Work and Leisure: Transcending the Dichotomy

Loree A. Primeau

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The contribution of a balance of work and leisure to health and a sense of well-being is a common sense assumption in everyday knowledge as well as in occupational therapy. The impact of the organization and balance of occupations in daily life on health, adaptation, life satisfaction, and a sense of well-being are central issues in occupational science. One of occupational science's potential contributions to society is the ability to provide understanding and insights that transcend common sense assumptions and everyday knowledge about occupations. This article will address, through a review of the literature, some of the limitations inherent in beliefs about a healthy balance of work and leisure. It will demonstrate how distinctions between work and leisure are culturally bound and perpetuate the assumption that they are dichotomous experiences. This dichotomy is shown to be a false one and must be transcended in order to explore the question of what is a healthy balance within daily life. This article concludes with considerations for occupational therapy research and practice that may arise from transcendence of the dichotomy of work and leisure.

The belief in a human need for a daily balance of work and leisure was already centuries old in 1659 when James Howell stated, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (as cited in Bartlett, 1980, p. 271). Adages about the ill effects of an imbalance between work and leisure can be traced back to the 4th century B.C.; for example, "If a man insisted always on being serious, and never allowed himself a bit of fun and relaxation, he would go mad or become unstable without knowing it" (The Histories of Herodotus, bk I, ch 173, as cited in Bartlett, 1980, p. 78). Or one may go even further back to the 24th century B.C. to find: "One who is serious all day will never have a good time, while one who is frivolous all day will never establish a household" (The Maxims of Pahhotpe, maxim no. 25, as cited in Bartlett, 1980, p. 3).

The centrality of a balance of work and leisure to health and a sense of well-being was already a widespread assumption strongly rooted in everyday knowledge when the profession of occupational therapy was founded in 1917. Thus, its incorporation into the philosophy of occupational therapy would seem to be a logical extension of the current cultural belief system. Adolf Meyer (1922), one of the founders of occupational therapy, stated:

The whole of human organization has its shape in a kind of a rhythm...The larger rhythms of night and day, of sleep and waking hours, of hunger and its gratification, and finally the big four—work and play and rest and sleep, which our organism must be able to balance even under difficulty. The only way to attain balance in all this is actual doing, actual practice, a program of wholesome living as the basis of wholesome feeling and thinking and fancy and interest. (p. 6)

And so, occupational therapy, defined today as a health profession that uses selected tasks to diminish or correct pathology and to promote or maintain health (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1991), was born.

From the traditions of occupational therapy, as articulated by Meyer (1922) and others (Slagle, 1922; Reilly, 1962, 1966), emerged occupational science (Yerxa et al., 1989). The impact of the organization and balance of occupations in daily life on health, adaptation, life satisfaction, and a sense of well-being are central issues in occupational science (Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa et al., 1989). One of occupational science's potential contributions to society is the ability to provide understanding and insights that transcend common sense assumptions and everyday knowledge about occupations (Clark et al., 1991). The human need for a daily balance of work and leisure is such an assumption. In fact, Clark et al. (1991) stated that
the commonly held assumption that a balance of work and leisure is healthful, although probably correct in a general way, fails to define work, leisure, or what constitutes a balance: does not specify the aspects of health that are promoted; and is not seriously subjected to the possibility of disconfirmation. (p. 306)

This article will address, through a review of the literature, some of the limitations inherent in the common sense belief in a healthy balance of work and leisure. Specifically, the question of what is a healthy balance of work and leisure will be explored. It is hoped that this exploration will provide a foundation for occupational therapists to think about and develop theory, research, and practice designed to examine the elements, dynamics, and limits of a healthy balance in daily occupations of work and leisure.

