developmentally and academically than their peers who participated in very few to no extracurricular activities (Mahoney & Vest, 2012; Sharp, et al., 2015). Other researchers have found that being involved in three or more extracurricular activities increased the likelihood of adolescents feeling stressed about their level of involvement (Brown et al., 2011). Additionally, parental expectations and influences on extracurricular involvement have increased feelings of busyness and stress (Brown, et al., 2011). Furthermore, parents who are overscheduled might be overscheduling their own children, thus creating a family dynamic of busyness (Quist, 2007), which might be continued throughout life.

Busyness as a result of overscheduling can impact how free time is spent as well as the value gained during free time. Those who have been involved in highly structured

extracurricular activities during adolescence might have few leisure skills and are unsure of what to do during their unstructured free time thus leading to boredom (Hickerson & Beggs, 2007; Wang et al., 2012). Therefore, students who have had highly scheduled and structured free time in adolescence struggle when faced with less structure and more free time while in college (Wang, et al., 2012).

Free Time and College Students. According to findings from the American Time Use Survey, full-time college students experience an average of four hours for leisure and sports with another two hours labeled as “other” per day (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This means full-time college students, on average, have between twenty to twenty-eight hours of time that could be considered free time every week. What one does during free time can be influenced by developmental growth and time management skills.

Panek (2014) found that college students with more self-control were involved in activities during free time that are associated with long-term benefits such as organized athletic or social activities. Those with less self-control were more likely to choose immediately gratifying activities (e.g., watching TV and playing video games) during their free time that have little to no long-term benefits. Furthermore, students who managed their free time were goal oriented, planners, and they were less likely to experience boredom during their free time (Wang et al., 2012). College students who managed their free time fared better in terms of quality of life than those who were unable to manage their free time (Wang, et al., 2011). Baldouf (2009) reported that one’s ability to manage free time is a predictor of academic success and retention in college.

Based on these studies, planning out and having the skills to know what to do during free time is important to quality of life as well as academic success in college, but the availability of free time for many is impacted by employment.

According to recent estimates, 43% of full-time college students were employed at least part time in 2015 with 15% of those employed working less than 20 hours per week and 27% working 20 or more hours per week. (College Student Employment, 2017). With the increasing cost of college tuition and living, college students are no longer just fulfilling the student role and are turning to paid employment to make ends meet. Therefore, there are variations in the amount of free time college students have based on academics and employment.

Research on the impacts of employment on free time use among college students is contradictory. Astin (1993) found that on-campus student employment had a positive effect on involvement in campus clubs and organizations while Kulm and Cramer (2006) reported that student employment acted as a barrier to participation in non-academic and non-work activities. Elling and Elling (2000) suggested that working 30 hours or more per week negatively impacted participation in student clubs and organizations. These studies focused on structured free time activities, but it is the unstructured free time with which college students might struggle the most. For instance, Barnett and Klitzing (2006) found that college students who reported having to rely on their self for entertainment during unstructured free time were more likely to be bored than those who sought external entertainment. This finding suggests that when faced with “nothing to do”, some

people are more likely to be bored than others based on their ability to handle and manage their available free time.

Purpose

Based on previous research, experiences during unstructured free time is impacted by leisure skills, leisure interests, and knowledge of what to do during unstructured free time. Yet there is a lack of information drawing connections between how free time attitudes and behaviors in college might have been shaped by involvement in structured activities in adolescence. In addition, the impact employment has on unstructured free time attitudes and behaviors is also unclear and needs to be better understood. The purpose of this study was to further explore the free time attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of employed college students and how experiences before college might have shaped their free time attitudes.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were 34 undergraduate students employed on campus at a mid-sized university in the southeast in the Federal Work Study program (FWS), the University Professional Internship and Co-op program (UPIC), and/or through general opportunities on campus unaffiliated with the FWS or UPIC programs. Eligibility to be employed through the FWS program is based on financial need, while employment opportunities through the UPIC program and general on-campus employment is open to any student. These programs encompass the formalized employment opportunities available on campus and these programs were targeted for examining on-campus working

student involvement in extracurricular activities and unstructured free time. Table 3.1 provides an overview of participant characteristics based on their employment programs.

Table 3.1
Summary of Student Characteristics by Work Program

Work Program	n	Gender		Year in School				Working 2 or more jobs
		Female	Male	First-Year	Soph.	Jr.	Sr.	
FWS	9	7	2	2	0	5	2	3
UPIC	13	8	5	1	3	3	6	1
General	9	7	2	1	3	2	3	2
FWS and General	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	2
General and UPIC	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	34	24	10	4	7	11	12	9

Research Design and Procedures

This study was phenomenological in nature and employed an exploratory qualitative research design. Upon Institutional Review Board approval, recruitment emails were sent to administrators in each of the employment programs on campus. Administrators forwarded the recruitment e-mail to student employees. Additionally, recruitment emails were sent to instructors of academic classes, which were then forwarded on to students in those classes. Participants had to be at least 18 years old, undergraduate students, and employed on campus to be included in the study. Interviews were scheduled in the order in which interest was received and once interview time slots were considered full, additional interested students were placed on a wait list. Interviews were conducted during the last three weeks of the spring 2017 semester (n = 31) and again during the last week of the fall 2017 semester (n = 3). The three additional

interviews in the fall of 2017 were necessary to increase the variety of types of jobs in the general category.

During the interview, participants were asked to discuss their experiences working, involvement in extracurricular activities, and anything else they did outside of their structured time. In addition to the interview, participants were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire that collected demographic information (e.g., gender, year in school), family background information (e.g., education, employment history), and general information concerning their employed work, academic work, and extracurricular involvement (e.g., hours worked, credit hour enrolled in, major, clubs and organizations).

Interviews occurred in person, followed an interview guide (i.e., semi-structured), and occurred both indoors in a reserved room and outdoors. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one and one-half hour. After the interview, participants were given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

Sample Size. The number of interviews conducted (N=34) met the criteria suggested for qualitative research. For instance, Creswell (2014) suggested three to ten interviews while Baker, Edwards, and Doidge (2012) suggested 20-30 participants are appropriate when using research methods such as interviewing. Based on the suggestions of Creswell (2014) and Baker et al. (2012), this sample exceeding the necessary sample size.

