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# WHAT IS THE LEISURE EXPERIENCE?

By the end of this chapter, you should have a critical understanding of:

• what researchers have said about the nature of the leisure experience
• a range of theories and research in the area, including:

    o Joffre Dumazedier and Josef Pieper: leisure as a contemplative 'celebration' of human values
    o Robert Stebbins: 'serious' leisure and 'casual' leisure
    o Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: flow as an element of the leisure experience

• what constitutes deviant leisure and how the motivation to engage in such activities relates to theory and research in the area
• the role of play within the leisure experience, including the notion of Homo Ludens and the play element within the wider culture of society
• the possibilities for a therapeutic leisure
• the role and status of 'Pleasure' and 'Desire' in the leisure experience
• leisure and the construction of a neo-tribal identity.

This chapter looks at the nature of the leisure experience. There is no agreement about what constitutes the leisure experience; there is no agreement about the role of leisure for the individual or for the wider society. For Parr and Lashua (2004), the word 'leisure' suggests a variety of thoughts, images and concepts from time free from work and other obligations to activities that promote greater self-understanding. For Kelly and Kelly (1994), much of the effort put into defining leisure has been in an attempt to establish a field of inquiry for Leisure Studies.

Whatever definition of leisure we choose to use, the leisure experience is commonly assumed to be different from the work experience; leisure experiences often take place in specific places or leisure venues and the leisure experience is something we look forward to participating in with positive expectations.

## What is Leisure?

*Activity*

Kaplan (1975) attempts to answer the question, 'what is leisure?' Reflect upon your own view of leisure before reading on. At the end of the book, you might want to reflect on how your view of leisure has changed.

Leisure:

- is a relatively self-determined activity or experience that falls into one's economically free time
- is psychologically pleasant in anticipation and recollection
- contains a range of commitment and intensity
- provides opportunities for recreation, personal growth and service to others
- has positive expectations
- has a friendly quality
- is self-determined but this does not mean that leisure is a product of free will; we have to take into account constraining factors, such as:

   o the availability of resources/facilities
   o individuals' limited knowledge of the opportunities
   o constraints of time and money
   o opinions of spouses, parents, neighbours and friends
   o social and moral obligations, for example:
      – individuals feeling that they have to visit ageing relatives
      – taking children on family holidays
      – tending gardens.

Some definitions, such as that of Joffre Dumazedier (1974), define leisure as a residual time free from work and other obligations, characterised by a feeling of (comparative) freedom. In contrast, Pieper (1952) argues that leisure is one of the foundations of Western culture; leisure is central to the philosophical and theological conception of self. Aristotle in both the *Politics* and *Metaphysics* suggests that leisure is the centre point around which social life revolves. Leisure is a contemplative 'celebration' of human values and is only possible if people are 'at one with themselves' and with the world. Leisure provides people with the opportunity to renew the self and allows us to do better in performing our everyday activities.

*Activity:*

Compare and contrast the definitions of leisure below. Which account do you find the most convincing – that of Csikszentmihalyi or Stebbins?

> Serious leisure is:
>    'the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience' (Stebbins, 1997: 17).
>    For Cikszentmihalyi the foundation of any leisure experience is the individual subjective experiences of an activity that is freely chosen and completed for its own sake, such as enjoyment.

Alternate definitions of leisure, such as that provided by Csikszentmihalyi (1982), are more concerned with the quality of the leisure experience itself. Csinkszentmihalyi's flow theory is based on the perception that people can stretch to peaks of commitment in their leisure activities that produce intense feelings of creativity and enjoyment.

Serious leisure is:

In addition, we have to take into account that definitions of leisure are often politicised. Coalter (1998) argues that a great deal of the theorising and research into leisure is conducted within a 'normative citizenship paradigm' that assumes publicly funded leisure provision is an essential part of 'social citizenship' and the commercial nature of modern leisure is largely ignored.

