

= Sociology of leisure =

Sociology of leisure is the study of how humans organize their free time . Leisure includes a broad array of activities , such as sport , tourism , and the playing of games . The sociology of leisure is closely tied to the sociology of work , as each explores a different side of the work @-@ leisure relationship . More recent studies in the field move away from the work @-@ leisure relationship and focus on the relation between leisure and culture .

Studies of leisure have determined that observable patterns cannot be easily explained by socioeconomic variables such as income , occupation or education . The type of leisure activity is substantially influenced by the individual 's immediate situation (presence or lack of family , age , and other factors) .

= = Theory = =

Sociology of leisure is a fairly recent subfield of sociology , compared to more traditional subfields such as sociology of work , sociology of the family , and sociology of education : it saw most of its development in the second half of the 20th century . Until then , leisure had often been seen as a relatively unimportant , minor feature of society . Leisure is now recognized as a major social institution , deserving of serious sociological inquiry , particularly in Western societies .

As John Wilson and others have noted , it is difficult to define leisure . Its definitions are numerous and often mutually contradictory , for example as a discrete portion of one 's time or as a quality of experience irrespective of time . Joffre Dumazedier distinguished four distinct definitions of leisure , which begin broadly and gradually narrow in scope . The first and broadest defines leisure as a style of behavior that may occur even at work , the second defines it as any non @-@ work activity ; the third further excludes family and household obligations ; and , finally , the narrowest defines leisure as activities dedicated to self @-@ fulfillment . Dumazedier 's four definitions are not exhaustive . Incompatible definitions and measures are seen as a major factor accounting for occasionally contradictory research findings .

There are some unresolved questions concerning the definition of work : in particular , whether unpaid endeavors , such as volunteering or studying , are work . Non @-@ work time should not be equated with free time , as it comprises not only free time , dedicated to leisure , but also time dedicated to certain obligatory activities , such as housework . Dividing activities into free and dedicated time is not easy . For example , brushing one 's teeth is neither work nor leisure ; scholars differ in their classifications of activities such as eating a meal , shopping , repairing a car , attending a religious ceremony , or showering (various individuals may or may not classify such activities as leisure) . The relation between work and leisure can also be unclear : research indicates that some individuals find skills that they have acquired at work useful to their hobbies (and vice versa) , and some individuals have used leisure activities to advance their work careers . Sociologists also disagree as to whether political or spiritual activities should be included in studies of leisure . Further , among some occupational communities , such as police officers or miners , it is common for work colleagues to be off @-@ time friends and to share similar , work @-@ based leisure activities .

Apart from a definition of leisure , there are other questions of theoretical concern to the sociologist of leisure . For example , quantifying the results is difficult , as time @-@ budget studies have noted that a given amount of time (for example , an hour) may have different values , depending on when it occurs ? within a day , a week , or a year . Finally , as with many other fields of inquiry in the social sciences , the study of the sociology of leisure is hampered by the lack of reliable data for comparative longitudinal studies , as there was little to no standardized data @-@ gathering on leisure throughout most of human history . The lack of longitudinal studies has been remedied in the last few decades by recurring national surveys such as the General Household Survey in the United Kingdom (ongoing since 1971) . In addition to surveys , an increasing number of studies have been focusing on qualitative methods of research (interviews) .

= = Research = =

Over time , emphasis in studies of leisure has shifted from the work @-@ leisure relation , particularly in well @-@ researched majorities , to study of minorities and the relation between leisure and culture . Marshall Gordon noted that there are two approaches in the study of leisure : formal and historical @-@ theoretical . The formal approach focuses on empirical questions , such as the shifting of leisure patterns over an individual 's life cycle , the relation between leisure and work , and specific forms of leisure (such as the sociology of sport) . The historical @-@ theoretical approach studies the relation between leisure and social change , often from structural @-@ functionalist and neo @-@ Marxist perspectives . Sheila Scruton provided a different analysis , comparing North American and British studies . The British approaches focus on input from pluralism , critical Marxism , and feminism ; the American approaches concentrate on the social @-@ psychological tradition .

= = Findings = =

Many sociologists have assumed that a given type of leisure activity is most easily explained by socioeconomic variables such as income , occupation or education . This has yielded fewer results than expected ; income is associated with total money spent on such activities , but otherwise only determines what type of activities are affordable . Occupation has a similar effect , because most occupations heavily influence a person 's income (for example , membership in a prestigious occupation and " country @-@ club " activities such as golf or sailing are significantly correlated--but so is membership in those occupations and high income , and those activities with high cost) . Education is correlated with having a wide range of leisure activities , and with higher dedication to them . As Kelly noted , " Predicting a person 's leisure behavior on the basis of his socioeconomic position is all but impossible . "

On the other hand , type of leisure activity is substantially influenced by the individual 's immediate situation ? whether he has a family , whether there are recreational facilities nearby , and age . Early family influences , particularly involving the more social leisure activities , can be profound . The type of leisure activity also depends on the individual 's current place in the life cycle .

Specific findings in sociological studies of leisure are illustrated by John Robinson 's late @-@ 1970s study of American leisure . Robinson found that Americans , on average , have four hours of leisure time each weekday , and more on weekends ? six hours on Saturdays , almost eight on Sundays . Amount of leisure time diminishes with age , work , marriage , and children . However , the amount of free time does not significantly depend on an individual 's wealth . People desire less free time if they are uncertain of their economic future , or if their job is their central interest . During the second half of the twentieth century , watching television became a major leisure activity , causing a substantial decrease in the time dedicated to other activities ; in the early 1970s the average American had 4 hours of leisure per day , and spent 1 @.@ 5 of them watching television . Shared leisure activities increase marital satisfaction .