Data Analysis

Participants were assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, with transcriptions checked for accuracy against the

recordings. Additionally, the researcher took reflection notes after each interview which provided more insight during the coding process. To increase trustworthiness, the researcher employed two external researchers to assist in the coding, categorization, and theming of the data as suggested by Roulston (2010). Initially, transcripts were read for a general understanding of ideas, then on the second reading codes were manually and independently created based on each researcher's interpretation of the data. Each researcher was responsible for developing themes independently. Once the researchers completed the data analysis process, the researchers met and discussed findings with the goal of achieving agreement on emergent themes. Additionally, the researcher sent summaries of individual interviews to participants to give participants the opportunity to either verify or correct researcher interpretation (i.e., member checking) providing an additional layer of trustworthiness.

Findings

Participants were asked to discuss their level of involvement in work, academics, extracurricular activities, and anything else they did during their free time. In addition to their academic and employment responsibilities and time commitments, 28 (FWS: 7; UPIC: 11; General: 10) were involved in organized extracurricular activities including sororities and fraternities, intramural and club sports, personal interest clubs and organizations, and academic clubs and organizations. Time commitment wise, these participants appeared to be busy and for the most part, did not have much unstructured time available. Their time, both obligatory and free, was highly structured with little to no unstructured free time (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2
Summary of Structured Time Commitments

Credit hours			Extracurricular Involvement				Number of Jobs			Hours worked per week		
> 12	12-15	16+	0	1-2	3-5	6+	1	2	3+	> 10	10-20	21+
1	14	19	6	14	11	3	23	9	2	7	18	9

Once participants discussed employment, academics, and extracurricular involvement, they were asked what else they did outside of employment, academics, and organized extracurricular activities and how they defined and experienced leisure. While never directly asked about their feelings concerning unstructured free time and busyness, participants would comment on their level of busyness when asked about whether they felt they had time for everything they did or when discussing their lives before college. Based on their responses, it became apparent that there were two groups of participants - those who knew what to do when they had unstructured free time and those who did not know what to do with their unstructured free time. Additionally, participants collectively felt that leisure provided opportunities for stress relief and restoration, which provides insight into their feelings concerning free time. As highlighted in the following discussion, certain themes were unique to specific work programs. The overarching themes that emerged were: a) leisure is a stress reliever and restorative, b) those who welcome unstructured free time experience leisure during unstructured free time, c) those who are unsure of what to do with free time have a need to stay busy which was shaped by past experiences, and d) those who are unsure of what to do during unstructured free time are unable to experience leisure during unstructured free time.

Leisure as Stress Relief and Restoration

Since free time is a time during which leisure can be experienced, participants were asked what leisure meant to them and feelings they associated with leisure. For instance, participants described leisure as “calming and soothing” (Tony, UPIC), “relaxing” (Denise, FWS), “a weight is literally lifted off” (Melissa, general), and “calming myself” (Michelle, UPIC). Others described leisure similarly which ultimately led to feelings of stress relief. This stress relief had restorative qualities that aided these participants in feeling like they could tackle life’s challenges better. For example, Beth (general) appreciated the break she gets during leisure because it gives her “a chance to reflect and know what you need to do next.” Joshua (UPIC) recognizes he feels “more charged” after a leisure experience while Leslie (FWS) finds value in the “recovery time” she gets from leisure. While participants shared similar thoughts and feelings about leisure, they tended to experience leisure through different avenues which is reflected in their free time attitudes and choices.

Unstructured Free Time is Welcome

Out of the 34 participants, 19 participants (FWS: 5 or 45.5%, UPIC: 9 or 69.2%, General: 5 or 50%) comprised mostly of UPIC and general participants did not mention having any negative feelings, such as boredom, with extra time on their hands that was not planned, organized or structured in some way. Free time was used to do activities they liked doing such as spending time with friends, playing games, or enjoying some needed alone time. For instance, Michelle (UPIC) used unstructured free time to get her much needed alone time – “I definitely value my alone time and if I don’t have it then I

get cranky.” Anna (general) played “video games a lot” with her friends in her unstructured free time. Dan (FWS) enjoyed “hanging out with friends” which can be “playing basketball” or “drinking” and going out. Regardless of what they did during their free time, these participants had no issue with having unstructured free time on their hands; boredom and fear of being unproductive were not problems that these participants expressed as outlined below.

Leisure Experience during Unstructured Time. These participants were involved in two to three organized extracurricular activities. Clubs and organizations ranged from Greek organizations to swing dance club to religious clubs. Additionally, these participants looked forward to unstructured free time during which they could experience the stress relief and restoration they associated with leisure.

For instance, Abby (UPIC) enjoys her experience through her sorority and values the friendships she is making, however, she does not consider sorority events and gatherings as her leisure. Abby is “very introverted, not, like, anti-social or anything, I just need time to myself.” She noted that since much of her involvement with the sorority is more social, she gets “very little” leisure from participating in sorority activities and events. Most of her leisure experiences occur during her unstructured free time during which she “needs, sometimes, like even 30 minutes or an hour to just, like, be by myself.”

Tom (general) was on three intramural teams and often played pickup games with his roommates and neighbors. While Tom enjoys playing different sports, the competitiveness takes away from the leisure experience – “It’s not leisure, but I’m having

fun...I don't know, I'm competing." In fact, it is Tom's "personal time" during which he experiences leisure –

I'm never just by myself inside, like an hour...sometimes I just sit in my car...then I'll be like 'oh, one hour passed'. I need to go inside. Yeah, I don't know why that happens, just be on my phone just, like, an hour, which is, I guess, is a good thing, you need time to yourself...that's definitely leisure.

Others also agreed that their leisure experience was in their alone, unstructured, free time.

Melissa (general) noted that leisure was "reading a book, having my alone time" while Joshua (UPIC) will "go to the botanical gardens...just to walk and to pray." While these participants enjoyed their involvement in structured free time activities, they welcomed unstructured free time because this was a time during which they could experience leisure.

Unsure of What to Do with Free Time

Out of the 34 participants, 15 (FWS: 6 or 54.5%, UPIC: 4 or 30.8%, General: 5 or 50%) revealed that they did not know what to do with their unstructured free time outside of work, academics, and extracurricular activities. For these participants, employment was not only a necessity for some, but it also kept them busy, meeting their need to feel productive. Involvement in student clubs and organizations was also a means to stay busy and fill their time. Two trends emerged among those who were unsure of what to do with free time: a) the FWS participants expressed a need to stay busy, since they did not know what to do with their free time, which helped them feel productive and b) participants in

the UPIC and General work programs relied more on the structure created by busyness which helped them feel more successful.

Relied on Employment to Stay Busy and Feel Productive. The FWS participants were employed for financial reasons. All FWS participants had a combination of scholarships and loans they are responsible for paying back, though some also had financial assistance from their parents and other family members. In general, these participants expressed unease at not knowing what to do with free time, so they kept themselves busy instead. FWS participants noted that at times, they were typically able to work on homework while on the clock, which could have an impact on the amount of free time available outside of employment. Additionally, not knowing what to do with free time seemed to stem from having always worked since they legally could.