## Serious Leisure

One of the most influential conceptions of leisure is found in the work of Robert Stebbins (1982, 1997) who made a distinction between 'serious' leisure and 'casual' leisure. For many people, paid employment is becoming less meaningful and, according to Stebbins, serious leisure allows an individual to develop a feeling of 'career' within their free time. This means that serious leisure is concerned with participants who pursue the leisure activities with an unusual passion and commitment.

For Stebbins, continued participation in serious leisure activities is explained by the 'profit hypothesis', in which the participant views the benefits of continued participation as outweighing the costs. Stebbins identifies six characteristics of serious leisure:

- perseverance
- following a 'career'
- personal effort
- benefits to the individual
- identification with the activity
- ethos of the activity.

These characteristics of serious leisure are central to a person's sense of self. A number of researchers have explored serious leisure: bass fishing (Yoder, 1997),

barbershop singing (Stebbins, 1996), mushroom collecting (Fine, 1998), football fandom (Gibson, Willming and Holdnak, 2003), golf (Siegenthaler and O'Dell, 2003) and marathon running (Baldwin, Ellis and Baldwin, 1999; Goff, Fick and Oppliger, 1997).

In their study of social identity and sports tourism, for example, Green and Jones (2005) found that sports tourism can provide participants with opportunities to engage in serious leisure. Participants used their leisure activities to construct a sense of identity by sharing an ethos with others. Similarly, Noreen Orr (2006) draws upon Stebbins to understand the motivations of heritage volunteers, and again found that serious leisure activities were central in the process of identity construction. The heritage volunteers became socialised into a subculture of knowledgeable individuals with whom they felt comfortable.

In his case study of a group of people in the United Kingdom who re-enact events from the American Civil War, Hunt (2004) concludes by suggesting that the re-enactment of historical events is from male-dominated 'living history' and not primarily an educational activity. The re-enactment is meaningful for the individuals involved, because it reinforces lifestyle interests through camaraderie, collective involvement and a subjective understanding of authenticity.

Gillespie, Leffer and Lerner (2002) draw upon Tomlinson's 'culture of commitment' to understand why people participate in dog sports as a form of serious leisure. This commitment can generate conflict within families, notably about the amount of money some participants spend on their dogs.

When Gillespie et al. (2002) asked the participants where the time and money came from for their hobby, they found that many of the respondents got extra jobs or worked overtime to subsidise their dog expenses. In some cases, people re-mortgaged their houses. Most of the participants set new priorities in the family budgeting to accommodate dog-related expenses. Many said that their job came second to their dogs, at least psychologically, but also in some cases in terms of time. A number of the respondents informed new employers that they would be taking time off to attend dog events. Some people chose jobs (or job locations) that allowed them the maximum amount of free time for their dogs, and it was common to schedule work around dog training schedules. It is this 'counter-culture of commitment' that makes dog sports participants different from non-participants.

Stebbins' conception of the 'profit hypothesis' is also examined by Jones (2000) who investigated a group of Luton Town football fans in the late 1990s – the fans were willing to engage in an unrewarding activity, in that the benefits did not appear to outweigh costs, yet participation continued. Jones adapts Stebbins' model to suggest that in such circumstances, participants would draw upon one or more of four 'compensatory behaviours':

- in-group favouritism – a strong sense of belonging amongst others who share the same level of support for the team
- out-group derogation – fans of rival teams, notably the local rival Watford, were believed to have a range of undesirable traits, thus enhancing the benefits of being a Luton Town fan

- unrealistic optimism, anticipating exaggerated future rewards
- voice, stressing the positive aspects of identification with Luton Town.

In the case of the Luton Town fans, there is a strong element of Tomlinson's (1993) concept of a 'culture of commitment' in that 'fandom' is a form of leisure activity that stresses the collective and intense nature of serious leisure participation. Carroll Brown (2007) found that for many participants shag dancing is a form of serious leisure in which participants developed a distinct shag ethos. The casual shaggers are as committed as serious shaggers but approach the dance in different ways, whereas serious shaggers are first and foremost interested in improving their technical dance skills for competitive dancing.

