

## Emancipating Leisure: The Recovery of Freedom in Leisure

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Freedom has been a frequent theme in the analysis of leisure. Existing conceptualizations of freedom in leisure focus on interior mental experiences and fail to acknowledge the historical horizon against which leisure occurs. This failure reinforces existing patterns of dominance. A critical theory of freedom in leisure addresses the deformation of leisure's emancipatory potential by exploring the horizon against which leisure occurs. J. Habermas's analysis of rationality types and the eclipse of leisure in the public sphere provides a framework for examining the diminished emancipatory potential of contemporary leisure, while a review of recent democratic theory illustrates the necessity of emancipating leisure for a restoration of democracy.

KEYWORDS: *Leisure, freedom, critical theory*

### Introduction

This essay was written to expand the theoretic framework for investigating the association of leisure and freedom.<sup>1</sup> This association has existed at least since Aristotle wrote that leisure is freedom from the necessity to labor at menial tasks (*Politics*, 1269a), but this statement has yet to be understood in all its dimensions, at least in leisure studies. Aristotle's account has this advantage: leisure is set in a specific context, the ancient *polis*, and has a specific aim, virtuous action. The freedom realized in leisure is thus given a richer substance than in contemporary discussions, in which inattention to social, cultural, economic, and political structures obscures ways contemporary forms of leisure are dominated by and contribute to the continuing dominance of social, cultural, economic, and political forces inimical not just to freedom in leisure, but to that expansion of human capacities which is the core of the very idea of freedom.

Drawing on recent developments in critical theory, particularly the work of J. Habermas,<sup>2</sup> a second purpose in writing this essay was to point out the specifically political nature of freedom in leisure, with the central thesis that leisure has been deformed through increasing commodification and consu-

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<sup>1</sup>Hemingway is an Associate Professor at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164-1410. The thorough reviews this paper received improved it significantly. I wish to thank the reviewers for their assistance in making this a better piece than it would otherwise have been.

<sup>2</sup>See the following for excellent historical analyses of the critical tradition: Benhabib (1986), Held (1980), Jay (1973), and Wiggershaus (1994). For representative excerpts from theorists working in this tradition, see Arato and Gebhardt (1993) and Bronner and Kellner (1989).

merization, themselves reflecting the growing instrumentalism accompanying modernization. Instrumentalism undermines the discursive, civic foundations of Aristotle's original association of freedom and leisure. The application of critical theory to this topic yields a theoretically richer and politically more substantive understanding of the issues involved than is presently available in the leisure studies literature.

Marx (1977, p. 38) defined critique as the effort to attain a reflective "self-understanding" by the participants of the principles underlying social practices. Practices are patterns of human activity defined by two sets of socially determined rules: regulatory, which operate within practices to direct activity; and constitutive, which define practices themselves by forming the boundaries between them and the rest of the world (see Hemingway, 1995, pp. 37-39). Critique of practices proceeds along two axes. Empirically, critique examines the historical development of practices from within to understand the principles out of which their constitutive rules emerged and to explore the contemporary content of their regulatory rules. Normatively, critique states this as the relationship between the original emancipatory *potential* of a practice and its current emancipatory *content*, with emancipation understood as the process of exposing, and preparing the ground for the elimination of the often latent restrictions on the development of human capacities embedded in existing social practices. As Horkheimer (1968) noted, the critical attitude challenges both the content and the justification of social practices in the name of emancipation so defined. A critical analysis of freedom in leisure will therefore address the social practices of leisure and particularly their historical evolution, being attentive to ruptures between principle and practice; between, for example, claims of enabling freedom in leisure and particular forms of leisure that in fact restrict freedom or channel it into a narrow range of practices.

Such an analysis is provided here, beginning with a brief critical summary of existing treatments of freedom in leisure, turning then to leisure's instrumental deformation during the shift from production to consumption oriented economies. A theoretic framework for analyzing these historical developments is provided by J. Habermas's analysis of the increasing instrumentalism associated with modernization, emphasizing the narrowing range of the rules constituting social practices (see especially Habermas, 1984, 1987). The essay concludes with an exploration of a possible enabling role for emancipated leisure in the radical democratization of society.

