A Social Psychology of Leisure

3rd ed

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to our wives, Janet, Pam, and Marg.

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Preface

The social psychology of leisure has long been, and still remains, a prominent perspective for understanding the role and impact of leisure in people's lives. It is a dynamic field influenced by researchers in leisure studies and theories and research in, among others, the fields of social, personality, developmental, and positive psychology.

An early systematic effort to examine the potential of social psychology for understanding leisure was provided by John Neulinger in his 1974 book, *The Psychology of Leisure: Research Approaches to the Study of Leisure*. In 1980, Seppo Iso-Ahola published *The Social Psychology of Leisure and Recreation*, the first textbook to map out the boundaries of the field and review the social psychological theory and research available at the time. Seventeen years elapsed before the first edition of *A Social Psychology of Leisure* was published in 1997. The first edition was well received, used in classrooms around the world, often cited by other researchers, and translated into Japanese. Another 14 years elapsed before the second edition—with Gordon Walker being added as a co-author—was published in 2011. It too was well received, used globally, often cited, and, in this instance, translated into Chinese.

This new edition builds on these earlier efforts and incorporates major new topics of research, innovative studies, and contemporary examples. It also advances from the second edition in several important ways. First, it takes into account recent trends in psychology, such as the rise of positive psychology, evolutionary social psychology, and the social psychological treatment of culture (see Chapter 2). Second, it provides a more comprehensive overview of the diverse range of experiences that take place in leisure (see Chapter 4). Third, we have changed the focus of later chapters from benefits to outcomes, recognizing that leisure behavior may be both beneficial and harmful at times. And fourth, rather than have a separate chapter on age and gender, we have integrated material on these two topics throughout the third edition.

These differences notwithstanding, we have continued with the general orientation that the social psychology of leisure is concerned with how people come to perceive time or behavior as free or discretionary, how they choose to fill and structure this discretionary time with behavior and experience, why they make these choices, and the implications of these choices for their happiness and personal growth. Important here, however, is that the social psychology of leisure recognizes that these perceptions and choices are influenced by other people and by experiences in the other domains of life such as work, family, and community.

A Social Psychology of Leisure is written to serve as a textbook for undergraduate students taking a course in the psychological and social aspects of leisure and recreation. It also provides for students in graduate courses a comprehensive introduction that should be supplemented by books and journal articles focusing on specific topics. Finally, especially as it has incorporated reference to newer literature, this edition is intended to serve as a source-book for leisure researchers in providing context and even direction when conducting studies that employ a social psychological approach. Given the last, in this edition each chapter has its own reference list rather than there being a single, comprehensive list as in the past. This modification reflects a recent trend in how researchers, who are typically interested in a specific topic or area, now access and utilize scholarly information.

Many years of teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in this area have provided a testing ground for much of the material and the methods of presentation that appear in this book. Consequently, we have tried to maximize the clarity and interest level of the text. Many concrete examples are used, and where appropriate, topics are introduced through the use of scenarios highlighting various types of leisure behavior for students to analyze. We also pose interesting leisure questions often found in the reader's own daily life and then demonstrating how researchers have attempted to answer these same questions. By doing the above, we hope to demonstrate the relevance, excitement, and methods of social psychological leisure research.

Finally, as in past editions, we discuss the potential applicability of the research reviewed. In some cases, these applications will have immediate implications for the provision of public and private leisure services in communities, tourism, park management, and private recreation businesses. However, there is another sense in which the book is applied. Not only can the information provided by a social psychology of leisure be used to more effectively plan leisure services, but also individuals, through an awareness of the social psychological dimensions of leisure, may be able to extend more control over their lives and better enjoy their own leisure. To this end, readers will constantly be asked to reflect on their own experiences and their personal observations of other people at leisure.

G. J. W.
D. A. K.
R. C. M

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About the Authors

Gordon Walker was a professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation at the University of Alberta. He received his PhD from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. His research program integrated social, positive, and cross-cultural psychology and leisure theory. He was particularly interested in leisure behavior generally, and how it was similar and different across cultures specifically. In 2009 he became a fellow in The Academy of Leisure Sciences; between 2016 and 2019 he was also a Distinguished University Professor at Wakayama University in Japan; in 2018 he was awarded the Leisure Scholar Award from the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies; and in 2019 he retired from the University of Alberta. His leisure interests were and remain reading (histories and mysteries), adventure travel (he has camped on every continent), and listening to music (blues, classical, and classic rock—especially "the Boss").