According to Jayne Raisborough (2007), one of the strengths of Stebbin' concept of serious leisure is that it contests the conception of leisure rooted solely in hedonism. For Stebbins, leisure does not have to be a fun activity, or based upon enjoyment, freedom or choice. However, Raisborough argues that serious leisure remains for the most part apolitical in nature. Stebbins does not view serious leisure as a site where individuals can resist or reproduce societal power relations.

The concept of serious leisure is used by Raisborough (2007) to explore the dynamics of women's long-term leisure commitment in the Sea Cadet Corps. As we saw in the case of the shag dancers, one of the central features of serious leisure is the notion of a participant's progression via a serious leisure career. However, within the serious leisure career, as in the more traditionally understood occupational career, power relations and the impact of 'other social worlds' can impact upon career trajectories. Within leisure spaces, gender relations are both reproduced and contested and a woman's career progression can be restricted by gender power. Hunt's (2004) research into the world of battle re-enacting noted that women participants were restricted to the roles of nurses and soldier's wives – in other words, traditional female caring roles that were rejected by men; as such, these women were not regarded as authentic re-enactors.

Raisborough found a similar gendered division of labour operating with carers within the Sea Cadet Corps. Women's leisure careers were restricted by organising principles such as the female cover rule, a regulation that required that a female member of staff must be present when female sea cadets were involved in any SCC activity, especially if the activity was led by male staff. This rule reinforced the gendered assumptions that men are predatory by nature and that the women there are by nature carers who are responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of the cadets and are also the tea makers. These 'emotional labour' roles were assumed to be based upon skills that were naturally female and as such were not acquired skills; this made it difficult for women to present themselves as authentic and committed members of staff.

For Stebbins (1996), although most people assume that having a hobby is a good thing, there is a culturally dominant belief that all leisure is casual leisure and as such there is a cost for all people pursuing a serious leisure career. This

is particularly true for women. As we shall discuss in later chapters, unmarried, young, heterosexual women are under great pressure to alter their leisure choices to accommodate romantic relationships (Herridge, Shaw and Mannell, 2003), and as Green, Hebron and Woodward (1990) found, women's independent leisure pursuits, unlike men's independent leisure pursuits, are often considered to be incompatible with traditional romantic love. Married women have to negotiate with family members over time and space constraints, such as having a room to participate in their chosen activity, and have to overcome feelings of guilt when they are made to feel that they are putting housework, childcare and their other family responsibilities second. This includes a wide range of leisure activities from women who enjoy reading romance novels (Brackett, 2000; Radway, 1991), watch soap operas (Harrington and Bielby, 1995) and do quilting (Stalp, 2006).

Stalp (2006) found that quilting is a serious leisure activity that women turn to for the most part for reasons of escape, relaxation and creativity. On the one hand, quilting appears to embody a wide range of feminine characteristics in that quilts are often given as gifts to friends and family members helping to cement emotional ties. However, the activity involves a woman taking time for herself. For Stalp, family negotiations over serious leisure quilting contain hidden gendered components about the power dynamics within families, where women's activities are not directly related to paid employment outside of the home or to their roles as mother or spouse.

## Casual Leisure

In contrast to serious leisure, in 1997, Robert Stebbins turned his attention to the relatively neglected concept of 'casual leisure' or 'unserious' leisure. Casual leisure was seen primarily as a marginal 'personal diversion' rooted in a highly personal perspective. For Stebbins (1997), 'casual leisure' can be understood under six headings: play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory stimulation. However, what all forms of 'casual leisure' have in common is that they are all hedonic in nature; people participate in these activities because they bring pleasure in the form of 'self-gratification'. In his discussion of play, Stebbins draws upon the work of Kelly (1990) who views play in terms of activities that have a 'childlike lightness', activities that are intrinsic in terms of their motivation and involve participants in a 'non-serious suspension of consequences' in relation to their participation. Various forms of 'casual leisure' are said by Sebbins to be deviant in nature – such activities include cross-dressing, passively watching sex-related activities such as striptease or pornographic films, and also a number of more active sexual activities such as swinging, social nudism or group sex. Heavy drinking, gambling and drug use are also identified. However, even though 'casual leisure' may fail to 'generate flow' or allow a person to achieve 'optimal experience', more people are involved in casual leisure than in serious leisure. However, with the exception of Chris Rojek's (1995) discussion of postmodern leisure, the area of 'casual leisure' is largely ignored by leisure researchers.

