

Timestyle and Leisure Decisions

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This article examines conceptually the relationship between *timestyle*—the customary manner in which one perceives and thinks about time—and leisure decisions. The authors suggest that individuals' timestyles can be described via four key dimensions, namely, social, temporal, planning, and polychronic orientations. Further, it is posited that these four dimensions of timestyle influence leisure activity decisions through their impact on categorization processes implicated in time perception. Propositions are offered for the linkages between timestyle and temporal category structures, the various factors that likely affect the categorization of any particular unit of leisure time, and how categorization of a leisure time unit in turn leads to the formation of a small-sized consideration set of leisure activity choices.

Timestyle and Leisure Choice

On a Friday afternoon Judy is at her desk, very busy, and juggling as usual several different tasks at once. As her electronic calendar beeps to let her know what she has planned for the next half hour, she double checks it with her day-timer, just to make sure the plans in both match. On and off, she also gives thought to what she should do on Saturday. She figures that it will be 1:00 p.m. by the time she completes the detailed list of weekend errands that she wrote out for herself on Thursday night. Hence, she looks forward to Saturday afternoon when she can relax and get her mind off work. She wonders whether she should call up a couple of friends and ask if they would like to go with her for a movie. On reflection, she opts against it. Instead, she decides to do what she has done on many weekends in the past: she will visit the neighborhood where she grew up for a long walk by herself. This plan appeals to her because she knows she loves reminiscing about old times. She can also get some exercise, thus accomplishing two things at once.

In this opening vignette, Judy plans her time meticulously, immerses herself chronically in multiple tasks, prefers spending her spare time alone, and enjoys the nostalgic remembrance of things past. A Saturday looms on her planning horizon and she carefully allocates the available time on that day to both chores and relaxation. She then picks a particular leisure activity

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from a myriad of possibilities. A different person might have given no advance thought at all to what to do on Saturday and, instead, may have engaged spontaneously in a completely different activity—play tennis, visit friends, or take a nap.

In this article, we argue that a person's customary manner of time perception and time use, his or her *timestyle*, has a pervasive influence on his or her choice of leisure activities (see also Bergadaà, 1990; Feldman & Hornik, 1981). The literature related to timestyle shows only occasional efforts at investigating relationships between different aspects of timestyle and individual behavior in a specific domain. Leisure stands out as particularly worthy of investigation, because decisions about leisure are, in fact, active decisions on how to spend or consume specific blocks of time. Leisure activities follow from the initial allocation of time to leisure (see also Cotte & Ratneshwar, 2000).

We sketch in this paper a conceptual framework for how people approach decisions regarding leisure time. Although grounded in the prior literature on time, our theorizing represents a significant departure from previous approaches to the problem of time use (see Hirschman, 1987 for a review). The economic approach, characterized best by Becker (1976), treats time as a fixed resource and assumes people want to maximize use of money and minimize time expenditures on all activities. A somewhat related approach is that of Feldman and Hornik (1981), whose conception of time usage means that people choose among desirable activities, and then make time and money tradeoffs. The sociological time budget approach is primarily empirical, and it concentrates on collecting and analyzing time diary data (e.g., Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Both the economic approach and the sociological time budget approach have conceptual similarities in their reliance on a fixed, objective view of time. For many other sociologists, (e.g., Marks, 1977; Lewis & Weigert, 1981) time is a social construction, a convenience that cultures agree on. However, studying time in this way does not allow study and prediction of what actual people might do, their preferences and motives for thinking about time.

Psychological and experiential views of time all share a focus on time as perceived by the person. The psychological literature on time has two distinct streams of research: psychophysical research on perception of time still mainly compare this to "clock" time (e.g. Reynolds, 1968), while phenomenologists view time as a mental construction having only subjective meaning (e.g. Bergadaà, 1990; Gorman & Wessman, 1977). As with the view of time as purely a social construction, this approach to time cannot help us understand how individuals make decisions about time.

