Using Leisure Services to Build Social Capital in Later Life: Classical Traditions, Contemporary Realities, and Emerging Possibilities

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The purpose of this paper was to explore the social capital generating potential of public leisure services for retirees as well as those approaching retirement age. The meanings of leisure, community, and friendship in the writings of Aristotle are explored as a philosophical base for reconsidering the relationship between leisure and social capital, and also for establishing a point of embarkation for the expansion of community leisure services beyond their currently limited focus. A description of the emerging profile of retirees, especially those preparing for retirement, is presented, as well as how they may seek and engage leisure activity consistent with the Aristotelian conceptualization of community. We offer a series of re-orientations for leisure service practitioners that may accommodate aging citizens and nurture their activities in informal ways that strengthen citizenship and democracy.

KEYWORDS: *Leisure services, social capital, Aristotle, retirement, generativity.*

Introduction

In this paper, we will explore the prospect that leisure produces social capital, particularly for retirees, and leisure services can be prominent in expanding such activity. After reviewing the philosophical and historical background for considering leisure in this manner, we will examine prospects for people who are retired to become civically engaged through social-capital-generating activities, in particular political discourse, and also contemporary aspects of post-retirement living that, in varying degrees, reflect a semblance of classical leisure ideals. Finally, we will turn to the redesign and reorientation of some aspects of community leisure services that may enhance the likelihood of such activity.

To our knowledge, the field of leisure studies has not directed much attention to the historical trends affecting civic engagement of older age groups. Indeed, a case could be made that, to the extent that the leisure

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interests of older people are accommodated, the problem will be exacer-
bated if those interests have an individual focus. However, interests and ac-
tivities more communal in nature are capable of producing social capital.
The relevance of leisure itself as a context for the development of social
capital has been addressed previously. In recent years, leisure studies schol-
arship has produced a small body of literature that directly explores the
concept of social capital and its prospects for finding meaning and applica-
tion in the field of leisure studies (DeGraaf & Jordan, 2003; Glover, 2004a;
2004b, Hemingway, 1999). These efforts have built upon previous research
related to community development (Arai & Pedlar, 1997), citizenship
(Glover 2002, Shaw & Martin, 2000; Stormann, 2000), and civic virtue (Hem-
ingway, 1988).

     Discussions of social capital in the literature, especially in the writings
of Putnam (1995, 2000), have focused on formal social connections. We view
the insufficient treatment of informal social connections as a general weak-
ness in this body of literature. Thus, the underlying focus of this essay will
be informal social connections and the social capital that arises from them.
To make the transition from the formal to the informal, we appeal to classical
leisure, in particular Aristotle. As we explore the prospects for generating
social capital through civic engagement during leisure after retirement, this
classical foundation offers an interesting perspective from which to view so-
cial capital.

Lessons from Antiquity: Aristotle on Leisure, Community, and Friendship

     To position classical leisure within the social capital literature requires
a consideration of the ideas of Aristotle. Although other philosophers and
political figures from antiquity addressed leisure, Aristotle was unique in that
he gave leisure a prominent role in the individual's quest for excellence,
which was primarily derived from empirical observation. This quest was in-
terconnected with other community members, and voluntary, informal in-
teraction was an essential component of the cultivating of human capacities.
His conceptualizations of leisure, community, and friendship reveal a num-
ber of similarities to the contemporary concept of social capital, providing a
justification for invoking classical leisure in this essay.

     While leisure played an important role in Aristotle's philosophical sys-
tem, especially in his ethical and political writings, he did not frequently
refer to it explicitly. Moreover, Aristotle did not provide a formal definition
of leisure as he did for so many other concepts (happiness, community,
friendship, citizenship), which seems odd given his statement that leisure is
a first principle for all human action. Therefore, efforts to interpret Aristo-
telian leisure (as free time, activity, state of mind, condition of being, etc.)
will primarily rely on the context in which it is found within the text. Nu-
merous leisure scholars have attempted such interpretations, but they are
often filtered through Pieper's (1952) leisure as a religious state of relaxation

and receptivity, or through de Grazia's (1960) leisure as a state of being. Another means of interpreting Aristotelian leisure is to compare it to Aristotle's other concepts. Such comparisons are important when trying to explicate Aristotle's arguments because a rich understanding of Aristotle's philosophical system requires a working knowledge of all its pieces (metaphysical, biological, ethical, political). Thus, we will begin with Aristotle's concept of *motion* as understood through the teleological dimension of his philosophy.