The Historical Context of Leisure

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher in the 3rd century B.C., could be considered to be the father of leisure (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). He stated, “It is commonly believed that happiness depends on leisure because we occupy ourselves so that we may have leisure, just as we make war in order that we may live at peace” (as cited in Rybczynski, 1991, p. 21). For the Greek philosophers, leisure as an ideal consisted of certain types of activities and was not just empty space waiting to be filled with activity of any sort. Leisure was seen as the arena for virtuous action “for leisure is among the primary conditions for virtue and the proper use of leisure is virtuous” (Hemingway, 1988, p. 181). According to Aristotle, leisure must be freely chosen because virtue cannot be forced upon one. Leisure was a time for contemplation of “thoughts noble and divine” (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 23) that would lead to virtuous choices and action. Such action was the only path to true happiness and pleasure. Through contemplation at leisure, one was able to come closest to what was godlike and divine in one’s nature. Thus, leisure was seen as better than work, for only in leisure could the ideals of the culture be realized. Today, the search for the good life in which the ideals of wisdom, virtue, and leisure are pursued is part of Greek legacy (Goodale & Godbey, 1988).

The Romans and early Christians also valued leisure above work. Work and wealth were viewed as distractions from serving God. Money had no value in and of itself other than as a means to an end. Having money “made it possible to exercise the virtue of helping others and supporting civic undertakings” (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 32), but wealth was indicative of a lack of Christian belief and service. Work was acceptable, but only to the point of provision of adequate comforts to meet basic needs. The predominant religious attitude toward work was that it was a form of penance for man’s basic evilness. It was a “useful and necessary discipline” (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 43) within which one could recognize, admit, and make amends for one’s sinfulness.

In the premodern world, that is, before industrialization and the 19th century, a work ethic was unnecessary. Natural rhythms and nature’s seasons organized the peasant’s or laborer’s time (Cross, 1990; Thompson, 1967). Outdoor occupations required work from sunup to sundown. Hunters used the night hours to set their traps. Seafarers and fishermen had to attend to the rhythms of the tides. Although work often stretched from morning to night, 7 days a week, it was broken up by frequent rests and meal breaks.

Irregularity in daily work time extended to include irregular weekly and yearly cycles (Cross, 1990; Parker, 1983; Rybczynski, 1991; Schor, 1991; Thompson, 1967). The pace of work and business was slower in premodern society. Constraints of nature for the farmer and constraints of technology for the merchant and craftsman resulted in seasonal variations in the pace of work (Cross, 1990; Schor, 1991). Holiday leisure time, including festivals during off seasons, religious celebrations, and unofficial holidays related to weddings, funerals, and traveling carnivals, added up to one third of the year in England and one half of the year in France (Schor, 1991).

Long before industrialization, during the 16th and 17th centuries, a work ethic began to emerge among radical Protestant and Puritan religious reformers in both England and the New England colonies (Cross, 1990). This group developed into a middle class that defined itself through its new attitude toward work. Rather than viewing work as a means to pleasure and leisure as did the poor or as a degrading activity meant for servants and slaves as did the rich, this middle class embraced work as a way to improve humanity. Work was “its own reward but also a promise of future benefits, both spiritual and material” (Cross, 1990, p. 25). Leisure was feared as a temptation to sin and as an opposite of self-control, a sense of purpose, rational thought, and godliness. The Protestant work ethic called into question the traditional daily balance of work and leisure.

In an effort to spread the word of their God who valued work, productivity, and discipline, the Puritans set out to reform the world. They rejected the celebration of holy days and other religious festivals throughout the year but believed that Sundays should be a day of rest (Cross, 1990; Rybczynski, 1991). With the elimination
of the seasonal holidays and the establishment of a weekly cycle of 6 days of work and 1 day of rest, a regular and full work year and workweek developed. Sunday, a day of weekly rest, guaranteed "a new kind of balance between work and relaxation" (Cross, 1990, p. 29).

