

LEISURE

Fourth Edition

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Publishers: Joseph J. Bannon and Peter L. Bannon
Director of Sales and Marketing: M. Douglas Sanders
Director of Development and Production: Susan M. Davis
Director of Technology: Christopher Thompson
Editorial: Amy S. Dagit

ISBN print edition: 978-57167-640-5
ISBN ebook: 978-1-57167-645-0
LCCN: 2001012345

Sagamore Publishing LLC
1807 N. Federal Dr.
Urbana, IL 61801
www.sagamorepub.com

More about this book: <http://www.sagamorepub.com/products/leisure-4th-ed>

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the years that the first three editions of *Leisure* have been used by colleges and universities from Maine to California and from Nova Scotia to New South Wales, I have received useful comments and suggestions from many faculty and not a few students. Also, I have learned more about leisure through research and exchange with colleagues throughout the world in the decades since the first edition of *Leisure* was written. Now in retirement I have also listened to and observed more nonacademic friends and associations.

The intent is to raise important issues rather than to close them. Science, after all, is a process of learning and communication, not a book of facts. In the end, this book is an invitation to join in that process of learning as well as to engage in the full potential of leisure and of life.

Any book such as this one is built on the contributions of many others, acknowledged and unacknowledged. To countless colleagues I am grateful for the opportunity to join in the ongoing development of the important field of Leisure Studies. Finally, I continue to value the support and companionship of my wife, Ruth, and my daughters and colleagues, Dr. Susan Kelly of Exeter University and Dr. Janice Kelly of Purdue University, their husbands, professors Stephen Whitefield of Oxford University and Clint Chapple of Purdue University, and now my grandsons, Steven and Evan, who add new contemporary generations to my world.

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PREFACE

This book will not answer all your questions about leisure. It is an introduction to the study of leisure, but not an encyclopedia of all we know about the subject. However, it is intended to raise the most important issues. The study of leisure is an ongoing project, not a complete body of knowledge. But we are coming to know what the issues are and how we can approach them. New voices raise different issues and offer new perspectives. The primary aim of this book is to bring the reader into an engagement with both the known and the unknown about the human phenomenon we call leisure.

Knowledge is always based on some kind of research. Investigation may be formal or informal, systematic or haphazard, cumulative or novel. In the decades since the first edition of this book, we have learned a good deal about leisure that was only guessed at before. And every new discovery leads to another set of issues that calls for investigation. We are always in the process of learning.

This book is not a collection of research reports. No attempt is made to summarize or even refer to every worthwhile study in the field. However, it is based on a developing body of knowledge developed from a variety of perspectives. Leisure studies is a field based in research that connects and focuses recognized theory and research in social studies and the humanities and has both significance and integrity. Historians, philosophers, economists, sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists have applied their scholarly tools to leisure.

Why a new edition now?

Of course, the times really “are a-changing”....constantly and in all sorts of ways. For years I told students that they would not live in their parents’ worlds. It is more accurate now to say that they will not live out their lives in what they think is their world. Here are a few examples:

- Almost every discipline of knowledge-seeking is now conflicted rather than consensual. To be a scholar or a learner means to enter into debate, not just accept some conventional wisdom.
- New technologies impact every aspect of life as the market constantly attempts to lure the consumer into being in the vanguard of the latest and allegedly best.
- Not only behaviors but also values and world views change continually, sometimes in ways that are just fashion and sometimes in profound shifts.