Leisure and the Actualization of Human Potential

For Aristotle, acquiring knowledge about a thing requires an "understanding of its composition (Material Cause), the structure of its composition (Formal Cause), the forces which make the thing actual (Efficient Cause) and the goal toward which the forces are directed (Final Cause)" (Dare, Welton, & Coe, 1987, p. 36). These concepts are easily understood in a biological sense. For example, Sabine (1961) shares Aristotle's famous acorn analogy where the mighty oak tree stands as an illustration of what an individual acorn may become. For Aristotle, this potential exists within the acorn, but external factors such as rain, sunlight, and foraging animals may assist or impede its full development. The process of growing from an acorn to a tree is what Aristotle refers to as motion leading to the achievement of its function (*ergon*). This doctrine of cause also applies to more abstract concepts such as the human quest for excellence nurtured by the community in which he resides. Thus, a general introduction to motion as the actualization of a potential is necessary as we move toward the discussion of leisure activity as the vehicle for individual civic growth.

Motion, for Aristotle was primarily "the fulfilling of what exists potentially" (Russell, 1945, p. 204). Developing a systematic account of how things move or change, as well as critiquing existing views, Aristotle devoted part of the *Physics* to defining motion (201ª11-12), while he explored what initiates motion in *On the Soul* and *Movement of Animals* (Edel, 1982). Defining motion as the actualization of a potential leads to the view that it is part of the nature of motion that the potential being actualized has, during movement, not yet lost its potentiality and become fully actual. Thus, there is always more to come. However, when full actuality is reached, motion ceases. According to Aristotle, this is the case with a house that has been erected or a statue that has been sculpted. But as we move toward a discussion of leisure and civic engagement, it will be necessary to introduce a relevant and related Aristotelian concept, *activity*, so that we may understand human potential and the role leisure plays in bringing it about over the lifespan. Note that this assumes an interpretation of classical leisure as activity, which in our view is entirely justifiable given Aristotle's position that leisure is the activity of the best part of the soul. Classical leisure has also been interpreted by scholars as activity (see Cooper, 2000). Thus, the identification of the distinguish-

ing features between motion and activity is an important step in the process of establishing leisure activity as being necessary for civic engagement and growth.

Activity defined in the Aristotelian/Platonic/Socratic tradition is a process through time by which some potential is brought to actualization at every moment of the process. Aristotle states that "activities are what determines the character of life" (*NE* 1100^{b}33) and that the goal of life is to achieve happiness (eudaimonia). In Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle defines happiness as an "activity of the soul in accordance with complete excellence" (*NE* 1102^{a}5-6). Given our earlier comparison of activity and motion, we may conclude that happiness (for Aristotle) is an activity of the soul, not a motion of the soul. Happiness is not something to be realized at some distance in time. It is actualized now through time. In an activity, we find that potentiality is completely overcome, and, at every moment of the activity, made actual.

At this point, we may ask certain questions about human activity. Particularly, of what is leisure an activity? What potential is being realized? These questions ordinarily lead to a discussion of Aristotle's tripartite nature of the soul; however, since Dare, Welton, and Coe (1987) have provided a sufficient account of it, we will refrain from reformulating it here. It is sufficient to state that activity in accordance with the rational principle of the human psyche is deemed best by Aristotle because it is what makes us uniquely human. In addition, the communities in which we live, as pointed out by Sabine (1961), offer opportunities for growth that are unique to humans. However, there is a further division of the highest principle into the theoretical (intellectual) and practical (political). This division plants the seeds for two primary ways of interpreting Aristotle's view of leisure: contemplative versus political activity. By taking Aristotle at his word in *NE* Book X, many leisure scholars have accepted the view of leisure as contemplation. Even though Hemingway (1988) argues well for a practical and political interpretation of Aristotelian leisure, many seem to miss Aristotle's view that the life leading to *eudaimonia* is a mixed life consisting of both political and contemplative activity. This perspective is illustrated by his arguments in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as he attempts to determine which life (pleasure, politics, philosophy) leads to happiness. Having rejected the life of pleasure as a candidate for the happy life, Aristotle extols the virtuous characteristics of the political life throughout most of the work. However, he abruptly declares contemplation the winner in his conclusion, which, for many readers, is unanticipated. This sudden shift need not contradict our mixed life argument. The solution lies in our considering the real life as similar to but distinct from the ideal life.

For Aristotle, every substance, plant, and animal has a purpose or function. Human beings *qua* human beings are distinguished by their capacity for thinking. In addition, each function is the result of a distinct excellence (*arête*). Thus, an individual exhibits excellence only insofar as it characterizes the function of the whole. *Arête*, Aristotle argues, is necessary for happiness.