Researchers have also discussed the allocation of time to *leisure* from economic, psychological, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. Researchers have focused on work versus non-work time allocations (Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Holbrook & Lehmann, 1981; Leuthold, 1981), activities pursued in leisure (Aldano et al., 1996; Philipp, 1992; Weisberg, Tal & Ribak, 1992), and the meanings subjectively perceived by a participant in a leisure

consumption activity (e.g., de Grazia, 1964; Havighurst, 1973; Kelly, 1983; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Kleiber, Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986). In addition, researchers have investigated psychological and sociological variables that may impact leisure behavior (Bishop & Witt, 1970; Iso-Ahola, 1980).

The goals of our conceptual model, shown in Figure 1, are (1) to provide an organizing framework for understanding how an individual's time-style influences decisions regarding leisure time, (2) to trace the categorization processes that are implicated in the relationship between timestyle and leisure choice, and (3) to establish a theoretical foundation for future empirical work in this area. As Shaw (2000) suggests, we use leisure as an exemplary domain and context for the exploration of a very central social science question: How does the customary way in which one perceives and thinks about time influence one's behavior?

To preview our arguments briefly, we suggest that individuals possess organized, cognitive category structures for leisure time. The category structure is influenced by a person's timestyle. When a "unit" of leisure time becomes available, or when a person is contemplating in advance an upcoming unit of leisure time, decisions are made by categorizing this upcoming time on the basis of that individual's preexisting category structure for leisure time. The likelihood of the time unit being categorized in a particular manner (e.g., time for myself, time for my kids) is moderated by the relative cognitive accessibility of different leisure time categories. Categorization of the unit of leisure time leads to retrieval in working memory of associated leisure activities; these activities constitute a small consideration

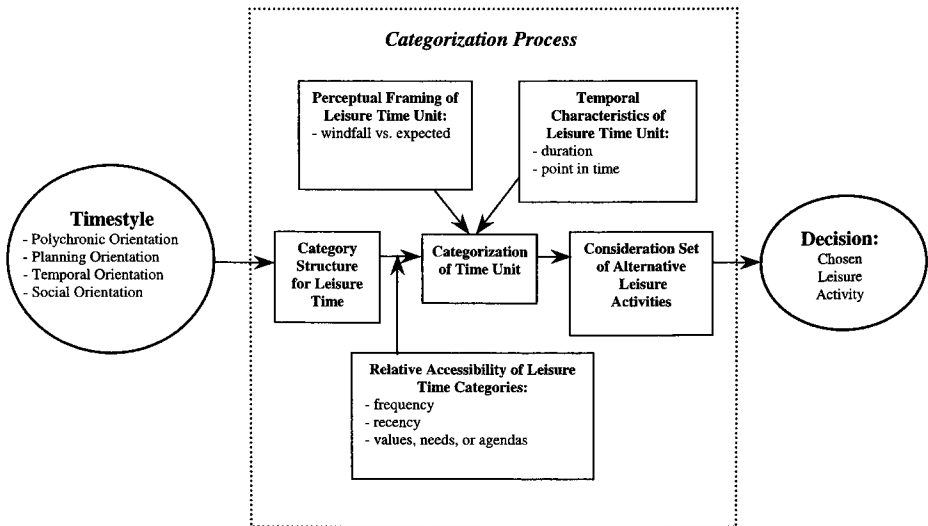


Figure 1. Timestyle and Leisure Decisions: A Conceptual Framework

set from which the person makes a final choice. Before developing these ideas further, we describe the multidimensional construct we call timestyle.

The Four Dimensions of Timestyle

What exactly constitutes an individual's timestyle? There has been limited prior research on this topic. Feldman and Hornik (1981) posited the choice of activities would dictate the meaning of time to individuals. In contrast, Kaufman et al. (1991) focused on how individuals vary in their preference for behaving in a polychronic manner, i.e., "multi-tasking." In yet another viewpoint, Hirschman (1987) hypothesized that how a person perceives time is a function of that person's anticipation and experience, budgeting process, and preferences and obligations. She also proposed that the prioritization of time-consuming activities is a function of intrinsic rewards as well as extrinsic social obligations. Finally, Bergadaà (1990) examined people's "temporal systems." She focused on temporal orientation to the past, present, or future, as well as the variables that could influence this orientation. She also theorized that differing temporal orientations might influence one's leisure preferences. Building on this prior work on time and timestyle, we posit that an individual's timestyle, his or her customary manner of time perception and time use, is a multidimensional construct consisting of four main dimensions. We explore these in greater depth below.

