

# Time Use and Leisure Occupations of Young Offenders

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*Objective. The overall goal of this study was to understand the time use, including leisure occupations, of a sample of young offenders in Melbourne, Australia.*

*Method. This study investigated how 37 probationary young offenders (from 13–18 years of age) spent their wakeful time during 1 week. The study used a combination of the Experience Sampling Method and interviewing. Participants were beeped 60 times over 7 days and, each time, they were asked to complete a questionnaire about the occupations in which they were engaged. Each participant was interviewed both before and after the Experience Sampling Method data collection about their everyday lives, including their leisure occupations. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.*

*Results. The young offenders reported that they were engaged in leisure occupations, predominantly passive, 57% of the times beeped, and in personal care occupations 21% of the times beeped. Only 10% of the times beeped did they report being engaged in productive occupations such as education or employment. The time spent in passive leisure occupations was 30% higher than for the average Australian adolescent. Leaving school and lack of financial and human resources contributed to the high percentage of engagement in passive leisure occupations.*

*Conclusion. Findings from this study help us to understand the relationship between use of time and social well-being, particularly the nature of time use of young offenders, and will help to inform occupational therapy practices with such groups.*

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The assumption that a relationship exists between balanced, purposeful, and varied use of time and a person's health and well-being has formed the basis for occupational therapy practice since its formation (Meyer, 1922/1977). In the founding years of the profession, Meyer identified four areas, or categories, of daily occupations—work, play, rest, and sleep—that, he argued, in interaction determined the overall adaptation of the person to the requirements of daily life. His views suggested that by providing opportunities for engagement in these daily occupations, especially work, a person should be able to fulfill personal interests and meet needs for physical and psychological well-being. In practice, occupational therapy has helped persons to develop ways to use their time in balanced and meaningful ways.

There is empirical support for the assumption that humans need a balance of daily occupations. Time budget studies, completed by social scientists in industrialized nations, have consistently found that humans have a natural temporal order to their daily living that is organized around the occupations of self-maintenance, work, and

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leisure (Castles, 1995; Robinson, 1996; Robinson, Andrievnikov, & Patrushev, 1988; Statistics Canada, 1986; Szalai, 1977).

Studies of the time use of adolescents also indicate consistency of findings across different countries. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) completed a comprehensive study of the ecology of the daily lives of adolescents in the United States. Their study, on which the study described here was modeled, used a stratified random sample, including male and female students from four high school grades and two contrasting residential zones. Using a research methodology that allows on-the-spot sampling of time use, the Experience Sampling Method, these researchers collected 2,734 self-reports on the daily occupations of 75 students. They found that 29% of the main occupations engaged in by the group during their wakeful hours were what the researchers described as productive occupations, primarily those relating to school. An additional 31% of their time use was spent in various self-maintenance occupations such as eating, bathing, and dressing. The rest of the time (40%) was spent engaged in occupations that could be described as leisure, for example, talking, playing sports, and reading. Sixteen percent of this leisure time was spent socializing and 7% watching television. These percentages closely resemble the findings of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, ABS (1993) of the time use of 15- to 18-year-olds in a national time use survey.

Bruno (1996), using a time allocation preference survey with 494 adolescents attending school in the United States found that girls were far more likely to allocate their time in directed occupations than were boys. However, those students of both genders who were considered by their teachers to have at-risk behaviors, such as being absent from school, had the least preference for occupations that involved external rules and the most preference for nondirected occupations such as entertainment and just passing time. Bruno's study indicated that the use of time may be important in understanding adaptation and, in particular, at-risk behaviors. The study further suggests that the occupational challenges for some adolescents may be greater and may predispose them to engaging in risk-taking behaviors.

There has been some empirical research in occupational therapy literature on humans' use of time (e.g., Hayes & Halford, 1996; Lo, 1996; Lo & Zemke, 1997; Ludwig, 1997, 1998; McKinnon, 1992; Neville, 1980; Passmore, 1998b; Suto & Frank, 1994; Wilcock et al., 1997; Yerxa & Locker, 1990). Although Passmore (1998b) explored the leisure occupations of adolescents and Lederer, Kielhofner, and Watts (1985) compared the values, personal causation, and skills of offenders and nonoffenders, no one has studied the time use of young offenders. Recently, several theoretical papers written by scholars in occupational science have stated the need for further research on the relationship between time use and adaptation to the demands of living

(Christiansen, 1994, 1996; Clark et al., 1991; Farnworth, 1990; Parham, 1996; Pettifer, 1995; Primeau, 1996a, 1996b). In response to this call, the present study sought to understand the time use and, in particular, the leisure occupations, of young offenders.