Throughout history, wherever people have had control over their working lives, their work patterns alternated between intense labor and idleness (Thompson, 1967). The practice of keeping Saint Monday seemed to originate in preindustrial workers' attempts to maintain this control in response to the increasing demands of an industrialized work schedule upon their free time (Ryczyński, 1991). Although it lacked official sanction, workers in England, France, Belgium, Prussia, and Sweden frequently added Monday onto the official weekly holiday of Sunday. Staying away from work on Monday and working longer hours later in the week became customary. The custom of keeping Saint Monday was characteristic of the preindustrial worker's choice of leisure over increased income. Less work and more play was preferred over attempts to accumulate wealth or material goods (Cross, 1990; Schor, 1991). Thus, for the premodern worker, "the line between work and play was blurred; work was engaged in with a certain amount of playfulness, and play was always given serious attention" (Ryczyński, 1991, p. 112).

Although the Protestant work ethic was resisted by both the poor and the elite, the emerging Puritan middle class of artisans, merchants, and independent farmers was devoted to work and eventually became economically dominant and capable of imposing its beliefs on others (Cross, 1990). The Protestant work ethic, with its emphasis on routine, hard work, and frugality, led to more work and less leisure for most people and to an accumulation of wealth for some. Thus, the Protestant work ethic has been linked with the development of industrial capitalism (Furnham, 1990; Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Zerubavel, 1981). The Puritan religious group that created the Protestant work ethic died out by the end of the 17th century, but the pervasive influence of the work ethic continues to be felt today (Furnham, 1990).

Industrialization, most often discussed in terms of economic change, had an equally powerful effect on social relationships and behaviors, including how people worked and played (Cross, 1990). Key factors in industrialization were the steam engine, the factory, and the clock. The steam engine allowed work to be mechanized, whereas the factory centralized work. But it was the clock that institutionalized the Protestant work ethic (Cross, 1990; Thompson, 1967). The clock "gave the 18th century employer the ability to precisely measure time and thus to quantify, control, and eventually to intensify the pace of work" (Cross, 1990, p. 58). Peasants transformed into factory workers were subjected to a long workday and workweek, an intense level of work because of mechanization, and the removal of play from their work through the ability of the factory manager to control their time. Thus, industrialization and the advent of the factory reduced workers' opportunities and time for leisure.

The impact of industrialization on work and leisure was felt in three main areas of daily life (Cross, 1990). First, work and leisure took place in different physical spaces and environments. The lives of workers were divided between income-producing time and family time as work was removed from homes and centralized in factories. "The workers' day became segmented into hours of work and hours of leisure, each conducted in different, often distant places" (Cross, 1990, p. 61). Thus, homes and families became the locus of leisure. Second, work and leisure increasingly became opposites, rather than complements, to each other. Instead of being at times indistinguishable, work was something one went to and gave up freedom for, whereas leisure was deferred pleasure experienced after work hours. Third, work and leisure developed into separate experiences for men and women. Women's paid work was generally restricted to a period between childhood and marriage; men continued paid work throughout their adult life.

Men's work and leisure were sharply differentiated as their labor was measured by the factory clock. Quitting time at the factory left men with residual free time for leisure. After marriage, women's leisure time was shaped by the rhythms of work within the home (Cross, 1990; Peiss, 1986). "Given the task-oriented nature of their work, married women's leisure was intermittent, snatched between household chores" (Peiss, 1986, p. 23). With the localization of leisure within the home, women's role in organizing leisure in the family (Cross, 1990) was frequently experienced as work rather than leisure (Peiss, 1986). The responsibility for food preparation and provision and childcare during outings, picnics, and parties could hardly be defined as leisure for most women. Differences in men's and women's experiences of leisure persist today. Women are more likely than men to have less time for leisure, particularly on weekends; to interspace their leisure activities among their household work activities; and to locate their leisure activities within their homes and families (Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Henderson, 1990; Shaw, 1985a).

