

Occupational Lives of Resort Workers

name

Description of the Project:

a. Purpose of the Project: I am interested in conducting research on resort culture and the leisure industry, this time focusing more on occupational dimensions of working in resort organizations. I am interested in resorts around the country and world broadly as a comparative base, but intend to primarily focus on the resorts on one broad beach area of Hawai'i that houses five major resort hotels. I would like to learn about the following topics: the careers of people who work in various departments in resorts, what it is like working in an organization that is open 24-7, how resort work affects the transience vs. stability of employees' lifestyles, relationships, and communities, what are the structural opportunities and constraints associated with resort work, how workers manage their interplay and dual motivations of work and leisure, and how their position vis-à-vis their clientele affects them.

b. Methodology of the project: I would like to do interviews with people who work in different positions within resorts. I know quite a lot of people who live and work in the area, as I have taught summer school through the University of Hawai'i there for the last five years. Many of my students also have friends, relatives, and acquaintances who work in the resort industry, and they have indicated that these people might be happy to talk to me. I would like to conduct unstructured interviews with any workers who feel comfortable participating in my study. I anticipate that I will recruit people into my study either through meeting them myself in the course of my time spent living there, through friends who know people and contact them directly or give me their names and telephone numbers for me to contact, or through referrals from other people. No subjects will be under the age of 18, as these resorts do not employ people in that age range. I anticipate that some people may feel comfortable letting me tape record these interviews, while others may prefer that I simply record their comments to the best of my ability by hand while we chat. The interviews will begin with a life-history base, beginning with subjects' first interest in the resort industry and how they came to work in resorts. I will follow their working experience up to the present. Then I will focus on some of the areas of interest mentioned in the purpose of the project section (a) above and chat with them about any topics that seem relevant to their experience. So this will include questions about their careers, their job satisfaction, their work cycles, their friendships and other experiences with co-workers, their outside family and leisure experiences, and their future career aspirations. This study focuses on subjects' work lives and, based on my research experiences with this subject years ago, I don't anticipate it moving into any areas that involve deception, embarrassment, or discomfort. I expect that the interviews will last between one and two hours, and they will take place wherever the subjects are most comfortable: their residence, a quiet place near their resort, or my residence. I will not conduct interviews at their workplaces. I will continue to interview subjects as long as I am getting new data. When the interviews that I conduct yield no new information, I will stop. I anticipate that I may conduct 100 interviews, as I move through various topics and try to get a cross-section of employees in different positions at the various resorts.

c. Risks and Benefits: Although it is unlikely, subjects may possibly feel uncomfortable talking about their relations with their employers. They may have a hard time scheduling an interview during the high season of work at their resort. On the other hand, some people may

find talking about their lives gratifying. Some may be interested in some of the trends and patterns I discover about their line of work, and about what I have learned from reading the sociological literature in the area of work and occupations about incessant organizations and the parameters of the contingent labor pool. There is no guarantee that they will directly benefit from this interview.

d. Privacy: Everything people tell me about their particular working experiences and situations will be held in the strictest of confidence. No identifying data will be used in my writing to identify the specific island on the Hawaiian chain where this research is taking place, which specific resort employs them, or who they are, so they cannot be identified. Many workers pass through a variety of management and line positions in these five hotels, and, even from a description of their job, they could not possibly be recognizable in anything I write. Thus, although I cannot offer them anonymity (as I will know who I am interviewing), I can guarantee them confidentiality. All interviews that I conduct will be transcribed using code names and the tapes recorded over when I am finished with them. I do not anticipate needing to keep the subjects' real names anywhere, since I am not really interested in who they are, but rather in their work experiences as it relates to their type of job. Similarly, I will destroy the written research data when I am finished with this project, and it will be kept in a secure place with the tapes.