Leisure is necessary for the development and exercise of excellence. There-fore, leisure is necessary for happiness (*Politics* Book VII). This argument implies that leisure must consist of some sort of intellectual activity since it is the rational soul that distinguishes the class of man from others, and that this activity should result in the development of excellence. But contempla-tive activity, while it emulates the divine and is self-sufficient, does not nec-essarily result in the development of *arête*. Social activity, conducted with "knowledge and choice" (*Pol* 1332ᵃ 28-38) within the life of the *polis*, is what is needed for the development of excellent character. For Aristotle, the ideal life would consist of ideal activity (the activity of the gods is contemplation), but such a life would render man inhuman. Real life consists of fulfilling the "necessities", developing the human capacities through activity with our fel-low man,[1] and partaking of contemplative activity as our lives (and chance) allow, all with an eye to achieving happiness. For the most part, the happy life is achieved within the context of community through the interactions and relationships of its members.

Community, Friendship, and the Actualization of Human Potential

According to Yack (1993), four key features characterize community for Aristotle: (1) It is a heterogeneous mix of individuals that possess significant differences; (2) goods, activities, and/or features of identities are shared by community members; (3) there is social interaction among members that involve the things that are shared; (4) the community is sustained by friend-ship and justice among fellow citizens. These characteristics are based partly on Aristotle's own empirical observations of many different communities, but are also theoretically-derived. It is a difficult task to separate the two in Ar-istotle's philosophy (see Irwin, 1988), but our failure to make this distinction is not damaging to our arguments given the purpose and scope of this paper.

The heterogeneity raised in the first point may seem to contradict what we know about ancient Athens. How could one perceive a *polis* that limits citizenship and its benefits to Athenian born males, while denying slaves, women, children, and foreign workers (*metics*), as heterogeneous? The aris-tocratic prejudices of Ancient Athens have been well documented (Ober, 1989; Sylvester, 1999; Wallach, 1994). However, what is implied by hetero-geneity in Aristotelian community is the lack of a collective identity. Due to the inclusion of instrumental relationships as communities, Yack argues Ar-istotle does not advocate a pure communitarian vision of community. In-stead, Aristotle "identifies it with the kind of sharing that brings individuals

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[1] We select the masculine generic here in keeping with Aristotle's use, being fully aware of the common charges of elitism, sexism and racism underpinning the cultural context of this time of leisure. Women were in fact largely excluded from the "citizenship" of ancient Greece, as we note shortly. However, as we also seek to demonstrate, the appropriation of Aristotle's thinking for contemporary life is entirely consistent with a more egalitarian society and, even at the point of writing, refers to what is human rather than what is the province of men alone.

together" (Yack, 1993, p. 30). This results in an interesting and somewhat contradictory conclusion. For Aristotle, a community without such a collective identity would have no potential of its own to actualize. This seems odd given Aristotle's analogy in the *Politics* of the citizen as a bodily organ and the community as the body (a hand separated from the body is a hand only in name). However, Aristotle seems to be clear that the end of the citizen and of the *polis* are the same (*Pol* 1252^{a}1). Individuals have less priority than the *polis* (political community) since the "whole is prior to the part" (*Pol* 1253^{a}19). Yack suggests an alternative interpretation. Political communities naturally exist, not with a nature of their own, but for the purpose of assisting human beings in developing their full capacities. Thus, the *ergon* of the community is to allow individuals the opportunity to actualize their human potential.

From Yack's perspective, the lack of a collective identity (heterogeneity) is the primary feature that makes Aristotle's community possible. "The creative—and sometimes destructive—tension that emerges from combinations of sharing and difference is one of the most important features of community as Aristotle conceives of it. Eliminate differences in social identity in the name of easing this tension and you destroy community itself" (p. 30).

Friendship (doing what one can for another) and justice (giving another what is due) have been identified as key characteristics of community for Aristotle. First, Aristotle identified three products of friendship: primary (or virtuous), utility, and pleasure. The type of friendship discussed here has been labeled by Aristotle (*NE* Book VIII) as political or civic friendship. According to Stern-Gillet (1995), Aristotle "identifies advantage as the presiding motive of friendship in communities" (p. 150) and seems to relegate civic friendship to the class of utility. But this classification should not devalue political friendship. Aristotle is clear that primary or virtue friendship is extremely difficult to achieve and sustain and that it is only possible to enjoy such friendship with a small number of individuals. Nevertheless, political or civic friendship may be engaged by the many and may "constitute the fertile soil in which the friendship of virtue can grow freely" (Stern-Gillet, 1995).

The *Polis* and Leisure as Sources of Social Capital

By making reciprocity, social connectedness, and trust essential features of social capital, Putnam (2000) has arguably built a bridge back to ancient Athens. Pericles, in his famous funeral oration in 431 B.C., suggests that democracy and the civic engagement among its citizenry exist together or not at all:

> We have a form of government . . . in name it is called democracy on account of being administered in the interest not of the few but the many. An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household

... we alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character. (Thucydides, p. 93)

Even though Aristotle advocated for the philosophical life, Pericles' proclamation is not inconsistent with Aristotle's philosophy. It suggests that citizenship in ancient Athens implied certain social activity which, if neglected, reflected a state of self-absorption quite opposed to the life of the *polis*.