Sally (FWS) tutors elementary school students 5-10 hours per week, is enrolled in 14 credit hours, and is involved in ROTC which is also a heavy time commitment. Sally also worked in high school and was involved in “seven clubs and band and I played sports.” For Sally, unstructured free time makes her “feel like I’m not doing anything...I would make myself do something else to keep busy.” Sally noted, “I actually like the working environment, I like being busy...my fun time is also going to work.”

Mia (FWS) also started working in high school and currently works two jobs, both on and off campus for a total of 30-40 hours per week, and is enrolled in 12 credit hours. Mia revealed “my friends call me a workaholic...not that I love working, but I just have always worked.” Mia explained that during free time she is “bored, like, I literally stay at home and I’m like ‘I don’t have anything to do. I should be doing something’”,

which she attributed to her having “always been busy.” Mia is even worrying about the free time she anticipates having after graduation –

I don't know what I'm going to do when I graduate and have, like, a normal job. I am going to have weekends off...I might actually do my normal, like, Monday through Friday job and then get a part-time job on the weekends just because I don't know what I would do otherwise.

Like Mia, Sarah (FWS) has two jobs, both on campus for a total of 20 hours per week, is enrolled in 15 credit hours, and is a double major. Sarah is also involved in two extracurricular activities and struggles with the idea of free time because “I think if I did have more time...I might not be as satisfied because I wouldn't feel as productive.” More free time for Sarah would mean that “maybe I don't have enough goal setting and achieving going on and I might not feel as satisfied with myself.”

Others expressed similar sentiments to Sally, Mia, and Sarah that if they were not working and had more free time they would “feel like I was just doing nothing” (Cindy, FWS), “just sit there at my house” (Jimmy, FWS), and fear “sitting there and being bored” (Meagan, FWS) during free time.

These participants felt that free time meant being unproductive. Their time was filled with employed work, academic work, and other structured activities that helped them feel productive. They also expressed genuine concern with the idea of having more time on their hands not dedicated to employment, academic work, or organized extracurricular activities.

Parental Influence. Participants were also asked about how they felt their parents influenced their feelings toward academics and work. All the FWS participants noted they saw their parents work hard, some even working multiple jobs which appeared to be associated with their drive to stay busy.

Mia, for instance, described her life living with her parents as very busy, which can easily be seen in her current lifestyle:

Both my parents are really hard workers...they both did their work jobs and they would come home, like, change real quickly and then we would go to church where they were both leaders for our youth group and then we'd go home, like, do everything we need to...there were very few times we ever, like, weren't doing something...it was always go, go, go.

For Mia, her home life growing up had a connection to the hectic schedule she currently keeps.

Sally, who was raised in a single parent household by her mother who held two jobs, described a life on the go as well –

I played travel soccer since kindergarten and so did my sister, so my mom was constantly, like, going from work, coming home, picking me up, taking me to soccer, taking my sister to where she needed to go, and then my mom would go back to her second job and come pick me up.

Sally's involvement in organized sports and seeing how hard her mother worked also had an influence on her need to be busy because, as Sally noted, "my mom does it, I can do this too." Sally is also driven to remain busy because she feels her brother has a poor

work ethic and that “made me want to work hard. I was like ‘I don’t want to disappoint my parents like he did’.”

Leisure Experience. Not surprisingly, the FWS students who did not know what to do with unstructured free time struggled to experience leisure (e.g., stress relief and restoration) during their unstructured free time. For them, unstructured free time was almost stress inducing since they were unsure of how to spend that time. Instead, leisure occurred during their structured activities, including employed work.

Jimmy works two jobs, both on and off campus, but only experiences leisure through his off-campus job as a construction intern when he is “working on a house by myself...everybody needs just alone time.” When taken into consideration with Jimmy’s dislike of being alone at his own house and preference to be doing something, it is interesting that while doing obligatory work, he can experience leisure. Being alone while doing work (e.g., painting a room) is leisure whereas being alone at home is not. Additionally, while Jimmy’s fraternity involvement “keeps me busy” the organized events also facilitate leisure because he is able to “hang out with the guys and, like, my girlfriend and all their dates...and it’s just super easy to just relax.” Yet he did not associate involvement in his other club and intramural activities with leisure experience.

Sally, who works and is in ROTC, also experiences leisure through her work tutoring elementary students. During tutoring sessions, Sally will “just color a picture and I can, like, ask the kids about their days...it’s just nice to not have to think about school, like, I’m coloring, it’s nice and relaxing or reading a book – I get to read a book to the kids.” Coloring and reading are all things that adults can do on their own time, perhaps

during unstructured free time, but Sally connects unstructured free time with the feeling that she is doing nothing, which she does not like. Additionally, during her first semester Sally considered dropping out of school due to financial constraints, but she learned that she could receive financial assistance if she joined ROTC. While she chose to sign up, she does not experience leisure through her activities and responsibilities associated with ROTC.

Jimmy, Sally, and others in the FWS tended to be unsure of what to do during their unstructured free time, a feeling that appeared to relate to the busyness of their lives before college. They also experienced leisure during employed work, while their structured free time activities were not always associated with leisure experience.

Busyness Provided Structure. The UPIC and general participants who did not work out of financial necessity also felt that too much free time would make them feel less productive. Their experiences centered around employment providing structure which ultimately helped them feel successful in school.

Carly (general) works 7-8 hours per week, is enrolled in 20 credit hours, and is involved in six clubs and organizations. Carly appreciated the structure that employment and her student involvement provided because it allowed her to be productive - "I do better when I am busier...having that pressured time has, like, forced me to focus more...I just try to have structure." Carly expanded - "If I didn't have all these things I was involved with then I probably wouldn't be doing as well in school." Without her busy and structured life, "I'd be, like, sitting around and watching Netflix...I'd be wasting time." During free time, Carly feels "bored and I am, like, not enjoying myself"

and explained that with more free time “I don’t think I would be, like, where I am in school right now” emphasizing the importance of the structure created by busyness.

Kaitlyn (UPIC) works 11-12 hours per week, is enrolled in 16 credit hours, and is involved in three clubs and organizations. Kaitlyn expressed that one of the reasons she works is because “I like being busy.” Kaitlyn “would feel, like, not productive” if she was unemployed and had more free time. Employment and student involvement provide her with structure and help keep her on track academically “because, like, I know I’m busy...so I just, like, try to like plan on certain times so I get things done.” Kaitlyn noted that her involvement and employment stems from wanting to get the most out of her college experience –

I just, like, get a lot done and I feel like I just want to, like, leave college and feel like I did everything I could have done...that’s why I like being busy because I know I’m taking full advantage of, like, everything I can.