Douglas Kleiber is a professor in the Recreation and Leisure Studies Program of the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia, where he also holds adjunct appointments in psychology and gerontology. After undergraduate work in psychology at Cornell University, he completed a PhD in educational psychology at the University of Texas in 1972. He held faculty positions at Cornell University, St. Cloud State University, and the University of Illinois before moving to Georgia in 1989. At the University of Illinois, he served as director of the Leisure Behavior Research Laboratory from 1982 to 1987, and at UGA, he was the director of the School of Health and Human Performance from 2001 to 2003. Dr. Kleiber is a member and past president and treasurer of The Academy of Leisure Sciences and has received the Allan V. Sapora Award, the National Recreation and Park Association's Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Award for Excellence in Recreation and Park Research, and the SPRE Distinguished Colleague Award. His research is directed primarily to the influence of leisure activity and experience on human development and adjustment across the life span. His current leisure interests include hiking and trail maintenance, biking, reading, and playing with grandchildren.

Roger Mannell is a psychologist and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Waterloo, and an adjunct professor of Leisure Studies. He served as chair of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, and director of the RBC/University of Waterloo Retirement Research Centre. Dr. Mannell is interested in the social psychological factors that influence leisure and lifestyle choices and in turn how these choices affect mental and physical health. These interests have led him to study work-leisure relationships, successful aging and retirement, adolescent media use, and the role of leisure in coping with stress. His research has been funded by the Canadian Population Health Initiative, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Change Foundation. Dr. Mannell is also a past president of The Academy of Leisure Sciences and received the Allan V. Sapora Research Award and the National Recreation and Park Association's Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Award for Excellence in Recreation and Park Research. His leisure interests include reading, photography, kayaking, house renovations, and sharing these interests with his wife, children, and grandchildren.

Section One

The Nature of Social Psychology

1

Understanding Leisure with Social Psychology

Chapter 1 Outline

Preview

Social Science and the Quest for Happiness, Health, and the Good Life
- A Question of Lifestyle: Juggling and Balancing the Demands of Daily Life
- People-Watching as a Science

Why Study Leisure with Social Science?
- Is Leisure a "Problem" to Be Studied with Social Science?
- Reaching the Potential of Leisure through Leisure Service Provision

Leisure and Social Psychology
- Social Psychology in Action: "Evils" of Gaming, eSports, and Other Conundrums
- But Can We Call These "Leisure Problems"?
- How Would You Approach These Problems?

The Social Psychological Approach
- Can Problems Be Studied with Social Psychology?
- Theory and Cause-and-Effect Relationships
- Social Psychological Ways of Looking at Problems
- The Situation: Stimulus-Response Approach
- The Person: Organism-Response Approach
- The Situation by the Person: Stimulus-Organism-Response Approach

Pinning Down the Social Psychology of Leisure

Preview

This chapter introduces the reader to thinking about leisure from a social psychological perspective. We begin by looking at the need to study leisure and how social psychological thinking has influenced the provision of leisure services. Then we consider how the social sciences in general, through the scientific study of people's everyday behavior and experience, differ from other ways of understanding the lifestyles people lead and what makes their lives meaningful and happy. Next, several scenarios are presented that demonstrate how a social psychological approach can be used to better understand leisure issues. The social psychological approach used as a framework for this book is then described.

Social Science and the Quest for Happiness, Health, and the Good Life

People have always sought the formula for health and happiness. This search for the good life is as common today as at any time in the past—perhaps more so. Throughout history, people have looked to the values of the social groups of which they are members, the folk wisdom passed down to them from their elders, religion, and philosophy as sources for the answers to these questions. Beginning fairly early in the 20th century, social scientists jumped into the fray in an attempt to provide answers as well.

A Question of Lifestyle: Juggling and Balancing the Demands of Daily Life

Whatever the source of ideas about health and happiness, the answers have often taken the form of a prescription for a particular way of living. Today these prescriptions are packaged as "lifestyle," and individuals are bombarded from all sides with suggestions for the best way to juggle and balance the various aspects of their lives. Online newspapers feature lifestyle sections, television series and online blogs and channels spotlight different and unique ways of living, and numerous self-help books on lifestyle appear on bookstore shelves or are downloadable from e-commerce companies. Lifestyle is typically described as a "total way of living" (Thirlaway & Upton, 2009; Veal 1993). The food we eat, the manner in which we prepare and consume it, our clothes, our homes, the entertainment and leisure we enjoy, the work we do, and how we raise our children all define our lifestyle.

Though not a new invention, people in previous generations, like fish in water, were immersed in their daily lives and for the most part oblivious to it; lifestyle alternatives were few for most people. While this lack of alternatives is still true for many people in different parts of the world, access to instantaneous electronic communication has created widespread awareness of lifestyle alternatives, even if these choices are not available to everyone. Moreover, commercials, pop-up ads, and sponsored content urge people to create their own lifestyle—with the "right" products, of course. Most people have come to believe that their lifestyles determine their health and happiness, and just as importantly, that they can *create* their own lifestyles through how they juggle and balance the work, family, and leisure aspects of their lives. Social scientists are studying the battle that people seem to be waging today to bring hectic lifestyles under control (e.g., Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2016; Gleich, 1999; Honore, 2004; Sirgy & Lee,

2016), as well as the impact various lifestyle choices may have on individuals and the larger society.