- The connections of almost everything to everything else make simplistic analysis not only deceptive but also dangerous. Beware of attractive slogans and catchy phrases, even from your professors.
- This is a world that is global in culture as well as economy. More and more, individual lives are impacted by changes almost anywhere.
- Population “minorities” are becoming majorities so that different cultures can no longer be addressed from the standpoint of “white Anglo (and usually male) culture.” “Diversity” is no longer just a single chapter in an otherwise taken-for-granted normative society.
- What seem at one time to be waves of the future often recede only to be followed by new waves that rise and fall. In a sense, every published thought is already dated.
- Note a few current developments that may or may not be temporary: *The college as “country club.” Entertainment seeming to reduce engagement. Privatization of leisure resources that had formerly been public. The upscaling of travel accommodations. Recession impacting both the sources and directions of investment capital. The separation of the poor from those who can pay.*

In this fourth edition of a text that was a “best seller” for decades, at least some of the most salient elements of such changes are addressed differently and more fully than in previous editions. And even so, teachers and students will need to do their own continual updating.

One way of doing this is to provide opportunity for all involved in the learning process to offer, record, and interpret their own stories. This book provides a few examples of such “real-life” stories, but there are usually better ones in the classroom. We also have considerable quantitative information gathered in surveys and government reports. However, these numbers also change constantly so that pointers are given so that readers can look up what is more current.

A comprehensive approach: *Leisure, 4/e* integrates history, current data and trends, a variety of conceptual approaches, critical perspectives to stimulate discussion, and full attention to the kinds of things that people do along with where and how they do them. This text provides a basis for classroom and online discussion and frees the instructor to concentrate on the issues and materials of greatest interest to the particular class. I have made no attempt to disguise the premises that have guided my own study of leisure. Leisure is understood here as a central element in being human. It is not peripheral or separate from the rest of life’s meanings and relationships. In fact, leisure may be crucial to our personal and social development and to our concepts of ourselves and to the world around us. Leisure is, after all, learned behavior. Its forms and content are a part of our culture and are transmitted in social contexts. As a

consequence, we will have to examine much more than games and activities to begin to comprehend the significance of leisure in contemporary life.

Leisure is not only central and socially learned; it also involves meaning and action. The abiding theme of every leisure philosophy is freedom. Freedom means more than lack of constraint. Freedom is the possibility of self-determining action. In the incredible variety of what people do as leisure, there is a dimension of meaning. Therefore, a recurring question in trying to understand leisure in any culture is Why? How do people make choices, and what seem to be their consequences?

There are several limitations to this book. One, of course, is the author. As a sociologist with some background in philosophy, economics, social psychology, and other social sciences, and with experience as a professional participant-observer in more than a dozen communities from New York to California and Montana to Georgia, my experience is wide but still limited. Even though considerable research has been done elsewhere that has informed American scholars, for the most part this book concentrates on leisure in North America. Further, although almost every chapter includes several references to sources and publications that deal with the related issues, as an introduction this book is not all-inclusive. Rather, a selection of philosophy and research considered most relevant and productive has been selected as a beginning. Many issues and agendas are suggested for further investigation. By all means, use your search engines to find more....and then read them critically.

Features of this Edition:

- **Discussion topics within the text rather than at the end of chapters.** This will enable readers to engage in their own debates and questioning along the way rather than as an afterthought.
- **Gender throughout the text.** Issues related to gender and the meanings and conditions of leisure for women—past and present—are woven through most chapters rather than limited to a single chapter. What does it mean to seek leisure in a sexist society? How has the study of and by women required reformulations of agendas and theoretical approaches? How do women “compose” their lives in the midst of a “stalled revolution”?
- **Leisure diversity in a multicultural society.** Issues related to racial, ethnic, and social class diversity are combined with attention to gender and sexual orientation. What are the new agendas and issues provoked by this recognition of diversity? A chapter (5) focusing on such diversity is augmented by the introduction of such issues throughout the text. The fundamental issue concerns the meaning of leisure in a society that is both inclusive and diverse.
- **Leisure as political and conflicted.** The thoroughly political nature of leisure is examined in chapter 6 as well as in the historical section. The

allocation of resources is political as well as economic as demonstrated by debates over the environment. Issues of privilege and social control demonstrate that leisure is often conflicted when resources of budget and space are allocated in ways that produce losers as well as winners.