Social Orientation. People often think about time as either "time for me" or "time with/for others," and individuals vary in the priority they accord to "alone" time versus "others" time (Hall, 1976; Manrai & Manrai, 1995; Rhee, Uleman, Lee & Roman, 1995). We refer to this as the social orientation dimension of timestyle (see also Hall, 1976; Kaufman & Lane, 1990; Zerubavel, 1981). The motivations to categorize a unit of time as for (or with) others can be either voluntary (e.g., when one knows that he/she prefers to spend time alone if given the choice) or obligatory ("this is time I *should* spend with my elderly aunt"). This distinction is also similar to Hirschman's (1987) idea that interactions with others plays a role in how time is perceived, and is consistent with Bergadaà's (1990) notion that an individual's cognitive structure consists of personal time and environment time. We believe there are likely to be strong individual differences on social orientation. For example, men and women differ on perceptions of solitary time usage for both work-related and leisure activities (Arndt & Gronmo, 1977; Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Manrai & Manrai, 1995). In addition to gender, age influences this dimension—as people age, they tend towards solitary activities vs. other-directed activities (Havighurst, 1973).

Temporal Orientation. A second dimension of timestyle is the relative emphasis people place on the past, present or the future, which is called temporal orientation (Bergadaà, 1990; Cottle, 1976; Holbrook, 1993; Jones, 1988). Prior research has often linked temporal orientation to personality differences because cognitive temporal representations of experience help

create an individual's unique personality (Graham, 1981; Holman, 1981; Kaufman & Lane, 1990; Philipp, 1992). Individual history variables like education, events experienced, and social class influence the temporal orientation of an individual. People may also be classed as present-oriented or future-oriented based on other socio-demographic variables like age and gender (Cottle, 1976; Block, Saggau & Nickol, 1984; Bergadaà, 1990). For example, Cottle (1976) found men to be more future-oriented while women tended to be present-oriented. There are also racial differences in cognitive beliefs about time, including temporal orientation toward the past, present or future (Jones, 1988; Hill & Stuckey, 1992). This is not to say, for example, that future-oriented individuals will *only* consider the importance of the future in their lives, but this variable helps to differentiate individuals based on the primary mode in which they think about time (Cottle, 1976). In his research on nostalgia, Holbrook (1993) showed that even within relatively homogeneous demographic groups temporal orientation (in his case, to the past) varies considerably from one person to another.

Planning Orientation. The planning orientation dimension of timestyle describes the way in which people approach time management and planning (Bond & Feather, 1988; Calabresi & Cohen, 1968). The poles of this dimension are *analytic* (i.e., people who plan very extensively and like to account for each minute of the day) versus *holistic* (i.e., people who are more spontaneous and think of time in larger chunks). People who exhibit a highly analytical planning orientation typically create small, mutually exclusive temporal categories. For example, they may plan their days in 15 or 30 minute intervals captured in a notebook or some other type of time management device. On the other hand, holistic planners think of time in terms of coarse and potentially overlapping categories; they may plan for "things to do this month." There are personality correlates with this timestyle dimension (Gorman & Wessman, 1977). People vary on the degree of time planning they do (Block, Saggau & Nickol, 1984), and in the level of cognitive effort they devote to decisions regarding time (Kaufman & Lane, 1990), and they also vary on their analytic ability (Hutchinson & Alba, 1991). These findings indicate that there are likely to be individual differences affecting planning orientation.

Polychronic Orientation. Finally, some people prefer to can be described as multi-taskers, preferring to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. Others are quite opposite, approaching time in a linear fashion, accomplishing one task at a time, and reluctant to "juggle" more than one thing in a given unit of time. Based on Hall (1959), we use the term polychronic orientation to describe this dimension of timestyle. Prior research indicates that people range on a continuum from a monochronic, "one-thing-at-a-time" style to a polychronic, multi-tasking style (Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Graham, 1981; Hall 1959, 1983; Hall & Hall, 1987; Kaufman et al., 1991). There are individual differences on capabilities to handle monochronic versus polychronic activities, including gender and life goals (Hall, 1976; Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Manrai & Manrai, 1995). Kaufman et al. (1991) also found a

positive relationship between polychronic time use and education, full-time employment, and social club membership.

