

A Rejoinder to Henderson's and Jackson's Commentaries on "A Critique of Leisure Constraints"

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It is both exciting and intimidating to engage in this dialogue with Ed Jackson and Karla Henderson. Their expertise in the area of leisure constraints is widely acknowledged and their reviews evoke critical questions about our article. Since the main point of this exchange is to raise issues for reflection, we will respond only in general terms to some basic points in their commentaries.

Jackson noted some ambivalence in our article, pointing out that we interpret our data as evidence of leisure constraints while also rejecting that interpretation as being too limited. This ambivalence is intentional and reflects our attempt within this paper to capture the processes by which we came to these understandings. Part I data analysis was initially written and submitted as a conference presentation that offered support for leisure constraints. During the four months between acceptance of that paper and the conference itself, our own thinking evolved into a radically different understanding of these data. In fact, when the proceedings were released we did not recognize our own abstract that we had written four months earlier! In this paper we tried to parallel the unfolding nature of that understanding. The ambivalence that Jackson noted is real, in part because the process took us from one understanding to another as we worked our way through the data. But also, by intentionally showing how our data support the leisure constraints framework we hoped to illustrate the vagaries of theoretical interpretation. Our intent was to raise questions rather than to offer answers.

Both Henderson and Jackson criticize us for relying too heavily on an older model of leisure constraints and not effectively representing the more recent literature which conceptualizes constraints much more broadly. That may be a major fault in our paper, which was initially drafted in 1992 when the Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) model was still current. However, we feel our discussion would be substantively the same even if it were premised upon the more recent literature. Contemporary discussions of leisure constraints still encourage us to understand people's leisure by viewing it as a process of encountering and negotiating threats and constraints. Whether we used an older model or the more recent literature, we would still reach the conclusion that this perspective seems limited for understanding the breadth of factors that shape people's leisure choices.

We have a serious concern about how the original discussions of leisure constraints have evolved to encompass too much. Jackson himself refers to this as the "Pacman problem," suggesting that the constraints model eats and incorporates everything that gets in its path. It is ironic, then, that Henderson and Jackson accuse us of using a "narrow" interpretation of leisure constraints that focuses only on participation. In our view, the broader con-

ceptualizations that they prefer (relating constraints to factors that shape preference or experience) would simply magnify our concern. It was troubling enough when leisure in the presence of constraints was viewed as evidence of successful constraint negotiation; now it appears that our leisure preferences and experiences are, themselves, the consequence of constraints or constraint negotiation. The all-encompassing and irrefutable nature of this claim illustrates how the constraints framework has evolved into a pervasive system of beliefs that shape and filter the way that many researchers see every aspect of leisure. In our paper, we simply raised the question of whether this framework is the most effective perspective for understanding many of the more complex social meanings of leisure.

This concern goes much deeper than whether or not our participants used the term "constraint." We agree with Jackson that scholars often employ abstract concepts to represent the events that they study, and those concepts may not be the terms that participants use when discussing those same events. However, we must use the right tool for the job, and a conceptual framework is valuable only when it adds insight into the events to which it is applied. By focusing on the term "constraints" Jackson overlooked our more significant point. In our opinion, interpreting our data in terms of leisure constraints did little more than uphold the constraints model; it did not add substantive insight into our understanding of these people's leisure.

Henderson and Jackson rightfully remind us that constraints research is just one of many lines of research in our cumulative attempt to understand leisure. Jackson even suggests that leisure constraints have become so pervasive that they infiltrate much of our thinking about leisure and no longer entail a distinct sub-field of research. It is important to place our paper in that perspective. However, in spite of that acknowledgment, Henderson and Jackson seem unable to step outside of that model in order to mount a critique based in the philosophy of science. Jackson says it is "disappointing" that we have chosen to attack leisure constraints "instead of offering positive modifications and extensions that could in the long run have been far more productive contributions to knowledge." Henderson offers those extensions for us, relating many of our points to diverse topics that have been studied as leisure constraints. Their comments puzzle us. *Why* is our contribution more useful if used to extend the leisure constraints literature rather than challenge it (especially since a better understanding of leisure was obtained by stepping away from that model)? Their comments reveal their difficulty in thinking outside of the constraints framework and illustrate our very point about the pervasive and commanding way that this paradigm has shaped, and quite possibly limited, this field.

Returning to our opening point, the ambivalence in our paper is due to the unresolvable nature of this dilemma. Our data can be interpreted as evidence in support of the leisure constraints model or they can be viewed as evidence that the model itself is too limiting. Like the riddle about whether a glass is half-empty or half-full, both perspectives are technically correct but reflect very different understandings about the same situation.

As Hemingway (1995, p.33) reminds us, "To ask one question entails foregoing the ability to ask another." Because an increasing number of researchers are framing their inquiries and understandings in terms of leisure constraints, we felt it was important to ask, What insights are we losing by not taking a different perspective?

References Cited

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