### Adolescent Leisure Occupations and Health

Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) found that the 75 adolescents in their study engaged in 51 different activities that they reported as being most enjoyable, most of which were leisure occupations. The most intrinsically rewarding leisure occupations in their study were those that were highly structured and highly organized and in which adolescents could use their skills. These included such pursuits as art, hobbies, music, and sports. All involved external rules and challenges.

Interest in participating in leisure occupations arises from a variety of sources. One source is a natural proclivity to find enjoyment within particular occupations that do not need external support (Kielhofner, 1995). However, for interests to be developed and maintained, opportunities for engagement generally need to be available as well as cultural instructions for appreciation of the experience. For example, a person first must appreciate that regular practice of a musical instrument is required before the pleasure of competent performance can be achieved.

According to Passmore (1998a), young people from families having higher socioeconomic status have the financial capacity to explore and gain satisfaction from a larger range of leisure occupations. Leisure occupations such as music, ballet, or tennis lessons may be beyond the finances available in many family budgets as well as resources for transportation to and from such lessons. The more exposure a person has to a range of potential leisure occupations, the more likely it is that he or she will also be able to make realistic choices based on preferences (Kielhofner, 1995). Gar-ton and Pratt (1991) also found that leisure occupations are determined by the availability of suitable resources. Yet, according to Passmore (1998a), those engaged in a wide range of leisure occupations, in addition to being from economically better-off families, are usually the higher academic achievers in school. The directionality of these factors is unclear. However, not only is it likely that the young person who is exposed to a range of leisure occupations will be advantaged academically over the person who has fewer choices, but also it is more likely that they will be able to engage in those occupations for which they have a greater preference.

There is some agreement that engagement in play and leisure occupations can facilitate cognitive, physical, and social skills as well as develop self-esteem and identity (Hendry, 1983; Parham & Primeau, 1997; Wood, 1996). Passmore (1998a), who studied the leisure experiences of nearly 1,200 Australian adolescents, 12 to 18 years of age, found that some forms of leisure contribute positively to

personal growth and development and to maintenance and enhancement of mental health and well-being, whereas others may lead to negative mental health outcomes. She identified three typologies of leisure occupations: achievement, social, and time-out leisure.

According to Passmore (1998a), achievement leisure occupations are those that provide challenge, are demanding, and require commitment, such as sports and music performances. She found that engaging in achievement leisure occupations influenced participants' self-efficacy beliefs and competencies and had a direct relationship with self-esteem. Passmore's social leisure occupations are those that exist primarily for the purpose of being with others. This form of leisure occupation also supported the development of competencies, particularly in the areas of relationships and social acceptance, which positively, albeit indirectly, influenced self-esteem. Time-out leisure, according to Passmore, is for relaxation. However, this type of leisure occupation supported neither competence nor self-esteem enhancement and was found to be negatively related to mental health outcomes. Time-out leisure occupations included watching television and reflecting or listening to music, activities that tended to be socially isolating, less demanding, and frequently passive.

### The Time Use of Young Offenders

Juvenile crime has enormous human and economic costs and, as such, needs to be understood further. Surprisingly little is known, however, about how young offenders occupy their time, including time in leisure occupations. A young offender is one who is arrested and processed through the Children's Court (juvenile court) for committing an illegal act. Research findings indicate that young offenders spend their time with friends in public places, such as shopping centers and street corners, where most of their illegal behavior occurs (Felson, 1994; White & Sutton, 1995). However, this criminological research has not studied why young offenders choose these social and physical contexts in which to spend their time. In one study, Hagell and Newburn (1996) briefly mentioned the time use of young offenders. They interviewed 74 British, predominantly male, repeat criminal offenders, about their family and social contexts. As a peripheral issue, they found that most of the young offenders reported that they were either unemployed (50%) or not engaged in studying or work training. Most were, in effect, doing "nothing" (p. 13). However, data in this study did not include any in-depth information about what this nothing meant or why they perceived themselves as doing nothing.

