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SIGNIFICANCE OF LEISURE IN THE LIVES OF KOREAN COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1998

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ABSTRACT

Korean students are coming in increasing numbers each year to study at American universities. For these students, leisure is an important part of their living in a number of different ways. This study explored the significance of leisure in the lives of Korean college students studying in the United States using qualitative research. Within the framework of phenomenology and leisure sociology this study investigated the meaning of leisure, what constitutes the leisure experience, and the influence of culture.

Thirteen Korean college students studying in the United States served as informants. Data was collected using four methods: 1) interviewing; 2) open-ended questionnaire; 3) self-reflection of leisure experience; and 4) self-introduction description. In analyzing these data, significant words and sentences were identified and coded by category.
As research based in phenomenology, the central focus became the informants' own subjective experiences of leisure. Three areas of research emerged. The first research area dealt with the meaning of leisure as subjective experience. This area was separated into four categories: 1) vital energy of a living process; 2) composure; 3) enjoyment; and 4) freedom. The second research area explored the elements of the leisure experience. This was classified into four categories: 1) personal development; 2) social bonding; 3) therapeutic; and 4) stimulation. The third research area considered how leisure and culture are interrelated. This area had three further categories: 1) culture is shared in leisure; 2) culture is learned through leisure activity; and 3) leisure is oriented to sub-culture. The results of this study suggested that Korean college students' leisure activities are associated with their subjective experiences of leisure within both Korean and American cultures.

Suggestions for future research were discussed in terms of methodological and conceptual models of understanding leisure as a complex set of meanings specific to the way in which Korean college students experience leisure within different cultural contexts.
This study is dedicated to my dear grandmother, who is always praying for her grandson, to my father, who encourages me as a scholar, to my mother who worships the ground her son walks on, and to my family--Myung-Ryun, my beautiful wife, and David, my son.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In modern society, the value of leisure has increased. As a result, over the last decade, many scholars of sport and leisure have focused their attention on the fundamental meaning of leisure and its significance (Harper, 1981, 1986; Dawson, 1984; Mannell, 1984; Gunter, 1987; Kelly, 1987, 1991; Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1990; Hamilton-Smith, 1992). Depending on the population, time, place, or culture studied, studies have produced different results. The concept of leisure, as studied, is both complex and dynamic dependant on completely subjective perceptions that change with the social, cultural, and historical context within which "leisure" is experienced by an individual. The individual's subjective experience of leisure determines the meaning and the degree to which leisure has importance in that individual's life. In short, "subjective experience"
is the lived experience. It is “the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful” (Van Manen, 1990, p.183). One’s experiences of their world as being meaningful relates to the individual’s immediate and reflective consciousness of their life. For example, when learning to swim first in a beginner’s swimming class, one feels terrible, as through all of the other swimmers are looking at him. Because one is conscious of the others the movements one makes to swim are awkward. However, once one is absorbed in swimming, one is able to ignore the fact that there are other swimmers. Immediate and reflective consciousness of an experience is the essence of subjective experience as lived experience.

Leisure provides one with time and space for lived experience outside of work. Here, time and space refers to lived time and space, as subjectively perceived by the individual. For example, one feels a psychological peace and freedom from the work routine through swimming in a swimming pool as lived space. Even when not swimming, because one has this experience of the lived space of the swimming pool, one can experience peace and freedom by thinking of swimming. Similarly, lived time is experienced differently than other time. For example, one may realize two hours have passed when it only felt like thirty minutes.
Experiential time, the kind of time that one experiences, differs from objective clock time.

The support of lived time and space is a significant aspect of modern leisure for people. Therefore, discussing modern leisure without considering the concept of lived experience would be incomplete. As well, to focus only on leisure in terms of subjective experience ignores other social and cultural factors. It is therefore important to interpret the experience of leisure as it is influenced by social and cultural contexts.

Modern leisure does not exist in society as an independent entity, but exists as a product of social and cultural interaction. Kelly (1989) states:

Leisure is existential as action that produces meaning. Leisure is deciding and doing as well as feeling. The action not only has meaning, but produces meaning... At the same time, leisure is social in both its context and orientations. Leisure is learned behavior, thoroughly ethnic in its adoption of the symbols and constructions of a culture. (pp. 91-92)

When a leisure is experienced balancing the individual's experience and social value, a leisure activity becomes meaningful in one's life. To illustrate what is meant as social value, if one plays soccer with friends in front of the house at 3:00 A.M. making a lot of noise, that
would be socially unacceptable although it may be achieving self-fulfillment through leisure. Leisure experience can only be meaningful when it conforms to social expectations. We therefore need to expand our consideration of leisure activity to include not only the existential, and self-perception, but also how leisure fits into a social context.

For this study of leisure activities of Korean students, we must consider both existential and social aspects. Were we to assume that the leisure experience of Korean students studying in the United States is the same as their experiences in Korea, we would not understand their U.S. experience within the context of an American socio-cultural system.

What Korean students study in a foreign country is called "Yoo Hak." It means not only a difficult self-discipline, but also a way of obtaining future success and privilege. There are two things to consider here. First, Korean culture has been influenced greatly by American culture since Korea's emancipation from 36 years of Japanese domination. As a result, American cultural, social, and political systems became the standard in Korea. Koreans who were studying in America were considered to be the leading persons who practiced modern approaches to knowledge. Second, after the 3rd Republic was formed, the former
president of Korea (Jung Hee Park) led the way to economic development known as 'the miracle of the Han River.' This was supported by Koreans who studied modern technologies in the United States and in Europe. However, this movement has diminished. Many Koreans now have the opportunity to study in other countries. Since the 1980s, there is a surplus of Koreans holding advanced degrees from American colleges. The goal of successful study in a foreign country, presently Yoo Hak, for many Korean college students, is viewed as a challenge to achieve self-realization and to experience different cultures rather than the seeking guarantees of social or individual success.

If Korean college students have created their identity within this Korean cultural system for 20 or more years, then leisure activities they experience in the United States should not be considered only as self-fulfillment. Through new sports such as golf, and skydiving, the Korean students in the United States also experience personal development, social bonding, and acculturation.

In order to understand more clearly the leisure experience of Korean students in a different culture, we must pay attention to interactions among existential, social, and cultural dimensions as well. This is the intent of this study.
Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain and explore the meaning of leisure, the structures of leisure experience, and the interactions between leisure and culture, based on the opinions and leisure experiences of Korean college students living and studying in the United States. To accomplish this, this study evaluates the way that Korean college students' leisure activities are associated with their subjective experiences of leisure in both Korean and American cultures. The study examines the ways that Korean students in the United States find meaning in their lives through leisure. This study supports the fact that "leisure has become the only setting for the experience of the self, for the exploration of one's own skills and capacities, and for the development of creative relations with other people" (Firth, 1983, p.262).

Significance of the study

This study is intended to identity and to elaborate the existential meaning of leisure in the lives of Korean college students as interpreted in the context of American
culture. This research attempts to identify the role that leisure plays as an existential phenomenon in helping Korean students solve problems that arise from culture shock when they first arrive to study in the United States.

Leisure plays a significant role in helping Korean students overcome culture shock. Leisure activities such as playing basketball with American friends during one's free time or bowling allows Korean students to acquire certain new culture patterns in their new environment. This experience is very similar to the time Korean men spent in military service.

To understand the existential experience of leisure and the students' endeavors to adjust to a different culture, requires thoughtful interpretation. Although this is an important area for research, there are no scholars that have explored the significance of leisure in the lives of Korean college students in the United States. Most American leisure research has focused on ethnicity or racialism (Burnett, 1989; Sugden, 1989; Wong, 1994; Yencken & Cushman, 1987; Yu & Berryman, 1996). There has been no research geared toward understandings the dimensions of leisure among Korean students. Focusing on leisure in the lives of Korean students in the U.S. may provide useful insights to inform both Korean and American leisure scholarship.
Research questions

To gain insight into the issues identified above, this study will glean data from the responses to questions such as:

1. What meaning may be derived from leisure as a subjective experience?
2. What are the elements of the leisure experience?
3. What is the relationship between leisure and culture in the life world of the individual?

Nature of the study

This study applies qualitative inquiry methods to identify the significance of leisure in a cultural context—namely, the leisure of Koreans in the United States. The following guideline statements are made in this study:

1. Reality is socially and culturally constructed.
2. There is a distinction between the "etic" (outsider's point of view) and "emic" (insider's point of view).
3. This study is both interpretive and descriptive rather than predictive and abstractive.
4. This study seeks empathetic understanding rather than objective portrayal.

Following these guidelines, as a human scientist I am trying to nurture an attentive practice of thoughtfulness in order to understand a variety of human interactions. As described by Glennsne and Peshkin (1992):

The openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right. Qualitative researchers avoid simplifying social phenomena and instead explore the range of behavior and expand their understanding of the resulting interactions. Through the research process, they assume that social interaction is complex and that they will uncover some of that complexity. (p.7)

Assumptions

This study begins with the following assumptions in approaching emerging themes:

1. Leisure has primarily an open-ended definition depending on cultural, social, and historical contexts.
2. Leisure experience is understood totally as a variety of subjective experiences narrated by thick description; it cannot be explained away casually.
3. The whole phenomenon of leisure must be understood through a holistic perspective.

**Theoretical frameworks**

Phenomenology and leisure sociology provide the theoretical framework for conceptualizing, analyzing, and interpreting data. Concepts are developed as a result of interpreting the emerging phenomena in this study. Through a contextual evaluation of the data, this study generates implications and theoretical considerations.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is derived from the Greek word *phenomenon*, that means "to show itself." It attempts to reveal the essential meaning of human endeavors by a return "to the things themselves" (Spiegelberg, 1960). Husserl (1970), who is considered to be the father of phenomenology, emphasizes a return to reflective intuition to describe experience as it is lived. In Husserlian tradition, phenomenology is focused on epistemological inquiry, raising the question, "how do we know?" The salient point of the epistemological attitude is achieved by clarifying the essential structure of the lived experience. What is called
"lived experience," which is the main focus of the many phenomenological groups such as Husserlian, Gadamerian, Heideggerian, and Ricoeurian, is considered a fundamental point to capture the essence of consciousness in itself, without preconceptions or prejudices. In this sense, phenomenology is significant in promoting human understanding by clarifying and describing the lived experience of individuals and their awareness of the life world around them.

The phenomenological approach in sport studies has contributed to an understanding of being in the life world as opposed to the scientific reduction of human movement. As Kleinman (1966) insists,

This method gives us new insight and true understanding of the human being as he shapes his world and acts and moves in it. Physical education, because of its intimate involvement with the body, occupies a privileged and distinctive position to utilize this method to gain greater understanding of the learning process. (p.13)

When we explore the sport experience, phenomenology supports the significance of sport as an ongoing process of lived moment and as necessarily experiential (Inoue, 1984). Phenomenology also provides an existential description of
the complexity of human experience.

Descriptive phenomenology in physical education would be the primary excavating tool to probe all those frustrating mysteries haunting physical education. At the moment, physical education crosses over many other disciplines. Its roots currently seem to be in all the various arts (liberal and fine) and sciences (natural and human). There is little question that physical education is included in Husserl’s recommended massive art and science archeological dig. Perhaps even more than other disciplines, physical education is in need of sustained, rigorous, methodological, and communal root exploration. (Harper, Miller, Park & Davis, 1977, p.267)

The phenomenological perspective in leisure theory usually deals with subjective freedom, self-concept, attributes, and nature of leisure experience. From the phenomenological standpoint, freedom to choose leisure is understood as both spontaneous and voluntary, meaning that is not constrained by external circumstances.

Self-concept is also interpreted as intentional, direct, and immediate leisure experiences. The nature of leisure experience shows the phenomenon of lived experience by re-awakening the basic experience of the world. In this sense, Lee (1990) insists:

Understanding leisure experience is not a simple task. It takes meticulous consideration to understand the
multifaceted and dynamic nature of leisure experience. While positivistically oriented studies on leisure experience are informative and valuable, it has been strongly suggested that the application of phenomenologist paradigm is an alternative, ideal way to understand leisure experience. In addition to the paradigmatic issue, measuring leisure experience during, or immediately after, leisure participation has been suggested as a vital step to understanding leisure experience. (pp. 28-29)

Leisure sociology

Some leisure theories are utilized to form the theoretical conclusions in this discourse on leisure. In fact, "much of the theory associated with the content of the field has been borrowed from other disciplines" (Henderson, 1991, p.46). This tendency means that an applicable leisure theory may be changed depending on social, existential, and cultural variables such as work, family background, income, life goal, culture, and self-concept. In this study, a sociological framework is used to understand some social variables in leisure relations such as work (or study), family relations, social relations, communication, self-concept, and time budget. While phenomenology is helpful in interpret the existential aspect of leisure experience, leisure sociology allows us to understand the relationship between experience and social variables such as culture.
In order to understand social variables and leisure, this study introduces the concept of "social formalism." Social formalism is derived from the work of a range of leisure scholars such as Dumazedier, Burch, Kaplan, Kelly, Neulinger, Roberts, and Parker. There is actually no evidence that these scholars claim to be members of a specific school of leisure theory. However, their works have shared the same methods and themes in the tradition of leisure sociology.

Social formalism emphasizes the importance of quantifiable propositions and methodologies. Such quantifiable works have contributed to leisure theory in two ways. First, social formalism illustrates the way that the relationship between our personal consumption and leisure changes throughout the life cycle. Second, social formalism also supports the quantified relationship between the distribution of leisure and associated variables such as income, property, occupation, sex, education, religion, cultural diversity, and race (Kaplan, 1975; Rojek, 1985).

Within the social formalist tradition, there have been many attempts to determine the nature of the leisure

1 Social formalism has greatly influenced Korean sport and leisure fields. After the 1990s, most sport scholars have combined methodological considerations between quantitative and qualitative approaches, mostly phenomenology and ethnography. However, Korean leisure sociology is still dominated by social formalists.
experience. Dumazedier (1974) views the nature of leisure as one of relaxation, entertainment, and personal development. Burch (1971) has associated it with tension release and opportunity to access life and society. Kaplan (1975) identified the main structure of leisure experience as self-determination, free time, and a feeling of pleasure. Neulinger (1981a) suggested the concept, "perceived freedom," to explain leisure experience. Kelly (1983) conceived of leisure experience as a social experience brought about when the institutional constraints and obligations are lessened. Parker's (1981) work is considered the most suitable for analysis for leisure experience. He explained four concepts related to leisure experience: 1) choice; 2) flexibility; 3) spontaneity; and 4) self-determination. These works allow us to understand leisure experience and its relationship to social variables (Rojeck, 1985).

Key concepts and definition of terms

The concepts used in this study have specific meanings to help us understand the research directions. To interpret my perspective, the following definitions are offered:
**Leisure:** In this study, the term "leisure" refers to various human endeavors which involve freedom, voluntary choice, enjoyment, restoring vital energies, and bringing about a sense of composure.

**Culture:** The term "culture" is addressed in two ways: a) a general process of intellectual, mental, and aesthetic development; and b) practical human actions involving movement such as sport, drama, opera and pop music, and their meaning.

**Leisure experience:** "Leisure experience" indicates a subjective state which includes freedom of choice, perceived enjoyment and intensity, and duration and intrinsic motivation. It combines the personal, somatic, social, cultural, and environmental factors.