Eleanor (UPIC) works 15 hours per week, is enrolled in 14 credit hours, and is involved in two clubs. Eleanor noted that she would have too much free time on her hands if she was unemployed since she feels her credit hour enrollment is low – “I’m not taking too many credit hours...I need to be kept busy...if I didn’t work I would just spend, like, all my time sleeping which isn’t the best for productivity.” Employment provides the structure Eleanor feels she needs to remain productive, especially during her semester with not many credit hours.

Grace (general) works 2.5 - 6 hours per week, is enrolled in 22 credit hours, and is involved in seven clubs and organizations. Grace experienced trouble with anxiety when

she transitioned into college because she was overwhelmed and needed structure. Grace gets a lot of value and enjoyment from her heavy extracurricular involvement and “wouldn’t have it any other way.” For Grace “staying busy honestly was, like, the key because once I started doing all these things, you don’t have time to think about ‘oh woe is me’...you just keep going.”

Ed (UPIC) works 12 to 15 hours per week, is enrolled in 17 credit hours and is involved with sailing. Work provides a needed layer of structure for Ed – “work keeps me structured...I don’t do well with too much free time because there was one semester I didn’t work my entire life – I kind of fell apart. I was like ‘Freedom? What’s this?’.” Ed further explained that since he works he knows that “I have these 4, 3, 2 hour windows that I could get things done. That keeps me like ‘okay, now I work, now I have school studies’.” Ed noted that free time constraints have kept him from being involved in more than one extracurricular activity.

There is not a whole lot of free time...so that’s [sailing] one of the activities, of when I wind it down too, I really enjoy that [sailing], that’s the one I wanted to keep up with...I wanted to keep myself involved at least with one club that wasn’t too much, like, taxing myself with...I would ideally like to be part of the different organizations as well...but it’s been very enjoyable.

Sailing gives him the opportunity to be social and do something during his free time, and fits the best in his free time since it does not require more of a time commitment than he could fit into his schedule.

For these participants, employment in addition to academics and extracurricular activities added an additional layer of structure they felt they needed in order to focus on and be successful in school. These participants felt they would just sleep or procrastinate if they had more free time which could impact their academic life.

Parental Influence. Life before college appeared to have been highly structured for some of these participants. Grace, for instance, recognized that she had a privileged upbringing that was full of structured activities during her free time – “My parents always read to me, they always put me in art camps, I always went to plays, we always went to musicals, just things that are always stimulating and sort of educating.” Grace worked during high school because “I had a lot more time”, referencing the discretionary time available to her that she chose to fill with employment, but it appeared that other than her parents providing her with opportunities to go to camps and experience the arts, her parents did not push her to be heavily involved in extracurricular activities or work. Grace feels she simply works better with structure.

Ed recognized how his upbringing shaped his busyness and need for structure. Ed noted that in his family, success was an individual endeavor but he felt the threat of being kicked out of the family if he did not attend college and pursue a science or technology related degree. For instance, Ed stated “one of the lessons they taught us is that if we want something we got to go get it ourselves...how we do that, it’s up to us.” Ed further explained, “If I didn’t go to school I wouldn’t have any support whatsoever...my family is very traditional – men do business, sciences and men related jobs.” Ed realized that he works better and is more productive and successful with structure. Since Ed is keenly

aware of family pressures to be successful, Ed maintains involvement in structured activities that help him be successful.

Leisure Experience. When faced with unstructured free time, these participants created structure that helped them to experience the stress relief and restoration they associated with leisure. For instance, Eleanor experiences leisure through “planned activities.” When Eleanor anticipates unstructured free time, she plans “activities and, like, hikes, or planned like a beach day with my friends...I plan my stuff very, very truly.” Leisure for Eleanor centers around the social experience, which is one of the reasons she relies heavily on planning. Even during unstructured free time, Eleanor participates in organized student events on campus, such as trivia nights, movie nights, and game nights therefore creating structure. Interestingly, while scheduled into her “free” time, Eleanor never experiences leisure through her service fraternity – “I think the service frat is one of those things I schedule in my head that I have to do...I feel so indifferent about it...I was thinking about it, like, the last meeting I was like ‘I do this, but why do I do this’.” She later explained that she volunteered to be Vice President for the coming year “to get something a little deeper out of it than just something on a resume. Because it seems really empty to me to do that.” She does however experience leisure during her involvement in a comedy club because it is “definitely de-stressing, decompressing and a lot of joy, a lot of laughing.”

Kaitlyn also fills her unstructured free time opportunities with activities that are more structured with friends. Kaitlyn likes to participate in campus activities and goes to “all the football games and sports games, like baseball.” Kaitlyn likes to run “because I

like, just like getting up and getting my day started...I feel a lot more productive when I do that.” For Kaitlyn, being involved in more organized activities during her free time helps her not only experience leisure, but also helps her take advantage of all the school has to offer – “I just want to, like, leave college and, like, feel like I did a lot. Like everything I could have done to get out [of the dorm], like go to the games...get everything out of [the school] that I could.” Kaitlyn is also involved in club sports, a sorority, and student government. For Kaitlyn, she mostly experiences leisure through activities with the sorority and through her club sports involvement.

Much like with the FWS participants, these participants did not look to unstructured free time for their leisure. Leisure occurred during organized, structured, and planned activities, but it is important to note that these participants experienced leisure less at work than those in the FWS group. Leisure occurred more during free discretionary time during which they created structure.

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight valuable information concerning attitudes about free time among employed college students. First, 19 of the participants welcomed unstructured free time and used this time to do activities that were enjoyable and even considered leisure, regardless of whether it meant spending time with other people or being alone. For the remaining 15 participants, unstructured free time had somewhat of a negative connotation and some were even actively avoiding free time. Unstructured free time, for these participants, meant that there was nothing to do and they were unsure of what to do. The desire to remain busy with structured activities appeared to be connected

with having been involved in structured activities before college, be it employment or organized extracurricular activities. These participants were also likely to experience leisure, how they defined it, during their obligatory and non-obligatory structured activities, not necessarily during unstructured free time.

Consistent with research regarding on-campus employment and extracurricular involvement (Astin, 1993; Elling & Elling, 2000), these employed participants were involved in extracurricular activities on campus. There are also many positive outcomes tied to involvement in campus extracurricular activities including physical health, social health, and retention (Artinger et al., 2006; Henchy, 2013), but being involved in too many structured activities during free time might lead to negative outcomes such as anxiety (Melman, Little, & Akin-Little, 2007). Therefore, it is also important to have unstructured free time and the skills and knowledge to know how to spend this unstructured free time.