We must note here that the citizenry was viewed as inseparable from the *polis;* in fact, they were the *polis.* Thus, any tendency of an individual to become isolated and dominated by self-interest was to contradict the function (*ergon*) of both the individual citizen and the *polis.* In the view of Putnam (2000), contemporary society has virtually abandoned this classic ideal of civic participation, trust, and social connectedness. Classical citizenship required the development and exercise of excellence through leisure activity, including the ability to reason, as well as the ability to engage fellow citizens in the sort of dialectic found in Plato's dialogues where issues, both practical and abstract, were identified, disassembled into multiple pieces, and then reassembled into a new and more meaningful whole. In addition, an understanding of how individuals contribute to the good of the entire political community, as well as how political community may nurture the intellectual growth of its citizens was essential. Classical citizenship and classical leisure seem to be inseparable and the social and intellectual dimensions of such leisure activities are apparent. However, classical citizenship stands in stark contrast to modern citizenship.

Contemporary society has reduced citizenship to a mere legal status that requires minimal levels of political activity from its members, while, as Manville (1990) points out, "Greek citizenship was defined by the active participation of the citizen in public life" (p. 5). Modern citizenship is usually demonstrated through the simple act of voting, which makes little, if any, intellectual demand on the individual, nor does it offer opportunities for intellectual exercise and growth. Hemingway (1999), in his discussion of strong and weak citizenship, suggests modern citizenship relies much more on vicarious participation. The individual citizen is dependent upon others to act on his or her behalf. Modern leisure, too, requires minimal activity. Rather than active participation that is self-directed, social, and intellectually engaging as demonstrated by classical leisure, modern leisure tends to be expert dependent, individual focused, passive, and anti-intellectual.

In ancient Athens, individual focus on issues of self-interest (*idia*) was different from a focus on communal matters (*koina*) (see Mulgan, 1990, for distinctions between public and private in ancient Greece). The Greek and Aristotelian ideal of citizenship, being dependent upon civic engagement in a public sphere and entailing reciprocal relations between citizens, resonates with contemporary social capital literature by stressing the social connectedness necessary for a democracy to thrive, as well as the activity located

within these social networks. The foundation of Putnam's arguments, echoed by van Deth (2001), is the fact that "democracy cannot function without some minimum level of political engagement" (p. 7). The deliberative nature of Athenians, illustrated by citizen dedication to debate and collaboration prior to establishing public policy, has been well documented:[2]

> Citizens had the right to participate in the community's deliberative . . . functions whose exercise normally took place in a civic center. And among the citizens a certain communal spirit could be identified, based at least partly on the shared belief that as members of their community they would have access to, and benefit from, justice. (Manville, 1990, p. 54)

Leisure, too, was closely linked with the social life of the *polis* in ancient Athens and was also a major component of Aristotle's philosophical system. As Hemingway (1988) described, leisure served as an "arena" for the development and practice of civic virtues, qualified by certain types of activity. Through leisure activity citizens connect and community is generated as civic friendships are developed and maintained. In fact, Bartlett (1994) states that "Nothing characterizes Aristotle's political science so much as its concern for moral virtue" (p. 400). Even Putnam (2000), when conceptualizing social capital identifies civility as virtually synonymous with reciprocity. Sylvester (1999) also described Athenian life primarily as social and occurring "in a civic culture that was collectivist . . . resulting in a deeply shared and reinforced network of ideals and values" (p. 4). Aristotle's view was that leisure is not only a necessary condition for attaining *eudaimonia* (happiness, the highest good, human flourishing), it was also necessary for political participation, or the life of the *polis*, and the development of excellent character (*Politics* Book VII Ch 9) since political activity is essentially a part of human flourishing, given the *ergon* of human beings. Thus, the contemporary decline in civic engagement that Putnam describes may be at least partially attributed to the absence of leisure. At least from a community leisure services perspective, this absence is illustrated by resource allocations in areas that in no way resemble the classical brand of leisure espoused in this essay. Instead of focusing on formal, voluntary associations for a means of civic reengagement as Putnam (2000) did, it is important to give due consideration to informal social networks as well.

The informal political activity (the practice of philosophy, the debate of public policy) described by Aristotle and engaged by the ancient Greeks possessed social capital generating potential. Putnam (2000) argued that informal connections "generally do not build civic skills . . . but informal connections are very important in sustaining social networks" (p. 95). Informal connections were identified by Putnam as *schmoozing* (informal conversation)

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[2]Aristotle was somewhat skeptical of democracy as the ideal form of government. Even a casual reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* reveals an unease between being ruled by the tyrant or being ruled by the masses. Nevertheless, there are passages in Aristotle's *Politics* that sing the praises of collective wisdom (Euben 1994).

leading him to conclude that Aristotle's statement about the political nature of humans was not based on such informal connections. However, our discussion of Aristotelian community and friendship suggests that the informal plays an essential role in the development and exercise of excellent character, whether it takes place in the agora or in the home of Agathon.[3] The importance attached to the informal resembles Oldenburg's (1988) third place more than Putnam's civic clubs. Hemingway's (1988) lament that "the classical Greek *polis* offers one of the great counter-examples to the isolation and fragmentation of modern society" (p. 188) is especially important here, not because the *polis* possessed an abundance of formal voluntary associations, but because it found sustenance in informal conversations.