**Life world:** "Life world" is a phenomenological term concerned with the world of lived experience. According to Berger et al. (1973), the term "life world" refers to an "overall structure of meaning within which... particular patterns and symbols are located and from which they derive their collectively shared significance" (p.62). The life world structures the business of living. "Central to the concept is the idea that our social life is composed of typifications. A typification refers to what persons will ordinarily expect when they inhabit a given social setting."
For example, we know what to expect when a doctor examines us for a general checkup, or when a policeman questions us after we have been stopped for speeding. Similarly, we know what typically happens in leisure events such as going to the cinema or attending a concert. Typifications provide, as it were, 'ongoing maintenance' in the life world" (Rojek, 1995, p.105).

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: The chapter 2 will introduce the meaning of leisure, research about leisure experience, and leisure in Korean culture. The chapter 3 will focus on methodology, research strategy, data analysis, and validity. In the chapter 4, there will be four discussions: 1) descriptive information for leisure actors; 2) the meaning of leisure; 3) the nature of leisure experience; and 4) the link between leisure and culture. In the final chapter, a summary of the research process, discussion of findings, suggestions for future research, and the limitations of this study will be discussed.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Meaning of leisure

It is difficult to determine exactly what leisure is when we consider the different analyses and the large number of critical themes that have been generated in a variety of disciplines. Some scholars view leisure as an individual state of mind reflected in attitudes toward activity. If one were to focus on the anthropological perspective, one would say that leisure is an expressive activity embodied in the interaction of culture and social systems. Leisure can even be defined as an economic product that we all exchange in the global market. From these examples, it is clear that there is more than one definition of leisure. In this dissertation, however, leisure will be identified by three main streams of analysis: 1) leisure as time (Brightbill,
1960; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Kraus, 1984); 2) leisure as activity (Dumazedier, 1974; Kaplan, 1975); and 3) leisure as a state of existence or mind (de Grazia, 1962; Kelly, 1987).

The first mode, leisure as time, commonly defines leisure as leftover time apart from that time in which one is obligated to work. In this mode, the perspective of leisure is quantified as hours and minutes. This quantifiable definition of leisure as free time has contributed to comparative research on the leisure of different population groups and different cultures. Its main drawback is that it has tended to ignore the qualitative aspects of leisure (Kelly, 1982). In order to account for this subtlety, the term "discretionary time" rather than "leftover time" is preferred to explain people's perceptions of "free time" (Bammell and Bammell, 1992). However, this amendment has at least two problems: as Kelly and Godbey (1992) argue,

The first is that all the categorization by form, time, and place is negated. Now it is necessary to know something about the decision process. The second stems from the first. If it is necessary to know how the choice was made and to assess the freedom from constraint or obligation, then leisure is no longer a quantity of time, but its quality. (p.17)

The model of leisure as time results in two lines of
research: 1) leisure time measured and distinguished from obligated times in life; 2) ‘time budget’ or the amount of time spent on various activities over a span of time (Strokowski, 1994). In the discussion of women’s leisure, leisure as free time could not offer a fully useful conceptualization of the way women spend their leisure time (Deem, 1986; Wearing and Wearing, 1988). This is because most women think their leisure time is available to others; therefore, it is easy to interrupt that time with their roles as that of mother or wife. In the case of women, therefore, a less clean distinction is made between leisure and work time.

The second mode for explaining leisure focuses on leisure as activity. This involves one’s participation during one’s free time in a recreational activity. It relates to self-determined activity chosen primarily for one’s enjoyment (Kelly, 1982). Leisure activities can be counted, quantified, and compared, but they differ depending on the population groups that participate in a particular leisure activity. Russell (1996) points out problematic questions about defining leisure as an activity: “Is making a ceramic pot a recreational activity for everyone all the time? Is tennis leisure when it is played on Saturday at the local park and something else when played in a required
physical education class or by a touring pro? When is mowing the lawn or washing the dishes a leisure activity?" (p.34).

Although leisure as activity means nonwork, it does not indicate a purposeless activity (Dumazedier, 1974; Kelly, 1982). Leisure activity is involved in relaxation and recreation from the obligation of work, family, and society. It comes from two crucial dimensions of leisure activity: self-determination and meaning within the experience (Kelly & Godbey, 1992). The model of leisure as activity does not focus on the activity itself but implies that leisure is existential in its self-determination and in its meaning as freely chosen activity.

The third mode of explaining leisure focuses on leisure as a state of existence or a state of mind. Rather than defining leisure as free time or as a recreational activity, this model is subjective and psychological. From this perspective, leisure is a feeling or an attitude of freedom, reflecting personal realities. Pieper (1952) argues: "Leisure, it must be clearly understood, is a mental and spiritual attitude--it is not simply the result of external factors, it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a week-end or a vacation. It is, in the first place, an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul, and as
such, utterly contrary to the ideal of "worker" in each and every one of the three aspects under which it was analyzed: work as activity, as toil, as a social function” (p.40).

In his research, Harper (1981) has contradicted the model of leisure as a state of mind. He insists that leisure is not a mental condition, but a ‘lived experience.’ This argument leads to Russell’s (1996) observation of leisure as an entire way of being—an opportunity for building purpose into one’s life—capable of providing opportunities for self-expression, self-achievement, and self-actualization.

According to Kelly (1991), leisure is both social and existential. Through the context of institutions and relationships, our leisure styles are socially learned. However, we do choose something of the shape and content of our leisure styles by which we make our way existentially. The two dimensions of leisure, the social and existential, are considered to be the two polarities in the dynamics of leisure styles. These styles reflect the dynamic interplay between the structures of society and the existential self-creation of the individual. As an existential element, leisure helps us explore the potential of tomorrow. In the process of helping us become what we might be, leisure enacts our roles for what we may be in the future. As Kelly
(1991) elaborates, "if leisure is the most free of life's space, the least determined by necessity and structure, then we may use our leisure opportunities, activities, and relationships to explore the potential of tomorrow" (p. 209).

Research about leisure experience

Phenomenological approach

The phenomenological approach helps us understand how human experience of leisure is meaningful and how humans have been involved in leisure subjectively. It goes directly to the consciousness as it is, following introspective, immediate, and unanalyzable states of a subject's conscious leisure experience. By emphasizing the return of an existential position to human action, phenomenology has suggested that leisure experience is not considered and analyzed as an object, but thoughtfully understood as a subjective medium of human meaning. Harper (1981) argues:

The phenomenologist is not substituting mere introspection for the pursuit of verifiable truths about the experience of leisure. It is understandable that many might think that an appeal to the region of consciousness is to fall prey to subjectivism. ...the
objectivity of the object under study is described as it is disclosed in the conscious acts of the subject. (p. 118)

Subjective freedom, self, attributes, and nature of leisure experience have been discussed in leisure and sport contexts as issues of phenomenological discourse. Among them, freedom through leisure experience is a salient point distinguishing between the leisure and nonleisure experience. Researchers have discussed how freedom depends on choosing what one wants (Bregha, 1980) and how one carries out one’s activities without constraint (Gunter & Gunter, 1980; Neulinger, 1981). Freedom to choose leisure is also understood as a spontaneous and voluntary human act that is not constrained by external circumstances.

The leisure experience from the phenomenological perspective is interpreted as a medium for self-development and self-expression. Since leisure is not coerced and does not involve external rewards, it is treated as a meaningful human endeavor. The existential situation that modern society has imposed on people, such as changes in technology, morality, and social roles, has increased the need to reflect and to express oneself through leisure experience.

Related to existential need, the phenomenological
approach has dealt with the nature of leisure experience. Lee, Dattilo, and Howard (1994) state that "leisure experience is very complex and transitory. The interpretation of feelings fluctuates at different times. The experience is not only pleasurable in nature, but also stressful and often associated with tension" (p. 205). This has been revealed by the nature, basic feeling, emotion, and sense of human behavior such as fun, enjoyment, relaxation, and freedom as described in interviews for this research.

Phenomenological research is applicable in health-related realms where the leisure experience can lead to self-growth and self-cultivation. For example, through a laboratory experiment, Tarrant, Manfredo, and Driver (1994) have documented the effects of leisure experiences through the use of recollections of past leisure experiences. They have suggested that the recollection of leisure experience improved cardiovascular function and increased one’s positive mood. This in turn has been linked to improved self-esteem, lowered depression, enhanced immune responsiveness, and reduced suicide rates. This implies that even conversations with a therapist on the recollection of either active or passive outdoor recreation experience can produce specific mental and physical health benefits.
Leisure sociology

In this study, leisure sociology provides a framework for understanding more carefully social concepts related to the leisure experience. Social concepts related to subjective experience are borrowed from the works on social formalism, specifically in research on sex, education, and family relations among others. The background for using descriptive information from informants will be discussed in chapter 4 is based mostly on Kelly's work.

A combination of social factors led sociologists to pay closer attention to matters of leisure following the Second World War. Among those factors, the rise of the so-called "affluent societies" in the West attracted the attention of sociologists. The masses experienced a growth in disposable income and free time, which had no comparison with the time period before industrialization. In the post-war years, a huge growth in the scale and range of leisure goods and services had created youth sub-cultures, and by the fifth decade of the century, the production and merchandising of leisure commodities emerged as a central factor in the capitalist economic system.

During the post-war years, academic sociology generally focused on the process of industrialization. Sociologists argued that the growth of leisure and the phenomenon of
equality among the social strata created the leisure society in the West. For this reason, many social and cultural researchers have adopted the period of industrialization as the central time-unit in the discourse of modern leisure (Dumazedier, 1967; Roberts, 1981; Rojek, 1985; Kraus, 1994).

Among the many areas of sociological researchers, "social formalists" have argued that leisure must be treated on the basis of society as a whole (Dumazedier, 1974). This attitude makes two contributions toward leisure research: 1) the relationship between personal consumption and leisure changes; and 2) scales for social variables such as sex, education, race, and religion are quantified (Kaplan, 1975).

Based on his research, Parker (1983) insisted that making a conceptual distinction between the individual and society was a basic step in the work of social formalists who measure the relationship between leisure and social variables. Parker believed that while the function of leisure for society is to maintain the social system and to achieve collective aims, the function of leisure for the individual is to provide relaxation, entertainment, and personal development.

The main components of leisure experience, according to social formalists, are choice, flexibility, spontaneity, and self-determination (Parker, 1981). Choice means a condition
of freely chosen activity. Flexibility refers to change in mental attitude between leisure and work. Spontaneity means leisure involves the opportunity for spontaneous action. Self-determination implies that "leisure is characterized by a search for a state of satisfaction, taken as an end in itself" (Dumazedier, 1974, p.75).

**Leisure in Korean culture**

An outline of Korean culture is necessary for developing this study since the study attempts to explore the leisure experience of Korean college students studying in the United States who have been influenced by both Korean and American cultures. In Korean culture, one may experience the nature of leisure differently than in the context of American culture. On this point, Edginton, Lee, and Won (1989) argue:

Korean leisure must be studied in the context of broader social and cultural values, both traditional and contemporary. The significant cultural values affecting Korean society are the Confucian precepts, which suggest that harmony, balance and moderation are important values toward which to strive. In addition, respect and devotion to parents is a strong cultural element. Leisure in Korean society continues to be directed toward preserving and promoting these values.
One central element of the leisure experience in the United States is the notion of perceived freedom for the individual (Neulinger, 1981). However, in the Korean culture, the basic unit is the family, rather than the individual. Therefore, leisure is often bound by the dictates of the family, rather than the individual. (p. 56)

The period of the Yi dynasty in the past five hundred years was dominated by the Confucian precepts, which emphasized mental courtesy. The ruling class called "Yangban" pursued its leisure in cultivating mental courtesy. While physical labor was totally left to the lower classes, Yangban despised labor, and respected mental courtesy and academic discipline, considered to be "Sunbi Jungshin" (traditional Korean gentlemanship). At a different level than physical labor, Yangban practiced their bodies in some ways like meditation, gymnastics, hunting, etc. The reason why the ruling class despised physical labor had to do with their belief that the development of labor activates, the expenditure of money, and the resulting social mood is harmful for people, as it may destroy morality (Choi, 1997). By the late nineteenth century, after the inflow of Western and Japanese cultures into Korea, these traditional Confucian concepts slowly faded.

Throughout the Japanese occupation that lasted 36 years
and the Korean war that followed, Korean culture was based on a mixture of Confucianism and other foreign cultures. This process of cultural transformation has had a direct influence on Korean leisure. Besides these cultural changes, urbanization and industrial development following the Korean War have influenced the Korean social system's evolution from a rural to an urban structure. Since the 1960s, Korean society has been changing into a modern industrial society. This sudden transformation to a capital economic system has conflicted with traditional Korean agrarian attitudes, causing major problems and contributing to stress in the lives of the Korean people. As Edginton, Lee, & Won (1989) note:

The process of industrialization has changed, very directly, the way Koreans live their lives. Perhaps the first and most significant change has been the rapid movement of Koreans from rural to urban areas... The family structure has also been dramatically affected by industrialization. An increasing number of individuals live in nuclear families, rather than extended ones, in urban areas. There is evidence that Korean families spend much of their time apart from one another, since work takes place outside of the home. Korean children attend school six days a week and have responsibilities for extracurricular educational activities after school hours. Korean children often refer to their father as their "Sunday friend," because that is the only time they see him during the six-day work week. However, even on Sundays, the head of the household may engage in leisure activities without his
family, which has given rise to another term in the Korean culture, "the Sunday Widow." (pp.55-56)

Within this context, we can argue that modern Korean leisure has been influenced by three factors: capitalism, cultural subordination of Western culture, and an adherence to traditional culture (Kim, 1993). When we try to understand Korean attitudes toward leisure, we must approach it from the context of historical, social, and cultural changes that it has undergone.

This chapter has introduced various definitions of leisure and theoretical approaches in modern leisure relations with multiple factors such as self-concept, freedom, nature of leisure experience, society, and self-determination. This theoretical framework is essential in understanding the leisure phenomenon of Korean college students studying in the United States in terms of social, cultural, and historical influences. The phenomenological approach allows us to understand the essence of leisure experience; and the sociological approach helps us understand the relationship between the leisure experience and the socio-cultural variables such as culture, social bonding, and social structure.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research strategy

The strategy used in this study is qualitative inquiry. The reason for this is that the research questions relate to meaning, experience, and cultural interaction—areas which are not fully explained by an empirical analytic approach. The question of meaning in this study is very subjective, rather than universal.

Meaning questions cannot be "solved" and thus done away (Marcel, 1949). Meaning questions can be better or more deeply understood, so that, on the basis of this understanding I may be able to act more thoughtfully and more tactfully in certain situations. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 23)

This study is concerned with the meaning and significance of certain phenomenon. "Not reading in of some
meaning, but clearly an exploring of what the thing itself already points to..." (Gadamer, 1986, p.68). This process leads the researcher to pursue the inquiry according to the characteristics of qualitative research.

1. Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers.
2. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products. How do people negotiate meaning? How do certain terms and labels come to be applied? How do certain notions come to be taken as part of what we know as "common sense?"
3. "Meaning" is of essential concern when using the qualitative approach. Researchers who use this approach are interested in the way different people make sense out of their lives. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp.29-32)

Based on qualitative inquiry, this study emphasizes the fact that "multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality. Reality, consequently, is socially constructed" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.34). In this respect, the meaning of leisure is created not only existentially by each individual, but also through lived experience in a social context.