### Situating Freedom in Leisure

Three current conceptualizations of freedom in leisure may be identified: the spiritual (Bregha, 1991; Pieper, 1963), the experiential (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Harper, 1986), and the perceptual (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Neulinger, 1981; Witt & Ellis, 1985). Despite their differences in approach, these conceptualizations share important similarities: none places freedom in leisure clearly against the social and political structures of modern western

society and all understand freedom as a subjective, interior mental experience. The underlying individualist prejudice of these three approaches lies in the assumption that freedom exists in the individual's ability to control her/his perceptions, spiritual condition, or thoughts subjectively, that is, independently from external influences. The degree to which the individual is able to withdraw from external influences determines the degree of freedom he/she experiences. This experience is fundamentally mental and thus interior to the individual.

These approaches to freedom in leisure reflect the predominantly liberal background against which analyses of leisure have been developed, a background increasingly criticized in current social and political analysis. It is characterized by the conceptualization of the self as disembodied, its defining characteristics existing presocially and thus independently of context. The critical tradition has challenged such conceptualizations from its beginnings (see again Horkheimer's 1968 seminal essay). More recently, communitarians (e.g., Taylor, 1989; Sandel, 1992) and feminists (e.g., Benhabib & Cornell, 1987; Fraser, 1989; Benhabib, 1992; and particularly Frazer & Lacey, 1993) have joined this criticism, arguing variously that the individual conceived independently of context is also empty of content, an autonomous will without ends to be willed; and that such conceptions exclude factors like gender that decisively shape the actual range of freedom available to individuals. Abstracting to such supposedly neutral conceptions like perceptions, subjective experience, or spiritual condition ignores the fact that individuals are situated in specific contexts shaping both these mental experiences as well as their range of possible content.

Freedom, no matter how interiorized, does not exist independently of the contexts in which human beings find themselves. These contexts consist not only of the social and material conditions in which people are located, but also include the forms of rationality these conditions make available to us. There is a dialectical interplay between these two—social and material conditions and forms of rationality—that establishes the range of freedom, the length of the tether, if you will. This interplay is largely absent from considerations of freedom in leisure, thus missing the fact that the individual interior in which freedom is said to be found derives in large part from the forms of thought available to it, and that these forms are historically conditioned by social and material factors. Any analysis of freedom in leisure must, therefore, explore the dynamics of this interplay.

Situating freedom in leisure thus involves both a historical account of the development of leisure, its shapes and content, but also the forms of rationality leisure embodies. Abstractly, a rationality consists of the rules governing the sorts of reasons on which human activity is grounded, by which people make sense of their actions to themselves and to others. These rules tend towards consistency within the sphere of activity to which they apply. They mold the rule governed practices in which people engage. There are multiple forms of rationality which may coexist in any given society. As Habermas (1984, 1987) pointed out, drawing on M. Weber's and T. Parson's

sociological theory, societies have historically been characterized by specific forms of rationality. He suggested (1984, pp. 85-86) that four broad types of rationality, and consequently rational action, may be identified: instrumental or purposive, or strategic reliance on a utilitarian means/ends calculus; normative, or compliance with group norms; dramaturgical, or expressive presentation of self to an audience or public; and communicative, or exchanges between two or more subjects testing claims about an intersubjectively defined situation.<sup>3</sup> Again building on Weber and Parsons, Habermas suggested that the process of modernization, at least in the west but perhaps intrinsically, is largely defined by the increasing dominance of instrumental rationality, the "colonization" of more and more spheres of human activity by instrumental or purposive reasoning with consequent deformation of those spheres, grounded as they were in noninstrumental rationalities. The meanings of human activity change as the rationalities underlying them are penetrated by instrumental, purposive, and utilitarian modes of thinking, themselves reflecting shifts in the material organization of society.<sup>4</sup>

This change can be conceived, for our present purposes, in terms of the social roles grounded in a particular form of rationality. To the degree these roles enlarge or narrow the range of human capacities, they enlarge or narrow the emancipatory potential of the social practices in which these roles are embedded. In classical conceptions, leisure's emancipatory potential lay in its discursive nature (see Hemingway, 1988; Hunnicutt, 1990), which rested in turn on a communicative rationality entailing the mutual offer, criticism, and refinement of validity claims about their intersubjective situation by at least two agents. This situation might have cultural, social, or political dimensions; it might involve questions of what is right, just, or proper in a situation that at least two people work to define between them. By making mutual claims about this situation, those involved both create and alter it, rather than simply accepting it as given (implied by normative rationality) or trying to maximize their individual benefits (implied by instrumental rationality). To the degree, then, that the communicative rationality underlying leisure (with other noninstrumental rationalities) is supplanted by a rationality giving rise to noncommunicative social roles, leisure's emancipatory potential is reduced. That is, to the degree leisure has been commodified and consumerized, the social roles available within leisure practices are grounded in a nonemancipatory rationality, conceiving human interaction as essentially aimed at satisfying self-interest in predefined situations,