Researchers reported that those who know what to do with their unstructured free time are more successful throughout life transitions (Kleiber, Hutchinson, & Williams, 2002; Nimrod, 2007). Nimrod (2007) reported that participation in both structured and unstructured free time leisure activities in retirement contribute to life satisfaction. Additionally, having various leisure skills can help individuals cope with loss such as loss of functioning, loss of a job, or loss of a loved one (Kleiber et al., 2002). Existing research in this area is applicable to the current study's findings because the participants are coming closer to a life transition (i.e., graduation). Recall that one participant is dreading her impending graduation because she anticipates having extra time on her

hands. She is already planning on seeking part-time employment because she does not know what to do with unstructured free time. This is troubling for many reasons, one being the perpetuation of busyness and how too much structure over prolonged periods might have a negative impact on the development of leisure skills that help one negotiate life transitions and function during unstructured free time.

Being involved in structured extracurricular activities has positive outcomes, but once these students graduate and move on to life outside of being a student, there might be fewer opportunities to be heavily involved in extracurricular activities. Depending on the geographic location and the resources available, there are limits to the number of structured leisure activities that are available after graduating from college. These structured leisure activities also tend to cost money (e.g., adult sports leagues or cooking classes) which can also limit participation in these activities after college. Unstructured free time might increase for some of these participants upon graduation, which has serious implications moving forward in life. The participants who were unsure of what to do during unstructured free time might fare worse than those who are comfortable with unstructured free time. In addition to offering options for structured extracurricular activities, institutions of higher education should be facilitating the development of leisure skills and interests that can enhance unstructured free time in the present and in the future.

For instance, leisure education programming offers opportunities for exploring interests and developing competencies to participate in leisure activities outside of structured settings (Datillo, 2008). While leisure education programming is structured,

the goal of leisure education is to increase leisure interests and capabilities (i.e., leisure skills) so one might be motivated to explore and participate in various leisure activities throughout life. In conjunction with programming, opportunities to participate in activities that align with leisure education programming outside of the structured environment should be available. For example, leisure skills classes such as disc golf, paddle boarding, mountain biking, and canoeing are offered at the institution where this study occurred. Leisure skills classes offer opportunities for students to develop competencies and explore leisure interests. In addition to the classes, the institution has a disc golf course on campus and gear (e.g., boats, bikes, paddle boards) is available for students to use on the lake and surrounding trails. By providing opportunities to explore leisure interests while developing skills in a structured setting and also having the infrastructure and resources in place for students to participate in leisure activities outside of structured settings, the institution has created opportunities to enhance unstructured free time.

Regarding the FWS participants, all of whom felt the need to work out of financial necessity, employment had been a salient part of most of their lives since they were legally able to work. Employed work not only kept them busy, but they experienced leisure in this area of their life as well and were unable to experience leisure during their unstructured free time. This finding identifies the need for future research regarding how socio-economic status might be tied to the inability to know what to do with one's free and whether this is due to a lack of opportunities to learn interests and skills necessary to know what to do specifically during unstructured free time. Socio-economic status then,

might play a role in differences in the reasons why people equate free time with a lack of productivity, not necessarily an opportunity to explore personal interests or for self-care. Future research should focus on the role socio-economic status plays in perceptions and attitudes towards unstructured free time as well as if, when, and how people with few resources (e.g., money, access, opportunities) are exploring personal interests and/or caring for their personal physical, mental, and social health through free time activities.

In addition to financial necessity, FWS participants appeared to rely on work to keep busy raising questions of whether participants were driven to work due to the boredom they anticipated experiencing during unstructured free time. Workaholics, for instance, experience boredom during free time and are unable to enjoy leisure associated with free time (Brady, Vodanovich, Rotunda, 2008). It is unclear whether workaholics avoid free time by working more or if it is the over work that keeps them from learning what to do during unstructured free time. If the FWS students are filling their time with work, they might be on their way to workaholism. Future research should explore whether socioeconomic status, employment, leisure experience, and workaholism are associated, how they are related, and long-term implications.

Finally, when asked about what they did outside of employment, academic work, and extracurricular activities, participants tended to struggle with an answer, tentatively informing the researcher that they did not participate in anything else. The researcher had to ask probing questions like “Do you read? Do you hang out with friends?” These questions elicited understanding and participants could move forward. The following

excerpt from Molly's (UPIC) transcript (some identifying information has been removed/edited to maintain confidentiality) best demonstrates this issue:

Interviewer: So what else do you do outside of your work as a student, as an employee, as a sorority member, and [the language club]?

Molly: I mean, yesterday I just interviewed for [the board]. I'm really hoping to get that...I want more of, like, an active role in campus...let's see how that pans out. But I also applied to be the [leadership role] of [a club]...

Interviewer: Okay, so then what else have you been doing, say, this year outside of everything you have scheduled?

Molly: I have been helping those professors with the research. So that's taking up a decent amount of time as well. But, yeah, that's really what I do.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you like to read or exercise?

Molly: Those kinds of things? Yes, I love to read.

This is relevant to bring into the discussion because it was as if the participants did not think their unstructured activities were worthy of mentioning or that being involved in many structured extracurricular activities was almost a badge of honor. This finding seems connected to the culture of busyness that is found in our society which is supported by existing research. Leshed & Sengers (2011) suggested that being busy, or at least perceiving and presenting one's life to be overly busy, has become entwined with the identity of our society and can help us feel and present ourselves as accomplished. Levine (2005) noted that in our current culture of busyness "to be busy is to be a worthwhile person" (p. 355). Levine also reported that busyness might be a preference of some

people based on psychological need, a strategy to appear busy when one is not actually busy, or a statement (i.e., badge of honor). Popular news outlets also convey the idea that being busy is used as a status symbol of importance further supporting the idea that regardless of whether American's are overly busy, we feel and perceive our lives to be busy and consciously or unconsciously brag about our busyness (e.g., Pinsker, 2017; Racco, 2017; Bellezza, Paharia, & Keinan, 2016).

Considering those participants who felt a need to be busy and did not know what to do with free time, it is imperative to think about the impact our culture of busyness is having on today's youth and young adults. Considering the adage "lead by example", future generations will continue down the path of being overly busy that is currently being perpetuated. This, in turn, has far reaching implications some of which relate to issues regarding boredom during unstructured free time. The more unstructured free time is diminished, a time during which interests are explored and development occurs (Eccles et al., 2003; Ginsburg, 2011; Larson, 2001; Mahony & Vest, 2012), the more likely it will be that people are aging without important leisure interests, knowledge, and skills to help them cope with life transitions in a healthy way. The relationship between culture of busyness and free time use, behaviors, and attitudes should be further explored to determine how the culture of busyness is impacting children, adolescents, and young adults.