People-Watching as a Science

Science is responsible for many of the lifestyle choices that modern life allows. For many people, "science" suggests the *physical sciences,* such as physics, chemistry, and biology, and they can easily name a variety of inventions emerging from research in these sciences that have made modern life easier—for example, toasters, plastic bags, heart transplants, more resistant strains of plants, personal computers, and smartphones. Of course, some of these inventions have created difficulties as well. Current problems being addressed by physical and biomedical scientists are also well known, for example, safer cars, pandemics, climate change, and fossil fuel dependence. These problems command the attention of scientists in a variety of fields, including those that study people per se.

The social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, have taken the popular pastime of "people-watching" and made a science of it. When asked to identify the kinds of inventions developed by social scientists, people often find it more difficult to come up with such a list. Yet social science has provided humanity with a number of innovations, such as psychotherapy, behavior modification, political polling, programs for deradicalizing religious extremists, time management strategies, educational planning principles, and brainstorming. However, social science is probably better known for the types of problems it attempts to address, such as child abuse, poverty, neurosis, alienation in large cities, the pain and dysfunction of substance abuse, social injustice and unemployment. It also aims at the elimination of lifestyle diseases, such as heart disease, stress, obesity, and type II diabetes, which can result from poor eating habits, smoking, an excess of sedentary activity (particularly media-based), and lack of exercise.

As people-watchers, everyone is an armchair social scientist, making predictions about the behavior of other people based on their own experiences. Everyone has theories about the best way to get a date, discipline children, organize a great party, keep New Year's resolutions, and approach the boss for a raise or a professor for a better grade—and we as individuals act on these theories. Social scientists, on the other hand, by carefully and systematically observing people in their homes, at work, at leisure, and even in psychological laboratories, attempt to provide a clearer and more objective picture of human behavior than we, as individuals, can hope to acquire on our own using our casual observations.

The social sciences have long been associated with the study of the types of human problems just mentioned. But during the latter part of the 20th century, a major shift began to take place. Social scientists started spending a great deal of time studying normal daily activities and the positive aspects of life as well. Altruism, creativity, happiness, optimism, resilience, and quality of life are only a few of the subjects that have been addressed in the name of "positive psychology" (Rusk & Waters, 2013; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). More will be said about this shift in Chapter 2.

Much of this research by social scientists is being carried out in colleges and universities. Departments of health promotion, gerontology, consumer sciences, and family studies—as well, of course, as leisure studies and recreation, sport, and tourism departments—have emerged to provide answers to specific lifestyle issues and educate people to work in human service fields related to these. Like other sources of information and values in Western society, the solutions provided by social scientists are often controversial. However, the work of these social scientists is alerting society to important problems, sometimes confirming common sense understanding, sometimes challenging cherished ideas and beliefs. Hopefully, this research will contribute

answers and raise social awareness about specific lifestyle issues so that people will be better able to manage their lives and more effectively support others as well. Accordingly, this book is intended to bring students of leisure and recreation, as well as parks, tourism, and sports into that discussion with an enhanced understanding that will enable them to be more effective service providers, instructors, and researchers.

Why Study Leisure with Social Science?

We will explore the various meanings of leisure in Chapter 3 especially; but it should be recognized at the outset here that leisure is inherently associated with *lifestyle* and that people seem to have difficulty achieving lifestyle *balance*. Although some early scholars suggested that individuals' leisure may have more impact on her or his quality of life than any other area (Kelly, 1996), recent empirical research indicates that, on average, its influence is at least as great as, for example, paid work (Walker & Kono, 2018). Leisure has been described in a variety of ways. In fact, one of the longest-standing problems researchers have had is agreeing on how to define and measure it. Leisure has been characterized as specific types of *activity* (e.g., attending a movie); as *time* free from obligations (e.g., the amount of time not spent in paid employment and taking care of home, family, and oneself); as meaningful and satisfying *experience* (e.g., feelings of enjoyment, fun, excitement, relaxation, awe, belonging); or as some combination of activity, time, and experience. Any of these approaches to defining and measuring leisure can be useful, and the approach used often depends on what questions about leisure the researcher is trying to answer. Chapter 3 will examine the issues of leisure definition and measurement in some detail and provide some interesting examples.

As to why one should study leisure, many researchers do so simply because they are curious and would like to know more about why people choose to engage in the activities and pursue the experiences with which they fill their free time. Why do some people jump out of airplanes while others prefer quiet walks in the park? How is it that some friends never have enough time for the activities they constantly pack into their available free time, while others find their leisure