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<sup>3</sup>Clearly this is simplifying to an extreme what Habermas developed in two large volumes. For discussion of his analysis, see McCarthy (1978) and White (1988); see also the essays collected in White (1995). Habermas's failure to discuss more concretely the forms of action following out of these rationality types, particularly the expressive and dramaturgical, has been justifiably criticized; see, among others, Benhabib (1986) and Fraser (1989).

<sup>4</sup>Habermas assumed the interplay between the material conditions of society and its rational structures throughout his work. See especially "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures" and "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism" (Habermas, 1979).

rather than at coming to agreement about common interests in a mutually defined situation open to effective criticism. This is clearly what Habermas believes to have occurred (see 1954, 1956, 1958; 1987, p. 369; 1989, pp. 159, 245-50; see Keane, 1984; Calhoun, 1992a, pp. 6-7). If the historical record supports this argument, then we have reason to ask just what sort of freedom is actually achievable in contemporary leisure; just how far the social roles established in leisure are truly emancipating.

### The Instrumental Deformation of Leisure

The instrumental deformation of leisure can be traced in a number of historical developments over the past two centuries: changes in the structure of work; fears that worker affluence would force the reduction of work hours and threaten economic stability; the search for new market opportunities; and the desire to maintain existing patterns of social, economic, and political dominance. Responses to these factors contributed to the commodification and consumerization of leisure by applying to it an instrumental rationality which increasingly narrowed the range of social roles available within leisure practices. These developments have their roots in the profound changes Polanyi (1944) termed "the great transformation." In Polanyi's view, the shift to a market economy represented "a change in the motive of action on the part of members of society: for the motive of subsistence that of gain must be substituted" (p. 41). Exchange became the dominant form of interaction, rather than the previous patterns of "reciprocity or redistribution, or householding, or some combination of these" (pp. 54-5). To separate labor from other activities of life by "subjecting it to the laws of the market" and thus the principle of exchange was to "annihilate all organic forms of existence and replace them by a different type of organization, an atomistic and individualistic one" (p. 163; cf. Parker, 1976, p. 24; Bailey, 1978; Spacks, 1995, ch. 1). The transition to a market economy did not immediately reach beyond conceiving human beings as producers; the nature of exchange was still unclear, as was its economic role. The move to include consumption as a source of wealth was conflict-ridden for a number of reasons (Appleby, 1976). It was not until the seventeenth century that a consumption economy materialized, which was well advanced in the eighteenth. Consumption proved to be a powerful economic force, and as Plumb (1982) pointed out, it very much included leisure.

Alt (1976) referred to the full development of a consumer oriented economy as "one of the great social and historical transformations of the twentieth century" (p. 55), with its roots in the development of wage labor. Wage labor redefined social interactions, removing customary elements of social obligation and transforming work into an exchange relationship between employer and employee. Scientific management, the dominant management theory in the early twentieth century, reinforced the disruption of social relationships. The scientifically managed workplace separated workers, assigning them discrete tasks to be completed with minimal social interaction,

regarded as reducing efficiency, and introducing social rewards into a system based on economic motivation. Goldman (1984, p. 85) suggested the isolation experienced by the worker contributed to the steady fragmentation of nonwork social bonds. Both Alt and Goldman pointed to the steady decline of communities based on more traditional ties such as craft or occupation, which they explain by the dissolution of work-based social interactions. No longer situated in a complex of mutually acknowledged social ties and obligations, work became more and more grounded in monetary reward.