## Postmodern Leisure

Over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many social commentators have suggested that Modernity gave way to Postmodernity. One of the central themes of the book is that social change has had a significant impact upon the provision and enjoyment of leisure. For Rojek (1995), postmodernity is characterised by a feeling of 'disembeddedness' where the world is becoming a universal, cultural space – in other words, on the far side of modernity, leisure spaces such as shopping malls, leisure centres and amusement arcades are losing their sense of the *local* and becoming universal, cultural spaces that mix fantasy and fiction with real events to construct the meaning of the leisure experience.

Stebbins' discussion of 'casual leisure' raises a whole series of issues about the nature and purpose of leisure participation and the nature of pleasure, deviance and desire as motivating factors. Richard Byrne (2006) has investigated a form of sexual adventurism known in the United Kingdom as 'dogging'. This is an activity in which consenting adults, who are not known to each other personally, meet at a given location for the purpose of exhibition, voyeurism and sexual adventure. Locations are posted via the internet to virtual communities. For Byrne, 'dogging' represents a distinct shift away from the traditional conception of 'lovers' lane' as a place of individual sexual exploration to an arena for organised, impersonal sex in public places. For Byrne, 'dogging' highlights a number of the disturbing trends in relation to consensual sexual activity within a leisure setting, including the development of new forms of deviant leisure in relation to new pornography and prostitution.

More generally, according to Reible (2006), popular culture, such as film, television, music, electronic and print media, draw upon a range of deviant behaviours as amusement for casual consumption. Soaps and popular police series make use of fictional cases of serious crime for our entertainment. Grand Theft Auto is a video game that provides the player with opportunities to be a character in virtual car theft, random killing and other deviant behaviours as a form of 'fun'.

This is in sharp contrast to Dumazedier (1974), Huizinga (1949) and Pieper (1952), who all assume that leisure is essentially 'good' in nature and benefits both the participants and humanity. In contrast, for Reible (2006), deviant leisure can become the background for the formation of an identity to resist the social pressure to conform that is common within the modern industrial society. Deviant leisure can provide people with a sense of being and belonging, helping to create alternative cultural values in a new community by the open rejection of those social controls that many people find dehumanising.

For Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1982), a central element of a good life is to have a focused and organised consciousness. However, in order to achieve this, the information we receive must be ordered in a predictable way – without this

structuring of information, we are likely to experience unhappiness. Csikszentmihalyi has found in research from around the world that irrespective of structural constraints such as age, class and gender and irrespective of cultural differences, people understand optimal experiences in the same way. When a person has sufficient skills and information to deal with the situation without feeling overwhelmed, the person experiences what Csikszentmihalyi refers to as 'flow' – a balance between concentration and involvement that we experience as valuable and enjoyable. A 'good life' is achieved when our skills and abilities are just sufficient to meet the challenges we face – in other words, when we find a balance within our challenge–skills ratio. If we do not find this balance, we may experience anxiety. Interestingly, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argues that many people find their non-work time to be more difficult to enjoy than their work time because many of our leisure activities are passive, such as watching television, and do not demand that we operationalise or engage our critical skills and abilities. Passive leisure experiences often induce a feeling of boredom where our skills are not fully required to participate within the experience. The characteristics of the optimal experience are:

- high concentration on the task
- deep but effortless involvement
- loss of track of time
- clear objectives of the task
- clear means to achieve the objectives
- sufficient understanding of the action taking place to make adjustments to our behaviour
- a decreased concern for self during the activity
- an enhanced sense of self on completion of the task.