Another effect of industrialization on daily life that endures today is the redistribution of time between work and leisure. Cross (1990) referred to this as the "repack-
Americans of all ages, and more than half of Americans stated that they experienced a decrease in leisure time as they aged (p. 73) of leisure hours. He stated:

Industrialization drove play from labor and eliminated the seasonal ebbs in the flow of work so characteristic of artisanal and agricultural life; it also made possible new forms of leisure time, including the typically modern notions of free evenings, the weekend, paid summer vacations, as well as a lengthy childhood and retirement. (p. 73)

In addition to the redistribution of time between work and leisure, there was a concurrent increase in the time spent in work. A 17th century medieval laborer worked an average of 1,980 hours per year, whereas an American worker in 1850 probably worked between 3,150 and 3,650 hours per year. In 1987, the average worker in the United States worked about 1,949 paid hours per year (Schor, 1991). Thus, today's worker, in terms of time spent in work, has merely regained the status of the 17th century worker.

The Sociocultural Context of Leisure

If the average number of hours worked per year has decreased over the past century, why are Americans today experiencing an increasing scarcity of time? One in four Americans holding paid jobs and the number of hours worked per week and year increased, whereas paid time off, sick leave, and unpaid absences decreased (Schor, 1991). The percentage of married women in the workforce doubled from approximately one third in 1960 to two thirds in 1990. Teenage participation in the workforce increased to 53.7% in 1990 from 44% in 1965 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988). Men's workforce participation is an exception to the trend of increased work time. In 1948, 89% of men were engaged in paid work; in 1987, the percentage of men employed in work outside of the home dropped to 78% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988). Mandatory retirement, educational preparation and job training, and economic factors such as plant closings and corporate restructuring have played a part in this decrease (Schor, 1991).

The average employed American in 1987 worked 163 hours or 1 month per year more than his or her counterpart worked in 1969. This increase has been consistent across all income categories, family patterns, industries, and occupations (Schor, 1991). Two thirds of the total increase in work hours between 1969 and 1987 is related to an increase in the weeks worked per year. In addition, the workweek lengthened by an average of 54 minutes, resulting in the first sustained peacetime increase in weekly work hours in this century. In 1990, 25% of all full-time workers worked more than 49 hours per week. Half of these workers put in more than 60 hours per week. Over the past two decades, the number of Americans moonlighting, that is, holding more than one job at a time; working overtime; and taking less vacation time has increased (Mason, 1994; Schor, 1991).

The result of the increase of work time over the past two decades is a decline in leisure time. Weekly leisure time has decreased a total of 9.6 hours over the past 15 years (Rybczynski, 1991). Leisure time for Americans as a whole has fallen 47 hours per year between 1969 and 1987 (Schor, 1991). Although Americans have not actively chosen to increase their work hours, a consumer-oriented society has forced them to work more just to maintain their accustomed standard of living. Adjusting for inflation, the average hourly wage today is no different from the average wage in 1973 (Edmondson, 1991). Waged workers make up 80% of the workforce. According to Schor (1991), these workers must work 245 more hours, or more than 6 extra weeks a year, just to...
reach their 1973 standard of living.

One of the great hopes of economic productivity that accompanied industrialization was that eventually there would be more leisure time for all classes of society. As has been seen, increased productivity over the past quarter century has not led to increased leisure for the masses (Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Schor, 1991). "In fact, a case can be made that people do not want more leisure, or that desire for more leisure is distinctly secondary to desire for more material goods" (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 130). Current advertisements are permeated with "lush images of lazy leisure," which seem to state that with the purchase of the advertised goods, one will gain, through osmosis, a thoughtful, uncomplicated life with time for leisure (Larsen, 1994, p. 59). But, given that materials goods cost money and that money costs time, the average American's spending habits ensure that more work and increased income will take priority over free time from work for leisure (Schor, 1991). Thus, free time has been converted into consumption time, and leisure has shifted from time intensive to goods intensive (Linder, 1970).