Thompson (1967) observed that the industrial revolution in England was particularly bitter because workers had no model of a mature industrial economy against which to measure the benefits of the dislocations they were suffering. The promise of affluence, increasing wages coupled with shortened work hours, had the effect of dampening labor conflict in the United States, though there was certainly conflict enough. Alt commented that "The industrial reorganization signified by Taylorism was largely accepted by American workers, because of the promises and pay-offs for wage increases, premium benefits, and reduced labor time" (p. 71). Hunnicutt's (1988) analysis supported this conclusion. Agitation for shorter work hours slowed and then ceased, in part because a constellation of political and economic pressures led New Deal policy to stimulate production rather than reduce working hours, in part because workers came to value increased affluence rather than shorter hours. Goldman (p. 85) documented the degree to which this was discussed by contemporary observers, citing S. Patten's early discussion of the transition from a "pain economy" to a "pleasure economy." Importantly, the new affluence and longer periods of free time did *not* restore the sense of social solidarity eroded by industrialization. Instead, leisure consumption mirrored work: it was individualistic, revolving around the self or the family, and involved exchange relationships rather than communicative or normative ties. Even in public, preferred activities reflected increasing social isolation. Goldman cited a survey by the National Recreation Association "of the leisure activities and desires of 5000 persons in several major urban areas in the early 1920s"; the survey "showed that the most popular activities were going to the movies, reading newspapers and magazines, and listening to the radio. One of the chief reasons for pursuing these activities was the fact that they could be done alone" (p. 96). Both Alt and Goldman argued that the new consumption built on patterns of work organization, reinforced underlying individualism, and contributed to community fragmentation and the privatization of American culture. The persistence of these patterns has been noted: Bellah, et al. (1985) and Gans (1988) observed that individual isolation is prevalent in the United States, while the increasing anonymity of social spaces analyzed by Sennett (1977) and the accelerating suburbanization narrated by Jackson (1985) are both contributors to and indicators of this shift.

Leisure reflected both the organization of and motivation for work, namely, exchange relations between individuals who generally had no further interaction than that required to complete the exchange, extending into

leisure a rationality foreign to leisure's communicative and normative content and reducing leisure's emancipatory potential.<sup>5</sup> But this was only one aspect of a broader development. Leisure was instrumentalized in at least two other mutually reinforcing ways, the increasing manipulation of a leisure market and the use of leisure as a means of social control.

As Hunnicutt (1988, p. 42) noted, the 1920s began with an economic depression that sparked significant fears in the business community of a crisis in overproduction; the business community, with political support, therefore resisted further reductions in the work week as a threat to economic stability because reduced work hours meant reduced spending power. During the same period there was also considerable alarm over threats to social stability from widespread leisure. Responses took two forms: a drive towards greater economic efficiency and campaigns for civic improvement and industrial betterment. Both attempted to make leisure serve dominant commercial and social interests. Although not always in harmony, they had the effect of increasing the instrumental rather than the emancipatory content of leisure.

The commercial response reflected growing awareness that leisure was a major untapped market arena. If there was over-production for "basic needs," economic prosperity could nonetheless be achieved by creating new consumption motives (Goldman & Wilson, 1977, pp. 161-62; Hunnicutt, 1988, pp. 46-7). The 1929 Hoover Commission report stated this quite clearly: leisure consumption was to be encouraged "not only because leisure is 'consumable,' but because "people cannot 'consume' leisure without consuming goods and services. . . ." The very leisure resulting from increased industrial efficiency could in turn "create new needs and new and broader markets" (p. xvi). Hunnicutt (1988, ch. 2) documented the rise of the "new economic gospel of consumption," which was to serve a dual purpose: not only would it stimulate the economy, it would also tie workers more closely to work. Without wages, workers could not consume, so they would give up the push for shorter hours; demand for discretionary goods and services could then be manipulated with increasing refinement through the new advertising industry (see Ewen, 1976; Goldman, p. 85). John Commons (cited by Goldman & Wilson, pp. 164-65) summed the matter up when he wrote that "the crowning stroke in the use of motive measurement and bonus incentives is the play hour."

Others voiced their positions equally clearly: "Rightly used, our leisure may be converted into an asset which will yield large dividends in culture and happiness; but if given over to mere idleness...will become a dangerous liability" (Eastman, 1922, p. 409). The lingering "Protestant ethic" was

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<sup>5</sup>Nasaw (1993) offered a popular account of the development of market oriented popular entertainments. The essays in Butsch (1990) developed these themes from a cultural studies perspective. Brenkman (1981) analyzed the development of the mass media in terms of the loss of a common communicative content, replaced by modes of entertainment grounded in seriality, i.e., the isolated, individual experience of something viewed by large numbers of noncommunicatively related individuals.