This study uses the theoretical frameworks of
phenomenology and sociology to describe the leisure experience of Korean college students in the United States. The phenomenological approach is used to explain the explicit essence or nature of leisure experience. Leisure sociology provides a framework in which considers significant social variables and how culture is related to leisure experience. This study intends to use both approaches as a way of balancing the social and existential meanings of leisure (Kelly, 1989, see Chapter 1, p.3).

**Researcher's role**

The qualitative researcher's work involves an understanding and an interpretation of the world or of human experience which is complex, dense, reflexive, and holistic. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the qualitative researcher is a *bricoleur* who is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing and observing, to interpreting personal and historical documents, to intensive self-reflection and introspection.

A qualitative researcher is reluctant to see the attributes of the behavior abstracted from the view of social action and social meaning discovered through hanging around and watching people carefully and asking them why they do what they do (Erickson, 1986).
In this study I assumed two roles: 1) researcher; and 2) learner. In my role as a researcher, I asked participants about things that I could not see for myself in the research I was doing. In speaking with my participants, I was better able to see my own prejudices about research themes. It is important for a researcher to be a good listener in a phenomenological study. During interviewing, I tried to understand fully what my informants said as a good listener. As Bogdan & Biklen (1992) note:

A good interviewer communicates personal interest and attention to the subject by being attentive, nodding his or her head, and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate. The interviewer may ask for clarification when the respondent mentions something that seems unfamiliar, using phrases such as, “what do you mean?” “I’m not sure I am following you.” “Could you explain that?” The interviewer also probes the respondent to be specific, asking for examples of points that are made. (pp. 97-98)

In my role as a learner, I abandoned the feeling of being an expert or being the authority in my research. Instead, I approached my participants as a good listener, a student, and a friend who wanted to understand the informants’ story, forming “a reciprocal relationship” with my participants.
Selection of the informants

Korean college students actively participating in leisure activities at The Ohio State University acted as informants in this study. Thirteen informants have agreed to participate since the fall quarter of 1996. The informants were recruited through personal contact.

I discussed my research direction and they gave me their feedback. In contacting informants, I began a dialogue process to refine and develop an open-ended questionnaire, a self-reflection paper by E-mail, and interview questions. Some of the informants gave me good feedback on these materials. Their feedback refined my research approach, perspectives required, and how I should explore the leisure experiences in their lives.

Data collection

This study used four methods of data collection: 1) interview; 2) open-ended questionnaire; 3) self-reflection of leisure experience by E-mail; 4) self-introduction description. The interview and open-ended questionnaire were employed as major research tools, and the others were useful in providing supplementary information.
The data collection for this study was done in the spring quarter of 1997, from March to June. Interview time and place were set up depending on informants' schedules. Interviewing and data collection were conducted for the first month at the beginning of the research. I also collected data by E-mail asking informants to write to me about their experiences after participating in a leisure activity. I actually requested that, if possible, they should send me their E-mail responses as soon as they finished their leisure participation. These were collected until early June 1997, the end of the research period. Other data was collected during interviews.

Interviewing

"Qualitative interviewing is both an academic and a practical tool. It allows us to share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.5). Qualitative interviewing provides a powerful tool to elicit in-depth answers about culture, nature, meaning, processes, and problems surrounding human actions and consciousness. In this study, the interviews were conducted using at times an unstructured format (Douglas, 1985) and at other times a semistructured format (Merton, Fiske, &
Kendall, 1990). In an unstructured format, usually at the beginning of the interviews, I asked each participant "How do you feel about leisure?" To approach more detail in the semistructured format, I then asked "What does leisure mean to you in your subjective experience?" The balance between structured and unstructured interviewing formats allowed me to catch the insights, thoughts, and understanding of the leisure experience of my interviewees (see Appendix C).

Interviews employed a conversational partnership method between a researcher and interviewees. Careful listening to what was being said was followed up by my further questioning to understand the interviewees. As in ordinary conversation, I kept the conversation on my research topics, led the interviewees in the flow of dialogue through comfortable interview settings, with empathy, sincerity, and pleasure. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. After listening to the type, I would set up an additional interview if I had questions in clearly understanding what was said. The main reason for a follow up interview was that often the informants' own special vocabularies would have a different meanings depending on the context.

Open-ended survey questionnaire

An open-ended survey questionnaire was developed during
ongoing interview process to illuminate the dimensions of response many of which were missed in the interview. This survey was focused on the perception of leisure, feelings, quality of life, and cultural comparison of leisure activities (see Appendix D).

**Self-reflection of leisure experience by E-mail**

The leisure experience in this study, as noted earlier, was based on a retrospective evaluation of an individual's unique involvement in his/her life world. To explore leisure experience, self-reflection reports were made by E-mail. The reason for using this is that most informants found that using E-mail was the most convenient way to report their everyday leisure experiences (see Appendix E). Except for Chon who temporarily had computer problems in using E-mail, the informants regularly sent their current leisure experiences to my account, lee.819@osu.edu.

**Self-introduction description**

To understand the participants' current leisure participation, experience, and socio-cultural backgrounds, informants were asked to write a self-introduction description prior to interviewing (see Appendix B). This self-introduction description asked for age, academic
background, future dream, hobbies, preferred leisure activities, and length of stay in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>RCF1)</th>
<th>I2)</th>
<th>SID3)</th>
<th>SRLEEM4)</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Chung</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X(2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1) "RCF" indicates "Research Consent Form" which revealed the informants' participation and permission to use their personal data in my research (see Appendix A).

2) "I" stands for "interview" and the number in the parentheses is the number of interviews.

3) "SID" indicates "Self-Introduction Description" in which the informants wrote their personal life history. "K" indicates Korean and "E" indicates English as the language that the informants used for their self introduction descriptions. When I gave them SID instructions written in English, I told them to "write this paper in any length you want, using any language either English or Korean."

4) "SRLEEM" indicates "Self Reflection of Leisure Experience by E-Mail." The number indicates the number of replies.

Table 1: Participation of informants in the research process
Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of systematically searching through and arranging interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that the researcher accumulates to increase his/her understanding of the informants. "Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what the researcher will tell others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.153).

In this study, the first step of data analysis was to analyze the interview data, the open-ended questionnaire, and the self-introduction description. The transcribed interviews and open-ended questionnaires were read several times in order to understand the substantive themes. The data was reviewed and significant words and sentences were coded. Coding is "a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments and identifies or names those segments" (Scwandt, 1997, p.16).

As a method to arrange coded words and sentences, I used Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992) approach to handling coding categories called “the cut-up-and put-in folders approach”
Sentences in the data were cut up and placed in large envelopes labeled by categories such as freedom, enjoyment, composure, etc. Categories with extensive amounts of data were divided further into sub-categories. Data collected by E-mail for daily leisure experience were arranged using the same method. During this process, I recorded my own subjective understanding of what each category meant.

In the second step, I sought to understand the meaning of each category based on research by such social formalists as Kelly, Neulinger, Parker, and Kaplan as reported in the *Journal of Leisure Research* and *Leisure Science*. I considered their concepts of each category. As Morse and Field (1995) state:

> No study exists in isolation, independent of the work of others. Research must be embedded in the conceptual world as well as in the research context. For theoretical evaluation, the researcher must identify related concepts found in similar settings. (p. 143)

A final step was to evaluate coding reliability. In order to accomplish this, I employed the "two coders" system used by Stockdale (1985) in which an analysis of informants' responses is used effectively to check the reliability of categories by using two coders and then cross checking the
categories. In addition to myself, Mr. H. Lee, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy & Leadership at OSU, who is familiar with my research project, acted as a second data analyst.

In analyzing data, the use of Korean and the use of English didn’t make any difference in the accuracy of the information that informants gave me. Throughout, with the Korean students’ cooperation in the research, the information collected was checked and rechecked several times with informants. This cooperation is a result of “Korean network system” which was essential to this study. This research is based on the relationship between researcher and informants growing out of this network. That is, Koreans have a reciprocal relationship. When someone needs help it comes from others who are also helped when in need. Most Korean will help someone in need without any reward. This is the Korean network system.

Validity

Validity is essential for judging the quality or goodness of the research. In the social sciences, validity is “one of the criteria that traditionally serve as a benchmark for inquiry” (Schwandt, 1997, p.168). As an
epistemic criterion, validity is used to probe the property of a statement, argument, or procedure. In order to provide validity in this study, the researcher applied four criteria: 1) triangulation, 2) member check, and 3) peer debriefing.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation means that a single study combines methods or sources of data. "It is possible to achieve triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy by combining different kinds of qualitative methods, mixing purposeful samples, and including multiple perspectives" (Patton, 1990, p.188).

In this study, I conducted methodological triangulation from the interviews, open-ended questionnaire, self-introduction description, and self-reflection of leisure experience collected by E-mail. These methods provided me sufficient data as well as increased my understanding and interpretation of emerging themes.

**Member check**

Member check is also referred to as a "respondent validation." This was originally a sociological term for soliciting feedback from the respondents on the researcher's
findings. Member check is considered an important procedure for verifying one's findings (Schwandt, 1997).

In this study, I used member check by going back and questioning to informants about my data findings. This process occurred continuously at both data collection and analysis stages. It was done formally and informally with informants. I sent formal letters depending on what I found during the data collection and informally met some of the informants to doublecheck and confirm my understanding of the data (see Appendices F & G). Any disagreement between my informants and my findings was recorded. I then would go back and reevaluate the data, looking for biases that had occurred. Member check greatly enhanced my research process. Guba & Lincoln (1989) note:

Member check allows the evaluator to assess the intent of a given action—what it is that a given respondent intended by acting in a certain way or by proffering certain information; it provides interviewees (informants, respondents) the chance to offer additional information, especially by allowing them to "understand" the situation as a stranger understands it; this often stimulates a respondent to think about information, which further illuminates a given construction and can bring out information that might have been forgotten if the opportunity to review the interview had not occurred. (p. 239)
The member check created a system of "co-researchers" (Wyman, 1985) in this study as informants shaped the research. One informant told me, "Your research seems like my own project. I guess you have to put my name as co-author in your dissertation."

**Peer debriefing**

Peer debriefing is "a procedure whereby the fieldworker confides in trusted and knowledgeable colleagues and uses them as a sounding board for one or more purposes" (Scwandt, 1997, p.113).

In this study, "H. Kim," a Korean student majoring in computer science, served in this peer debriefing process. By a process of interaction with H.Kim, my peer, I extended my interpretation in a different direction from my findings, tentative analysis, and translation of interview data.

These methods provided me an opportunity to release psychological stress resulting from my subjective perspective toward the research process. These also enhanced the validity of this research.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA RESULTS

Introduction

This study explored the significance of leisure in the lives of Korean college students who are studying and living in the United States and learning American cultural and social systems. The interpretation of discourse and text were totally oriented toward a reflective act of understanding the lives of Korean college students studying in the United States. As my research topic unfolded, I tried to hear, describe, and hold the informants’ leisure experiences "as meant." In my instructions, I emphasized "your subjective experience" and "your leisure experience today." The informants' multiple tales and my interpretations represented cultural themes about leisure experience by thematic statements.

In this chapter, four sections are discussed. The first section introduces "the descriptive information of
participants" concerning their leisure styles, school or work histories, hobbies, families, etc. These are provided to understand the participants as "actors" of leisure phenomena. The descriptive information familiarizes the readers with the participants in this study.

The second section provides "the meaning of leisure" made up by the everyday lives of Korean college students studying in the United States. It elaborates on four categories related to the meaning of leisure experience: vital energy of living process, composure, enjoyment, and freedom.

The third section addresses some components of leisure experience within the contextual setting of American culture in the lives of the Korean participants. Only looking for the meaning of leisure has limited us to elucidate the particular manner of the lives of Korean students. Discourse of the underlying components of leisure experience makes it possible to assess the ways that leisure experience gives the sense of an existential structure in the social process. The implicit categorizations of ways that leisure enhances the lives of those who participate in leisure activity are as follows: personal development, social bonding, therapeutic, stimulation, and experiential.

In the last section, this chapter focuses on the link
between culture and leisure concerned with changing the socio-cultural reality in which the participants experience leisure. This link reveals the possibility that leisure plays a role in culture, and in the way that culture brings leisure into personal and social advancement. Three main categories are discussed: culture is shared in leisure; culture is learned through leisure activity; and leisure is oriented to a sub-culture.

These four sections provide cultural considerations of leisure experience and elucidate leisure experience in the cultural contexts.

**Descriptive information for leisure actors**

For the informants in this research, leisure serves as meaningful human engagement. It promotes the process of each individual's growth, consisting of the directions of development, the self-images, and social and cultural identities of the present through the leisure experience. Leisure also plays a role in connecting between "being in the present" and "becoming toward the future." Judging from this perspective, my informants are actors in their life stages from the past of cultural history to the future of engaging in social bonding, self development, making a
choice, experiencing culture and society, as well as the
nature of social action through leisure experiences. Kelly
(1989) stresses this point:

There is always a tension between being and becoming,
between what we perceive ourselves to be and what we
seek to become. In this sense, leisure is action, not
in the simple sense of just doing an activity but in
the fuller sense of expressing what we are and aiming
toward what we might become. The state of
consciousness of the immediate experience is central to
the meaning that reaches back into the past of
personal history and forward into the future of
becoming. (p. 106)

Interpreting leisure experience not only offers meaning, but
also feeling. In order to capture this process of the
informants in this study, descriptive information about
their backgrounds and leisure participation is introduced.
In the following self-introductory description written by
informants and given in interviews, each individual
background describes the leisure context in the informant’s
current life style. All informants are Korean students
studying in the United States, in undergraduate and graduate
schools, including both males and females. Pseudonyms were
used to protect the anonymity of the informants.
Baik

Age (Gender): 22 years (Female)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 2 years
Future dream: Businesswoman
Major: Business administration
Academic level: Junior
Preferred leisure: Bowling, skiing, cooking, and dancing
Number of leisure activities per week: 3-4

Baik began her undergraduate studies in America after she graduated from high school in Seoul, Korea. She has been living in America for more than two and a half years. At first, she went to Seattle, Washington with her sister and majored in tourism for two years. Her sister still goes to school in Seattle. Now Baik is majoring in Business Administration at OSU. She explained why she changed her major:

I want to be a careerwoman in marketing. I really enjoyed studying tourism and traveling stuff, but the major can’t offer the way to becoming a successful businesswoman.

Besides her own thoughts, her friend who studied at OSU recommended that she transfer from the tourism school in Seattle to OSU which offers a good management program for undergraduates. When Baik lived in Seattle, she usually went to outdoor picnics related to her major. But in fact,
she wasn't used to participating in outdoor recreation much when she lived in Korea. She gave me the reason: "...because I was educated in middle and high schools in an only study-oriented Korean educational system."

Baik feels that she doesn't have good physical ability, and she doesn't like intensive exercise. That she loves to go to picnics rather than doing any sport activity is natural, given her physical condition and personality. Her personality is somewhat introspective and it influences her leisure participation pattern:

That kind of personal style allows me to enjoy outdoor picnics and parties with close friends... but I like to get acquainted with many multicultural people to go out for some recreational activities.