Rybczynski (1991) declared that with $13 billion spent annually in America on sports clothing, "about 1.3 billion hours of potential leisure time are exchanged for leisure wear—for increasingly elaborate running shoes, certified hiking shorts, and monogrammed warm-up suits" (p. 219). Although the material goods are being used for leisure time activities, their purchase leads to the need to work to pay for them and translates into more work time and less leisure time. Indeed, as Larsen (1994) stated, "The only way to really get more free time is to stop buying all these things that sell our fantasies back to us" (p. 61). As more hours are worked to buy the material goods for leisure, less hours become available for leisure. Consequently, consumption speeds up (Linder, 1970); leisure behaviors and family life speed up (Goodale & Godbey 1988; Hochschild, 1989); and leisure itself becomes activity dense, that is, a high volume of activity occurs per single time unit (Zerubavel, 1981). A result of this speedup is simultaneous consumption (Linder, 1970), which is defined as a situation in which people "try to defy the traditional zero-sum relationship among the durations of different activities— whereby time can be spent on one activity only at the expense of the time spent on another— by carrying on several activities simultaneously" (Zerubavel, 1981, p. 58). Common combinations of activities such as conducting business over lunch, listening to audio-taped recordings of books while commuting to work, and watching television while visiting with friends are examples of simultaneous consumption.

Some activities, however, cannot be successfully combined with others. Activities that cultivate the mind, such as contemplation, reading, intellectual debate, and journal and letter writing, may be minimized or lost on the basis of their time intensiveness. "The result, then, is not only a speed-up or attempt to speed up many leisure behaviors to save the increasingly valuable commodity of time, but also a change in how we prefer to 'spend' our leisure" (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 132). Creekmore (1994) theorized that Americans have fallen into a "leisure trap" (p. 61), which frequently leads to weekends that are more exhausting than workdays. In an effort to get away from the stress of working at jobs that they do not like, many people have chosen to participate in stressful leisure activities that they do like. Slaves to the leisure habit, they fill up their nonwork time with leisure activities that can become obsessions, with demands equal to those of work, and thus, as Mason (1994) stated, "the fine art of loitering is lost to Americans" (p. 76). Social activities and meetings and obligations fill up the evening and weekend hours, which whiz by in a blur of activity. The Protestant work ethic continues to influence people's experience of leisure today. When one's sense of purpose and worth is tied up with what one accomplishes and the material goods one owns, leisure becomes just one more means to an end: proving one's worth" (Creekmore, 1994, p. 61).

The current sociocultural context of leisure is one in which there is little time as work hours increase in response to the costs of living, including the costs of leisure and its material goods. Lives have sped up; people race through their days, experiencing work and leisure as accomplishments, frequently carried out simultaneously. Many Americans are beginning to question and make changes in the balance of work and leisure in their lives. These changes include advocating for a shorter workweek (Brandt, 1991; Dolnick, 1994); stepping off the fast track and choosing slower paced, lower paying jobs (Gorney, 1994; Kaylin, 1991); cutting back on consumption and spending (Edmondson, 1991; Kaylin, 1991; Schor, 1991); and finding enjoyment and happiness in work, no matter how unglamorous or repetitive it is (Edmondson, 1991; Griffin, 1994).

**Current Definitions of Leisure**

A lack of definitional consensus within leisure theories on what is leisure complicates the question of what is a healthy balance of work and leisure. Leisure has been viewed in three principal ways: (a) leisure as time, (b) leisure as activity, and (c) leisure as an experience or state of
mind (Gunter & Stanley, 1985). Both the time and activity definitions of leisure are easily quantified and thus readily lend themselves to studies that aim to establish trends, discover patterns, or document changes in a population's use of leisure time or participation in leisure activities. Problems with conceptualizations of leisure as time or activity include a lack of focus on the quality, meaning, or benefits of leisure time or activities (Gunter & Stanley, 1985).

The definition of leisure as time has been called the discretionary or residual time perspective (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1982). According to this definition, leisure consists of the time remaining after time for existence or obligatory activities (e.g., eating, sleeping, self-care) and time for subsistence (i.e., working at a job) are subtracted from the total available time. This view of leisure is problematic because it (a) defines leisure by default and in terms of activities that are not leisure, such as eating, sleeping, or working; (b) focuses exclusively on when the activity occurs; and (c) ignores the potential of work to provide a similar quality of experience (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1982).