However, there have been a number of criticisms of Csikszentmihalyi's work. Vitterso (2000) argues that what is measured by the challenge–skills ratio is unclear; Csikszentmihalyi gives insufficient attention to transforming the concept of 'flow' into indicators that can be measured at an empirical level. Secondly, it is unclear whether 'flow' refers to a short intense experience or to a longer period of overall life satisfaction. At times, 'flow' is synonymous with 'happiness', while at other times it is not. At times, 'flow' is understood in terms of doing things as an end in itself, while at other times, actions have to have a wider significance for a person's life.

In addition, there is also the possibility that 'flow' can function to satisfy a 'criminogenic need' – in other words, as a motivating factor in causing either crime or deviance. So-called 'healthy' leisure experiences may not have positive benefits for all participants. Taking his starting point from Csikszentmihalyi's conception of *flow*, Williams (2005) examined the role of recreation within sex crimes. Williams notes, for example, that the meaning of jogging and the cardiovascular and psychological pleasure jogging brings are very different for a paedophile who goes jogging in a park. Williams used a

clinical case study of one sex offender's 'sexual assault cycle' – a repetitive process of the thought–feeling–behavioural chain in response to specific events, to trace the link between 'flow' and deviance. Early in the cycle, the subject explained that there was a need for 'recreation' in which both the victim and the subject could feel both comfortable and happy. Victims were often invited to participate in leisure activities when the subject was reported to feel bored and frustrated with his work. The leisure activities of the subject moved from hiking and exercising to drinking and drug use, but the purpose of the leisure activities was to 'maintain a cycle of secrecy' within which the assaults could take place.

### Recreation and play

*Recreation* is a narrower concept than leisure and is best approached through the notion of *Play. Play* is a psychological concept that draws attention to the individual's orientation and experiences. In contrast, *Recreation* is the *social parallel* – defining activities that are socially recognised as playful – divorced from the serious business of living. According to Huizinga (1949), play is a voluntary activity performed at specific times and in specific places according to freely accepted, but absolutely binding, sets of rules. The aim of the activity is the performance of the activity in itself and the enjoyment of feeling tension and happiness that accompany the activity. Such activities and feelings that are generated are experienced as 'different' from 'ordinary life'.

   Callois (1955) classified the games people play and argued that 'organisation' can be a way of introducing difficulty – which is incompatible with *fun* – the positive feedback given by the brain when suspending oneself from reality, but at the same time enjoying being faced with challenges that allow us to successfully exercise our skills.

Paidia———————————————————-Ludus
Unorganised play————-Organised sports

### *Activity*

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) explains that popular dance provides people with many flow-producing opportunities from the movement of the dancer's bodies, the emotional communication and the social aspects of the dance.

- Is there a link between flow and serious leisure?
- Can you think of any other recreational or leisure activities that might lead to involvement in crime or deviance? Think of an example and suggest a possible chain of events from leisure activity to crime.

Rojek (2000) suggests that Stebbins' conception of serious leisure is built upon a functionalist conception of community and solidarity, in that serious leisure helps to provide a degree of integration for the social system. In contrast, Rojek's argument takes its point of departure from Durkheim's conception of abnormal forms that Durkheim developed in the latter part of his book on the division of labour. Leisure can be viewed as 'normal' or 'abnormal' in nature. Abnormal leisure is regarded as deviant leisure because it often involves engaging in activities that are regarded as morally wrong. Rojek identifies three forms of abnormal leisure practice:

- Invasive – this is where individuals withdraw from social networks and engage in leisure activities associated with self-loathing and self-pity in which people push themselves beyond the limit to turn their back on reality.
- Mephitic – these are morally questionable leisure activities that involve gaining pleasure and satisfaction at the expense of others, such as engaging in prostitution or, in more extreme cases, engaging in acts of terrorism or serial killing as sources of pleasure.
- Wild – this form of leisure also involves going beyond the limit of what is commonly understood as acceptable behaviour, but it often involves engaging in the activity with similar-minded leisure partners in a carnivalesque spirit. Wild leisure activities include such things as football hooliganism and rioting. With the emergence of the network society, opportunities to seek out similar-minded leisure partners are significantly enhanced.