The leisure participation pattern that Baik chose related to her sub-goal in her life: learning about new cultures of various nations, and learning English to use in her future job. Even though she avoids meeting new Korean people, she wants to meet many Asian friends who have different cultural patterns in life style to accomplish her life's sub-goal.

Baik believes that enjoying leisure involves talking, dancing, and singing with friends in a comfortable place where she enjoys the natural environment. She commented:
Coming to a natural environment gives me much more pleasure than any other place in comparison. The fact that I have my close friends and a comfortable natural environment is a fantastic and enjoyable condition. You understand what real peace is, what amusement is involved in there. ...That's beyond leisure, it is the ideal human condition.

Chon
Age (Gender): 27 years (Female)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3 years
Future dream: College professor
Major: Somatic studies
Academic level: Graduate school
Preferred leisure: Dancing and tennis
Number of leisure activities per week: 2-3

Chon got her undergraduate and graduate degrees at the S University in Seoul, Korea. Her major originally was Korean dance. She married, and her husband (Korean) finished his doctoral degree majoring in mathematics at OSU. Chon now is a doctoral student in somatic studies at OSU and has been living here for 3 years. After graduation, she hopes to teach at a Korean university.

She usually has spent leisure time with her husband. The role of her husband when she enjoys leisure impacts her choices greatly. She said:

I actually didn’t enjoy leisure much, but after
marriage my husband really liked to participate in any kind of sport activity. Thus, I also became interested in some leisure activities which my husband usually does. ... We sometimes went out to play tennis together, and went on trips to see tennis tournaments in Cincinnati, following my husband’s plans of leisure participation.

Chon’s schedule is always full because she has to work at school and at home and her husband also is working at school, teaching mathematics to undergraduate students as a postdoctoral researcher. Having a busy schedule, she believes that sharing leisure activity with her husband creates good family coalition. She pointed out:

With my husband, through leisure we could feel enjoyment and inner peace of mind. Whatever we do that we do together is meaningful. ...now I’m a tennis and golf fan as my husband likes this stuff.

Chung
Age (Gender): 24 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 6 years
Future dream: Executive manager
Major: Electrical engineering
Academic level: Junior
Preferred leisure: Golf, fishing, and billiards
Number of leisure activities per week: 2-3

After Chung graduated from high school in Seoul, Korea,
he went to Cleveland, Ohio where he started his undergraduate studies in March 1992 at a small college in Cleveland. He finished his liberal arts courses and decided to move to Columbus to study engineering. Then he felt he needed to learn business skills rather than becoming an engineer.

Even though I am majoring in electrical engineering, I want to be a successful businessman who combines my creative idea of engineering and business strategy. To accomplish this aim, it is better for me to go to business school for graduate work (MBA).

For Chung, leisure experience is existential. He believes that through leisure he can attain full human growth. He thinks leisure totally determines its choice and outcomes by his will. He explained:

Leisure promotes my sense of flesh freely. When these are depressed by other social factors such as my work, time, and other people, my enjoyment of life is going away. As I mentioned, enjoyment means the freedom of my body/mind balancing each other.

Chung wants to have a comfortable body/mind for his studies through enjoyable leisure experience. One of his favorite outdoor recreations is fishing in a lake. He explained why he chooses fishing as his preferred leisure
activity:

Fishing plays a role in helping me to concentrate in the calm environment. Imagine the night, singing birds, and shining stars reflected on the surface of the lake. This environment makes me think beyond where I am now.

He also indicated that he is both enjoying and concentrating when fishing, which is the most important attraction of leisure in his life.

Kim
Age (Gender): 28 years (Female)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3 years
Future dream: Physical therapist
Major: Exercise science
Academic level: Senior
Preferred leisure: Golf, snowboarding, and tennis
Number of leisure activities per week: 1-2

Kim grew up with a younger brother and a younger sister. Before she went to OSU, she worked for a physical therapist in a hospital in Korea for three years after graduating from college. The purpose of her major in exercise physiology in undergraduate study is to have more advanced knowledge of physical therapy. She said, “I am really interested in how we prevent injuries from sport activities, since I had hospital work experience.” She
recalled that she worked hard in the hospital in terms of the time she devoted to her work. Kim usually worked from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. to take care of many patients, and felt seriously the need of leisure in her hard work:

The situation was terrible. I always thought I was too depressed by my hospital work, and leisure gave me some motive to escape my daily routine. To get away from work, I looked for other hard work different from the nature of my hospital work. I usually went to climb mountains near the sub-Seoul area.

Having this leisure experience based on her desire to escape the routine of daily life, Kim described that her leisure patterns were changed after coming to study in Columbus, Ohio due to the changes in her environment. She felt that her position of returning as a college student gave her more spare time than she used to have as a worker. It seemed like her lifestyle was rather boring, and she thought about how she killed time after school. She stated:

Whenever I felt that I didn't have to deal with anything today, I had to seek something to do. I felt that my daily life pattern was boring. I didn't mean my study was boring, or difficult. ...I wanted to search for something that was totally different from my study, as I enjoyed other kinds of hard activity when I worked in the hospital, you know. It's my real leisure. ...The desire is my inner reward for present work by doing leisure.
The way Kim looks for something new in her environment is her own unique leisure behavior. As she told me, it's about finding something "exciting," "funny," and "worth pursuing."

Ku
Age (Gender): 27 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 2 years
Future dream: Architect
Major: Architecture
Academic level: Sophomore
Preferred leisure: Walking, racquetball, and traveling
Numbers of leisure participation per week: 1-2

Ku’s undergraduate education was a major in English literature in Korea, and he had background experience serving in the ROK as a ROTC officer. He changed his major to architecture at OSU and expects to go to graduate school after he graduates. He mentioned his main reason for studying abroad: "I want to make up rather creative and experimental works that escape the traditional architectural paradigms." For him, creative work is an important concept in his life’s goal. His leisure participation is a kind of expansive line to promote his creative work:

Whenever I feel heavy in my work, in which I do some drawing in the architecture studio, I usually go out to do something different from my work. Mostly I work out playing racquetball in Larkins Hall or watching T.V.
That kind of leisure provides for me the root of work efficiency.

What Ku calls "work efficiency" relates to the changing of his vision so that he is drawn toward work. He indicated that "Being concentrated on only one thing related to my work limits my physical and mental abilities; but in leisure, I experience another way of seeing my work through taking a break and resting."

Work and leisure are not separate in Ku’s life. As he agrees, the more he uses his physical and mental powers to make creative drawings in architecture, the more he needs adequate leisure.

**Kwon**

Age (Gender): 30 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3 years
Future dream: College professor
Major: Geodesy
Academic level: Graduate school
Preferred leisure: Golf, tennis, and bowling
Number of leisure activities per week: 2-3

Kwon is studying geodesy in graduate school. After graduating from the university and graduate school in Korea, he took an interest in advanced topics such as satellite
tracking since 1994. He has been working as a research assistant at OSU since he began his studies. During the week, he goes to the research laboratory, where he works from morning until midnight. Kwon said his daily routine is "too busy to spare time for me." Since he had the same experience in graduate school in both Korea and America, he expressed the difference between his Korean and American lifestyles as a graduate student:

The length of time I work for the laboratory is almost the same in both Korea and America. But, in Korea I used to do research with my research mates, so I had many experiences of going out drinking beer and playing pool near campus with my peer researchers whenever we had a chance. As you know, in the campus area (Shinrim Dong) there are many leisure facilities which tempt college students. ...Many people participate in rather tiring and intensive physical activities to kill some spare time after lunch or dinner while working in the laboratory in America. Although I can easily access the sport facilities on campus here, it takes longer than the leisure I enjoyed in Korea.

He further expressed the difference of leisure participation in the two countries:

The difference in environment and culture changed my style of leisure participation. I was too impulsive when I was a graduate student in Korea, but here I am more focused on my studies. To enjoy the same leisure activity as in the Korean style, bowling or playing pool in my spare time, I have to use much more time in
Kwon emphasized that leisure activity gives him the kind of opportunity to reflect on himself in the American context. During his busy schedule, leisure offers an existential space for him. He told me:

It is not only study that develops our personality, is it? Leisure promotes the positive side of life. It is as important as study in society. For me as a student studying abroad, leisure experienced in my social and cultural conditions is a self-expression of my enjoyment to balance my work and self-concept.

Lee
Age (Gender): 27 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3 years
Future dream: Dentist
Major: Biology
Academic level: Senior
Preferred leisure: Racquetball, tennis, and traveling
Number of leisure activities per week: 1

Before Lee came to OSU, he graduated from a Korean university where he majored in animal science. He wasn’t satisfied with his major and wanted to change it as soon as he graduated. In order to study what he wanted, he went to Indiana University in 1994. He took English-speaking courses in ESL and took some undergraduate classes to
determine his new major. According to his friends’ recommendation of undergraduate programs, he decided to seek a new major at OSU. As Lee insisted, the main reason for his study in the United States was that, “after I graduated from the university, I had a “mental blank period” about my future. My intention to study in the United States meant a new way of seeing my future.” Lee now is preparing to go to dental school at OSU. He is studying basic natural science subjects, biology and biochemistry.

In Lee’s case, leisure divides in two directions. One comes with his church activities. He is a chorister in the Korean Methodist church and goes to church to sing every Friday as well as every Sunday. He expressed the importance of church activity in his leisure:

The most expected leisure for me is to practice in the Christian belief. When I go to church, I can enjoy mental freedom with people who share the boundary of the same religious interests.

The other is participating in an enjoyable sport activity with his friends. He mentioned the constrained routine work, and leisure plays a role in helping him get away from the constraint which pursues an inner feeling. Lee has played tennis and racquetball regularly with his friends.
These two directions of Lee's leisure activities play a great role in restoring his physical and mental strengths. He confessed that he had much psychological wondering since he began to study in the United States. However, when he experienced leisure regularly in both church and outdoor activities, he was bolstered to have more confidence and self-esteem.

Lim
Age (Gender): 27 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 9 months
Future dream: College professor
Major: Mechanical engineering
Academic level: Graduate school
Preferred leisure: Table tennis, racquetball, and watching movies
Number of leisure activities per week: 1

Lim majored in mechanical engineering in Korea. He has the same major in graduate school at OSU. His motivation to study in the United States was in order to have a lot of academic discipline and to have access to advanced technology and expensive engineering equipment which was not available in his undergraduate work in Korea. He stated, "I am totally satisfied with the academic conditions at OSU."

Lim mentioned that anything from which he can feel enjoyment is leisure. For him, a sports activity is the
most preferred leisure. He explained that sports influenced him to have bodily and mental advantages resulting in enjoyment during intensive physical activity, and keeps him in healthy condition. When I asked Lim when he wanted to feel enjoyment, he said:

In two kinds of stress periods, emotional and physical periods, I participate in leisure activities. Whenever I feel much stress, I want to change my emotion through leisure to have enjoyment. In this case, I go to see movies. Except for this emotional impulse, on weekends I exercise my body to condition my health which is apt to be weak. In order to control my physical condition, I choose a sport activity. After that, I feel fresh and cool.

Lim believes that the most important requirement to finish his studies successfully in the United States is keeping in good health. According to him, good health strongly releases mental stress built up during his study and gives him an indomitable will to adjust to American life.

Seo
Age (Gender): 28 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 2 years
Future dream: Executive C.P.A.
Major: Accounting
Academic level: Senior
Preferred leisure: Golf, bowling, and listening to music
Number of leisure activities per week: 1-2

Prepared to become an executive C.P.A., Seo majored in accounting at OSU. He originally studied architecture as an undergraduate in Korea. After he was discharged from military service, the ROK, he decided to become an international businessman. In order to achieve his dream, he had to determine whether to study Business Administration by completing two more years in a Korean university or begin to study his major in the United States. At that time, he thought that studying in the United States might give him more opportunities to be an international businessman who must be able to speak English and must have adequate international marketing skills in the realm of business.

A well-organized time manager, Seo knew that leisure is a means of using time to promote social bonding. He realized since he studied Business Administration in the United States that if he wants to be a successful businessman, he must also enjoy leisure with his clients. He mentioned the arrangement of a life schedule as a significant role of leisure in his current living situation. He explained the aspect of leisure:

My leisure means taking a rest, especially on weekends. It usually gives me another space of time to change my
interests. I always pursue a developmental future by using adequate time management. I think the present is important, but the future is more meaningful and everything I do in the present makes up my accomplishments toward my future. In this respect, my leisure is an investment for my possibility of future growth.

Seo insisted that his life is being constructed through everyday personal work and effort, and leisure plays a role in keeping up that same life process.

Shin
Age (Gender): 26 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 9 months
Future dream: College professor
Major: Chemistry
Academic level: Graduate school
Preferred leisure: Tennis, and chatting on Internet
Number of leisure activities per week: 2-3

Shin graduated from undergraduate and graduate school in Korea. He wants to be a creative chemist and has been making new theories in interpreting chemical modeling. He hopes to work for a university in Korea, or to have some work experience in an American company after he finishes his degree. He had the motivation to join the doctoral program at OSU since last year. As soon as he began his studies, he looked for an adequate leisure activity to relieve the stress from his studies, and at last he joined the "Korean
Friday Tennis Club" which practices tennis every Friday on campus. Through this participation, he has gained much leisure satisfaction. He pointed out the effects of participation in the tennis club:

It made me keep in touch with many Korean seniors and juniors through playing tennis. It has an added advantage to get information about academic fields and life styles in America. And it also leads me to have good human relations with Koreans. But, it also had the disadvantage that I mostly keep in contact with Koreans which prevents me from meeting many Americans. If I have any problems in either academics or living, I think of Korean seniors to discuss my problem with rather than American friends at first.

Shin finds his major so boring that he turns to leisure to make him feel another amusement in his American living arrangements. He described that "much tension during study is resolved through leisure." He explained that whenever he suffers a difficulty in his studies, he wants to go out. However, he evaluated himself as an introspective person, and this sometimes prevented his search for leisure more actively. He stated:

I usually participate in leisure recommended by friends rather than leisure I select even if I feel the need of leisure escape. Whether it is exciting or not, when many people enjoy some leisure with me, I feel
refreshed.

For Shin, leisure is oriented toward sharing time and activity with his close friends. Whenever he felt homesick during his first quarter at OSU, he experienced that meeting friends promoted self-esteem in him to overcome the kinds of problems most international students have suffered in their first year of study in the United States.

Ro
Age (Gender): 28 years (Male)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3 years
Future dream: Expert of natural resource research
Major: Environmental economics
Academic level: Graduate school
Preferred leisure: Jogging, skin scuba diving, and skiing
Numbers of leisure participation per week: 1-2

Having grown up in Seoul and having experienced an exchange student program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign during his college years, Ro is now a graduate student majoring in Natural Resource and Environment Economics at OSU. The exchange student program led him to study in the United States. He was interested in environmental problems since his college years. He realized that research topics in environmental economics have a big gap between Korean and American academic attitudes. That he
can contribute to Korean environmental resolutions in the future was the driving force for him to study at OSU.

Ro likes active sports. He played a role in forming a college ski club associated with several Korean universities during his undergraduate year. He also has a certificate of skin scuba diving. However, he injured his left leg in the last year. After his injury, he changed his sport activities from intensive to a less physical style. He reported: “that injury totally altered my leisure participation and warned me to control my exercise pace.”