- **Leisure in the marketplace.** This 4th edition analyzes what it means for 97 percent of leisure-related spending to be in the market sector. What are the aims of leisure businesses? Is leisure becoming more and more consumption of marketed commodities rather than action and interaction? Are there economic imperatives in a market economy that are shaping the nature of contemporary leisure?
- **Globalization.** Leisure, like everything else, is more and more global rather than national as media, travel, and education and even vocabularies erase formerly rigid borders.
- **History and contemporary issues.** Still the only text with more than a nod to history, *Leisure 4/e* recasts the historical chapters to prompt discussion of implications in current leisure practices.
- **Sexuality in society.** The chapter on sexuality (22) is revised to introduce issues beyond sex-role socialization. The significance of sexuality for leisure is approached as pervasive rather than as a separate issue or as limited to gender identification. The multiple meanings of “family” are placed in a focus on the centrality of primary relationships for leisure.
- **Ageing and the life course.** Issues raised by social gerontologists in the author’s book on activity and aging are used to give greater attention to this growing segment of the population. What are the continuities and changes in later life that impact patterns and meanings of activity? The chapter on the life course (4) now gives aging attention equal to youth and the middle years.
- **Multiple media and popular culture.** The chapter on popular culture (16) is revised to give greater attention to the significance of mass media, new electronic developments, and the diversity of cultural styles. The dominance of television and being online and connected in non-work time allocation is central to understanding contemporary leisure styles and meanings.
- **The nature of leisure.** The classic analysis of definitional and theoretical approaches to leisure is revised to include a focus on such concepts as “identity,” “investment,” “flow,” “creativity,” and “existential” life-development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John R. (Jack) Kelly is professor emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was professor in Leisure Studies and the Institute for Human Development and director of the Gerontology and Aging Studies program. His Ph.D. in sociology is from the University of Oregon, and he received masters degrees from Yale, Southern California, and Oregon.

He is the author of 11 books, including three editions of *Leisure*, along with *Recreation Business*, and *Freedom to Be: A New Sociology of Leisure*; he was editor of *Activity and Aging*, and co-author of *Recreation Trends and Markets in the 21st Century*, and *21st Century Leisure: Current Issues*. His books have been translated and published in both China, Japan, and Korea. He has also published 50 chapters, eight encyclopedia articles, 11 technical reports for federal agencies and corporations, and over 60 research articles.

Among honors he has received are the Roosevelt Research Award, the National Literary Award, and Distinguished Colleague Award from the National Recreation and Parks Association. At the University of Illinois he received two awards for research excellence and was Nash Scholar of the American Association of Leisure and Recreation. He was the founding chair of the Research Commission of World Leisure and has lectured and taught in seven European countries, Brazil, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

He has had research grants from four federal agencies including the National Institutes of Health, the National Forest Service, and the National Park Service and marketing contracts with American and Japanese corporations including Yamaha, General Motors, and Battelle International.

A related question provokes similar hesitation: Is there any setting or time in which leisure always takes place? As already suggested, it seems possible to trade freedom for constraint and satisfaction for duty anywhere at any time.

More provocative questions have to do with associations, modes of participation, and expected benefits. With whom is the activity done? How is it done? Why is it done? Answers to these questions seem more central to leisure than what, where, and when.

According to *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, the word leisure is derived from the Latin *licere*, meaning "to be free." Leisure is done in a leisurely or relatively unconstrained and uncoerced manner. It is *done freely*. Leisure is freely chosen because the activity or the companions, or some combination of the two, promises personal satisfaction. It is the personal and social orientation of the participant that makes an activity leisure—or something else. Leisure is defined by the use of the time, not the time itself. It is distinguished by the meaning of the activity, not its form. Aristotle, in Book 8 of his *Politics*, was right in pointing to the intrinsic pleasure or happiness that distinguishes leisure from lesser activity. Leisure is activity that is chosen more for its own sake than for ends related to survival or necessity. There is more to defining leisure, but choice for its own sake is central.