threatened by increasing affluence and consumption, which could lead to dissipation. Rudin (1972) quoted William Tolman, a prominent "social engineer," as saying that "there are a variety of movements combining the educational and the social, the lighter or recreational phase [as] a kind of bait to attract the attention to the serious work or to win the young people away from other attractions which are bad for them" (p. 62). Employers, community leaders, and politicians all worked to develop leisure programs that would serve to keep workers away from influences endangering productivity or stability. Certainly some of these efforts were inspired by the best of motives, but many were intended to deny the possibility of communicative and emancipatory experiences in leisure. Both the development of community recreation (as Stormann has incisively shown; 1991, 1993) and particularly the industrial recreation movement were influenced by these ideological objectives. Goldman and Wilson chronicled the growth and justification of industrial recreation, noting that employers sought to protect both work values and industrial efficiency by controlling not just work time but free time as well: the purpose of industrial recreation was "to reintegrate the new world of leisure into the new world of technical work. It was an attempt to rationalize leisure for productive ends" (p. 158). This ideological aim is amply demonstrated by Rudin (pp. 62-63), quoting Gertrude Beeks, a prominent social worker and member of the National Civic Federation, who stated that in her work to set up "wholesome" recreation opportunities for workers and their families, she avoided the "so-called democratic idea" because it was best that workers be given only advisory roles in shaping the programs Beeks and others believed were needed.

### The Political Implications of Leisure's Deformation

It is unsurprising that leisure is different after the period of industrialization than it was before. What is more to the point is the nature of the transformation leisure underwent. The preceding historical sketch suggests this transformation proceeded along at least three dimensions. First, leisure became a commodity, to be marketed and sold as any other commodity, and subject to the same demands for novelty and innovation (see Nasaw, 1993). Second, leisure reflected the organization of work and work motivations. Where work and leisure had once been integrated in a common life (see, e.g., DeGrazia, 1962), they were now separated, with leisure mirroring the individualist, structured patterns of workplace organization. Third, leisure had been identified as both a threat to social stability and an opportunity for extending social control beyond the workplace into free time activity to preserve existing patterns of social, political, and economic dominance. The result has been the increasing supersession of noninstrumental rationalities by instrumental rationality, much along the lines of Habermas's theoretic framework sketched out earlier.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Interestingly, it might be possible that similar transformations can also be observed at the micro-level. Glancy and Fukuhara Dahl (1995) have examined participants in a renaissance fair that



As that framework suggests, the enlargement or constriction of social roles lies at the heart of any social practice's emancipatory content, leisure included. Given the eclipse of noninstrumentally grounded social roles in modern leisure, shaped by the historical developments outlined above, we are justified in looking for evidence whether these roles do in fact enlarge or constrict freedom. Among the roles of most interest to Habermas has been citizenship. Tracing its changing content provides a further illustration of how leisure based social roles have been instrumentally deformed, and suggests as well the necessity of recovering their noninstrumental content in order to preserve their emancipatory potential.

The role of citizen is communicatively grounded. This is the classical heritage explicitly affirmed by Habermas (1973, ch. 1), including the Aristotelian association of citizenship with civility and leisure (p. 42). The focus of citizenship is discourse, the communicative process of exchanging reasons and criticisms in the hope of establishing some basic understanding of and agreement on the societal context in which discourse occurs. What emerges from this approach is a concept of democracy that may be called "deliberative" (Habermas, 1992, esp. chs. vii & viii) or "discursive" (Dryzek, 1990). Such democracy is practiced in what Habermas termed the "public sphere," or that social arena situated between the privacy of primary social institutions and the economic and political systems (Habermas, 1989; see Calhoun, 1992b, for an excellent collection of essays on this theme). Historically, then, the public sphere has been shaped by communicative rationality, the peculiar focus of which was "publicity" (*Öffentlichkeit*), the public use of communicative action to discuss the just arrangement of public affairs. Indeed, Habermas made explicit the analogy of the ancient *agora* (1989, p. 3). Communicative action occurred particularly in leisure settings such as coffee houses, fraternal organizations, and reading societies, which deliberately expanded the range of those who could enter them, though that range remained nonetheless significantly limited. In such settings as these and in other public encounters, citizens engaged in discussion free of instrumental interference to shape what was called public opinion, not to be confused with the superficial sort measured in polls. Instead, early public opinion was conceived as reflecting shared commitments to open discussion of the political community, that is, in Habermas's formulation, it was built on communicative discourse about the just life.