Ro said he now works out swimming, jogging, and cycling—all of which he enjoys by himself. He mentioned further his new leisure patterns:

There are many good jogging courses near the campus I never noticed before. When my left leg was in normal condition, I didn’t think jogging was good exercise for me. But, now jogging with a controlled pace depending on my leg is salient leisure for me.

Leisure experience in swimming or jogging has given Ro’s life psychological satisfaction. Two main anxieties, his studies and a leg injury, made him realize that leisure is an important key to success in his American way of life.
Sung
Age (Gender): 22 years (Female)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 9 years
Future dream: Marketing manager
Major: Communication
Academic level: Junior
Preferred leisure: Swimming, singing, lacrosse, and meeting with friends
Number of leisure activities per week: 2-3

Sung was born in Seattle, Washington. She grew up in Seoul, Korea, until she reached the age of 13. She came to Cleveland, Ohio, to attend an all girls' private school. She explained why she came there: "I hoped to study in an environment where I could freely express my thoughts and interests." She is now majoring in communications.

Unlike the other participants, she had experienced a lot of Western sport activities because she had that earlier experience of the American educational system. During her high school days, she could participate in horseback riding, archery, lacrosse, and field hockey. She was a member of the lacrosse athletic team in her high school. She said, "I was an active athletic girl, as good as any boy who played lacrosse."

Sung mentioned that leisure for her is meaningful in dealing with stress, and for enjoyment. When she felt stressed, she wanted to spend time alone by listening to
music, playing the piano and going for a drive. When she wanted to have some fun, she met her friends and enjoyed their company. She said:

Enjoyment, for me, has to be with friends. But if I want to release my stress, I think, I should probably do it alone. Release of stress with friends is very temporary, but if I do it alone, I have more time to deal with myself, so it lasts longer. Maybe I definitely solve it, but with friends it's temporary. I can forget about the problem for a while, but it's gonna come back later.

Sung expressed that leisure played a great role in learning about American culture, recalling her high school experiences. She pointed out her cultural adaptation:

When I joined the lacrosse team, I felt like I belonged to the cultural group. I got to know other Americans and how they accepted me to play the game, explained to me the manner in which I had to play, and how we had to cooperate with each other. During this time, I could have a kind of sense of other American people who have different mentalities from Koreans of what they are thinking, how this sport works, and I knew the pattern of what is wrong or right during cooperative work. That helped me adapt to American culture.

For Sung, the basic element of leisure is having fun in successful social bonding. She said that after she entered OSU she really realized the importance of leisure as a means
of social promotion. Since she is naturally bilingual, speaking English and Korean with ease, she wants to keep a balance of social relations with both Americans and Koreans.

Yoo
Age (Gender): 26 years (Female)
Length of stay in the U.S.: 3.6 years
Future dream: College professor
Major: Dental hygiene
Academic level: Junior
Preferred leisure: Tennis, playing piano, and walking
Number of leisure activities per week: 4-5

When Yoo discussed her job course with her undergraduate advisor in Korea, she decided to study dental hygiene in the United States. At that time, she thought that this major is not popular in Korea, so she thought she could get a higher position in the Korean job markets after she finished a higher degree.

She actually disliked exercise before going to America. However, after she realized the significance of health in her life of studying abroad, she became interested in leisure activities that are suitable for her physical condition. For 3 years, she has been experiencing leisure through walking to small lakes. For Yoo, this leisure experience is both existential and social. She reported:
Walking around the lake is just relaxation exercise. It is not heavy workout like ball games, but gives much meaning to me. I usually have time to think about myself while walking, and reflect on my current events related to study, family, and friends. Seeing many woods standing near me, the surface of the lake approaches to change my mind more comfortably. This activity sometimes has allowed me to meet new people walking or jogging around the lakes. They introduce themselves, and we naturally communicate. This kind of experience leads me to anticipate the next day’s walk.

As a single female, Yoo easily feels that physical changes such as gained weight and a tired condition menace her confidence to achieve her academic goals in the United States. The way she prevents this kind of worry is experienced in leisure. She emphasized that “in order to adapt well to American living conditions, it is inevitable that I experience leisure.”

Meaning of leisure

Exploring the meaning of leisure has allowed me to assess the in-depth interviews and the open-ended survey questionnaires. I did not impose an explanation of leisure experience onto the data, but rather attempted to hear the personal meaning of what leisure means to the informants. After the informants understood the purpose of this
research, they answered this question: “Please describe your thoughts of what leisure means to you in your subjective experience.” All informants expressed their opinions about the meaning of leisure based on their own leisure experiences. Throughout an open-ended questionnaire in which all informants wrote down their ideas after the interviews, they were able to explain more accurately their conception of leisure in answer to this question: “What is your perception of leisure participation?”

My participants expressed some notions to clearly indicate the meaning of leisure from their own experiences, and then these notions were elaborated in four categories: 1. vital energy of living process, 2. composure, 3. enjoyment, and 4. freedom.

1. Leisure as vital energy of living process

“Leisure as vital energy of living process” emerged as the first category of what leisure is. Many informants expressed leisure as the living process that helps human adaptation through physical and mental development when confronted by environmental changes:

All human actions to accomplish an abundance of living quality in human life are leisure. Leisure is also the medium of ‘promotion’ toward an energy of human life.
What I call "promotion toward human life" is the push and pull in our growth process that is occasioned by leisure. For instance, as you know, my study is always pushing me, but leisure makes me also improve my physical and mental condition by doing something else. (Chung)

As we do our best in our given task to arrive at life goals, at the midpoint we need some 'vital elements' by taking a rest. I guess this role is done by leisure. Just as we have to eat something or sleep when we feel hungry or sleepy, whenever we feel the need of a vital mind, the essential desire is for leisure. (Lee)

When I compare leisure to gas, it seems to make you laugh, but I would say that's how the importance of leisure is expressed in our lives. Leisure is an invisible rest space to make me anticipate a new enjoyable Monday. During the weekday, if I use up my whole energy, I have to recover the same energy from another space. That space involves time, mental, physical, and psychological renovation by experiencing leisure. (Seo)

Both Seo and Kwon compared life to an automobile mechanism when they talked about leisure as an aspect of energy: "that is similar to a car that runs on the road. After a while, the car needs some gas to run again" (Seo); and "If the two front wheels are our regular work to manage, leisure seems like the back wheels to make the car run smoothly" (Kwon).

Leisure is a "vital power" to invigorate myself. It
helps me to have a healthy life, to lessen stress in my study. It also provides me the balance between an environment I have to deal with and my physical and mental abilities by giving me the vital energy. (Kwon)

Chung introduced his philosophy of leisure in the connection between living quality and leisure. He believes that leisure promotes activating the senses of the flesh. Chung also expressed that perceived fun is a most salient factor to determine the quality of life for him. With a lack of fun in living conditions, he believes that all bodily functions are restricted, and leisure not only promotes the senses of the body, but accomplishes fun through adequate bodily movement which he chooses freely.

2. Leisure as composure

The second category of the meaning of leisure is "composure." The concept of composure from my informants involves two factors: 1) relaxation and 2) self-reflection through leisure.

As the exam date was approaching, it caused a lot of mental stress, and I had to relax with comfortable time and activity. That I released my stress totally was helping me prepare to study for an exam even though I spent some time on this kind of leisure. ...I perceive that leisure is a relaxed state no matter its duration. (Ro)
I felt peace, joy, and a certain belief in myself after leisure. In the middle of a research project, it was time that I have an interim output in my work, and experiencing leisure made me relax by getting away from my own obligations. Feeling comfortable was my own leisure. (Kwon)

A "special situation" often indicated was: "all I focus on in my life attitude is that here study makes me more stressed than I was when I was living in Korea" (Lim). This point made my informants see leisure as relaxation. Leisure fulfills the desire to change this special situation as Yoo insisted: "Isn’t this life style focused on study changing us too much, if we do nothing but study everyday?" To alter this situation, leisure can be used for relaxation:

A relaxed living environment is itself leisure for me. I now mostly spend time at home except for going to school, so cooking by myself is totally leisure and it makes me relax. That kind of work can make me forget my worries from schoolwork. (Baik)

When I was really busy, when I got stressed, and when I really wanted to have time for myself, then something I can enjoy is gonna be leisure to relax everything. (Sung)

Thinking back to a time they escaped from routine work is what some informants perceive as leisure. The other aspect
of leisure discussed as composure involves self-reflection.

You sometimes feel "I wonder whether my living attitude is right or wrong." It's like when I want to calm down from all I have to do. Stopping time and space, I just try to think about my inner world. I don't care how much I can do; even if only 10 or 15 minutes, if I have focused on myself, I may be satisfied about that. That's real leisure. It's not far from me. (Shin)

The state in which I erase everything and get rid of pressures in my brain—There, I can know how I am doing. Leisure leads me there. (Kim)

3. Leisure as enjoyment

The third category of leisure is "enjoyment." Most informants defined enjoyment in leisure as "amusing," "exciting," "fresh," and "cool." Ku expressed why enjoyment is necessary in his life:

Enjoyment...exciting...satisfaction... it's a big concept in my life. It sometimes gives me a motive for what I am doing. I think it comes when I am doing something with a more positive attitude, rather than when I am pursuing it simply. Making something to be enjoyed is my will in life, and it will relate to my satisfaction.

Kwon expressed that enjoyment occurs when self-fulfillment and social relations are harmonized:

Another side of our businesses we have confronted
beyond our own regular work is the area in which we have to balance our own enjoyment and social relations through leisure, so leisure must be directing self-fulfillment, as well as helping others.

Talking about enjoyment, Lim reported how enjoyment is involved in his leisure:

It is impossible to experience my leisure without enjoyment. The things I enjoy are considered leisure. That’s simple logic. In my understanding, sport is my leisure, which includes what I said about enjoyment. You can perceive the enjoyment in sport whether watching a game or participating. The magic power of sport makes it a good leisure activity for me.

4. Leisure as freedom

The last category is the state of "freedom." Chon stated that "Releasing myself from my attachment means leisure for me." She explained real freedom through leisure:

Only being away from my work is not the state of freedom for me. I think when I get rid of my psychological burdens as well as work, that is what gives me real freedom. Without being free from study or home, it is only a rest, but there still remains something in my mind.

Kwon mentioned freedom gained through leisure was the
A basic principle of human life is hedonism, I think. It is natural that playing is more enjoyable than studying. But, the most important thing is avoiding intemperance of enjoyment, and connecting the satisfaction of work to the enjoyment of leisure. It might give us real freedom, having a mindful state from both work and leisure. ...If I don’t have any work related to my life’s goal, leisure is also useless and the freedom of leisure is not any more meaningful. Or if I don’t work well in my study, I can’t feel freedom, but even get bored with what I do in leisure. Within the balance between work and leisure, freedom is created and provides a good feedback to enrich my life.

Lee who regularly practices meditation expressed how through meditation he achieves the state of freedom:

I feel freedom when my inner motivation is satisfied by leisure. I usually try to meditate drawing good images about my future, my family, and friends, whenever I suffer from the stress of study. It helps me melt all of the unnecessary distracting thoughts and stress, and gives me a really free state.

Components of the leisure experience

The leisure experience is the immediate phenomenon which occurs in the interaction process between a given environment and oneself. For my informants, leisure
experience, especially in America, is a subjective manner in which they explore the meaning and nature of being in different cultural contexts to connect their bodies and consciousnesses. These were analyzed by in-depth interviews, E-mail reports on daily leisure experience, and other ethnographic information.

This study is focused on exploring four categories of the elements of leisure experience: 1. personal development, 2. social bonding, 3. therapeutic, and 4. stimulation.

1. Personal development

Some of my informants sometimes had the feeling of discouragement from difficulties that resulted from language problems, and changing study habits, and their parents' excessive expectations. For those who suffer these kinds of problems, leisure is a refreshing way to strengthen personal development. Throughout the leisure experience, the students try to feel a kind of confidence and esteem that "I can do" or "the problem I suffer now is beneath my notice."

In this respect, personal development derived from leisure can increase inner power that allows the informants to escape from their current problems. Two sub-categories of personal development can explain the concept within leisure experience: 1) self-challenge and 2) self-control.
1) Self-challenge

Some leisure activities made the informants think "if I try to do my best, I can be the best, with pleasure and enjoyment." This is often expressed as "the battle against self" (Chung). Kwon made this point:

Last year I went to a golf course for the first time with my college alumni group. I rented a golf club and went to the golf range to learn how to make my grip and swing. As soon as I had practiced the swing, my friends took me to the golf course, even though I was a stranger to golfing. The game--I don't know, I can't say it's a real game--was terrible, but I felt I had a challenge. With consciousness like that, I knew I could master this sport. I was surprised that I wanted to keep going with this sport, although I had the feeling that this was a difficult sport that I couldn't do very well in the world. I actually play some other games of ball very well, as you know.

Shin explained how the self-challenge of leisure experience works during the leisure:

When I was excited, it was because I had gained a special skill that nobody else had. In tennis, I used to try some skills I had been thinking about. I learned them from magazines or television, and when I could use these skills exactly in matches, I felt great. Those moments encouraged me to invent other skills which only I could do.
As a member of the Korean student tennis club called the Friday Tennis Club, Shin had been practicing tennis every Friday with friends. The desire to invent specific and private skills is a salient factor in developing self-challenge in leisure experience. Shin always pursued a sense of leisure that included self-challenge different from the obligation of study:

...two leisure activities, tennis and billiards, made me change my normal lifestyle focused on studying. Those can lead me to another world, feeling refreshment and a challenge of something among different settings and natures.

Ro, who had suffered the injury of his left foot a year ago, mentioned the self-pace to make up a "challenge consciousness" in leisure:

After the injury I hated to compete with somebody, because if I did excessive exercise beyond my bodily condition, I easily felt tired. ...In order to match my current bodily condition, jogging is a good exercise, but if I lost that control, I felt dissatisfaction after that. I usually work out jogging by making a goal like 5 km or 7km, depending on my body's condition, and I run around the campus. The distance of 4.5 km when I want to run to the 5 km is the most difficult point both bodily and psychologically. Once I overcame this difficult point, I felt that I had accomplished something.
Kim had a good experience through snowboarding. She thought that if she were in Korea, she would have never tried to enjoy snowboarding. According to her, "I was so used to hearing the Korean traditional notions from seniors that women have to avoid dangerous physical activity and women must strive to have feminine characteristics."¹

... the social limits had given me a much depressed feeling when I participated in sport activities. But after I enjoyed snowboarding, I realized that I can do anything that gives me a feeling of risk and pleasure as well. Of course, the activity gave me the power to forget the social limits which I was so used to. This kind of self-challenge lets me have the feeling of something like leadership.

Yoo claimed that the most influential index of life

¹ The Korean traditional notion of how women must behave in society is closely related to the Korean notion of the feminine spirit. It was influenced by Confucian precepts. The Korean concept called “Jung Sook” is an example of this notion, which means having a calm, quiet behavior and good moral character. This has emphasized how Korean women must behave according to the social norm. However, many women of the new generation have denied this feminine concept of the old generation and have claimed a different model of woman who is more active and equal to a man in Korean society.