Is there any setting or time in which leisure always takes place?

Some would define leisure quite exclusively. For Sebastian deGrazia (1964), leisure is a rare and exotic state, one that may never be achieved by most of us. Any trace of social manipulation or lack of free expression keeps that experience from being defined truly as leisure. The result is that very little remains. After all, everything we do has some elements that limit our freedom. Any activity that involves another person calls for some adjustment to the expectations of that other person in order to meet and communicate.

On the other hand, inclusive definitions run the risk of not distinguishing leisure at all. If leisure is defined as anything done outside of employment, then it may include some of the least free events of our lives, such as taking a test for a driver's license or waiting for a ride to the hospital. However, if most leisure involves other people, and meeting people includes some constraint, then leisure can hardly be completely free in every sense. At this point, an ordinary definition should be adequate. *Leisure is activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction.*

The Scope of Leisure

Taking the general and inclusive approach just suggested, what is the scope of leisure in people's lives and in society? Or perhaps the question should be, What are people *not* doing as leisure? There may be about 48 million people in the United States who played cards in 2009, but it is also possible to fill entire

arenas with people trading and selling old beer cans. It is estimated that in 2009, about 25 million attended college football games and 21 million attended National Football League games. Estimates of the number who attended high school games, hometown Little League, and softball would be staggering, if not inaccurate. Tennis may have grown to a high of 30 million players by 1976 before declining to about 17 million by 1991 and then rebounding back to 30 million by 2009. In 2008, 41.6% of the population gardened, 26% played some sport at least once, 14.7% did photography, 13% sewed, and over half claimed to have exercised. (These and other numbers are found in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (SAUS, 2011). Students may get them and hundreds more updated every year online.) Also, in most activities, 80% of the alleged participants did the activity VERY infrequently, and about 20% were regulars.

These statistics do not even begin to describe the scope of leisure in contemporary American society. For every one person who attends a cultural or sporting event on a Saturday, there must have been 50 who went to a nearby

shopping center to *look around* for a while and perhaps pick up one or two items as a justification for going. The meeting place for teens has become the shopping center, not the gym. The major market for the National Football League is television, watched at home or in miniature on the way somewhere. "Games" are now on

... it is the informal and everyday kinds of things that are at the heart of most people's leisure.

portable devices more than around tables, but gambling draws more money than movies, concerts, and races combined.

As shown in studies on adult leisure and outdoor recreation, it is the informal and everyday kinds of things that are the heart of most people's leisure. Events outside the home are special; they heighten and give needed interruption to the ordinary. Vacations are even more special, since they provide a longer break from routine. But for the most part, in their leisure, people talk to each other, watch television, read, talk on the phone, do something around the house or garden, play with the kids, go to the store, and fantasize about other things they might be doing if they had more time and money.

The list of activities that are leisure to some people is endless. Even the most prosaic lists prepared by recreation professionals contain hundreds of possibilities. Reports of snake roundups in the Southwest, roping clubs in cattle country, and whittling in the hills remind us that there is no way we could even begin to think of all the varieties.

The amount of time spent also varies, but it does suggest the importance of leisure in the overall scheme of life. If 56 hours are subtracted for sleep and 50 for work and getting to work from the week's 168 hours, some 62 hours remain. Much of that time is obligated to maintenance of the self and of the household. While younger and older people have more time free from obligations, we can say that generally people have as much as 35 hours a week available for some

kind of chosen activity. Measured by time, the potential scope of leisure is considerable.

Leisure Expenditures

Measured by money, leisure has become a leading industry. *Not* including equipment such as automobiles that are used for leisure as much as or more than they are used for necessities; government spending on recreation programs and facilities; the incalculable worth of federal land used for recreation; or the cost of space in homes, churches, and schools used for leisure, direct leisure spending in the United States is estimated to exceed \$300 billion a year. This amount, adjusted to include inflation, is at least double what it was in 1970. Several estimates suggest that the average household spends about 8% of its income directly on leisure, a figure that varies by income level, age, and other factors.