Criminological studies indicate that many young persons who come to the formal attention of the legal system are those who are truant from school and who often engage in activities that result in suspension or expulsion from school (Carrington, 1990; Galloway, 1985; Knight, 1997). One consequence of leaving school is that they become

more vulnerable to long-term unemployment (Alder, 1986; Braithwaite & Chappell, 1994; Sullivan, 1989). Increasingly high levels of youth unemployment in Australia have further exacerbated the problems for young offenders. According to Commonwealth of Australia (1998) figures, the average unemployment rate for 15- to 19-year-olds seeking full-time employment in the state of Victoria, where this study was completed, was more than 30% during 1998. The figures for the United States during the same period was 14.6% (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999).

From these studies, it appears that young offenders may differ in their time use from their peers who are nonoffenders. Occupations, such as paid employment and attending school, help to structure time and develop routines and habits for independent living (Allen & Steffensmeier, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Jahoda, 1981). However, the time use of young offenders is largely unknown.

### Purpose of Study

Occupational science and occupational therapy literature indicates that humans need a balance of daily occupations to maintain their health and well-being. This assumption is supported, in part, by empirical data from time use surveys. Occupational science literature also suggests that some occupations may have more positive mental health outcomes than others. Although much has been written about delinquency, there is little empirically generated information about the time use of young offenders. The current study sought to redress this gap in the literature by exploring the time use occupations and, in particular, the leisure time use occupations of young offenders in Melbourne, Australia. Understanding the relationship between occupation and health is of central concern to occupational therapists. Hence, the findings from this study also may expand the profession's knowledge of human occupation. In particular, findings may help us to understand the relationships among use of time, leisure occupations, and social well-being—specifically that of young offenders. Additionally, this study may potentially inform current and future occupational therapy practices with young offenders.

### Method

This study used a combination of research methodologies—Experience Sampling Method, a methodology developed by Larson & Csikszentmihalyi (1983) and Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and qualitative interviewing. The Experience Sampling Method yields both quantitative and qualitative data (Farnworth, Mostert, Harrison, & Worrell, 1996) and involves each participant carrying a pager and a pad of Experience Sampling Forms (ESFs). At random intervals during the day, a signal was sent to the pager, alerting the participant to complete a questionnaire (the ESF) about what he or she was doing, the social and physical environment, and various subjective experiences at that moment.

## Participants

Thirty-seven offenders, 15 to 18 years of age and literate, were recruited for this study. Participants lived in an outer industrialized suburb of Melbourne, a city of 4 million people, in the state of Victoria, Australia. Eligibility for inclusion in the study was based on having appeared before the Children's Court for committing an illegal act. In Victoria, the age of criminal responsibility under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court system is 10 to 17 years. In Australia, just 4% of the total population of 10- to 17-year-olds are processed either by police caution, panel hearing, or court appearance.

All participants were on probation and lived in the community with relative freedom to choose the structure of their daily occupations. Thirty-one participants were referred by probation officers and youth workers. Five additional offenders were referred by other participants. The 16 girls and 21 boys ranged in age from 13 to 18 years ( $M = 16$  years).

Whereas 12 lived with a family member and 10 lived in accommodations arranged by government and nongovernment agencies, 7 were homeless (see Table 1). Seventeen participants had been expelled or suspended from school, and 10 had left school voluntarily ( $M = 7.7$  years achieved). Ten were still enrolled in school. However, only 4 of these 10 regularly attended school while in the study. Three participants were currently employed in casual and shift work. Although 26 were at least second-generation Australians, 11 were first-generation Australians or had been born overseas. This cultural mix was typical of the population living in the district.

The offenses for which the participants were on probation included shoplifting, assault, and drug trafficking (see Table 2), which were representative of offenses committed by juveniles in Victoria. Twenty-one participants reported using alcohol, marijuana, speed, heroin, or methadone. Four reported being under the influence of mind-altering substances more than half of the times they were beeped.

## Instrument

A modified version of an ESF originally developed by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) was used. Each ESF contained the open-ended question, "What was the main activity that you are doing?" to record the occupation that the person was engaged in at the moment that he or she was paged. The ESF also contained open-ended questions related to the social and physical contexts of the occupations

**Table 1**  
Living Situation of Participants

Living Situation	Number
Government or nongovernment agency	10
Living with family member	12
Living with boyfriend or girlfriend	7
Itinerant or homeless	7
Living alone	1