We now turn to a discussion of *how* timestyle influences leisure choices. Fundamentally, we suggest that timestyle influences leisure behavior because it influences the way leisure time is categorized in the mind of an individual.

Category Structure for Leisure Time

Several researchers in the area of consumer behavior have studied how people organize knowledge in a categorical manner in memory (e.g., Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Loken & Ward, 1990; Ratneshwar, Pechmann & Shocker, 1996). However, early work in psychology on categorization and time also asserted that there seemed to be basic temporal categories (Rosch, 1978), and that these are part of larger networks of on-going cognitive processes (Gorman & Wessman, 1977). We posit that people have a categorical structure related to how they think about leisure time, and that leisure decisions are often made in a categorical fashion, using leisure time categories and the consideration sets that are linked to these categories. To anticipate our later arguments, our framework essentially suggests that categories concerning leisure time are first formed in long-term memory and then "consulted" during the decision process. Note that such an approach also provides a theoretical explanation for why certain leisure activities are seen as substitutes or complements—such relationships are encapsulated by the categorical structure of leisure time and the similarities and differences that motivate this structure.

Category structures can be taxonomic and thus reflect attribute correlations in the environment (e.g., in categories such as birds or trees; see Rosch, 1978; Smith & Medin, 1981). Categories can also be goal-derived (e.g., things to take on a camping trip; see Barsalou, 1991; Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991; Ross & Murphy, 1999). We propose that leisure time categories contain aspect of both taxonomic and goal-derived categories. In terms of taxonomic aspects, the category structure should reflect the temporal attributes of leisure time such as duration (e.g., one hour vs. five hours) and point in time (e.g., weekday evening vs. Sunday afternoon; summer vs. winter), as well as correlations among these attributes (e.g., five hours of leisure time may be strongly associated with Sunday afternoons). Categories for leisure time in one's cognitive structure should also reflect instrumentality: what one can do or what one should do with a particular category of time (Barsalou, 1991; Ratneshwar, Pechmann & Shocker, 1996; Ross & Murphy, 1999). Thus, leisure time categories may also exhibit many properties of goal-derived categories, since specific categories should be characterized by their suitability for attaining specific goals of individuals (e.g., time that I can spend by myself playing computer games at home).

An emphasis on instrumentality also implies that timestyle should influence the manner in which categories are structured in a person's mind. Dimensions such as social and temporal orientation should characterize var-

ious categories and, perhaps, to various degrees for different individuals. Indeed, Rosch's classic work (1978), the work of Murphy and Medin (1985), and more recent work in cognitive anthropology (see D'Andrade, 1995) strongly suggests that cognitively represented meanings of time, such as those we discuss as the four dimensions of timestyle, permeate the category structure for time.

Prior research in cognitive and consumer psychology suggests that the structure of leisure time categories will be highly flexible and can change with context or point of view (Barsalou, 1987; Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991). We believe that timestyle similarly influences this category structure. For example, the thought of time spent "all by myself" can be relaxing or stressful for the same person in different contexts. Thus, the same category can elicit different reactions across different situations. For this to happen, category knowledge stored in long-term memory must have several characteristics including mutual exclusivity (time can be stressful or relaxing, not both), continuity (there is no clear cut boundary between relaxing and stressful time), global organization (relaxing and stressful are also contained within higher-order relations like schemas and scripts) and episodic organization (previous stressful or relaxing episodes will be integrated with generic knowledge of stressful and relaxing times) (Barsalou, 1987). For example, an individual with a highly analytic planning orientation will likely have categories that are finely graded and discrete. Those with a more holistic planning orientation will likely have a category structure for leisure time that has more "fuzzy" boundaries between categories, and more encompassing categories. Therefore, an individual's timestyle influences the category structure he or she accesses at certain times, or in certain contexts. To summarize:

- P1: People organize their knowledge of leisure time in categorical structures.
- P2: The category structure for leisure time has both taxonomic and goal-derived properties.
- P3: Timestyle influences the categorical structure for leisure time.