Of course, such figures do not necessarily represent participation. Some expensive items, such as boats, trailers, and vacations homes, may be used very little. On the other hand, a television set costs only a few cents an hour to watch, including depreciation, electricity, and repairs. At the same time, items such as moving to an expensive house in the suburbs may be in part a leisure expenditure to obtain a safe yard for children to play in and proximity to outdoor opportunities for both children and parents.

The financial scope of leisure is enormous, even when only expenditures that are clearly leisure-related are included. Stadium admissions, equipment, resort and vacation travel costs, and other such items make it clear that leisure is big business, even without including the oversized SUV useful primarily for the vacation trip or the game room, yard, or entertainment space built into a new home.

Values and Leisure

The significance of leisure in the value systems of contemporary adults is less clear. We cannot assume that people invest the most time or money on what they find most important. On the contrary, people appear to value those relationships and activities that require the least in special equipment or resources. On the other hand, leisure may be second only to housing as an inclusive economic sector.

What is most important to people? Various studies of both hourly and salaried workers have found that no more than 25% could be classified as “work-oriented.” At least three-quarters see the family, leisure, and their own well-being in some combination as more central to their lives than work. Similar results were obtained in Europe in studies done over several decades. More complex analysis of realms of value and satisfaction among working adults identified the primary importance of families and immediate communities followed by leisure and work in that order (Kelly & Kelly, 1994). Most, however, tried to develop a balance among these elements even when there were conflicts among time allocations or role responsibilities.

For many people, a higher material “standard of living” comes first. Even leisure may be defined primarily in terms of what is spent to purchase equipment, clothes, environments, and the consumption of entertainment. For others, the leisure element in a total “quality of life” is more a matter of experiences of sharing with others, an immersion in natural environments, and the challenge of action. There is cultural conflict between leisure as what we buy and possess and leisure as what we do and who we become. Is leisure the height of consumption, an add-on after we have achieved a full material package, or essential to a life in which meaning is not lost in possessions?

There is cultural conflict between leisure as what we buy and possess and leisure as what we do and who we become.

Leisure in the emerging society may not be as idealistic and person-centered as some would hope. Quality of life can be defined and measured in quite materialistic ways as well as in terms of environment and personal development. Leisure may be viewed as purchased opportunities and possessions as well as nonmaterialist values.

Modern societies, however, do seem to be shifting from a focus on production to a multidimensioned valuing of the quality of life. Within this shift, leisure is emerging as a significant dimension of the overall values and priorities of those who are moving into the twenty-first century.

Paradoxically, this rise in leisure expectations may be combined with a loss of time for nonobligated activity. *The Overworked American* (Schor, 1992) points to a time scarcity for many in contemporary society. Those vital to the research and development underlying economic productivity, those in service industries with long and irregular hours, and women who come home from employment to primary responsibility for childrearing and household maintenance are not experiencing the dawn of an “age of leisure.” Some report time famine while others deal with unemployment and lengthening years of retirement.

DISCUSSION

- Can you cite evidence that many people are finding leisure more central to their lives now than 10 years ago, 50 years ago?
- What about those who have lost their jobs?
- Can anxieties make free time more a burden than an opportunity?

Health and Personal Welfare

What are the common reasons that people seek leisure opportunities and activity? If asked, most respond simply, “I like it.” When questioned further as

to why they “like it,” common responses suggest some of the dimensions of why leisure is valued. There is now considerable evidence that leisure is a major contributor to both physical and emotional health (see Godbey & Mowen, 2010).