All three abnormal forms contain a degree of *liminality* which is understood as going beyond the threshold of normal behaviour. Liminality involves solitariness, in which the individual becomes unattached from the widely accepted moral codes that underpin society. In Durkheim's terms, the individual experiences a form of anomie, a sense of normlessness. This form of leisure is then on the edge of morality and society and a number of researchers, such as Lyng (1990), have referred to this form of leisure as on the edge of everyday life, as *edgework*, where a person chooses to engage in risky behaviours for fun. Examples include leisure activities such as sky diving and extreme sports. This edgework allows a person to experience a feeling of self-actualisation and self-determination similar to what Csikszentmihalyi refers to as 'flow'. Predee (2000) explains that such motivation can lead to leisure activities that become sadomasochistic in nature. He suggests that one of the consequences of greater commodification of everyday life and increasing levels of consumption is that hurting and humiliating others, engaging in damage to property and joy riding become increasingly pleasurable activities because they involve pushing oneself to the limit.

## Therapeutic Leisure

Linda Caldwell (2005) has attempted to answer the question of why leisure is believed to be therapeutic by evaluating the empirical research in the area.

Caldwell (2005) organises the research into three broad groupings: firstly, the research that suggests that leisure can prevent negative life events; secondly, that leisure can be used as part of a coping strategy for negative life events; and thirdly, that leisure can be therapeutic.

Wong et al. (2003) found that amongst older adults, regular walking improves fitness and cardio-respiratory function and can help prevent mobility problems in later life.

Kleiber (2004) has suggested that because leisure activities are often distracting, they can act as a buffer to negative life events. Some leisure activities can also generate optimism in that they allow people to reflect on the past and reconstruct the meaning of events that have affected them; hence leisure can become an instrument for personal change. This is particularly true in relation to work-related stress, Coleman (1993), Coleman and Iso Ahola (1993), Iso Ahola (1989), Iwasaki (2001), Iwasaki and Mannell (2000), Iwasaki and Schneider (2003), Iwasaki et al. (2005), Kleiber, et al. (2002) and Neulinger (1982), Trenberth and Dewe (2005) have all investigated the role of leisure in the reduction of work-related stress and all found that leisure, has a positive role to play in health promotion, particularly as a coping strategy for dealing with stressful work environments. Similarly, Iwasaki and Schneider (2003) found that the most common motives for leisure, such as relaxation, compensation, escapism and independence, all have stress-reducing properties. Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) have identified three leisure-based coping strategies:

- palliative coping – when a leisure-based activity gives an individual temporary respite from an issue that is of concern to them
- mood enhancement – such as watching a comedy
- companionship – spending time with friends in a commonly enjoyed activity.

In addition, Coleman and Iso Ahola (1993) talk about the role that leisure partners can play in the reduction of stress, because leisure activities provide people with opportunities to develop companionship and friendship.

Iwasaki and Bartlett (2006) investigated the role of leisure in the stress-coping processes of Aboriginal people with diabetes, living in Canada. The meaning and role of leisure is integral to Aboriginal culture in Canada and cannot be separated from the spiritual, cultural and social aspects of Aboriginal life. Iwasaki and Bartlett (2006) suggest that the social world is made meaningful for Aboriginal people through leisure.

On the other hand, some leisure activities are seen as potentially bad for health. Passmore and French (2000) found that 'uninvolved leisure activities', such as watching television alone, were related to negative mental health issues.

In the last analysis, however we define leisure and whatever its benefits for health or well-being, one would expect that the leisure experience should be a pleasurable one.