It is fitting to make the connection between social capital, leisure, and ancient ideals since the past presents us not only with valuable counter-examples, but also different ways of thinking about democratic community and the citizens comprising it. Moreover, we must take note of the fact that Athens, during its golden age (461-429 B.C.), experienced little difficulty engaging its citizens with issues of common interest, which is quite different from contemporary American society where the very survival of democracy may be jeopardized due to a lack of citizen engagement. Besides the minimal political activity of voting, participation must include everyday civic action through the development and maintenance of meaningful relationships with others if it is to resonate with classical citizenship. Aristotle's placement of leisure squarely in the life of the *polis,* as noted by Hemingway (1999), seems to be consistent with Putnam's analysis as well.

A connection between the classical view of leisure and the ills plaguing contemporary American civic engagement may be found in social capital theory, defined by Putnam (2000) as "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19). Hemingway (1999) has suggested that social capital may be a primary link between leisure and democracy, and that certain forms of leisure produce certain forms and amounts of social capital resulting in strong or weak citizenship in participatory or representative forms of democracy. In his view, participatory democracy and the social capital produced from its activities is a result of an autonomous, self-directed, and collaborative citizenry that lacks dependence on government agents. Such activity produces what he terms "strong citizenship" as conceptualized by Barber (1984). By its very nature, this type of activity is creative, imaginative, and not static. It is also more time consuming, and because it requires more resources (financial, physical, intellectual), it has the potential to become elitist. Nevertheless, a representative democracy suggests that citizens are more reliant on experts, government agents, and policy makers, and may participate in com-

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[3]This is true of other ancient Greek writings as well. For example, most of Plato's dialogues consist of informal, philosophical conversations within the context of leisure, such as the *Syposium.*

munity affairs vicariously through them. This minimal activity requires less time and resources and results in what Hemingway refers to as "weak citizenship" as conceptualized by Barber (1984). Because of the reliance on others, this activity would appear to be less imaginative, less creative, and static. Based upon Putnam's observations, as well as the societal critiques offered in contemporary leisure studies scholarship (e.g. Arai, & Pedlar, 1997; Glover, 2004a; Hemingway, 1999; and Stormann, 1993), the description of contemporary social/political life suggests that a representative democracy and weaker form of citizenship are the realities.

Leisure Services, Citizenship, and Social Capital

With its emphasis on top-down professional management and individualized programming, community leisure services seem a part of this reality. Our position, though, is that leisure services, although deficient in some ways, offer some of the best prospects for providing activities, resources and facilities that are conducive to both the generation of social capital and the strengthening of citizenship.

In spite of the significance of social capital as a political resource, it is not always used positively. Demonstrating how social capital generation in public gardens can become proprietary and exclusionary, Glover (2004b) challenged leisure studies scholars to critically examine social capital, particularly where issues of inequity are concerned. Sports teams and leagues clearly generate a lot of social capital within teams and their fans, but in what ways is it used, if any, for other purposes? In *Habits of the Heart*, which includes a general critique of leisure activity as socially non-generative, Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985) refer to most social groups as "leisure enclaves" that simply perpetuate individualism and isolationism in contemporary American culture, carrying little public weight.

For social capital generation to "carry public weight," it must be turned to other purposes than simply solidifying the bonds of familiarity. Tending to regular playmates, sorority sisters or one's own children may strengthen existing bonds, but it may do little else. In contrast to the "bonding" kind of social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), which may or may not extend beyond existing intimate relationships and limited purposes, the "bridging" form of social capital typically puts groups in contact with those with whom they might not otherwise be involved, usually for some overarching purpose. Arai and Pedlar (1997) illustrated bridging social capital through the coming together of diverse groups of citizens to initiate a community clean water program. However, even without an immediately identifiable and instrumental purpose for gathering, informal conversation has the potential to generate bridging social capital through meaningful social criticism (Wood, 1996). Intergenerational relations too, beyond those simply generated through one's family, may have the effect of creating this kind of bridging social capital. Having explored social capital, citizenship, and classical ideals,

we now turn to a specific segment of the population, retirees, and their civic potential.