**Table 2**  
Most Serious Offense Committed by Participants

Offense	Number
Crime against person	
Sexual or indecent assault	1
Assault and robbery	1
Assault (indictable; i.e. serious)	2
Assault (summary; i.e., less serious)	3
Crime against property	
Theft (of goods)	6
Burglary	1
Theft of motor vehicle	2
Handle stolen goods	1
Criminal damage	1
Other crime	
Drug trafficking	4

with the questions, "Who are you with?" and "Where are you?" An additional question—"What are you thinking about?"—was included. Two cognitive questions directly related to the main activity when paged were, "What are the challenges of the activity?" and "What are your skills in the activity?" These cognitive questions had Likert response categories where participants indicated their response on a scale ranging from 1 to 7 where 1 corresponded to low and 7 to high. Although the ESF contained 22 additional items on motivation, cognitive efficiency, activation, and affect, only the questions about the occupation, social and physical contexts, thoughts, challenges, and skills will be discussed in this article.

## Data Collection

Data were gathered between 1995 and 1997, and a total of 1,535 ESFs were completed. Each participant responded to 12 to 60 ESFs when paged, with a mean response rate of 43/60 (72%). Seventy-eight percent of the beeper signals were responded to within 5 min, 87% within 10 min, and 92% within 20 min. These response rates compare favorably with other Experience Sampling Method studies with nonoffender populations of young persons attending educational institutions (e.g., Clarke & Haworth, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). Each participant was paid for his or her participation in the study, which may, in part, explain the high response rate. No ESFs or participants were excluded from the data analysis, except one participant who lost her booklet. Therefore, the Experience Sampling Method data analysis was carried out using data from 36 participants only.

## Procedure

Informed consent was gained from each participant or his or her guardian. As a condition of ethical approval for the study, participants were warned that they did not need to make comments that may have been incriminating or that constituted a breach of their probation. I met with each participant in a location of his or her choice. Each participant was introduced to the study, and received instructions on the use of the pager and how to fill out the questions on a pad of 30 double-sided self-report forms (ESFs). I asked

participants to fill out a practice ESF and then gave them a pager and pad to carry for 7 consecutive days.

*Experience Sampling Method procedure.* In this study, a standard method of paging was applied. Each participant was asked about his or her normal sleep-wake pattern so that a beeping schedule could be arranged around wakeful hours. At one random moment within approximately every 2-hour period, a signal was sent to the pager, causing it to beep or vibrate. Each participant was paged 60 times during the week. At the time of the beep, the participant answered questions on the ESF, a process that took approximately 2 min. At the completion of the 7 days, I met with each participant for debriefing and collected the pager and the pad of ESFs.

*Interview procedure.* Participants were interviewed twice. Interviews in conjunction with the Experience Sampling Method have been used in other studies (Hurlburt, Happe, & Frith, 1994; Hurlburt & Melancon, 1987; Kimiecik & Stein, 1992; Mokros, 1993; Voelkl & Nicholson, 1992) to check the validity and authenticity of findings and their interpretation. Using a semistructured interview schedule, I interviewed each participant during the week of the Experience Sampling Method study to develop rapport and to gather background information about their engagement in illegal activities and their past and current occupations, including questions about their schooling and leisure occupations. This first interview process involved an informal conversational style that lasted from .5 hr to 1.5 hr. The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed fully.

After I studied the initial interview transcript and analyzed the data from the ESFs (approximately 2 weeks after collecting the pager and ESFs), I again met with each participant for another interview. I gave the young person a copy of the transcript to read and discussed information from the first interview and ESFs that required further clarification. This procedure included checking with the participant about how he or she would interpret ambiguous categories in the open-ended items. The findings from the Experience Sampling Method were also shared with each participant. This second interview also was tape recorded and transcribed.

I kept field notes and an analytical log throughout the research data collection (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). Field notes included additional information about each participant that arose during the data collection, such as my description of the participants' living situations, their appearance, or their relationship with me. The analytical log was a record of daily schedules and logistics, a personal diary about my impressions, and a methodological log about questions that presented themselves and changes in thinking about the research process as it was evolving.

#### *Data Analysis*

All ESF data were coded and entered into a data analysis

program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (V6 for Macintosh computers). Categories from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey on *How Australians Use Their Time* were used for coding occupations (Castles, 1993). The 10 broad functional categories were labor force occupations, domestic occupations, child care, purchasing goods and services, personal care, educational occupations, voluntary work and community participation, social life and entertainment, active leisure occupations, and passive leisure occupations. Because illegal activities are an important category for this study, they were coded separately. The frequency and mean percentage of completed ESFs for each participant, and for the total group's engagement in each occupation, were computed. Time diaries and the Experience Sampling Method have the potential to produce almost identical values of time allocation for different daily occupations (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, 1987); therefore, the ABS time use data were used as a basis for comparison with the Experience Sampling Method data.

