

Leisure or Recreation *A Definitional Mini Debate*

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Abstract

The following activity should only take 20-25 minutes of class time and is specifically targeted for leisure and recreation introductory courses. By using an unstructured debate, this activity should foster classroom discussion beyond the clear-cut definitions of leisure to its nuances, similarities, and the student's own preconceived notions. This activity should help students to verbalize, question, and discuss definitional challenges of leisure, recreation, and play. In a short period of time, students should be able to utilize course definitions and content and apply their knowledge to specific activities as well as become familiar with non-traditional leisure activities.

KEYWORDS: Recreation definition, leisure definition, play definition

Introduction

Engaging students to conceptualize leisure and recreation in the classroom is quite a challenge. One instructional method that fosters engagement and learning is classroom structured debates. These structured debate formats typically include discourse and competition. In the classroom setting, employing structured debates can develop skills in critical thinking, organization and communication as well as help the student better understand the course content (Holihan & Baaske, 1994; Freeley, 1996; Lantis, 2004). Debate can foster discussion on opposing perspectives, dimensions of the topic and multiple views through the social interaction of the classroom (Fallahi & Haney, 2007). “Preparing for a debate requires students to use library resources, take notes, define terms, formulate arguments and rebuttals, develop critical thinking skills, and work as a team (Fallahi & Haney, 2007, p. 83). Using debate as an experiential learning tool creates opportunity for increased understanding of a topic.

Theoretical/Practical Foundations

Kolb defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb 1984, p. 41). The concept of leisure, while not necessarily controversial, can be difficult to understand and articulate. Debate, a form of experiential learning, can improve the students’ listening skills and public speaking skills, in addition to challenging prior beliefs and helping to build appreciation for complexities of the issue (Bell, 1982). Critical thinking is defined as “the ability to analyze controversial statements; the ability to search out relevant information; the ability to test evidence and conclusions based on evidence; and the ability to perceive reservations to inferences in argument” (Allen, Willmington, & Sprague, 1976, p. 382). Encouraging students to think critically, to analyze and to question is one of the primary goals of higher education. Debate fosters both critical thinking and experiential learning (Worthen & Pack, 1992). However, a challenge to recreation and leisure educators is the amount of time available to facilitate a structured debate in an introductory course with large numbers of students. The ‘Leisure or Recreation: A Definitional Mini Debate Learning Activity’ provides students the opportunity, in a short period of time, to utilize course definitions and content, apply their knowledge to specific activities as well as become familiar with non-traditional leisure activities.

The Learning Activity Description

Divide the students into groups of four. Each group is then asked to assign each student one of the following tasks: 1) Pick one person to read the list out loud to the group—Reader, 2) Pick one person to be the secretary (writing down answers and turning them in to the instructor)—Secretary, 3) Pick one person to represent the group to the class (be able to articulate group ideas verbally)—Group Speaker and 4) Pick one person to do whatever the instructor asks—Cooperator (a good opportunity for kinesthetic learners). In the meantime, the instructor passes out a list of 8-10 activities to the

groups. No two groups have the same activities. Once each student knows his or her role, the individual who is the reader should read out the list of activities to the group (see Recommendations for a list of suggested activities). Then the group is to respond to the following with the secretary keeping track of the group answers:

- Which activity surprised or astonished the group the most when first read out loud?
- Determine and discuss what term best describes **each** activity: leisure, recreation or play (The group must choose what term fits best—cannot all be leisure!). Write down one reason for why group chose specific term that described it best.
- Then pick one activity to analyze: Provide an example of how the chosen activity can be leisure, recreation and play. Write out the analysis examples.

While the groups are working on this assignment, the instructor pulls the cooperators out of the classroom. These students are asked to be prepared to act out the group's chosen activity (e.g. charades) for analysis.

This process takes about 15-20 minutes. When the groups are finished, the Cooperators act out their group's chosen activity in front of the class. As the charades game begins, the class then determines what the actual activity is and debates whether they think it is recreation or leisure. The group then shares the rationale for naming it recreation or leisure. Then the class debates on the definition category for the leisure activity. Each group takes a turn to share their activity and rationale. On a blackboard the instructor divides the board into four categories (recreation, leisure, play and questionable). Once all charade activities are completed, the Secretary writes in large print on a post-it note each activity from the list supplied from instructor and places them on the blackboard in their respective locations. All students are invited up to the board to examine the collective activities and instructed that without talking, any student may move any activity that they think is in the wrong location to the questionable area. The Group Speaker for the activity then defends their rationale to the class. After hearing the defense, then have the student who placed the activity in the questionable area provide his or her rationale for moving the activity into another location.

If there is time, the instructor can have each group relate to the class what activity surprised or astonished the group when they first heard it read. The instructor can facilitate a discussion that not only introduces the entire class to non-traditional leisure pursuits but the inherent challenges of the definition of leisure, recreation and play.

Learning Outcomes

This learning activity is a loosely “structured” tool that can be used to facilitate debate and discussion. This allows students to verbalize, question and discuss definitional complexities of leisure, recreation and play. While not a structured debate (i.e., timed, competitive, or controversial issue), this activity fosters classroom discussion beyond the clear-cut definitions of leisure to its nuances, perhaps revealing

the student's preconceived notions/experiences. This learning activity helps to support retention of knowledge, adapt mental models to new contexts and provide better understanding of course content (Nilson, 1998). In addition to critical thinking skill development, this activity offers an opportunity for those often underserved kinesthetic learners (Armstrong, 2000), fostering student involvement and co-construction of their learning of leisure concepts (Berdine, 1987).

Recommendations

This learning activity is specifically targeted for leisure and recreation introductory courses. We have chosen to place some purple/deviant leisure activities amongst the list to broaden the students' perspective. Our list specifically omits traditional activities (i.e., baseball, softball, golf) students are already familiar with or in which they have likely participated. Some of the activities are surprising because of the geography the students come from (e.g., curling is not typically seen in the south, except possibly during the Winter Olympics). The point of this learning activity is to not only help solidify leisure definitions but to introduce students to the possibilities of leisure and recreation beyond the scope of their experience.

Forms of Recreation or Leisure List*

Doll houses/miniatures	Christmas light display	Giant pumpkin
Re-enactment	Jump rope/double dutch	Salsa dance
Clogging	Primitive/ancient skills	Kazoo players
Beer can collector	Numismatists	Remote control (airplanes, robots)
Amateur/ham radio	Gold prospecting	Ice fishing
Woodwork	Curling	Dungeons & Dragons (role playing)
Ventriloquism	Recumbent bicycling	Barbershop quartet
Step show	Reading (book clubs)	Cricket
Long-distance hiking	Wine/beer making/tasting	Kite boarding
Skydiving	Surfing (big wave, paddle)	Hang gliding
Slack lining	Dog sledding	Sea kayaking
Quilting	Ice sculpting	Macramé
Gambling	Birding	Gardening
Adventure racing	Eating competitions	Origami
Orienteering	Volksmarch	Bridge/spades
Juggling	Fencing	Spelunking
Bonsai tree trimming	Ping-pong/table tennis	Red Hat Society
Street racing	Cannabis cup	Frisbee golf
Kite flying/making	Lumberjack competition	Tree top camping /climbing
Geocaching	Freestyle walking	Unicycle hockey
Cowboy poetry	Storytelling	Rattlesnake roundup
Mime	Elvis impersonator	<i>Star Trek</i> fan
Burlesque	Vaudeville	

"This list is not exhaustive but can be expanded according to your needs. If you want the full list, please contact the authors.

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