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has evolved from a nonprofit activity to a commercial enterprise. Participants whose initial involvement was noninstrumental (e.g., expressive role playing) have become dissatisfied because the fair's commercial status limits their ability fully to pursue their noninstrumentally grounded activities, while participants whose involvement included sales of various goods associated with such fairs (e.g., craftspeople) have responded favorably to the increasingly instrumental administration of the event. As the rationality underlying the event has shifted from noninstrumental to instrumental, the event itself has taken on different meaning to its participants, some of whom believe their roles as participants within the fair have been progressively narrowed. I am indebted to M. Glancy for sharing these findings with me.

The changing shape of leisure contributed to the collapse of the discursive public sphere. As the historical developments sketched above unfolded, leisure's communicative rationality expressed in this public sphere gave way to instrumentally grounded leisure, which cannot support discursive citizenship or democracy. In Habermas's distinction between *Freizeit* (free time) and *Muße* (leisure), the former was conceived as "culture consuming" and the latter as "culture creating" (1956, p. 220). The social roles involved in each represent different rationalities. Culture creating leisure has a clear (but not exclusively) communicative element, in which interacting subjects attempt to define the content and quality of their intersubjective situation. Culture consuming leisure is instrumental, making use of subjects and objects encountered in leisure without engaging them as other than partners in temporary exchange relationships. Habermas argued that so long as instrumentally defined culture consumption is the dominant form of leisure, *no increase in the amount of free time will result in emancipation*. Such free time is, according to Habermas, simply the other side of work, and evolves in a similar fashion. Structural changes in work destroyed earlier craft traditions, in which the worker was at least partially motivated by pride in skill and creativity, and substituted efficient production. A similar inversion occurs in consumption, in which genuine material need is transformed into a limitless reservoir of externally stimulated consumption impulses (1954, p. 717). Consumption entails work just as working enables consumption; both are defined instrumentally.

The narrowing of available social roles represented in this process of instrumentalization raises serious challenges to any conception of democratic citizenship that retains the communicative, discursive content of classical models (cf. Habermas, 1989, pp. 211, 231). This process entails the transformation "from a public that made culture an object of critical debate into one that consumes it" (p. 173). Thus culture has become a commodity, and leisure the act of consuming it. In regard to the specific social role of citizen, the deterioration of the public sphere in which citizenship was pursued has been accelerated by the commercialization of precisely the leisure-based venues that earlier facilitated public discourse (cf. Brenkman, 1981, p. 105). No public emerges from media and spaces whose content is private relaxation and enjoyment rather than critical discussion. The illusion of such a public's existence is regressive because it provides an illusion of freedom, and not just in the political sense. Acts of private consumption respond to an instrumental rationality that undermines active critical discussion and culture creation. The public sphere loses more than its political function as leisure becomes determined by private consumption; it loses the cultural capacity to generate social roles that are emancipatory in the sense of expanding the range of human capacities.

### Emancipating Leisure

At this point the double meaning of this essay's title should be clear. *Leisure cannot be emancipating unless it is emancipated; the task of a critical theory*

*of leisure is therefore emancipating leisure.* The recovery of the original emancipatory potential of Aristotelian leisure, grounded as it was in communicative notions of moral personhood and citizenship but intolerably limited in its extension, must be the task of a critical analysis of leisure (cf. Gilbert, 1990). The integration of empirical analysis and normative perspective in the critical approach distinguishes it from alternatives that remain one or the other. This approach thus advances, in ways these alternatives cannot, the exploration of venues for communicative interaction that lead beyond themselves, opening the structure and content of social roles for analysis and pointing to the means of enhancing their contribution to the development of human capacities. The critical analysis of leisure is thus part of the search for a renewal of freedom in democratic society.