Categorization of a Unit of Leisure Time

Consider confronting the situation of planning for what to do on an afternoon free of obligations. (For ease of exposition, we refer to this afternoon as a "time unit"). When a person faces a unit of leisure time, they will access the category structure for leisure time, but they must decide how to account for this time. The perceptual framing of the time unit as expected (e.g., a routine Saturday) versus windfall (a surprisingly short meeting leads to leaving work much earlier than expected) should influence the categorization of that time unit, much as money is accounted for and categorized differently, depending on its source. We propose that the categorization of windfall time will be more fungible than expected time. The intuition is that consistent with the findings in the mental accounting literature, (e.g., Thaler, 1985), windfall time will be perceived and accounted for as a "bonus" for which a person may reason that the norms, rules, and scripts of time use do

not apply. Thus, instead of assimilating the windfall time unit into the category structure in a routine and fairly reflexive manner, the person may engage in a more constructive, ad hoc process of categorization (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Thus:

- P4: The categorization of the leisure time unit will be influenced by whether it is perceptually framed as windfall or expected; framing as windfall will lead to more constructive or ad hoc categorization.

Our conceptual model posits that time units in the individual's planning or decision-making horizon are categorized on a "best fit" basis by using the cognitive structure that is already available. Three principles determine the likelihood that the leisure time unit will be mapped on to any particular leisure category in a particular person's cognitive structure.

First, the inherent temporal characteristics of the time unit place constraints on its categorization (Smith & Medin, 1981). When categorizing a unit of leisure time, people will consider its duration and point in time. That is, in attempting to slot some time unit into an appropriate category, people will look to its actual length (e.g. in hours, minutes, etc.) and when it occurs (e.g. time of day or evening, day of week, month, season, etc.). These temporal characteristics will effect categorization. These characteristics correspond to the taxonomic properties of the available category structure, and the higher the degree of correspondence, the greater the likelihood of a particular categorization.

- P5: The inherent temporal characteristics of the time unit will affect its categorization.

Second, the relative accessibility of different categories in one's cognitive structure will influence the likelihood that a particular category will "capture" the stimulus. Kelly (1955), in his personality theory, suggested that constructs or categories that are used frequently or habitually will influence individual perception. Bruner (1957) emphasized that categories recently used, or those related to currently salient needs and goals, are more likely to be accessed from memory, and that accessible categories are more likely to be used in categorizing stimuli. Note that the goal-derived properties of the category structure play a critical role in this regard. When certain needs or goals are salient for the individual, categories associated with those goals will be activated in memory and thus highly accessible (Barsalou, 1991). So, for example, when a salient goal for a person is "landscaping the yard," the category for time spent working in the yard is relatively accessible, and how a given time unit (e.g., a weekend afternoon) is categorized will be influenced by the accessibility of this category. Contemporary social psychologists continue to stress the role of cognitive accessibility in terms of the individual's readiness to perceive and encode stimuli in a selective manner (see, e.g., Srull & Wyer, 1986; Higgins, 1990). Accordingly:

- P6: Categorization of a time unit will be influenced by the relative accessibility of different categories in the individual's cognitive structure for leisure time.

- P7: Relative accessibility of different categories is a function of frequency of use, recency of use, and the salience of associated values, needs, or goals.

Decisions: Choosing Leisure Activities

Prior research suggests a simple mechanism for linking categorization to the decision process (Barsalou, 1991; Nedungadi, 1990; Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991; Ratneshwar, Pechmann & Shocker, 1996). We assume that as a part of their goal-derived properties, leisure time categories are associated in memory with appropriate activities or actions sequences in which the individual might engage. Categorization of a time unit, as described above, causes activation of the activities associated with that particular category in long-term memory. These activities are then retrieved into working memory as a small-sized consideration set of options from which a person might make a final choice. Because we are primarily interested in the influence of time-style in this article, our model does not make any specific prediction with regard to how people might make a final decision from this consideration set. We expect if the alternatives are fairly similar (for example, choosing between one sport to play or another), they may use one of several different choice heuristics (see Bettman, Johnson & Payne, 1991 for a review). When the alternatives are fairly heterogeneous (for example, choosing between playing a sport or doing some volunteer charity work), abstraction strategies such as those described in the literature on noncomparable alternatives might be employed (see, e.g., Johnson, 1984). Notwithstanding, the process suggested here, at the very least, offers a potential explanation for how people narrow down the "what do I do?" decision regarding leisure time to a few possible options from a multitude of action possibilities.

