

DOCTORAL THESIS

A phenomenological study on the serious leisure experiences of Hong Kong adolescents

Siu, Po Kwan Gertrude

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**A Phenomenological Study on the
Serious Leisure Experiences of
Hong Kong Adolescents**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

Not all experiences encountered by an individual are genuinely or equally important to him/her. However, they impact on the individual's future, for better or worse. An experience of a person is the interplay between his/her needs, desires and purposes and what, at the time, constitutes his/her environment. Thus, an experience that creates impact on one person may not do the same on the other. Experiences of school-age adolescents centre around three areas, namely maintenance activities and routine household chores, schoolwork and leisure. Contemporary research findings suggest that leisure offers adolescents a distinct developmental context apart from family and school. I would like to examine the serious leisure experiences of adolescent participants and explore the kind of impact such experiences have made on them.

In this study, I assume that facilitative conditions for adolescent development are inherent in serious leisure of the adult world. For those adolescent serious leisure participants, their transition into adulthood would thus be facilitated. This phenomenological study is designed to explore the serious leisure experiences of a sample of fifteen youngsters (i.e., 9 male and 6 female, with age ranging from 17 to 23) who have been engaging themselves in activities that later become their serious leisure ever since adolescence or even earlier. For those who have taken up the leisure activities long enough, serious leisure experiences of them covered their life span from primary schooling to secondary schooling or even tertiary education. As a whole, all participants were engaging in serious leisure pursuits when they were in their adolescence, a period during which the traits of adulthood gradually emerge rather than a time in life being determined by a particular age range.

Data were collected through a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews with

the research participants. Analysis and interpretation of findings were organized by way of foci of the following three interviews according to the chronological order of the participants' bumping into and engagement in serious leisure: (a) past life contexts, (b) serious leisure experiences and (c) reflections on engagement in their own serious leisure. Findings in this study revealed that serious leisure experiences of the research participants had provided them with involvement in goal-directed activities which offered them more opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills, explore the self and form relationships with others within a context of effort and demand. As time went by, they also derived meanings and life purposes from their serious leisure engagement. Positive impacts of serious leisure experiences on the participants' development were evident as findings revealed that they were, to some extent, moving into their emerging adulthood.

Recommendations were offered to parents and teachers. Given that there were multiple concurrent experiences other than serious leisure experiences that might have affected the research participants' development, the conclusions and recommendations put forth should be taken with caution for consideration of their appropriateness on an individual basis.

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