Limitations and Conclusions

This study was exploratory and therefore has limitations. For instance, while this study highlighted experiences of employed college students, these findings are not

generalizable. Deeper and more thorough questioning as well as follow up interviews might have yielded additional information that could have provided a better understanding on the issues of busyness, boredom, and the use of unstructured free time, particularly how life experiences before college influence free time attitudes and choices.

This study shed light on the lives of employed college students and some of the issues, such as busyness, that may impact attitudes toward unstructured free time. Privilege, opportunities, parental involvement, and how one experiences leisure played roles in in how these participants spent and viewed their free time. Structured free time activities have many benefits, but it is also important to know what to do during unstructured free time, especially as individuals move into adulthood and opportunities to be involved in structured free time activities decreases. Research should continue to explore busyness and boredom during free time with the hope of improving perceptions of and experiences during unstructured free time.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Research Reflections

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of employed college students, specifically their work and leisure experiences. While there were no concrete hypotheses, there were assumptions that guided the reasoning behind this research. For instance, research that focuses on college student employment highlights the many benefits of part-time, on-campus employment, but there is information missing from these studies regarding characteristics of the samples as well as jobs.

What was striking to me was the lack of research regarding outcomes based on the different types of jobs that are available to college students on campus. When I began researching the different types of jobs available on campus, I came across stark pay differences among available jobs, specifically those in the UPIC and FWS programs as well as the types of jobs that were available in these programs. Taking pay differences into consideration with the costs of attending college and the number of students who are in financial need, this raised questions as to how socioeconomic status impacts work and leisure experiences. For example, the cost of tuition and fees at the institution where data were collected during the 2017-2018 academic year was \$14,712 for state residents while out of state tuition and fees were \$35,654. Additionally, 8,502 out of 18,395 undergraduate students (46.2%) were found to have financial need in the 2016-2017 academic year (Clemson University, 2016; Mini Factbook, 2016). While not all the findings can be tied to issues of wealth, privilege, and opportunity, they highlighted that

there is something worth investigating in the future concerning different types of jobs, characteristics associated with employees in different jobs, and how these might impact their work and leisure experiences.

Review of Findings

Through the exploration of work and leisure experiences of college students, various themes emerged that were presented in this dissertation (Table 4.1). Additionally, there were themes that were not presented in this dissertation that are discussed in this concluding chapter and should be further explored.

Table 4.1
Summary of Research Questions and Corresponding Themes

Research Question	Theme	Sub Theme
What skills are employed students acquiring through their jobs?	Skills that are universally transferable	Communication, time management, and leadership
	Skills that directly relate to career interests	N/A
Are students employed in jobs that align with their career interests?	1 out of 11 FWS participants were; 6 out of 13 UPIC were; 10 out of 10 General were	N/A
Are students engaging in extracurricular activities that are related to their career interests?	Of those involved in extracurricular activities, 52% were involved in an activity that was connected to career interests	N/A
What career related skills are students developing through participation in extracurricular activities?	Getting specific experience and learning about opportunities in the field	
How do employed students define leisure?	Leisure is stress relief and restoration	N/A
What impact does leisure have in their lives?	Maintain balance, remain on top of things	
Do students experience leisure through their employed work?	1) Leisure occurs through work experiences 2) Leisure occurs during work	N/A

Research Question	Theme	Sub Theme
Experiences and attitudes towards both structured and unstructured free time.	Know what to do during unstructured free time	Experience leisure during unstructured free time
	Unsure of what to do during unstructured free time	FWS Relied on employment to stay busy and feel productive – saw parents work multiple jobs; These participants were also unable to experience leisure during unstructured free time
		Busyness created needed structure – involved in a lot of structured extracurricular activities growing up; These participants needed to plan out their unstructured free time, thus creating structure, in order to experience leisure

The first article (Chapter 2) presents findings associated with career development and job preparation. Since on-campus employment and involvement in extracurricular activities are positively associated, outcomes, such as the development of career-related skills, were examined in both employment and extracurricular activities. Overall, these participants learned various skills such as communication, leadership, and time management all of which are important to future careers, but the FWS program

participants were employed in jobs that required little to no technical skills. They also felt they were not gaining technical skills related to their field of interest whereas those in the general group and UPIC program were gaining and using technical skills. Outside of employed work, some participants were gaining career-related knowledge and skills through extracurricular involvement. Extracurricular involvement can be another source of career development for employed students, but extracurricular clubs and organizations cost money, which can further drive a wedge in career development opportunities between those in financial need and those who can afford to be involved in extracurricular activities.

The second article (Chapter 3) focused on the leisure experiences of employed students in the workplace. Work/life balance is important to Millennials and I was curious if leisure experiences occurred in the workplace and whether this had any relationship with feelings of balance. First, participants were asked about leisure and participants overwhelmingly agreed that leisure provided them stress relief and feelings of restoration. There were various activities mentioned in which they experienced leisure such as socializing with friends, reading a book, walking alone, and doing anything in nature. Next, the participants were asked whether they experienced leisure, as they define it, in the workplace. Participants who experienced leisure in the workplace either did so through their work duties or during breaks when they could socialize while at work. Those who experienced leisure in the workplace also felt they had enough leisure and that they could manage the demands of their competing roles. These findings speak to the

importance of either enjoying and valuing one's work or having a work culture that is enjoyable and how positive work experiences might contribute to work/life balance.

The third and final article (Chapter 4) presented findings on the issue of boredom during free time. It is important to note that the findings presented in this article were not an intentional focus of the study, but it became apparent during the data analysis process that there was an issue with busyness and boredom that needed to be explored within this sample. The sample was divided between participants who knew what to do with their unstructured free time and felt comfortable with unstructured free time and those who felt uncomfortable with the idea of unstructured free time because they were used to being busy. Those who did not know what to do with their unstructured free time had worked since they were legally able, grew up in a busy household, and/or were involved in many extracurricular activities growing up. When examined with the literature regarding issues with busyness and boredom during free time, it became apparent that being busy might negatively impact one's ability to know what to do when faced with periods of unstructured free time, a state that ultimately associated with risky and sedentary behaviors. It also became clear that these findings were divided across socioeconomic statuses as the FWS participants had worked in high school and relied on work to keep them busy as well as for financial need. Socioeconomic status and employment history, then, might be predictors of unstructured free time attitudes and behaviors which is worth exploring in the future.