Activity-type definitions of leisure are equally problematic. Such definitions may provide information on the number of people participating in and the time spent on particular activities, the frequency in which specific leisure activities are engaged, and the preferences expressed for particular activities but do not indicate the meaning of the activity to the participants (Gunter & Stanley, 1985; Iso-Ahola, 1979). The same activity may have a variety of meanings across persons and situations (Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Marino-Schorn, 1986; Shaw, 1985b). In a study designed to explore perceptions of leisure situations, Shaw (1985b) found that only 2 (reading books and cultural events) out of 37 activities were consistently (100% of the time) defined as leisure by respondents. Other activities within the study were experienced either as work or as leisure, both work and leisure, or neither work nor leisure according to different situations. For example, shopping was just as likely to be described as leisure (34.2%); as work (31.6%); or as a residual category, that is, both work and leisure or neither work nor leisure (34.2%). This variation in experience also occurred within persons, that is, an activity was defined differently by the same person in different situations. These findings led Shaw to conclude that “evidence for these individual and specific situational differences further emphasizes the difficulty of developing any meaningful activity-type definition of leisure” (p. 11).

Problems with the leisure as time and leisure as activity definitions led several leisure theorists to develop definitions of leisure as an experience or state of mind. These definitions focus on the meaning and quality of the leisure experience and not on the activity or when it occurs (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Iso-Ahola, 1979; Kelly, 1983; Neulinger, 1981; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1982). Studies that used leisure as experience definitions found that several qualities distinguished leisure from nonleisure. Some of the qualities identified include freedom of choice, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, low work-related and role constraint, aesthetic appreciation, relaxation, novelty, self-expression, companionship, intimacy, and lack of evaluation (Iso-Ahola, 1979; Roadburg, 1983; Samdahl, 1988; Shaw, 1985b; Tinsley, Hinson, Tinsley, & Holt, 1993).

**Balance of Work and Leisure**

The question of what is a healthy balance of work and leisure has seldom been addressed within the literature, although discussions of the need for a healthy balance of work and leisure abound (Bartales, 1993; Bernard, 1988; Borut, 1989; Gramm, 1987; Lengfelder, 1987; Schrier, 1994). Of the three definitions of leisure commonly encountered in the literature, leisure as an experience seems to be the most useful for studying the balance between work and leisure. A problem with the studies discussed so far is that they proposed to distinguish between leisure and work, thereby perpetuating a dichotomy between leisure and work that is culturally bound (Masur, 1984). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) was the first researcher to recognize the need to deconstruct the culturally imposed dichotomy of work and leisure. Although he talked about work and play, he did not make a theoretical distinction between leisure and play, seeming to consider them to be interchangeable. Referring to the cultural dichotomy of work and leisure, he stated:

> One way to reconcile this split is to realize that work is not necessarily more important than play and play is not necessarily more enjoyable than work. What is both important and enjoyable is that a person act with the fullness of his or her abilities in a setting where the challenges stimulate growth of new abilities. Whether the setting is work or play, productive or recreational, does not matter. (p. 202)

In an effort to reconcile the split between work and leisure, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) began to study the affective experience of intrinsically motivated participants in various leisure and work activities. His research led to the identification of an optimal experience that occurs "when all the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other, and with the goals that define the person's self. These are the subjective conditions we call..."
pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 24). The focus on the affective experience itself rather than on the activity and its context made it possible for Csikszentmihalyi to move away from the culturally bound concepts of work and leisure to explore the nature of the experience itself (Allison & Duncan, 1987).

Optimal experiences in work and leisure were explored in a study by Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989). They found that study participants experienced optimal experiences more often in work than in leisure but were more likely to report increased motivation and relaxation when engaged in leisure rather than in work. The authors concluded that

we have, then, the paradoxical situation of people having many more positive feelings at work than in leisure, yet saying that they 'wish to be doing something else' when they are at work, not when they are at leisure. Apparently, the obligatory nature of work masks the positive experience it engenders. In deciding whether they wish to work or not, people judge their desires by social conventions rather than by the reality of their feelings. (p. 821)