An individual synthesis was constructed for each participant that integrated the nonnumerical ESF data, field notes, and textual data into a comprehensive whole for each participant. In collecting and analyzing the qualitative data, a comparative method was followed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This type of analysis is an iterative process of observing, recording, coding, and comparing data and emerging interpretations of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Polkinghorne, 1986). Data related to daily routines and leisure occupations are presented in this article. A computer program, NUD\*IST (Richards & Richards, 1997), was used to aid in handling the nonnumerical and unstructured data and in supporting processes of coding data in an index system. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

## Results

### *Reported Beep Times Engaged in Main Occupation*

Table 3 summarizes the 1,421 responses to the question "What was the main thing you were doing?" Passive leisure occupations included watching television, talking, thinking, and listening to music; personal care occupations included smoking, drinking, eating, or resting; household occupations included domestic, child care, and purchasing goods and services (e.g., selecting a video); active leisure occupations included playing computer games, sport, hobbies, and having sex; education occupations included both school-based occupations and homework; labor force occupations included voluntary work; legal related occupations included shoplifting, purchasing and using illegal substances, and police-related matters; and social leisure occupations included attending social events (e.g., going to the movies).

Nearly 80% of the reported beep times of the group

**Table 3**  
**Percentage of Beep Times Engaged in Main Occupation of Sample Compared With Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 1993) 15- to 18-Year-Olds\***

Occupational Category	Main Occupation Sample (% of Time)	ABS 15- to 18-Year-Olds (% of Time)
Passive leisure	48.5	18.2
Personal care	21.2	16.4
Household	9.3	9.1
Active leisure	6.7	8.6
Education	6.3	22.1
Labor force	3.3	11.1
Legal related	3.0	
Social leisure	1.4	14.0

\*Not including sleep.

was spent engaged in leisure, particularly passive leisure (49%), or personal care occupations. Conversely, when beeped, few participants reported being engaged in education or labor force occupations, although there were wide individual variations in this time use. The percentage of reported beep times engaged in legal-related activities, such as shoplifting and use of illegal substances, is small (3%), and because recording it had the potential to incriminate, this figure probably underestimates participants' engagement in these activities.

For a comparison with the time use of a larger population of adolescents, Table 3 presents the 1992 ABS Time Use Study percentage of time engaged in main occupations for boys and girls 15 to 18 years of age (not including sleep). When the occupations of the two groups are compared, the most obvious differences are that the young offender group spent the most time in passive leisure occupations (30% higher than the ABS population) and 3% engaged in legal-related activities. Time engaged in educational occupations was 16% higher (almost three times as much) in the ABS sample. Engagement in labor force occupations was 7% higher (almost three times as much) in the ABS sample, and social leisure occupations were almost nonexistent in the young offender population. The percentage of time reported in personal care and household occupations are similar for both groups. In considering participants' engagement in active leisure occupations, only 39 (2.5%) of the ESFs contained reports of engagement in occupations such as kicking a football or skateboarding. Thirty-two of these occupations were reported by the four participants who were still regularly attending school. Just 11 (.7%) ESFs reported participants engaged in hobby-related leisure occupations, such as drawing.

These time use findings strongly suggest that young offenders do not spend their time in the same way as their peers who are nonoffenders. Passive leisure occupations appear to dominate their lives, whereas nonoffenders use more time engaged in productive occupations such as education and labor force occupations and social leisure.

### *Leisure Occupations*

All participants were asked about their current leisure occu-

pations. Although it is usual for adolescents to engage in a range of structured leisure occupations (Castles, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984) or, using Passmore's typology, achievement leisure occupations (e.g., music, sports), surprisingly few participants could mention any achievement leisure occupations in which they currently engaged. Their time use was dominated by passive, or time-out, leisure occupations. The reason for this was explored further through questioning.

### *Loss of Active Leisure Occupations After Leaving School*

Most participants talked about leisure occupations that they had developed in the past, in the context of the school environment. These may have included active sports, such as athletics or team sports, or artistic pursuits. Of the five participants who more regularly engaged in sporting occupations during the study, four were still attending school. Ten participants reported that they had ceased their engagement in achievement leisure occupations as a direct consequence of leaving school.