Prospects for Social Generativity in Post-retirement Living

Although the data shared by Putnam (2000) does not appear promising, those retired from full-time work have the opportunity, through their leisure, to produce social capital and thus make a contribution to the well-being of their community. Developmentalists point to late middle age as a time for "generativity" (e.g. Erikson, 1982; McAdams, Aubin & Logan, 1993), a concern that one's efforts will have some impact on and value for the generations who will follow and that one's work and leisure can be creative and productive. Research on the meaning of generativity has demonstrated the validity of both its prominence at midlife and the fact that it applies to more than the interests of one's children. McAdams and colleagues (1985) elaborated the significance of generativity in the concerns, commitments, actions and personal narratives of people at midlife in contrast with other periods. Generativity, with both communal and agentic properties, is thus reflected in the processes of creating, maintaining, or providing for those who are to follow. Parenting, teaching, mentoring, counseling and directing are its prevailing roles, and are readily appropriated in the context of leisure (see also Kleiber, 1999).

Furthermore, the lengthening life span has changed the nature of the tasks of this "third age." Active involvement, including reintegration with society in new and different ways after retirement, must be differentiated from the ego integration and interiority most commonly associated with later life (Antonovsky & Sagy, 1990; see also Rowe & Kahn, 1997). And there are also indications that for those approaching retirement, however self-serving and civically-unengaged they have been in the past, the retirement phase is likely to be seen by many of them as an opportunity to correct this imbalance and invest more heavily in others (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Indeed, Roszak (1998) and others (e.g. Greider, 2005) suggest that retirement will be redefined by a new wave of humanistic social values, with compassion and continuing engagement with the wider world being the predominating social ethics. Social and community conditions that elicit such activities and orientations may be necessary, though, to tip the balance away from the private enclaves of leisure lifestyles (cf. Bellah et al., 1985) and toward involvement with others in communities near and far. It is to that subject that we turn shortly.

At this point, however, we can only hope that those approaching retirement will view it as an opportunity to strike off in a new direction by focusing on community contributions rather than accumulating personal goods and seeking individual gain. Perhaps when presented with free time for reflection after a lifetime of work-compensating diversion, retirees will see new opportunities in and through leisure for meaningful social and community en-

gagement. Since those approaching retirement age, because of their massive numbers, will be the focal point of state and national politicians because of their numbers and their wealth, perhaps they will become more interested in political activity on a local level and will begin to develop well-formulated positions on community issues that involve all citizens, not just members of their group, thus, placing themselves in a position of considerable social influence.

Where, if at all, are retirees (and those approaching retirement age) engaging their fellow citizens? Senior centers? Libraries? Bars, coffee houses, and restaurants? Gas stations? Our view is that while there are places and spaces in most communities that could serve effectively in the generation of social capital through activities such as political dialogue, they are not cultivated for that purpose. Community leisure services fall into this category. Oldenburg (1989), in his excellent commentary on the disappearance of what he calls "third places," argued that the opportunities for informal conversation are diminishing, due in large part to the very lack of spaces that lend themselves to this type of activity. His narrative primarily includes commercial establishments (bars, coffee houses, salons) and their disappearance as third places; he does not address non-commercial venues that might have this potential. Therefore, we will end with an examination of possibilities for creating third places in public sector leisure service agencies that are likely to facilitate social capital generation among retired and retiring members of American society in ways that approximate the leisure-cultivating character of the ancient Athenian *polis* and Aristotle's ethical and political philosophy.

Reorienting Leisure Services to Generate Social Capital in the Third Age

The aging American population lacks the civic engagement levels of their generational predecessors (Putnam, 2000) and their leisure activity reflects this absence, even though most have more discretionary time available as they enter the realm of retired life. From an Aristotelian perspective, contemporary communities, through leisure services, may assist individuals in actualizing their potential through the provision of free space for leisure activities such as informal political discourse. A common sense of justice (mutual obligations) and civic friendship that is somewhat instrumental (reciprocity and trust) assists individuals in achieving collectively, what would otherwise be difficult to obtain individually.

It is certainly noteworthy that Putnam's now-celebrated work on the decline of social capital draws its signifying metaphor, "Bowling Alone," from a leisure activity that has moved from group (league) oriented to being more individualistic. This shift seems to be the trend in leisure activity as in the rest of society and defines to some extent the orientations of those using leisure services. Nevertheless, Stormann (1993) calls for a new role for leisure professionals, one in which they will become catalysts and facilitators rather than therapists and administrators. This move away from professionalism may increase the freedom and autonomy of individual citizens by eliminating an

organizational structure that encourages dependence and learned helpless-
ness. Removing the stress on efficiency and corporate emulation would allow
both citizens as well as community officials to view the community and the
allocation of its resources more critically. We intentionally chose the terms
"public leisure services" rather than "parks and recreation" for our analysis
because the former allows for a wider variety of meanings and possibilities
consistent with the generation of social capital and civic engagement. The
classical leisure emphasis on creative, self-directed, social, and intellectual
activity suggests something broader and more encompassing than does the
general domain associated with the terms "recreation and parks."