In addition to the findings presented in these chapters, there were findings concerning family history and decisions to go to college that are worth discussing.

General and UPIC program participants felt that there was never any question about attending college, it was only a matter of what college. They attributed this feeling that college was the next step to having grown up in an environment where going to college was the norm. These participants went to camps, musicals, plays, and traveled growing up. Their parents helped them with homework and projects. Some were not even aware that a college education was not a given for many people until they came to college. These experiences stand in stark contrast to those of the FWS program participants. Parents and guardians were supportive and encouraging of pursuing higher education, but FWS participants did not receive as many opportunities or as much academic assistance in the home. Additionally, these participants never felt that pursuing a college education was an expectation. This finding illuminates the impact that socioeconomic status might have on the decision-making process of whether to attend college, which also needs to be further explored.

A Need for Future Research

While not generalizable, the findings from this research raise questions that are worth exploring in the future. The overarching question being - how are institutions of higher education preparing students for work and life after college? In an environment where the cost of a college education is coming into question, it is necessary to revisit and examine the experiences and value graduates get out of their college education (Sreenivasan, 2017). Academics is one part of the equation, but work experiences also matter.

Since institutions of higher education offer student employment, it seems prudent to examine on-campus jobs and determine the value student employees get from them beyond monetarily and what they should get out of these work experiences. It is also worth exploring whether on-campus employment opportunities are intentionally structured to prepare college students for their future careers and if not, ways that on-campus employment can be structured to better prepare students for their future careers. Off-campus student employment experiences and outcomes needs to be better understood as well. Since life after college is not only about work, investigating how to prepare students for lifestyles reflecting an increase in unstructured free time is also an area worth investigating.

While on campus, institutions of higher education offer opportunities to be involved in both structured and unstructured extracurricular or free time activities, but after graduation, access to these opportunities is more limited. Attention should be given to how students are being prepared for managing their non-work part of life. Being able to function and enjoy the “life” part of work/life balance is essential to experience work/life balance. It is too early to know whether work/life balance is an expectation for future generations, but one might assume this trend will continue; the bottom line is that institutions of higher education should be investigating ways to prepare their students for life after college.

As socioeconomic status played a role in the experiences of these participants, research on college students should consider background experiences and opportunities when investigating college student experiences. The existing research on on-campus

student employment points to positive academic outcomes, but it is unknown if these academic outcomes are consistent across backgrounds, job types, and for students holding multiple jobs. There might be valuable information that could be learned by considering background experiences, ultimately leading to better experiences for all students, regardless of background.

Ultimately, this study raised many questions and also provided insight into the work and leisure experiences of on-campus employed college students across different backgrounds. Regardless of generalizability, results from this study can be used to develop future research. Research stemming from this study will contribute to the understanding of the college student experience and the development of policies that contribute to the work/life balance culture and well-being throughout life.

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- Mini Fact Book 2016. (2016). *Clemson Institutional Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.clemson.edu/oirweb1/FB/factbook/minifactbook.cgi>
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval

Dear Dr. Anderson,

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the protocol referenced above using exempt review procedures and a determination was made on April 12, 2017 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as **Exempt under category B2** in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101. **Your protocol will expire on October 31, 2017.**

Please find attached the approved informed consent document to be used with this protocol.

If an extension is necessary, the PI should submit an Exempt Protocol Extension Request form, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>, at least three weeks before the expiration date. Please refer to our website for more information on the extension procedures, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/guidance/reviewprocess.html>.

All team members are required to review the IRB policies "Responsibilities of Principal Investigators" and "Responsibilities of Research Team Members" available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html>.

No change in this research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or informed consent form(s). Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

Good luck with your study.

Regards,
Belinda G. Witko
IRB Assistant
Clemson University
Office of Research Compliance - IRB
391 College Avenue, Suite 406
Clemson, SC 29631
Phone: 864-656-3918

Appendix B
Recruitment Email

I am currently recruiting research participants to be involved in an upcoming study involving the experiences of employed students on-campus. Research participants need to be an undergraduate Clemson University student, employed on campus, and at least 18 years of age.

Participants will be compensated with a \$20.00 Amazon gift card! Participants will be asked to complete a short survey on-line, participate in an in-person interview, and answer follow up questions following the interview. The survey will take no more than 5 minutes, the interview will last between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, and the follow up questions should take no more than 1 hour of your time for a total of 2 hours and 35 minutes.

Please contact Katherine Ann Jordan (kjorda5@clemson.edu; 706.614.0731) if you are eligible and interested in this study. There are a limited number of slots available and interviews will be scheduled on a first-come first-serve basis.

*This study is the dissertation research of Katherine Ann Jordan under the direction of Dr. Denise Anderson (dander2@clemson.edu; 864.656.5679)

Appendix C

Pre-Interview Survey

A Study of the Experiences of Employed College Students

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Denise Anderson and Katherine Ann Jordan are inviting you to take part in a research study. Denise Anderson is an Associate Dean of undergraduate students at Clemson University. Katherine Ann Jordan is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Denise Anderson. The purpose of this research is to learn about the different types of work experiences of students employed on-campus at Clemson and how employed work effects academic work and leisure experiences. Your part in the study will be to complete a survey on-line, participate in an in-person interview, and confirm the interpretation of your interview.

It will take you a total of about 2 hours and 35 minutes to be in this study (5 minutes for the survey, 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes for the in-person interview, and 1 hour to confirm the interpretation of your interview).

Risks and Discomforts

There are certain risks or discomforts that you might expect if you take part in this research. They include increased stress due to the nature of the questions as well as being uncomfortable sharing personal information. You may stop participating at any time during the study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand the effects of on-campus student employment which could ultimately lead to more meaningful on-campus employment opportunities for undergraduate students.

Incentives

Participants will be given a \$20.00 Amazon gift card upon the completion of the in-person interview. If you withdraw from the study before the interview is completed, you will not be eligible for the \$20.00 Amazon gift card.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we

collected about you in particular. Participants will provide pseudonyms to be used for identifying purposes. All other identifiable information will be kept separate from the data and will be located in separate password protected files on a password protected computer.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Denise Anderson at Clemson University at dander2@clemson.edu (864-656-5679). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you at our in-person interview.

Selecting the "agree" button indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

Agree

Disagree

Condition: Disagree Is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey.

1. Please enter your username (ex: kjorda5). This information will only be used to contact you as well as pair your pseudonym with your data during analysis.