“I like concentrating my mind, emotions, and body on the music,” replies the young mother who plays Bach. Further, the demonstration of mastery achieved through discipline and practice is found to be satisfying. The couple packing for their annual trip to the lakes and mountains like the opportunity to get away from the city and its crowded streets and freeways and from the routines of work. The travel, camping, and fishing have their freedom and relaxation, but more often they speak enthusiastically about the companionship. The machinist will refer to the satisfaction of actually making something, of creating by employing his skills. The art editor speaks of the relaxation of tennis in the midst of a harried schedule and of the sport being good for her physical and emotional health; however, given more time to think about it, she will also mention the new friends she is making and the satisfaction of improving her game. The couple talking over coffee finds that the relaxed communication has become almost as much of a need, a craving, as the dinner that goes before. The Ford worker remembers the strain of the factory and speaks of his need to relax. The father at the basketball game hopes for the joy of seeing his son play, but also knows that the boy would be disappointed if Dad were not there. The mother values the family event despite the “work” that makes it possible. The veteran pilot loves the environmental beauty as well as the exercise of 50 years of skill development.

What do people find in their leisure? Self-expression, companionship, integration of mind and body or wholeness, physical health, a needed contrast or rhythm in the work-constrained schedule, rest and relaxation, a chance to try something new and to meet new people, to build relationships, to consolidate the family, to get in touch with nature, to test oneself in risk or competition, to meet the expectations of people who are important to them, and to just feel good without analyzing why. All these are among the benefits people find in their leisure.

Leisure and the Society

Of course, if leisure is beneficial to the health of the citizens of a society, it benefits the society in general. That has been the most common argument for the support of leisure programs. The origin of the recreation movement in the United States stemmed from the rise of the industrial cities, their lack of recreation space and opportunity for children and youth, and the quite evident problems of physical and social health.

Today, although there are still many people in the inner cities and rural fringes whose opportunities for leisure are extremely limited, the question of the value of leisure to the society has changed. Some of the urgency felt in the time of the Industrial Revolution, when so many lives were being chewed up in the factories and smothered in the crowded sprawl of the city, has been lost. This loss

is due as much to familiarity with old problems as to improved conditions for those still caught in the twin trap of poverty and lack of opportunity. For most Americans, however, recreation has become an accepted public program. As such, it must compete for support and funding with national defense, education, health care, housing, and highways. How can public recreation be supported in a competition for scarce resources?

Without anticipating all of the discussion of later chapters, at least four arguments for leisure programs and provisions may be outlined as follows:

1. As suggested, leisure as a part of the rhythm of life, freedom, and self-development is important to the wholeness of human life. Leisure is good for people.
2. There are still several significant kinds of opportunities for leisure that require public provisions. In the city where land is expensive, in the forestland where trees may be used for paper as well as shade, and along the water, where wealthy private owners have cut the public off from beaches and shorelines, public action and public funds are required to hold space for recreation.
3. With more than half of American workers engaged in services and with the proportion in manufacturing continuing to decline, many refer to this as a “postindustrial age.” Such a turn from production and stress on material goods toward the development of selves and society supports the increasing importance of leisure.
4. Finally, adapting a classic sociological argument, the social nature of much leisure would indicate that leisure has the special function of building community in a society. In the chosen activities and relationships of leisure, the bonding of intimate groups such as the family and larger groups of the community takes place. In short, a society needs leisure so that people can learn to live together.

DISCUSSION

- Cite evidence from your experience that leisure is more than a way to fill leftover time. Do you think leisure in this society is changing? How?

Highlights

1. Leisure is a vast and varied set of activities incorporating an incalculable range of personal interests, market provisions, and public resources.
2. Although the study of leisure will reveal many exceptions to every generalization, for most people, informal leisure, often social and usually close at hand, is most significant.
3. Leisure is freedom, and as such it is crucial to human and social development. Therefore, leisure cannot be reduced to any list of activities, places, or times.
4. If leisure is important to people and to society, then we need to understand both what it is now and what it might become.

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