Considerations for Research and Practice
It would seem, then, that the first requirement in attempting to answer the question of what is a healthy balance of work and leisure is for occupational scientists to conceptualize research that would not be bound by culturally defined concepts of work and leisure. A balance between what is culturally accepted to be work and leisure in one's life appears to be less important than a balance of affective experiences across all of one's occupations. A second requirement would be to use research methodologies that would encourage study participants to move away from responses that are culturally determined by social definitions of work and leisure. Qualitative research methods, such as participant observation, intensive interviewing, life histories, and narrative inquiry, have the potential to uncover the experience of work and leisure within daily life without relying on culturally bound definitions of work and leisure. Allison and Duncan (1987), in a study of employed women's experience in work and nonwork, used intensive interviews to ask the women about experiences of enjoyment and boredom or anxiety in their daily lives without specific reference to work or leisure. Methodologies such as this may be one way to elude the influence of the culturally bound dichotomy of work and leisure on subjects' responses.

This article began by asking the question: What is a healthy balance of work and leisure? A review and synthesis of the pertinent literature revealed that this question cannot be directly answered. The problem may lie not with the concept of a healthy balance, but with the formation within modern Western culture of a false dichotomy of the concepts of work and leisure. The difficulty may arise from trying to achieve a balance that relies on the assumption of two dichotomous phenomena that, in the course of daily life, are not dichotomous experiences. A more useful framework for studying and evaluating a healthy balance within daily life may require deconstruction of this false dichotomy through an examination of the range of affective experiences that occur during engagement in one's customary round of occupations.

Affective experiences during work and leisure occupations may not be consistent with culturally bound expectations. For example, parents of pre-school-aged children were observed to embed play with their children within their household work (Primeau, 1995). To an onlooker, the parents appeared to be enjoying themselves, even though they were engaged in work tasks frequently perceived as onerous, such as laundry, vacuuming, cooking, and doing the dishes. Later, during intensive interviews, when asked to reflect back to the times when they were observed to embed play with their children within their work, many of the parents stated that they were having fun. All the parents said that they were working, but four mothers specifically stated that they were both working and playing. They described the experience of embedding play with their children within their household work as work that was fun or as a blending of work and play. For many parents, play with their children within the context of household work is a continuous experience combining elements from both work and leisure. Thus, work and leisure occupations may not always be experienced as separate and dichotomous phenomena within daily life.

Deconstruction of the concepts of work and leisure can be facilitated within the daily practice of occupational therapy by therapists focusing on the person's range of affective experiences across all of his or her typical occupations rather than by compiling a checklist of work versus leisure occupations regularly engaged in by that person. Occupational therapists need to consider the feeling aspect as well as the doing aspect of occupation. All too often, occupational therapy assessments focus on leisure or work as measured by activity-type definitions, that is, in what leisure or work activities does a person engage? In the case of the parents just described, an occupational therapist might have determined that the parents were engaged in work tasks on the basis of the doing, or activi-
The parent was experiencing a blend of work and leisure occupations. If the therapist were not to ask the parents about their affect or state of mind while engaged in their household work, then the experiential component of the occupation and its meaning to the parents would be lost. Failure to gather data about this feeling aspect of occupation could have repercussions for subsequent therapist-parent interactions.

Occupational therapy evaluation and intervention would be better served through the use of occupation as experience definitions, that is, definitions in which the feeling or affective experience is taken into account. A person's feelings and experiences while engaged in an occupation may vary from day to day, and even year to year, and may also differ from the feelings and experiences of another person. Occupational therapists cannot rely on culturally bound definitions of work and leisure to determine their clients' need for intervention to engage in a healthy balance of daily occupations. As has been shown, one's affective experience while participating in an occupation is as important as participation in the occupation itself. Thus, what may be more crucial to health and well-being than a balance of work and leisure occupations is a balance of affective experiences that may be achieved as people engage in their customary round of occupations within daily life and throughout their life span. If one is to answer the question of what is a healthy balance of occupations within daily life, one must first transcend the dichotomy of the concepts of work and leisure.

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