This renewal must occur at several levels. The transformation to a consumer-based economic system has been paralleled by the transformation to a client-based political and administrative system (Habermas, 1987, ch. viii). The social role of client is not capacity enhancing, given that it assigns dependency to the client and dominance to the administrator, bureaucrat, or "service provider." Such social roles, best intentions of their occupiers aside, tend towards instrumentalism, the client trading various forms of compliance with the dominant party's expectations for benefits the latter is able to provide. The dominant party tends to objectify the client as the seeker of benefits, rather than accepting her/him as a participant in a communicatively grounded relationship. Even where, as in public or industrial recreation settings, there is formal attention to the issue of seeking "citizen participation" or "employee input" on boards, commissions, and advisory councils, the dominance relation persists between the experts and administrators able to dispense benefits (e.g., programs, facilities) and community residents or employees desirous of those benefits. The very selection processes used to constitute such groups reinforce this relationship. The classic organization theory problem of "separation of consumption from control" (see Etzioni, 1964, ch. 9) reflects the tendency of organizations to instrumentalize relations with those perceived as clients. A critical analysis of leisure administration and service delivery would address such issues, always communicatively, that is, with the hope to eliminate the instrumentalism entailed in client-based social roles by enhancing the abilities of (in this example) residents and employees not only to participate fully in advisory roles, but to supersede the necessity for "experts" in the first place.<sup>7</sup>

The recovery of leisure's emancipatory potential must begin with forms of leisure that bring people into communicative interaction with common purposes extending beyond individual gain. The restructuring of client-based social roles, as suggested above, can occur on relatively local and personal levels. Can it, however, build on such restructured roles, or on noninstru-

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<sup>7</sup>There is a growing discussion of the application of critical theory to such questions. In addition to Dryzek (1990), see the essays collected in Forester (1985) and Leonard (1990) for a somewhat more radical formulation of the issue. For a critical study of the contemporary role of "experts" in public life, see Brint (1994).

mentally defined social roles generally, to contribute to democratic renewal? Interestingly, there is some empirical evidence that this is in fact possible, and that noninstrumentally defined leisure plays a significant part in shaping democratic attitudes.<sup>8</sup>

In his superb study of contemporary Italian politics, Robert Putnam (1993) examined differences in the success of regional government reform. He found that a tradition of civicness was strongly associated with support for open, communicative politics. He also found that a tradition of civicness is strongly associated with "intense horizontal interaction" (p. 175), that is, interactions based on equality and mutuality aimed at some degree of cooperative relationship. Putnam reported that associational membership was among the strongest indicators of exposure to such "intense horizontal interaction"; the most frequent form of associational memberships mentioned were in sports or leisure groups (Table 4.1, p. 92). Participation in voluntary organizations in leisure does have an emancipating effect: those who are emancipated in their leisure tend to be democratic in their political attitudes.

Mansbridge's (1983) study of a rural Vermont town meeting and an urban crisis center suggests that communicative action significantly lowers the adversarial content of these direct democracies. By conceiving themselves as members of a communicatively defined space, the people Mansbridge studied were able to enhance their commitments to democratic processes and norms. And as Mansbridge pointed out, her subjects did not abandon these commitments once they left town meetings or the crisis center. Participation in town meeting is of course voluntary, and many of the crisis center's staff were volunteers. Both represent leisure activity that creates an identifiable arena for communicative interaction, which has emancipatory effects. As soon as instrumental elements were introduced, this arena disappeared rapidly and was replaced by adversarial relationships with negative effects on trust and sense of efficacy, both central to democratic citizenship.

These empirical studies indicate that the presence of communicative elements in leisure, particularly in the public sphere of voluntary associations and civic affairs, enhances citizens' commitment to democracy. Civil discussion is also central to normative theories of democracy. Barber argued, in *Strong Democracy* (1984), that citizenship is communicatively grounded, that is, citizens are defined by the activities of citizenship, of which "democratic

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<sup>8</sup>I can offer anecdotal evidence for the same claim, having worked with a community service group, Project CARE, in the central Washington town of Othello. The community faces several serious problems related to its multicultural population, inadequate public facilities, and lack of cohesion. The members of Project CARE have gradually been able to awaken in Othello's residents a sense of responsibility and involvement through a number of recreational and promotional activities, with the ultimate aim of securing funding for a community center. The project is ongoing and its prospects uncertain, but it is clear that moving from an instrumental definition of social roles to a communicative one has contributed to establishing a stronger sense of citizenship within parts of the community. The dedication of those involved has been remarkable.

talk" is perhaps the most important. Barber characterized democratic talk as "not *about* the world; it is talk that makes and remakes the world" (p. 177). This communicative activity cannot be assigned to others; to do so alienates one's citizenship role. The citizen talks for her/himself. Barber ascribed to democratic talk "a single, crucial end—the development of a citizenry capable of genuinely public thinking and political judgment and thus able to envision a common future in terms of genuinely common goods" (p. 197). Such talk, however, requires an arena. The absence of this arena is often noted by analysts of democracy. In her provocative essay *Democracy on Trial* (1995), for example, Elshtain began by pointing out that the web of associations in the public sphere which once supported democratic discussion has disappeared. Though she did not state so explicitly, what Elshtain laments is the disappearance of public, democratic leisure that would support Barber's "democratic talk" (cf. Lasch, 1995, ch. 6).