Resource allocations and programming efforts in all sectors of leisure
service delivery, now more than ever, focus on achieving the desired individ-
ual outcomes of their "customers" rather than strengthening citizenship or
increasing opportunities for civic engagement. If leisure services are to suc-
cessfully facilitate and nurture community involvement and citizenship
through the leisure activity of its aging citizens, a philosophical shift must
occur. Such a mandate is not unprecedented. Again, Stormann (1993) has
described the insidious presence of the "expert" in leisure services and the
diminishing autonomy and creativity of those who utilize these services. Fur-
thermore, he has suggested that leisure services is moving away from its his-
torical roots of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where civic
engagement, consideration of a common good, and intellectual and moral
growth were the foci. These origins resonate with classical leisure. From the
classical perspective, the obligation of the government is to understand the
full potential of its citizens as human beings, to identify the necessary con-
ditions for actualizing their potential, and then to make these conditions
available so that it facilitates the cultivation of human flourishing.

Our hope is that the lack of civic engagement identified previously may
be corrected through the promotion of civic activity by leisure services, par-
ticularly for retirees since they generally have the discretionary time, the
tendency to seek generative activity, and may draw from decades of life ex-
periences. One opportunity for civic engagement may follow the model
adopted by the Kettering Foundation and its National Issues Forums
(www.Kettering.org). Leisure services, because they are housed in local dem-
ocratic governments, may in fact prove to be the most appropriate homes
for such activities where diverse groups of citizens gather together to delib-
erate and debate issues of common interest. As a result of these events, even
though they may initially require facilitation efforts, citizens may freely ex-
ercise the civic virtues developed from such activity within and across social
networks.

We have already stated that strong citizenship requires considerable time
and resources. For this reason, we have identified retirees as having great
potential for generating social capital and for strengthening citizenship due
to their relative economic stability and available time. In particular, the ab-
sence of distractions typically arising from the world of work may offer a
chance for reflection and deliberation—two activities necessary for true civic

engagement. As mentioned previously, the ancient Greeks were committed to deliberation and debate prior to action, and individual choice, in relation to civic virtue, requires reflection prior to action as well.

Possibilities for Leisure Services

Given the foregoing and considering the history, potential, and some emerging practices of contemporary leisure services, several possibilities present themselves.

1. Promoting the integration of public leisure service neighborhood centers with branch libraries.

The integration of libraries and leisure services may have the effect of promoting the association between leisure and the cultivation of the mind. Libraries often make room for lectures and discussion groups, but they may also find ways—and places—to tolerate more sociability and dynamic interaction. Similarly leisure services might well see libraries more as information centers that support sociable interaction. The combination may also lead more effectively to new forms of "third spaces" similar to the ancient *agora* which neither owns, but which, like some contemporary bookstores, offer both attractive café-type amenities and internet connections. Local libraries, too, may act as a venue for social capital generation as described by Putnam in *Better Together* (2003) where Chicago branch libraries provide examples of these new functions that help bring people together and initiate change in a community. Some Georgia public libraries have weekly national and local issues forums involving informal debates between participants and local political science professors. Seattle citizens overwhelmingly passed a $200 million bond to construct the new Central Public Library downtown that includes lots of meeting space, internet connections, and frequent guest speakers on an array of political and community issues. Libraries will continue to act as information hubs, but to properly complement leisure services, libraries must be dedicated to being accessible for and tolerant of citizen interaction.

2. Promoting the integration of public leisure service neighborhood centers with senior centers.

Senior centers themselves may become less appealing because of their presumed age segregation. Attracting seniors to community centers, while facilitating interaction and sociability with peers, would be freer of overt age bias and more attractive to newer cohorts—including retirees—who reject the labeling of "senior" for defining aspects of their "third age." And the prospects that public leisure services neighborhood centers might be made more "club like" in having amenities such as juice bars could make them more attractive for intellectual, political and other issue oriented informal discussions on a casual basis.

3. Promoting social capital development around intergenerational activities.

Civic engagement for retirees will require interaction with individuals and groups existing outside of their particular age group if they are to successfully become members of the wider community. The integration of libraries and community centers, each serving a variety of age groups, will presumably open the door for more intergenerational interaction, but we are suggesting that measures also be taken to more fully involve adults and seniors in activities targeted typically for children, such as youth sports and after school programs. With respect to the former, adults—often parents and grandparents—are spectators with little other connection to one another other than their children's sporting activities. Nevertheless, friendly acknowledgment usually accompanies such shared participation. Cultivating still greater informal associations, such as recognizing parents and other adults as "sponsors" of the activity, may build the horizontal age relationships conducive to the "bonding" that characterizes on form of social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). Similarly, with respect to after school programs, retirees may be in an especially good position to serve as adult mentors while relating as such to each other as well. The latter associations may be "bridging" because they don't rely on existing relationships to the extent youth sport spectators typically do, but the need for volunteers who serve in an advisory capacity, as well as in direct instruction and mentoring roles would create horizontal as well as vertical relationships. Through intergenerational activities, perhaps retirees can inculcate the value of civic engagement through intellectual activity.