Chung, 17 years of age, explained that he was expelled from school because he took too much time off to attend to his girlfriend's problematic pregnancy. He was one of those who had stopped engaging in sporting occupations. He had subsequently become immersed in an illicit drug culture and was currently on probation for heroin dealing. In discussing activities he enjoyed, I (L.F.) asked him whether he had ever played sports, to which he replied:

Chung: Yeah. I played volleyball for [a state team] and we came fifth.  
 L.F.: This is at school? Chung: Yeah. Through school. Yeah, at high school. L.F.: So, do you still play volleyball. Chung: No, I quit for 2 years, 3 years. Yeah, as soon as I left school.

Similarly, John, 16 years of age, also stopped his athletics when he left school. He had originally received an athletic scholarship in a private school. However, his expulsion from school also coincided with drug taking and engagement in other illegal activities. At the time of the study, he was on probation for a series of burglaries that were committed to finance his drug addiction. According to John,

John: I represented Victoria and stuff. I was a sprinter. I've got, like, a big newspaper article and medals and stuff. I went to the Pan Pacific games and stuff like that. Got sponsorship by Nike.  
 L.F.: Do you do any sports now? John: Oh, not really, not much time. I was training every day and stuff. I am going to get back into it soon. Get fit again.

John acknowledged, "I smoke [marijuana—bongs] all the time," in part because "normally after a smoke it motivates me in a way." He was under the influence of drugs 45% of the times he was beeped and engaged in passive leisure occupations 52% of the times. These occupations included listening to music, watching television, and smoking marijuana. His only active leisure occupation was having sex. The Saturday described in Table 4 is an example of his routine daily occupations. Although he began the day

**Table 4**  
**John's Experience Sampling Form (Saturday)**

Time	Thoughts	Where	Occupation	With Whom	Challenge	Skill
10:29 a.m.	Lawn mowers	Garage	Talking	[not answered]	4	7
12:35 p.m.	Smoking bong	Bedroom	Smoking	Girlfriend	2	7
3:06 p.m.	Scoring	[Local shopping mall]	Walking		7	7
4:44 p.m.	Bongs	Home	Smoking a bong	Girlfriend	2	7
7:29 p.m.	Bongs	Home	Having a bong	Girlfriend and friend	2	7
9:49 p.m.	Cleaning	Home	Cleaning	Girlfriend	2	7
1:19 a.m.	Sleep	Bed	Sleeping	Girlfriend	1	7

by trying to mend the lawnmower so that he could mow his girlfriend's mother's lawn, by midday he was smoking "bongs." He then ran out of drugs and needed to "score" (purchase more marijuana). Under the influence of these drugs, he began cleaning at 9:49 p.m. before going to bed by 1:19 a.m. For a young man who had previously won a scholarship to a private school for his athletic prowess, his routine, as indicated by this Saturday, would not support his resumption of athletic activities. His most challenging activities for this day are "scoring" drugs at the local shopping mall and smoking them at home.

#### *Loss of Capacities*

Other participants had also experienced prior successful participation in achievement leisure occupations. Sue, on probation for two assault charges, had won prizes for her drawings. Drawing was important to her because it was the only activity she had engaged in that had gained her external praise. She explained:

...drawing. That's all I've been good at. And that's all I know I've been good at because I always won awards since I was little, and I won the [local] show, first prize. It was so exact. But the thing about me is I only draw right, but if I'm actually supposed to do something, I can't concentrate.

Sue, 16 years of age, had stopped attending school at 14 when the demands of attending to her boyfriend's needs had become too much for her to keep up with her schoolwork. At that time, however, she had demonstrated some artistic talent. Although this skill could have been developed further, without the structure and routine provided by school, she now found it difficult to draw because she lacked the required concentration skills. In the week of the study, Sue was engaged in passive leisure 74% of the times she responded to the beeper, in household occupations 13% of the time, in personal care 10% of the time, and in purchasing goods from the local milk bar 3% of the time

**Table 5**  
**Sue's Experience Sampling Form (Tuesday)**

Time	Thoughts	Where	Occupation	With Whom	Challenge	Skill
12:25 p.m.	Nothing	In car	Listening to music	Brother	1	7
2:00 p.m.	Friend's house	Friend's house	Looking around friend's house	Friends	1	7
4:45 p.m.	Nothing	Friends	Talking	Friends	1	7
6:15 p.m.	Turning the noisy thing [the washing machine] off	Home	Washing clothes	Family	7	1
8:21 p.m.	The Golden [listening to music]	In car	Sitting in the car	Friends	1	7
11:25 p.m.	Going home	Friend's house	Thinking	Friends	1	7

(see Table 5). The drawing that she enjoyed, and in which she has some skill, was not practiced, nor did she engage in any other activities in which she was likely to develop further skills. Even attending to a noisy washing machine becomes a highly challenging activity—the highest challenge, but her lowest perceived skill—in the week that Sue participated in the study.