Some evidence of attempts to reclaim the public sphere for "democratic talk" may be found in the activities of what are called the "new social movements." These are quite diverse, having been "inspired by feminism, recovery of community, ecological renewal, and participatory democracy" (Boggs, 1986, p. 9). As Offe (1987) formulated it, contradictions within contemporary western society are simply not resolvable by a further extension of bureaucratic state action (i.e., the welfare state) or a retreat from the diversity of social interests and needs in society (as urged by the neoconservatives; see, e.g., Bellah, et al., 1985; Shils, 1991; Seligman, 1992) The new social movements "seek to politicize civil society in ways that are not constrained by representative-bureaucratic political institutions" (Offe, p. 65; Boggs, p. 19). The themes and concerns of the new social movements do not fit into the "binary code of social action" characterizing contemporary democratic society, that is, the opposing categories of private and political (Offe, pp. 68-69). The issues that stir these movements cut across the spectrum of society, bringing together individuals of disparate backgrounds but common concerns. Significantly, Offe found that the constituents of the new social movements were generally those who are outside the traditional "labor market," that is, those who have either more flexible time regimes or greater leisure (pp. 77-78).

Again we find that leisure and the realization of communicative potential are linked to democracy. But Offe's empirical description points to a significant threat to democratic renewal, namely, that the leisure and other attributes prerequisite to entering a reconstituted public sphere are far too narrowly distributed within society, which contradicts leisure's emancipatory potential. Gould (1988, p. 25) argued that "self-development" was at the heart of freedom and proposed the principle of "equal positive freedom," defined as "the equal right to the conditions of self-development, including enabling material and social conditions in addition to civil liberties and political rights" (p. 133). Leisure plays a double role in extending this principle. It is, first, an arena necessary to the development of capacities (p. 55), which entails the provision of such material conditions that enable one to use lei-

sure (p. 41). Leisure is embedded in a web of material and social relations, the justification of which is their contribution to the development of human capacities. Leisure is, second, an occasion for participation in common activities in which the individual has an equal right to engage in deliberative discussions and decision making, a right Gould extended beyond the political to include social and economic activities (p. 84).<sup>9</sup> The availability of leisure along with the conditions necessary for its existence and exploration is thus an essential feature of the continuing expansion of human capacities, which is at the heart of emancipation.

The themes emerging from this brief survey all point towards the necessity of an emancipating leisure for the extension of democracy: the creation of a discussional public sphere in which individuals participate equally and voluntarily to pursue aims of both personal and public interest that are frustrated by existing institutions and processes. Existing conceptions of freedom in leisure are inadequate to this task; they cannot accommodate the grounding of a discussional public sphere in a noninstrumental, communicative rationality supported by democratic material and social relations. Both the rationality and the relations are at once the precondition for the existence of a discussional public sphere and its embodiment in leisure. Leisure must be emancipated from its instrumental, commodified forms before it itself can be an emancipating force. This cannot be done "for" or "to" us: we must do it ourselves. Nor can emancipating leisure be simply a means to some end, for this immediately reintroduces instrumental rationality. Emancipating leisure, like democracy, is a process through which one expands one's capacities in their practical application and in which individual decisions and acts are simply way stations to further development. Emancipating leisure stands against an open horizon that will never be achieved, but instead promises constantly greater extension of human capacities and cultural richness. What other end could we desire in a truly democratic society?

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<sup>9</sup>This has the effect of creating a standard by which leisure might be morally evaluated: the degree of self-development entailed in specific leisure activities (cf. Pizzorno, 1987, pp. 27-28). Gould was fully aware of the unsettling implications of such a doctrine and worked within her analysis to prevent externally imposed conceptions of self-development from invading the individual's own project. If there is always a social horizon to self-development, Gould reminded us that it is an *individual* who pursues development (p. 48).

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