According to the 1997 Human Development Report by the UN, the Korean Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was ranked 73rd in the world. This measurement was based on the ratio of women in administrative levels of social participation (Staff, 1997, September 18). In Korea, women’s social participation still is dominated by traditional concepts.
satisfaction and self-challenge while studying in America is her health condition. Leaving Korea and separating from her family, she actually worried about her health. When she lived in Korea, mostly her mother took care of her physical needs. For her, the way she kept in good health was by “regularly doing exercise.” She stated the effect of exercise:

I discovered the changes in my body one day. I was surprised that my body seemed rather lighter, and my clothes were not too tight. It gave me a kind of self-satisfaction that my health condition is going well in my American life.

Yoo also described further that good health allowed her to reach psychological repose and it also affected her whole life as well as her studies by giving her a better self-concept.

2) Self-control

For my informants, self-control is manifested through concentration, self-denial, and tranquility of mind during leisure. When I asked why one needs to have self-control in leisure, Chung explained that “it is made intentionally to practice self in terms of bodily and mental training.” Chung, who is enjoying golf at least twice a week, expressed this:
My golfing experience usually teaches me how to control my body and mind. The self-control came from concentration that I have to keep my awareness on the ball continuously from the address position to hitting the ball. If I lose my temperament from bad hitting, I am apt to ruin the play by hitting the ground. I mostly feel that I want to break my club, whenever I can’t hit the ball accurately. At this time, the most necessary thing is self-control. Thus, I would say that golf is the most beautiful game through the combination of self-control and inner concentration.

Chon, who experiences most leisure with her husband, described how she experienced the aspect of concentration in golf. As she expressed it:

I went to a golf course once. Before that time, I used to practice the golf swing in the golf range with my husband, and I didn’t realize the attractive characteristics too much. But, while I played golf on the course, I could realize for the first time why most men really are crazy for golf. ...the attraction comes from the fact that I can concentrate on something on the green grass that makes me indulge in golf. It was fantastic.

2. Social bonding

Social bonding is the most significant function of leisure among the family and other face-to-face living groups. In the situation of this study, some informants had left their families and had their own lives fully in the
United States; their American peers and Korean friendship groups are more significant for social bonding than being with family. For some informants, the theme of social bonding was related to three sub-categories: 1) friendship, 2) communication, and 3) meeting new friends.

1) Friendship

Shin, Baik, and Yoo introduced how friendship is involved in their leisure experiences. Shin said, "I tend not to decide what to do prior to meeting my friends."

...Because doing something together is itself meaningful. I know whatever we do is enjoyable. Mostly after we have some coffee and chat for a while, we go somewhere, depending on the opinion of friends. Billiards, that's the most enjoyable activity. While we play, we usually talk about our current life changes, what kind of study problems we have, and what we know about recent Korean political and economic news. There's pure enjoyment. With my friends I can feel comfortable. (Shin)

Sharing my cooking like Bulgogi or baking provides a good time with my friends. It allows us to talk about some topics and gives the natural space to sing songs. It seems like just a simple activity, but it makes us break down some barriers among friends. We can have an open-minded feeling and express our current inner conflicts and problems. We also give and take good advice. (Baik)
Playing tennis with friends, or playing music with a group brings people together in one interest, and it helps to concentrate people of different minds on the same thing. Sharing my whole mode with another individual is very enjoyable. (Yoo)

Yoo plays the piano when she feels lonely, and she has good experiences playing music with other friends and sharing her feelings. She described that making harmony through different musical instruments is the most memorable leisure experience she has had.

...it was a nice experience that my playing the piano could be harmonized with other musical instruments. As you know, each instrument has a different range and tone, but while playing one song, every instrument was one, as well as each friend was sharing the same feeling in the flow of music. (Yoo)

Lee mentioned the significance of friends in his current life of study abroad:

I suffered too many cultural problems since I began to study here in the United States. Whenever I suffered, I called my friends and talked about my problems. While talking I felt that my Korean friends had suffered the same kinds of problems that I had. When I changed my mood, we went out and we enjoyed some beer together... The fact that I have good friends to listen to my problems was itself a mental shelter.
Lim had a leisure experience coming from a quarrel over a trivial matter with a friend. He solved it through leisure activity with that friend. Speaking about how he decided to share leisure activity with his friend, he said, "at first, it was hard to call him, but I believed that joining a sport together would allow us to forget the insignificant matter between us."

... While playing racquetball, I could solve the matter that had come up in our relationship. We, the game mates who had some conflict, could easily make up our relationship, after sweating through a good game together. There were not too many words. We knew that we just enjoyed that activity. I realized our matter was superficial, and we could make up as we did in playing racquetball. (Lim)

2) Communication

Leisure plays a great role as a communicative convention in supporting exchange of topics and experiences. Chon explained that this aspect of communication in the leisure experience created an opportunity for her to understand her husband and how much he liked a specific activity, and also led to a shared leisure activity with him:

My husband was usually watching the golf channel, so I naturally was interested in watching golf without any consciousness to focus on the game. The important
topics that my husband and I discussed were golf and sometimes tennis, because he also really liked to play tennis, as you know...

Their choice of leisure activity was not one-sided, with her husband's leisure pattern determining Chon's. Her husband also joined some leisure that Chon preferred. Chon moreover explained how she communicated with her husband through leisure participation:

Our leisure time is mostly from Friday evening to Saturday, because we both go to school in the weekdays. We made a promise that we have to enjoy something we can share during our leisure time, so we choose one thing from playing tennis, watching a dance performance or a movie. As you know, my major is dance, so when I appreciate a dance performance I learn many valuable things, and after enjoying the dance performance we talk about the performance. My husband wasn't interested in dance, but now has some knowledge about a dance performance through our communication and many opportunities to appreciate the performance.

Influenced by his study subject, business administration, Seo emphasized the significant role of leisure in his life goal, and introduced his experience of how he used a sport topic to communicate with his American friends and extended it to his own interests:

I consider human relationships are most important in
our social life. It is more valuable than personal or professional skills in the business world. To keep good human relations, and having some interesting topics is a good personal resource. Sport and leisure may be good topics, if I do my business successfully here [in America]. ...Last week I discussed the Master's Golf Game and Tiger Wood with my American classmates. I learned about the existence of Tiger Wood in terms of racial and cultural symbols, and we also discussed Tiger's economic value. I agree that he has a huge economic value, as much as Michael Jordan. Sooner or later we will see some products labeled in his name.

3) Meeting new friends

Yoo spoke about how she has met new friends in relation to her leisure experience with a friend:

I have a close American friend. She is busy in the weekdays studying hard. The only day we can meet is Friday evening. Every Friday, whenever we meet to share a recreational sport or a dinner, she always brings some of her American friends and introduces them to me, because she doesn’t have a lot of time to share to meet all of her friends separately. This meeting has given me an opportunity to learn English and has taught me how young Americans think about current events in politics, pop music, sport games. ...I really expect to meet her every week and also some new friends of my friends. I look forward to the days when I can enjoy a good time with my friends.

One of the functions that leisure promotes in human
relations is creating natural conditions under which people meet each other as they join in the same activities, such as talking, eating, thinking, etc. It allows people to feel intimacy even when they are meeting new friends. Kim pointed out: “Leisure allowed me to release the distance of human relations.” Many informants thought that sharing leisure time provides the opportunity to become close and friendly. Ro, Lee, and Lim described that doing sport was a great medium for close friendships, and other activities after sport, such as taking a shower in Larkins Hall, talking and drinking beer made them feel close to each other.²

3. Therapeutic

Managing stress is another decisive reason for Korean students to experience leisure in their lives. Dealing with stress through leisure provides an enjoyable experience for reducing serious health problems and stimulating control.

² Some Koreans believe that if you want to get to know somebody, go to a public bathhouse (sauna) together. The bathhouse in Korea is totally different from the American, which is a side facility of a sport center; it is equipped with a big space of hot and cool waters as well as a sauna and a sleeping place. It is natural that many Koreans go there after a sport and they feel more intimate. The public bathhouse has a unique cultural context that is spread throughout Asian cultural nations, especially Korea, Japan, and China. It meets people’s need for rest, and sharing this kind of leisure allows people to understand each other.
over recurring mental and bodily symptoms of stress.

Many informants described their own experiences of dealing with mental and physical mechanisms when confronted by many stressful factors. They suggest that leisure experience is considered a tool in a drive to promote positive health conditions both mentally and physically. In this respect, three sub-categories of therapeutic roles of leisure experience were discussed: 1) stress management, 2) healing effect, and 3) physical rest/relaxation.

1) Stress management

Most informants described their current life style as "too busy to sleep," and "always pressed with study." They viewed stress as being inevitable in their lives. But stress was considered to produce not only nervous tension, but also an optimal state of stimulus to study.

For Kwon, who is majoring in the scientific field of geodesy, seeking new information was a very important academic procedure. He thought he was always stressed

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3 According to some informants, such as Ro, Kwon, Kim, and Ku, who have studied in both Korean and American colleges, the intensity of study is not different among them from Korea to the U.S., but the amount of study time seems like a big difference. They perceived that reading, preparing, and understanding problems in English make the difference in the amount of time spent on their studies in the U.S. versus in Korea.
during his study time, and leisure helped him to release stress in his life. As he described:

As a student majoring in engineering, I think that one of the most important characteristics of modern society is the fact that technological development has proceeded so much faster now than at any other time. To study changing technology is to look for new information as soon as possible. Within this situation, I don't have much time to spend on leisure activity, and have too much stress every day, and I don't even have the desire to have leisure participation, or release my stress. ... but I have to enjoy leisure. My purpose is to make myself more effective in my work. I've worked for 20 hours in my lab, taking normally 3 classes, having homework, and projects from companies or government, directed by my advisor. Keeping good health and releasing stress from my work enables me to accomplish my work effectively.

Considering that checking his time schedule of a typical weekday was helpful to understanding him, I asked for his schedule by E-mail. I understood why he believed that controlling his stress by leisure gave him a worthy meaning in his life. As he sent it:

7:00 Wake up
7:30 Go to school
8:00 Study for projects
11:30 GS875 (Sectional analysis)
12:30 Geol. 642 (Geomatic mathematics)
2:30 Lunch with seniors in our dept.
3:30 Do homework for GS 875

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5:00 Make programs for presentation
6:30 Back to home
7:00 Dinner
8:00 Go to school
8:30 Office—Study for Geol. 642
12:00 Back to home
12:30 Sleep

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With regard to releasing stress that occurred from the nature of her schedule, Yoo mentioned her way of managing it.

This quarter's class schedule consisted of only morning classes from 7:30 to 12:30. After 12:30 P.M., I usually felt that the day was too long, unlike in other quarter. How I used the leftover time gave me some stress, so I started jogging for two hours around 3:00 P.M. This exercise released the stress that resulted from my new time schedule, and changed how I felt. It also connected my school schedule and my self-regulating learning at home, as well as giving me some psychological motivation, so that I could enjoy studying because I worked out with fun.

Chon talked about "just imagination for fun" to release stress. She emphasized her experience as changing her feelings and helping her to deal with stress. As Chon expressed it:

... the imagination to have fun and enjoyment made me
overcome the stress which I usually got from being anxious during midterm or final examinations. Imagining something possible helped me feel good and it was the beginning point of my leisure experience. After I finished the most difficult period, such as the examination times, doing what I imagined gave me self-satisfaction and inner reward for psychological depression during the difficult periods.

Lee, who plays racquetball very often, expressed that stress is "something that's blocked in my mind." For him, playing racquetball means destroying the block:

...by hitting the ball to six sides from up to down, I can have the feeling that something blocked in my mind is clearly destroyed.

However, Lee also talked about the "negative effects" related to releasing stress through leisure, when he felt that he got more stress from unexpected factors in a game.

I had an appointment to play tennis with my friend, but he brought another friend whom I never met before. The new friend had a skill of high level in serve and stroke; thus I got much tension while playing tennis. That experience was so bad that it gave me stress rather than enjoyment.

2) Healing effect
In its healing aspect, leisure experience is helpful to take care of mental and physical illnesses. Lee who had suffered from serious attacks of indigestion in the last year, introduced how he cured his disease through leisure:

... at that time (last spring) I had mental agony about my future schedule. I really wanted to change my major, industrial design, because it did not suit my aptitude. That agony caused indigestion problems during the spring quarter. One friend who knew my situation suggested that I take a trip to Florida during spring break. In fact, I lost interest to go there, but my friend at last persuaded me. ...As soon as I went there, and the natural conditions that are different from Ohio made me forget my mental and physical problems. I just fell into gorgeous weather and a fun environment with the other travelers. When I returned to Columbus, my mental and physical functions were restored, and the trip had given me some courage to wisely overcome my problems.

For Lee, his leisure experience played a significant role in his healing mental and physical problems by strengthening his inner powers. Lee further expressed that “I realized through the leisure experience that the bright sides of human life exist more than the dark sides.”

Chon also believed that leisure is more important than going to a hospital for medical treatment. She thought that “the proper exercise while suffering a physical illness may contribute to healing from some disease rather than taking
medication, even though it takes longer."

3) Physical rest/relaxation

Adequate relaxation is considered a satisfying basic human need. Lim mentioned how to deal with physical fatigue by doing sport:

I am really crazy for sport. I like both watching sport games such as the NBA basketball game and playing a ball game. If I feel my bodily condition is bad, or I require practice, I go to the gym in Larkins Hall. When I lived in Korea, I usually rested by sleeping rather than doing a sport activity. But, now I realize working out is better than sleeping. Physical fatigue has an inertia so that if I take a nap when I feel some fatigue, next time I have to sleep to get rid of this kind of physical tiredness and the psychological feeling is not even changed; but going out to exercise changes my bodily condition to more cool as well as giving me a better feeling.

Ro, who is enjoying jogging, described how he solved his physical fatigue by doing exercise:

Even though I run 5km, I can't feel my physical weariness is relieved suddenly. After the exercise, I am used to taking a shower and I feel my state of health is getting better. ...You know how you feel your physical condition suddenly changes even if you are doing good exercise--I don't know which one is the best for good health. What I feel as physical fatigue is removed from psychological changes at first, I believe. I actually hate the kind of exercise where I
have to work out regularly. When I am conscious that I need to get some fresh air, that’s a good time to work out. Good relaxation is when I feel the need not only to improve my physical exhaustion, but also to satisfy my mental needs.

As Ro continued to talk about how his feeling is changed after jogging, he described it like this: “it was like a tangled thread got untangled.”

4. Stimulation

Pursuing stimulation through leisure usually relates to getting away from the routine of daily life and keeping in touch with other feelings or moods. The theme of stimulation consisted of two sub-categories to explain my informants’ desires of this kind: 1) fun and 2) exploration.

1) Fun

Fun is the most fundamental element of leisure experience. Kwon expressed how leisure brings fun into his current lifestyle:

Without fun, leisure is not meaningful. I have too much stress from studying, but my inner desire to feel fun is expressed in how I manage my work. ...At once, when I go to a golf course, I am absorbed by playing golf and there is a lot of fun; my inner desire can be fulfilled through golf.
Chon stated that fun depends on her emotional mood, and is not gained through participation in leisure. She also indicated the situation of competition during leisure lessened her ability to have fun.

Depending on my emotional mood, it can be fun or not. ... When I perceive my opponent as a competitor in tennis, there is no fun. It's a totally competitive game like a kind of hard work, not leisure. Before I play tennis, even if I have a mind to enjoy today's game as much as I can, if the other players are aggressive, there's no fun. So I think whether I have fun or not is determined by the situation and the emotional moods.