4. Becoming a venue for public issue discussions.

The leisure activity that binds communities is conversation. The role of leisure services, then, will not be to provide the topic of conversation, but to provide the space for this informal political activity.[4] Leisure service agencies might position themselves more clearly as one of the places where people can come together to discuss a variety of concerns. For example, members in a neighborhood concerned about green space might utilize meeting space in an agency to invite experts and consider action alternatives. Although local governments are often seen as the "perpetrators" by some critical of existing practices and policies, the provision of a space free from the presence of policy makers and other government agents may appeal to citizens. Some communities have ample public spaces for such hearings and

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[4]The theme of space for political activity recurred throughout the 11th Congress on Canadian Leisure Research pre-conference community roundtable (cf. Glover, T. D., & Stewart, W. P. (eds.) (2006). Rethinking leisure and community research: Critical reflections and future agendas [Special Issue]. *Leisure/Loisir: Journal of the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies, 30*(1)). For further discussion of this topic see Evans and Boyte (1986) *Free Spaces: The Sources of Change in Democratic America,* as well as Eliasoph (1998) *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life.*

discussions while others rely on library space, fire stations or other less con-
ducive facilities. Some communities have few if any options for such activity.
In one case, a public swimming pool became the context for meetings in a
community for neighborhood residents to deal with environmental pollut-
ants (Hill, 1997). Issues might also be those broader in scope and not directly
involving local concerns, such as social security or health care. As noted
earlier, the Kettering Foundation (www.Kettering.org), although not tied to
the public sector, arranges community forums around the country to in-
crease citizen involvement and give voice to those who are less often heard.
Kettering often utilizes college and university settings or public libraries for
such purposes, but would welcome other settings that are even closer to
groups less inclined to be familiar with or comfortable in these settings. Of
course, public discussions of this sort need not be focused on matters related
to aging or targeted to those who are retired, but such activity may benefit
from the freedom that such groups might have for participation.

The government initiatives proposed here, if enacted, will not guarantee
any positive social change. In fact, the targeting of retirees by leisure services
could result in issues of inequity, due to the influence of their large numbers,
education, and SES on public policy and resource allocation. Neither leisure
nor social capital is inherently good. However, in order for individuals to
fully develop their human capacities (actualizing potential), political com-
munity, as theorized and observed by Aristotle, will be necessary.

Conclusion

The need for greater civic engagement in contemporary America has
led us to explore ways in which this trend may be counterbalanced. An ap-
peal to classical leisure and classical citizenship was made in an effort to take
stock of modern leisure and citizenship, as well as to provide a different
perspective from which to view contemporary problems. An interpretation
of Aristotelian leisure, community, and friendship was provided in order to
illuminate the similarities between these ancient concepts and contemporary
civic engagement and social capital generation. This view recognizes the in-
strumental dimensions of political friendships and political communities, a
feature that links it with social capital because of its inherent reciprocity.
Yack (1993) points out that Aristotle, in his discussions on reciprocity, viewed
"the instrumental character of political friendship as the foundation, rather
than the solvent, of political community" and that citizens are "held together
by the expectation of a return for some good for the good they do for
another citizen" (p. 116). Friendship of this sort is yet another example of
Aristotle's theme of the mixed life and how engaging one activity can result
in another form of activity (i.e. the foundation of civic friendship as a nec-
essary condition for the development of virtuous friendship), just as leisure
in the political dimension sets the stage for a philosophical dimension of
leisure. Thus, the activities occurring in this context are both instrumental
and altruistic (see Lear, 2004, for a discussion of activity being choice-worthy

for the ends that it provides as well as for its own sake), echoing the con-
ceptualization of social capital as both an individual and collective good (Put-
nam, 2000). Instrumentalism and altruism, in turn, led to the identification
of communication about shared interests (political conversation) within het-
erogeneous groups as a key ingredient for Aristotelian community.

   We have sought to establish a philosophical and historical framework
for redesigning contemporary community leisure services to be more effec-
tive in cultivating social capital. This objective has led us to target a group
(retirees) due to their increased free time, desire for generative activity, and
their abundance of life experiences, a place (public leisure services) due to
their mission and accessibility, and an activity (informal conversation) that
creates and sustains civic relationships. We are encouraged by the possibility
that public leisure services may play a critical role with this cohort in creating
a new climate of community involvement that may help to reverse a trend
that threatens the very essence of American democracy.

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