2. Please create a pseudonym for yourself (do not use your given name or a nickname). Your pseudonym will be used when discussing the research findings in lieu of your given name. _____

3. How old are you? _____

4. How do you describe your gender identity? Mark all that apply

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Cisgender
- Genderqueer
- Agender
- A gender not listed _____
- Prefer not to answer

5. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

Condition: Graduate Student Is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey.

6. How many credit hours are you enrolled in? _____

7. What is your major? _____

8. The following questions are meant to help me learn a little bit about you before our interview. Please select the answer that best describes you: I am employed...

- On Campus
- Off Campus
- Both on and off campus
- Currently unemployed

9. I am employed through...

- UPIC
- Federal Work Study
- General Part-time
- Other _____

10. What is your job title? _____

11. Are you involved in any Greek organizations?

- Yes
- No

12. Are you involved in any student organizations other than Greek Organizations?

- Yes
- No

Condition: No Is Selected. Skip To: Are you involved in any club or intra....

13. Please list the student organizations with which you are involved.

14. Are you involved in any club or intramural sports?

- Yes
- No

Condition: No Is Selected. Skip To: The following questions concern your

15. Please list the club or intramural sports with which you are involved.

The following questions concern your parent(s)/guardian(s). Please answer as best as you can.

16. What is the highest level of education that your mother completed?

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from High School
- Attended college but did not complete a degree
- Completed an Associates degree
- Completed a Bachelors degree
- Completed a Masters degree
- Completed a Doctoral or Professional degree (such as Medical or Law degree)

17. While you were in the home, was your mother employed:

- Part-time
- Full-time
- Unemployed but looking for a job
- Unemployed and not looking for a job
- I don't know
- My mother was not in the home

18. What is the highest level of education that your father completed?

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from high school
- Attended college but did not complete a degree
- Completed an Associates degree
- Completed a Bachelors degree
- Completed a Masters degree
- Completed a Doctoral or Professional degree (such as Medical or Law degree)

19. While you were in the home, was your father employed:

- Part-time
- Full-time
- Unemployed but looking for a job
- Unemployed but not looking for a job
- I don't know
- My father was not in the home

Thank you for completing the survey. I will reach out to you soon to schedule a time for our interview if it has not already been scheduled. I look forward to meeting with you!

Appendix D

Interview Consent and Guide

A Study of the Experiences of Employed College Students

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Denise Anderson and Katherine Ann Jordan are inviting you to take part in a research study. Denise Anderson is an Associate Dean of undergraduate students at Clemson University. Katherine Ann Jordan is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Denise Anderson. The purpose of this research is to learn about the different types of work experiences of students employed on-campus at Clemson and how employed work effects academic work and leisure experiences.

Your part in the study will be to complete a survey on-line, participate in an in-person interview, and confirm the interpretation of your interview.

It will take you a total of about 2 hours and 35 minutes to be in this study (5 minutes for the survey, 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes for the in-person interview, and 1 hour to confirm the interpretation of your interview).

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We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular. Participants will provide pseudonyms to be used for identifying purposes. All other identifiable information will be kept separate from the data and will be located in separate password protected files on a password protected computer.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Denise Anderson at Clemson University at dander2@clemson.edu (864-656-5679).

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

Consent

I have read this form and have been allowed to ask any questions I might have. I agree to take part in this interview.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Audio Recording Consent

I agree to allow this interview to be audio recorded.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Date:

Location:

Duration:

Interviewee:

Thank you for meeting with me today. As I mentioned in the e-mail, I would like to ask you questions about your experience here at Clemson University as an employed student. Since I know your time is valuable, you will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card for your contribution to my dissertation research. I would also like to record this interview so I will be able to go back and listen to what we speak about at a later time. Is it okay if I go ahead and turn the recording device on? I also want to reassure you that your responses are confidential and I will only use the pseudonym you specified in the survey.

First, I would like you to tell me a little bit about your job at Clemson. You mentioned in the survey that you are employed at _____.

1. What does a typical work day look like?
 - a. Do you enjoy the work that you do?
 - i. Why do you think that is?
 - b. Do you value the work that you do?
 - i. Why do you think that is?
 - c. Are you able to interact with other people? Who?
 - i. How do you feel about that?
2. Why are you employed?

- a. If you have to, how does that make you feel? Or Do you think that changes your work experience?
3. Has your employment influenced your career interests?
- a. How so?
4. Have your career interests influenced where you work or the job you hold?
- a. How so?

Now I would like you to think about your work as a student. That means time in class as well as any time spent working on assignments and prepping for class. You mentioned in the survey that you are taking _____ credit hours and you are majoring in _____.

5. How do you like your major?
- a. Is it challenging to you?
 - b. Why did you choose your major?
6. What about your course load? Do you enjoy your current classes?
- a. What does “enjoyment” mean to you?
 - b. Are you able to connect with your peers in your classes?
 - i. Are you friends with people in your major?
 - ii. Are you friends with people outside of your major?
7. Do you feel like you have enough time to do the school work you need to do?
- a. Why?
8. I noticed that your parents [insert information from survey about parental education and employment]. Do you think your parental involvement before college influenced how you think about academics and employed work? How so?

Now I would like you to think about your life outside of employed work and student work. You mentioned you were [insert response from survey: involved with student or Greek organizations OR not involved with student or Greek organizations].

9. What is your role in ____ organization?
 - a. Do you enjoy your involvement?
 - i. Why do you think that it OR how so?
 - b. Do you value your involvement?
 - i. Why do you think that it OR how so?
10. What else do you do outside of your work as a student and as an employee?
 - a. Do you enjoy that? Do you value that?
11. Do you feel like you have the time you would like to dedicate to doing what you like to do?

Finally, I would like to ask you about leisure and what leisure means to you.

12. What do you think of when I say “leisure”?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
 - b. What are some of the things you get out of leisure?
 - i. How does leisure make you feel?
 - ii. Is leisure important to you?
13. Based on your understanding of leisure, do you experience leisure on a daily basis?
 - a. In what ways?
 - b. Do you think you have enough leisure?

- i. If you do, how do you think this influences you?
 - ii. If you don't, how do you think this influences you?
- c. You mentioned you get [insert their initial response to leisure] out of leisure. Have you ever experienced this in your employed work?
 - i. Would you consider that to be leisure?
 - ii. Have you ever experienced [insert their initial response to leisure] in your academic work?
 - 1. Would you consider that to be leisure?
 - iii. Have you ever experience [insert their initial response to leisure] in your involvement in student organizations?
 - 1. Would you consider that to be leisure?

Thank you for meeting with me today and I truly appreciate you taking the time out of your day to speak with me.