Sung pointed out that having fun in a leisure experience is situational and explained "fun" from the feminist perspective.

It is most memorable that all my girlfriends are without a man, and I see all my girlfriends when I have "girls' time" like a night out. ...As you know, as girls grow up, they tend to feel that they should rely on guys and they should depend on men, and they should meet men to have fun. Just being with girls, I have very much fun. We don't need men to be there to have fun. So that was very significant. All of the girls that night felt very good, because most guys and girls, they go out and feel like they have to be hooked up with girls and guys. They have to meet guys or girls. But, without meeting the opposite sex, we can go out
and have a fun with our own sex.

2) Exploration

Exploration is a salient point especially when we talk about outdoor recreation. It allows people the opportunity to have sympathy with nature, to recognize the importance of one’s surroundings through leisure.

Chung discovered that going fishing gives him not only time in beautiful nature, but time for knowing himself in terms of how he is managing his life now:

In the atmosphere everything was calm, nobody there, and I just focused on a float. It was fantastic. ...The word “calmness” was all I felt. I thought the lake and I were not two, and through concentration on the float I could feel real freedom which I couldn’t have from my routines. After some hours, I tried to think about my whole life, not a shortsighted life goal. ... Myself in beautiful nature... how wonderful it was! I could love my life and all my surrounding family, friends, and so on. It was a wonderful exploration to seek for myself through getting absorbed in nature.

Kim thought exploration supports self-esteem:

It was somewhat scary because I never tried it before. As I became skillful after much practice, snowboarding felt like skiing. When I was going down from uphill, I had the desire to go to the other side where snow was reflecting the sun--there was a very beautiful small
hill. I hesitated how to get there, but soon I wanted to touch the snow with my hands. When I got there, I felt much joy. That inspired me with more courage.

**Link between leisure and culture**

Throughout the in-depth interviews, the link between leisure and culture was explored. As the informants explained the meaning of leisure in their lives, leisure affects all mental, psychological, environmental, and physical areas of their social and cultural lives. In this sense, this section seeks an interrelating position that reveals some assumptions about the role that leisure plays in culture, and how culture brings leisure into the realm of personal and social advancement. The link is elaborated in three categories: 1. culture is shared in leisure; 2. culture is learned through leisure activity; and 3. leisure is oriented to sub-culture.

**1. Culture is shared in leisure**

When many informants in this study considered the relationship between leisure and culture, one of the common responses was that culture is shared in their leisure experiences. That is, leisure experience plays a great role
in sharing cultural aspects such as values, modes, attitudes, morals, and so on.

During leisure, some participants perceived how cultural differences between Korea and America interact in their leisure and life. In the case of Lee, the leisure participation style totally changed from "group-oriented" to "individual-oriented" since he has been in the United States. Speaking about how leisure is influenced by culture, Lee expressed his changed leisure pattern by comparing Korean and American leisure cultures that he observed.

Culture... It seems like quite a complex concept for me. I don't know exactly how much human interaction is defined as culture. But, if I talk about the cultural aspect of leisure, leisure may contain a lot of cultural values. The characteristics of leisure are reflected in culture. Leisure I have experienced now in the U.S. is totally different from my Korean style of leisure. It's like more... individual... technological... and... anti-stress. You know, in Korea leisure mostly means doing something together. I think that what I call "Korean style leisure" is oriented toward collective leisure where we share everything through leisure such as drinking^4, playing Korean card games^5, etc.

^4 In Korea the drinking culture of what is called "bomb liquor" is a unique drinking habit. It consists of a very strong mixed liquor of beer and whiskey. Because of increasing health problems for Korean urbanites, now many social associations are working to eliminate this drinking culture (Staff, 1997, September 20).
Lee further expressed his experience of how cultural values impacted on his leisure:

... American culture I think tends to respect individual life even if people share the same kind of leisure. In Korea, we have a kind of group mission which is more important than one's private goal in life. I had many experiences where I didn't participate in group meetings, in which case most of my friends thought me to be an asocial guy.

For Kim, leisure meant getting to know cultural values. She mentioned that her leisure experience was filled with the understanding of culture when she began a new leisure activity that she had never experienced in Korea.

The most impressive thing I shared through leisure here was the fact that enjoying leisure together is not a competition with each other, but an encouragement that everybody can be satisfied through leisure. One day I went to a softball game with my American friends, and there were many unskilled people like me. But everybody could join in the game and many skilled players encouraged the females and unskilled persons.

5 The phenomenon of the lack of a sound play culture in Korea is now a serious social problem. According to the SBS TV station's report (Staff, 1997, September 10), the most wanted leisure during the Chu Suk holidays (September 14-18, 1997), which is the most celebrated holiday and looks much like American Thanksgiving, was reported as playing the Korean traditional card game called "Go Stop." Among Seoul residents, 19% chose Go Stop, and next most were watching videos (17.5%), traveling (12%), and sleeping.
and they taught us to join actively. I think that leading everybody to participate is more important than competing with each other. No matter what we do, doing it together is better. I guess it's an important American cultural value that every member makes up something together rather than considering output, and it's real sport spirit as well.

Seo spoke of the cultural nature of leisure through his changed perspective since he’s been in the United States.

You see, in Korea, most people sleep when they are tired of their work. They may think of it as the best leisure. It’s the same with me. But in my impression, the more that Americans are tired of work, the more they go out to work out. I think it comes from different cultures. We have a more stable style in leisure, but American people have a somewhat dynamic culture. Since I realized this, I changed my leisure attitude. If I am tired of my study, I go out to exercise, such as jogging. Now I can say that "the more a top is spinning, one more it is trying." ...The top may be human life. Through leisure, human life is going on more positively. This is my philosophy which I have realized from observing American leisure.

Chung had the following to say about his experience of leisure attitudes:

I already have my own culture [Korean]. Like that, American culture is not learned in short terms, or memorized like English words; it may take longer to understand why American people behave like that. I am surprised that my own habits have changed, and are
influenced by this environment. I never tried to learn that, but it was made by my unconscious cultural behavior ... I mean living in America itself gives me a period of sharing in American culture. I was so ashamed of dancing with others in Korea, but now I enjoy dancing in the Jazz bar. It's not accomplished by an intended learning, but a natural cultural process through which I live here.

2. Culture is learned through leisure activity

Leisure also promoted many informants to learn about culture. Through joining leisure activities with American people, the informants could learn cultural diversity, social system, and values. As some informants thought, sport especially supported getting to know valuable cultural aspects.

Baik explained her experience when she was surprised at different cultural attitudes during leisure activities with multicultural friends:

We went to a picnic with many Asian friends, and ate dinner talking about how to cook traditional foods. While talking and eating, I was so surprised by looking at what my Japanese friends did. As you know, in Korea eating food by lifting a rice bowl is considered discourteous, but the Japanese think of it as a normal style. When I asked them, they didn’t understand me. Like that, enjoying leisure together leads me to learn different cultural aspects. ... If you hear Japanese or Chinese songs, you can find out that some words have the same pronunciations and meanings. It’s strange,
but that's my learning experience through leisure with people of other cultures.

Having an American conversational partner, Shin mentioned that his leisure experience with an American friend gave him a good opportunity to learn about young Americans.

We met at least twice a week. We usually went to coffee shops near campus. I asked about the American educational system, human networks, and social problems. It gave me an opportunity to learn more about young Americans. I guess it can't be learned from a text. I realized how I have too much prejudice about young Americans. Talking together directly is a good way to get to know them.

Experiencing sport in America led some informants to understand the cultural values which sport has. For Chon, doing sports was the best way to learn cultural manners and values, as "sports like golf and tennis provide many occasions to learn about a culture." Chon explained her opinion about cultural learning through a new sport.

I think when I experience a new sport in America that I never tried to play before in Korea this might be a cultural learning experience. Within a different culture, learning new sport activities means discovering hidden aspects about the different culture. American culture involves cultural and social phenomena
such as manner, spirit, and so on.

For Lee, doing sports with American friends is also a way of "learning about their culture." He explained further:

When I played tennis with my American friends, I could learn the play "manner," and after the game, I asked why they did something during the game. I learned some gestures such as raising the hand before a serve and some tennis phrases that I didn’t know before.

Talking about culture and sport, Kwon emphasized that:

I sometimes feel that I have to do something with my American friends, because I want to learn something here. Especially, learning American culture and overcoming the language problem are significant issues with American friends. When I learned the differences of thoughts between Koreans and Americans by communication during or after playing tennis, I think this is learning about culture. Obviously, communication with my American friends also helped to improve my English.

Kwon also explained how he could understand American culture through his leisure experience.

What American culture is can be reflected through the living attitudes and habits my American friends have. When I joined some sport activities with my American
friends, I felt I could understand how their culture works. ...I can't say it's comparison between cultures, but the attitude in sport participation is manifested somewhat differently. We [Koreans] play tennis based on skills, while Americans, I guess, play with a strong power. So there's a lot of time I have to follow the ball. I can't enjoy it as much as when I play with my Korean friends. It results from cultural differences, I think. Doing together itself creates good relations, but gives me much satisfaction.

3. Leisure is oriented to sub-culture

Some informants thought of sub-culture when they experienced leisure. What they expressed as sub-culture in leisure is suggested as "my leisure group" (Chung), "personal leisure space" (Yoo), "girls' group" (Sung), and "my Korean tennis members" (Shin). Leisure allowed some informants to make up their groups which share the same kind of leisure.

Ku explained why he enjoys leisure oriented to a sub-culture based on himself alone.

I came here when I was older, I think. So I have had difficulty in getting acquainted with my American friends. I mostly spent much time alone to do something. As I said, my favorite leisure is watching Japanese animation and jogging near the campus area. These kinds of leisure I can do by myself without any partner. I like to do it alone. Even though I met many Korean friends, it's not in order to enjoy my leisure, but for social benefit.
Ro explained how his interest gained and made his leisure group:

Before I came here, I wasn't interested in American football. But, now I am crazy about football. Since I have really enjoyed watching American football, I also like to talk about the game with some friends. We usually meet to talk about college football, about the plays, strategies, and coaching conditions. ...As I am involved much in American football, I can form a kind of group to discuss football.

Chung thought his preferred leisure style created new social relations. As he stated:

I think in the United States we have more choices to have leisure groups than we do in Korea. When I work out playing tennis or golf every week, my leisure peers are not different people. Even though I know many American or Korean friends, only four or five people with whom I am involved in leisure meet regularly.

Summary

To explore the nature of leisure experience in the lives of Korean college students studying in the United States, this chapter examined the meaning of leisure, the
components of leisure experience, and the relationship between culture and leisure as referred to in some Korean college students' own stories. It tried to disclose the essential meanings of leisure experiences in a cultural context.

With this content, the presentation of data results shows the descriptive information of the informants, the meaning of leisure, some components of their leisure experience within a cultural setting influenced by both Korean and American cultures, and the link between culture and leisure. The descriptive background showed each informant's present situation, life style and general story of leisure.

The meaning of leisure was revealed by how Korean college students considered what leisure meant in their cultural and social experiences. It was elaborated in four categories: 1. a vital energy of living process; 2. composure; 3. enjoyment; and 4. freedom.

Next, in an interpretation of the components of leisure experience, four categories were discussed: 1. personal development; 2. social bonding; 3. therapeutic; and 4. stimulation. The last discussion was about how leisure and culture are interrelated in the life world of my informants, explored in three emerging categories: 1. culture is shared
in leisure; 2. culture is learned through leisure activity; and 3. leisure is oriented to sub-culture.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Summary of the research process

This study used qualitative inquiry to explore the significance of leisure in the lives of Korean students in the United States. The aim was to understand the meaning of leisure, and the leisure experience from informants' own experience of leisure within a cultural context.

To consider both existential and social aspects of leisure, this study used two theoretical frameworks: phenomenology and sociology. Phenomenology was used to examine the meaning and nature of leisure experience. A sociology framework was used to explore the relationship between leisure and cultural influences in context. These two different methods of inquiring provided frameworks that supported the understanding leisure from a more holistic
perspective.

My role as qualitative researcher was to associate with informants as an "involved," "subjective," and an "active" learner in the research setting by questioning the informants while they participated in a leisure experience. I could see the attributes of behavior as social action with cultural meaning.

This study used a total of four research methods: 1) interviewing; 2) open-ended questionnaire; 3) self-reflection of leisure experience via E-mail; and 4) self-introduction description. The main research methods were interviewing and the open-ended questionnaire. Self-introduction description and self-reflection of leisure experience were supplementary methods.

Data analysis is to analyze the interview data, open-data collection on ended questionnaire responses, and data from the self-introduction paper. Significant words and sentences were identified and coded by category and classified. The meaning of each category was checked against previous research. As a final step, categories were cross checked against classifications by a second coder, 'H. Lee.'

In order to provide validity for this study, the researcher applied three methods: 1) triangulation; 2)
Discussion of findings

In so far as this research project used single case studies of 13 informants, it may only suggest generalizable conclusions about leisure for all Korean college students studying in the United States. This study explored leisure experience “as it is.”

The study raised the following fundamental questions: 1) What meaning may be derived from leisure as a subjective experience? 2) What are the elements of the leisure experience? and 3) What is the relationship between leisure and culture in the life world of the individual? All questions were drawn from the informants’ own reports of everyday experiences of leisure relations. Informants’ reports of their experiences suggesting new perspectives about the significance of leisure in a new cultural context.

My informants’ subjective experiences of the meaning of leisure led me to create four categories: 1) vital energy of a living process; 2) composure; 3) enjoyment; 4) freedom.

In the first category, leisure is defined as restoring "vital energy of a living process.” The term “vital energy” has a unique cultural meaning\(^1\) for the informants which

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\(^{1}\) According to Seo (1996), a famous scholar of Korean philology who
relates to concept of "Ki." As Nagamoto (1992) mentions, "everywhere in the world is filled with the invigorating activities of life-energy (Ki)" (p.202). In Asian culture, energy called "Ki" or "Chi" is considered the main source of life within the personal body.

The second category identified leisure as bringing composure. This was divided into two factors which were used to refer to the state of mind/body: relaxation and self-reflection. Through leisure, the relaxation of the body/mind relieved fatigue for the informants. As Shaw (1985) indicated, relaxation is a very important element characterizing leisure experience in everyday life. The effect of leisure also was found in self-reflection, in which people think back over their lives and current situation. Leisure for composure provided the informants with a positive mental state and bodily conditions, and physical condition, improving their life energies.

The third category of the use of leisure was leisure for enjoyment. Enjoyment is also considered the main element of the flow and optimal experience that accompanies leisure activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; 1990). Enjoyment was expressed as feelings of excitement, published the book titled "Ki treatment and super power" that introduces the stories of Shamans, "Our use of Ki in medical treatment is the most valuable medical treatment which provides people with pure remedy and no side effects" (p.297).

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amusement, freshness, and cool gained from the pleasant state of both body and mind. For many informants, the concept of enjoyment in leisure meant not only having enjoyable feelings by oneself, but also sharing this kind of feeling with others. That is, enjoyment always came with the satisfaction of both individual and social needs. This fact is supported frequently in leisure research which identifies enjoyment as a fundamental motive for leisure participation (Dumazedier, 1974; Iso-Ahola, 1980). Enjoyment indicates sharing in fun with social relations (Kelly, 1987) and individual satisfaction at the same time (Mannell, 1980).