#### *Lack of Resources to Pursue Leisure Occupations*

Not having money to pay for leisure occupations was raised by several participants. For example, Martin said that apart from signing on at the local police station every day,

Martin: [I] sit down and do nothing. Sometimes I drink, sometimes I just smoke cigarettes all day. Read the newspaper or do puzzles in a magazine. And that's it. L.F.: Would you rather be doing something else? Martin: Yeah, but I haven't got the money.

Martin was living (illegally) in an accommodation provided through a Youth Support scheme with four other persons. None of them had enough money to even buy a television. Although Martin suggested that he might have to steal one, he was trying to get through his probation without further charges. His \$240 biweekly allowance did not allow him to buy extras apart from food and rent. Previously, Martin had been able to use a barter system to pay for some of his entertainment. For example, he had worked at his local "[pinball]-parlor" mopping floors and cleaning up pool tables, "just to get a few credits." But as a condition of his probation, he was no longer allowed to go to the suburb, so he lacked both the opportunity and financial resources to pursue this leisure occupation.

#### *Lost Leisure Occupation Opportunities*

Some facilities that provided care for young offenders appeared to lack opportunities for realistic leisure occupations. I met both Laura and Linda through a safe house that provided supported accommodation for young female

offenders who also had been victims of sexual assault. The program had an excellent reputation for the care and support offered to these young women. By coincidence, I was party to an ongoing saga about four bicycles.

Linda, now 16 years of age, had previously been a keen bike rider. She explained:

I used to do it when I was a child, that was my escape. Sort of piss off and ride for hours and get [as] far away as possible, and then since I went out on the streets and all that sort of bisso [business], I sort of didn't get the chance to even get my hands on a bike to ride, or do anything I liked.

Linda—who had had a baby when she was 11 years old, earned a living through prostitution, had been addicted to heroin, and attempted suicide—now was staying in her first stable, supported accommodation facility in 5 years. The facility had four bicycles; however, all of them required minor repairs. Linda had asked whether the bikes could be fixed, and one of the workers had purchased some repair equipment, but none were repaired before Linda moved out. When I asked about the repair equipment, no one could find it.

Laura had different reasons for wanting to use the bikes. She had been raised in a rural town and after escaping an abusive home situation, had fled to the city. She responded well to open, natural environments. For example, at one time when beeped during the study, she was walking in a park with her youth worker while the worker walked her two dogs. Laura's affect at that beep was her highest during a traumatic week of periodic suicidal thoughts. She feared walking alone into the local parks, but would have been happy to go by herself with a bike if one had been repaired. Had the bikes been repaired, both Linda and Laura may have learned that leisure occupations can be enjoyed regularly, with little cost, and from within their regular living environment.

## Discussion

The lives of many of these young offenders were dominated by passive leisure with few achievement leisure occupations, time use that differs greatly from their peers who were nonoffenders. This finding is important because it identifies a problematic area of concern, that is, young offenders engage in passive leisure occupations at the expense of engagement in achievement leisure or productive occupations. Hoge, Andrews, and Leschied's (1996) research indicated that effective use of leisure time is one factor that protects young offenders from engaging in criminal activities. The clear predominance of passive leisure reported by the participants in the study indicates that these young offenders were not using their leisure time effectively. These findings strongly suggest that occupation-based interventions with young offenders should reflect the need for these clients to develop effective use of leisure time.

Many of the participants had fragmented family lives

and experienced financial and emotional deprivation. One consequence of this is that they potentially had fewer opportunities to engage in a range of achievement leisure occupations than did adolescents from more secure families. For those participants who had developed achievement leisure occupations at school, accessibility to these was lost once they left school. In consequence, not only did they lose the time structure and routine of attending school (as evidenced through the descriptions of their daily routines), but they also lost the potential health benefits of engaging in achievement leisure occupations. For several participants, leaving school coincided with their initial or deepening immersion in the use of drugs that also had an impact on their physical and psychological ability to engage in achievement leisure occupations.