- P8: Categorization of a leisure time unit leads to the memory-based formation of a consideration set of alternative activities from which the person makes a final choice.

Summary and Discussion

This article presented a conceptual framework for how people's time-style might influence decisions regarding leisure time and as such it addressed a relatively neglected area in leisure research. How people differ in their preferences for dealing with time holds intriguing opportunities for investigating differing leisure behaviors. Our approach here significantly differs from some previous research on time usage but integrates ideas from research: on time perception (Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Hirschman, 1987; Bergadaà, 1990); categorization and decision-making (Barsalou, 1991; Rosch, 1978); and leisure activity decisions (Manrai & Manrai, 1995; Holbrook & Lehmann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1980).

Leisure time decisions require that one process temporal information. How such temporal information is actually cognitively represented and processed has become an important research question (Jackson 1990). Decisions

about leisure time allocation sometimes may appear to be complex, and seemingly require considerable cognitive effort. But if these decisions are fairly low in involvement (for example, when one is routinely choosing what to do on a weeknight) people may seek ways to simplify their decisions. Relying on previously constructed categorical knowledge about leisure time, initially and importantly influenced by one's timestyle, is one way of simplifying such decision-making.

Our theory contributes to the leisure literature by adding a missing perspective to the literature on leisure time allocation. Our treatment of time allocation is distinct from traditional models of time allocation in that the time unit, rather than the activity, is considered first. Contrasting with classic approaches, where people choose among desirable activities and then make time and money tradeoffs, we posit that people may first think about "How much time do I have?" and "What kind of time do I have?" *before asking* "What would I like to do?" We have argued that how the first two questions are posed, or whether they are posed at all in a conscious manner, is influenced by timestyle. Ultimately then, the answer to the third question is also influenced by timestyle. We believe it is crucial that researchers investigating leisure time choice augment their investigations with a more encompassing emphasis on *time itself* in their work.

Given space limitations, this conceptual model of the decisions regarding leisure time is of necessity a "sketch" at this point. Many important issues are merely touched upon, and have not been elaborated in detail. However, the model does accomplish its objective of providing a broad organizing framework for the decision process involved when men and women face a choice of what to do in their leisure time. Flowing from our work, we believe one of the most important questions that remains unanswered concerns the antecedents to timestyle. While culture could certainly play a part, perhaps gender roles or family socialization may also play a role in determining one's timestyle. Future research could productively investigate these, or other possible antecedents of timestyle. With our current focus on the individual, we were unable to investigate broader, more macro issues. We recognize that Rojek (1985; 1995) warns against studies that look at leisure in the absence of an investigation of historical and social forces (see also Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). We acknowledge that this work really does not deal with societal issues such as power relationships in society and how these might influence the leisure goals and behavior of certain groups, like women or minorities. We also did not investigate patriarchal power influences on women's leisure (c.f., Ferree, Lorber & Hess, 1999; Rojek, 1995). Thus, future research that considers issues such as power and gender relationships, and their effects on an individual's timestyle and leisure choice, may build on our research.

Based on the model and propositions we introduced, there are a number of promising directions for future research on leisure time decisions. However, we should first point out some other limitations of our theory. First, the outlook of the model is cognitive and as such no clear role is accorded

to emotional inputs to decision-making. The model is not affect-based and as such cannot adequately deal with more experiential views of leisure decisions.

The model is precise up to the point when an individual consults the consideration set for possible choice of leisure activity. We assume that when making his or her ultimate choice, a person uses some of the well-established cognitive processes for that choice. Depending on the situation, a person may use heuristics to simplify the choice, or he or she may compare the alternatives in a more effortful way. In addition, our model does not deal with the formation of those consideration sets for leisure activities, but rather implicitly assumes their existence.

There is certainly a need for empirical work to validate the assertions in this conceptual model. Certain methodological approaches seem promising—one could potentially measure the four dimensions of timestyle with questionnaires—however, categorization and category structure seem to lend themselves to experimental study. Thus we see that a fruitful study of the impact of timestyle on leisure time decisions will almost certainly require a multi-method measurement approach.

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