The final category defined leisure as producing feelings of freedom. This did not mean just emancipation from obligation, but a fully positive sense of self. Leisure experience as freedom enhanced the intensity of ordinary physical experience for my informants subjectively. Harper (1981) states:

in the various worlds of leisure, our freedom is experienced as an intensification of our ordinary experience. The experience is "thicker" than our day-to-day experiences. Because of the successive unfolding of the experience, we are, in a sense, three times richer for it as we anticipate, realize (make real), and recapitulate. And rather than seeing our freedom simply in terms of some moment or point of departure or arrival, we live our freedom intensely

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throughout the extended duration of the experience. (p.127)

Kelly and Kelly (1994) also indicate that "the main theme of leisure has been freedom, not only freedom from the necessity of work but also with a sense of self-determination" (p.257). As a major dimension of leisure, freedom must be understood as expressive and primarily an end in itself, based on immediate individual experience, rather than apart from the obligations of one's life.

According to informants' statements, the meaning of leisure from them was one of vital energy, composure, enjoyment, and freedom. These statements suggested that understanding the meaning of leisure is not simple. Leisure is not just a concept of time, activity, and attitude, but is combined with multiple concepts of time, activity, and attitude to produce the meaning of leisure as energy, composure, enjoyment, and freedom for my informants.

"...leisure has three preconditions: some capacity for free choice, some time left over once life's necessities have been satisfied, and the availability of experience that departs from the ordinary routine." (Bammel & Bammel, 1992, p. 11)
One aim of this study was to explore holistically the subjective meanings of leisure for Korean students who experienced leisure in both Korean and American cultures. As Bammel & Bammel (1992) indicate, the holistic perspective helps us to understand the meaning of leisure more completely:

the holistic perspective suggests that you must perceive life as a whole: you cannot segregate parts of the day and say one part is work, another leisure. (p. 250)

From this holistic perspective, the fundamental question, "What is the essential structure of leisure experiences?" allows us to understand the nature of leisure experiences. One goal was to capture in the data the existential meaning of the leisure experience as what it meant.

For this study, values of leisure experience were classified into four categories: 1) personal development, 2) social bonding, 3) therapeutic, and 4) stimulation. These categories referred to positive states of body/mind which promote a beneficial life quality for most informants.

The first category, personal development, consisted of two sub-categories: self-challenge and self-control. Through leisure, most informants have experienced a
beneficial growth of positive self-concept, as opposed to the negative self-concept that one experienced when stressed and overworked. Most informants often expressed that their current life was focused on an orientation only toward study, which gave them a negative self-concept. They experienced how leisure provides an existential space of individual development that is different from the depression of study. Thus, some informants reported that acquiring leisure skills and exploring new leisure experiences enhanced their self-esteem. This fact supports Iso-Ahola’s (1980) argument that self-challenge is enhanced by acquiring and developing new skills during leisure experience.

Leisure experience also provided the opportunity to control one’s body/mind in a situation such as golf for some informants. Involvement in this kind of leisure led them to improve self-control. Bain (1995) gives the experience of playing golf in this sense.

When I play golf, I am absorbed in golf - and my absorption is a solo activity. I do not want to compare scores or compete. The state that I am seeking and occasionally find is total concentration on the game but simultaneous detachment from the outcome. (p.249)

The second category is social bonding, an important function for strengthening the ties of family and other
social groups through leisure. In this research, social bonding involved social relations with school peers, including both Koreans and Americans. Most informants emphasized how social bonding or social cohesion was a positive result of their leisure experience. This led to building meaningful social ties. This category consisted of three sub-categories: friendship, communication, and meeting new friends.

My informants defined friendship as sharing their feelings together as in fraternal relationships. This perception was closely related to culturally unique problems suffered by most informants, such as studying in a foreign language, cultural heterogeneity, and homesickness. The Korean students sought to live with their friends to overcome their problems through mutual cooperation. In this regard, meeting new friends through leisure allowed them not only to refresh themselves through a pastime together, but also provided them with valuable social contacts and information regarding living and surviving in the United States. The communicative aspects in leisure experience allowed some informants to bolster social bonding. Leisure activities, especially talking about sports, led them to experience a sense of social cohesion with many friends. As Driver and Brown's (1986) previous research showed, social
bonding in leisure experience provides important motivation to become involved in leisure.

The third category, the therapeutic aspect of leisure experience, referred to the ability of leisure participation to reduce serious health problems and to stimulate control over recurring mental and physical symptoms of illness for some informants. This refers to how my informants controlled some negative health conditions through their leisure experience. Leisure experience as therapy was broken down further into three sub-categories: stress management, healing effect, and physical rest/relaxation.

Many informants mentioned that leisure was helpful to release their stress and even helped to heal some disease that resulted from their lifestyles. Many researchers actually have reported that the therapeutic effect of leisure experience improved mental and physical health by encouraging self-esteem (Austin, 1987; Brok, 1988; Mason, 1988; Shasby, Heuchert & Gransneder, 1984). Some of the informants in this study expressed that enjoyable leisure experience promoted healing and prevented illness.

The final category, stimulation, emerged as an important product of leisure experience. Leisure activity led some informants to get away from the routine of daily life through fun and exploration in a non-work context.
Many informants perceived that fun is the most significant factor in leisure experience and worked to satisfy an inner desire to escape from the stress and depression caused by a daily, study-oriented lifestyle. Some female informants, however, indicated that leisure experiences were not always fun. This depended on the emotional, situational, and environmental situation as they experienced them.

Leisure activity in a natural setting afforded some informants the opportunity not only to think about themselves, but also to enjoy the beauty of nature around them. Also, some degree of self-esteem was encouraged through exploring nature, in the case, for example, of a female informant in my study who said she gained a driving sense of adventure. As Gunter (1987) explains: "a sense of adventure need not require an exotic setting, however, even if these feelings are most recognizable in such circumstances. It may occur in common, everyday situations which tend, for some people, to provoke feelings of wonder and mystery" (pp. 125-126).

In addition to evaluating leisure experience, interpreting culture through leisure was a major emphasis of this study. As Pieper (1952) indicated, leisure is the basis of culture and it has various key directions to solve the nature of culture. That is, leisure is embodied in a
cultural context and reflects unique cultural evolution.

The starting point in this study for interpreting the link between culture and leisure was asking the question, "In what ways do members of Korean college students' groups actively construct their culture in America?" In order to approach this question, I had to make sure I understood the perspective of culture from my informants' point of view. According to the informants, there are three aspects of culture: 1) unique social products; 2) ethnic and social diversity; and 3) different attitudes toward life. This indicated that the perceived culture includes all human interaction rather than just superficial human behavior.

The relationship between leisure and culture was explored in three categories according to the informants' replies: 1) culture is shared in leisure; 2) culture is learned through leisure activity; and 3) leisure is oriented to a sub-culture. First, many cultural aspects shared through leisure experience emerged. As many informants reported, the differences between Korean and American cultures were revealed during leisure experience. These included an individual versus a group orientation, and differences in types of human relations, lifestyles, and leisure habits. Informants also emphasized that leisure experience allowed them to recognize the differences between
the two cultures. It also led them to assimilate American cultural values. It is obvious that learning American cultural values helped Korean students to adapt to studying at the university in the United States more effectively.

Second, how leisure supports the opportunity to learn about a culture in an enjoyable way for the informants. While sharing culture through leisure experience was largely an unconscious process, learning a culture involved purposeful intent. Most informants thought that one of the significant goals of study abroad was not only academic development, but also experiencing cultural diversity, acquiring knowledge of a different social system, and experiencing different values. In this sense, leisure experience promoted many informants to improve their use of English language, to acquire new cultural manners, and to appreciate a completely different attitude toward life.

Third, most informants tended to form a sub-culture for leisure. As a way of adapting to their new cultural environment, they tried to construct a sub-cultural group based on their shared leisure activities.
Suggestions for future research

Every year, Korean students are coming to the United States in increasing numbers either to pursue academic studies or for cultural experience. Both of these pursuits provide material for future research on leisure experiences. The fact that Korean students studying in the United States have experienced and are influenced by two cultures provides them with a complex set of meanings of leisure and their experience of world. There is much that warrants further investigation.

The following are suggestions for future research study of leisure experience within a cultural context:

1. Develop phenomenological research methods using both Korean and English texts to understand the nature or meaning of everyday experiences of Korean students abroad. A phenomenological research methods allow for research projects offering researchers insights from having a more direct contact with culture and human experience.

2. Develop a longitudinal study, including cultural/racial groups of various backgrounds. Such a study would look at the cultural evolution of the leisure. Through the
comparison of other cultural/racial groups of foreign students studying in the United States, such a issue of the study would be an insightful guide to the critical relationship between leisure and culture for increasing numbers of foreign students.

3. Conduct interpretive research from various geographical areas and chronological classifications. The study tries to identify how leisure is experienced and how it serves as acculturation for Koreans studying in the United States.

4. Conduct a study to explore leisure for Korean students who have previously experienced the American educational system. Such an interpretative study might show how past leisure experience has influenced their life.

Limitations of the study

This study explored the significance of leisure for a group of Korean college students studying in the United States rather than to seek a conceptualization of leisure. One limitation of this study, as noted earlier, concerned my interpretation of the research presented in relation to the informants' experiences of leisure. The following are
limitations of this study:

1. In so far as this study was conducted in Korean and English, language presented some specific problems. In the process of interpreting the data, the informants’ subjective and existential meanings were used to describe how they experienced leisure in their lives. To a certain degree, the depth and richness of language was lost due to linguistic differences between Korean and English, as was also the case with the use of metaphor and Korean slang expressions. Emotions and feelings, some of which were confidential, were often difficult to translate fully into the English both by the Korean participants and by the researcher.

2. In conducting the member check, I found that some informants revised their background information and changed what had been reported about their concepts of leisure. Differences between past leisure experience statements and recent leisure experience statements were noted in checking the data. Changes between these leisure experience statements over time was one area that was not fully explained in this research.
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM
RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

I give research permission to Chul Won Lee to make use of the information I provide him through interviews, questionnaires, personal data analysis, reflection paper by E-mail, transcripts from audiotapes, and other ethnographic notes for his dissertation and other academic publications. I will participate in his research projects voluntarily to provide data on my leisure participation and experiences.

I permit Chul Won Lee to use my quotes which respond to his research project honestly. I also consent to the use of a pseudonym or my initials instead of my full name when applying my data to his final research.

Your Name:____________________
Signature:____________________
Date:____________________

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APPENDIX B

SELF-INTRODUCTION DESCRIPTION FORM
SELF-INTRODUCTION DESCRIPTION

Please introduce yourself. Give your personal thoughts, perspective, culture, and life history. The information that you provide about your academic background, age, family, your academic ambition, future dreams, hobbies, preferred sport and leisure activities, the year's stay in the U.S., your motivation to study in the U.S., and so on will be helpful in my research. Your information will not be used beyond the purposes of my dissertation. In order to ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym or your initials will be used in my final research document. Thank you for your cooperation.

Your Name:________________________
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWING GUIDE SHEET
INTERVIEWING GUIDE

QUESTIONS

I. Meaning of leisure

1. Please describe your thoughts on what leisure means to you in your subjective experience.

2. Please tell me, when do you like to participate in leisure? And why?

II. Leisure experience

1. Please explain the significance of leisure experience in your current lifestyle and attitude.

2. Recalling from your experience, which leisure activity do you regard as a privilege to bring about personal and social benefits?
3. Please describe your most memorable leisure experience during your stay in the U.S.

4. How do you feel during leisure participation? And how do you experience leisure time and space during a recreational activity?

III. Culture and leisure

1. What does the term “culture” meant to you?

2. How do you think that leisure relates to what you mean by “culture”?

3. If you experienced a cultural change in yourself during a leisure here in the U.S., please explain your experience.
APPENDIX D

OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Name ________________

In the following investigation, I am interested in your leisure participation pattern and experience. Please respond with your subjective leisure experience. Any comment you may make is of importance to me. Please take your time and answer all questions as honestly as you can. As we agreed, a pseudonym or your initials will be used to protect your identity. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me: Lee, Chul Won, Tel. (614) 326-0176 or E-mail: lee.819@osu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What is your perception of leisure participation?

2. How would you describe your feelings when you are having a good time during leisure activity? And what is involved in this good experience?
3. Do you think leisure experience improves the quality of life? If so, please tell me your point of view.

4. How has your leisure participation changed as a result of living in the U.S.? What is different about current living and study habits?

5. How do you reconcile the cultural complexity between American and Korean cultures as it is expressed in your leisure experience?
APPENDIX E

SELF-REFLECTION OF LEISURE EXPERIENCE

GUIDE BY E-MAIL
SELF-REFLECTION OF LEISURE EXPERIENCE
BY E-MAIL

I appreciate your participation in my research. Feel free to describe your participation in any leisure that you experienced recently. If possible, please send me the following list in ENGLISH as your reflection of today's leisure experience.

These answers must reflect your experience of leisure participation. Thus, you can choose as many questions as you want. Your writing style, form, and length do not matter. If I don't understand what you are saying, I will get in touch with you in person to ask you to clarify. This self-reflection paper must be sent to my E-mail Account: "lee.819@osu.edu"

1. What kinds of leisure activities did you participate in today? Why did you choose that activity? Who joined your leisure activity?
2. What differences or changes over leisure participation did you notice in terms of your feeling, health condition, and so on? Were you satisfied with your leisure participation?

3. Please describe your optimal (peak) experience in today’s leisure participation. You may skip this question if you did not have a peak experience during your leisure activity.

4. Please describe anything you thought or felt during your participation in today is (or your most recent) leisure.

5. Any additional comment?
APPENDIX F

FIRST MEMBER CHECK LETTER

BY E-MAIL
Dear informants:

This letter is written for interim checking to help me understand the data. When you browse through these enclosed tables below (characteristics of informants and participation of informants to the research process) through E-mail, if you find mistakes or misunderstandings in the data, please inform me as soon as possible. This step called "member check" is very important work for 'rigor' research. Now I am trying to transcribe the interview data word by word. After I finish this manuscript transcription, I will send it to you by "local" mail, not electronic mail.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Truly yours,

Chul Won Lee
APPENDIX G

SECOND MEMBER CHECK LETTER
June 13, 1997

Dear informants:

I really appreciate your help. How was your final-term examination? I hope my research did not prevent your studies. I have just finished transcribing the data from our interviews. As I told you, the interview data are very important for me to explore your leisure experience. Although I tried to transcribe the data as carefully as I did, I discovered that there were some points where I didn’t understand what you meant. I enclosed a draft of the transcribed text for interim checking by you. If you want to add, delete, or write any comments when you read the text, please feel free to do so. This process will enhance the validity of my research, as I explained to you by E-mail.

Any comments will be very much appreciated. As soon as I get all of your responses, I am going to code all of the texts that I collected. I also will schedule a private
meeting to discuss the subject categorization of your data around the end of June. If you have any question, feel free to call me at (614)326-0176, or send me E-mail: lee.819@osu.edu. I hope you have a great summer vacation.

Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Chul Won Lee
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