Passmore's (1998b) research indicated that passive time-out leisure is likely to negatively affect mental health, competence, and self-esteem; one might, therefore, assume that this pattern of time use was unlikely to encourage the mental health of the participants in this study. That is, the time use of young offenders not engaged in work, school, or achievement leisure occupations potentially may have negative health implications.

From findings presented here, relationships, if any, between this pattern of time use and young offenders' engagement in criminal activities are not explained. Greater understanding of this relationship is likely to be found by further studying their experiences while engaged in occupations. Although the experience of boredom is cited as coexisting with engagement in criminal activities (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1978; Farnworth, 1998; Glassner & Loughlin, 1987; Hirsch, 1969), the relationship between boredom and different occupations, such as passive and achievement leisure, needs further exploration. The use of the Experience Sampling Method to identify any such relationships is strongly recommended.

Passmore (1998b) also found that not only are achievement leisure occupations more likely to lead to improved mental health, but also are more likely to lead to the development of values and skills necessary for work settings, such as commitment, personal control, and learning to work with others. Additionally, social leisure is about forming interpersonal relationships, developing a sense of belonging, and resolving differences. Hence, both achievement and social leisure occupations are conducive to developing skills for the workplace; however, these are the very leisure occupations least likely to have been engaged in by young offenders. In support of this, Hong, Milgram, and Whiston (1993) found in an 18-year follow-up study, that adolescent leisure activities predicted subsequent employment choices. As has been suggested by Passmore (1998b), achievement and social leisure occupations may lay the foundations for supporting a range of occupational roles, including the worker role. It is likely that the young offenders in this study may be disadvantaged by their lack of



engagement in achievement and social leisure pursuits not only in the present, but also in the future.

### Occupational Repetition

As Clark et al. (1991), postulated occupations and routines facilitate or limit a person's ability to successfully adapt to and meet environmental demands. Hence, understanding one's daily routines may give us insight into the person's occupational adaptation. According to Carlson (1996), people tend to repeat engagement in the same or similar occupations, or to engage in occupational repetition, producing a sequential pattern of occupations with little variability. So, for example, if a young woman watches television at the exclusion of other occupations, she may lose interest in seeking alternative daily occupations. Occupational repetition sets in. She may come to define her social identity in relationship to her regular pattern of television watching. In this way, the young woman's use of time not only affects her self-perception, but also leads to acceptance of this use of time as normal, resulting in little personal investment to change. As Carlson explained, occupational repetition would be an implicit and positive requirement of achievement leisure occupations, such as sports, that demand repeated practice over time. However, repetition of less fulfilling, passive occupations, such as watching television, may indirectly lead to wasted talent and personal mediocrity.

The long-term consequences of occupational repetition may potentially affect all levels of cognitive, physical, and emotional growth and development from adolescence to adulthood. To this end, the use of time by young offenders as described in this study—dominated by passive leisure and few achievement leisure occupations—might lead, without intervention, to similar patterns of occupations in adulthood. Future research on the use of time of young offenders, therefore, should concentrate further on the occupational history of a larger group of young offenders, and in particular, their development of leisure interests from childhood to the present. Additionally, to further understand the relationships between different forms of leisure occupations in adolescence and future occupational roles, longitudinal studies of young offenders are necessary.

### Conclusion

The overall goal of this study was to explore the time use and, in particular, the leisure occupations, of young offenders. Findings indicate that these young offenders do not use their time in the same way as their peers who are nonoffenders. Their lives are dominated by passive leisure and self-care occupations, and they engage in few productive occupations, such as labor force or education occupations. The findings also suggest that these young offenders engage in few achievement leisure occupations, that is, those that may contribute to their mental health and well-being and that could lay the foundation for supporting a range of pro-

ductive occupational roles. The pattern of time use found in this study may negatively affect the young offenders' future development of skills for independent living.

This research has also contributed to the study of occupation by furthering our knowledge on human use of time and its relationship to health and well-being. Many young offenders in this study who experienced problems at home and who left school subsequently lost achievement leisure occupations. Their current use of time, therefore, was a consequence of a problematic occupational history.

As has been indicated, data from this study also revealed that those working with young offenders do not always appreciate the benefits of engaging young people in ordinary everyday occupations that may have health benefits. Expert knowledge on human occupation is the domain of occupational therapists. Hence, findings from this study help us to understand the use of time—particularly, the leisure occupations—of young offenders and will help to inform current and future occupational therapy practices with such groups. ▲

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