## What is Pleasure and What Role Does it Play in the Leisure Experience?

Why would we want to define pleasure? Pleasure is pleasure and most people would find it impossible to define. However, for most people, pleasure is the coming together of desire and enjoyment, a state of consciousness and happiness. It is possible to talk about the 'pleasure' of reading a good book, eating, drinking, sexual experience or considering a work of art, for example. The problem here is that all of these things are *sources* of pleasure, and cannot be used to define pleasure in itself. We appear to be 'psychologically wired' to forms of desires that give us pleasure, and to avoid the things that might cause us pain. Whatever their origin, desires are great motivating factors because they allow us to make a judgement about which activities to perform and in what order – without desires, we would have no likes or dislikes.

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### What is pleasure?

In everyday life, most people assume that *pleasure* is the feeling we experience as a consequence of satisfying some physical, emotional or intellectual need and as such is appealing to whoever experiences it. *Pleasure* is about feeling good and happy and is often contrasted with feeling states such as *pain* or suffering that make us feel bad. There are at least three types of pleasure:

- sensory pleasure – gratification experienced in relation to food and sex
- aesthetic pleasure – gratification that is more abstract in nature, such as that derived from music and the arts
- pleasure achieved through personal value – such as performing well at a difficult task.

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Pleasure is associated with hedonism, and Veenhoven (2003) explores the relationship between hedonism and happiness. Veenhoven drew upon the research findings contained within the World Database of Happiness, a data set containing findings from 705 studies from 107 countries, to establish the link, if any, between hedonism and happiness. Even in relation to stimulants such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs, the data suggested that hedonism did not lead to unhappiness. In relation to smoking, none of the heavy smokers were happier than moderate smokers, however, in later life heavy smokers did tend to become unhappy. In relation to drug use, psychotropic drug users were unhappy compared to non drug users.

### *Activity: Why it is generally pleasant to do what one desires to do?*

When we have a sense of intrinsic value about an activity, that activity is believed to be of value in itself without reference to any other factors – this enhances our desire to participate. Elery Hamilton-Smith (1985) explains that in relation to the arts, the leisure experience is a subjective human experience that is characterised by intrinsic motivation and satisfaction, and the activity is defined as leisure if our reference group defines the activity as 'leisure'. However, Brewer (2003) argues that pleasure is different. With pleasure, a person must have an *occurrent* desire to engage in the activities in order to derive pleasure from them. In other words, the person must have a desire to engage in that activity for its own sake.

Gunn and Caissie (2006) explored the relationship between deviant leisure and serial murder. They examined acts of deviant leisure and serial murderers for 28 male and female serial killers between 1947 and 1992, and found that both male and female serial killers spent an excessive amount of time preparing, committing (trolling, kidnap, rape and torture) and reliving (Via photographs, videotape, audiotape, trophies and souvenirs) the events during their free time. Gunn and Caissie concluded that serial killers used murder as a deviant and non-traditional form of leisure activity.

Is all pleasure intrinsically good? Would you accept or reject the idea that *only* pleasure is intrinsically good? A murderer may get pleasure from killing a victim; does this make the activity *intrinsically* good? In other words, we can only consider pleasure to be *intrinsically* good if the source of pleasure is considered separately from its consequences.

Should leisure be rooted in utilitarianism – where we should act so as to bring about the greatest good to the greatest number?

Outline the reasons for your answer.

Leisure activities provide individuals with the opportunities to fulfil their desires, and as such, these activities are seen as potentially dangerous for both the individual and for the wider society. Since the nineteenth century, many countries have seen state involvement in the regulation and control of leisure experiences. Foucault (1977) explained this 'social management of pleasure' in terms of the 'repressive hypothesis' – the Victorians were concerned with defining, regulating and locating pleasure in appropriate places. The Victorians did not want to ban leisure, or prevent people from enjoying pleasurable experiences, however activities had to be performed within appropriate leisure spaces.

This forms the basis of the concept of 'rational recreation', the idea that leisure activities should be morally uplifting for the participants and have positive benefits for the wider society.

### Rational recreation

Rational recreation was a regimen that attempted to make leisure activities 'morally uplifting' and prevent national disorder. The idea was to provide the population with opportunities to maintain physical fitness, counter-balance the debilities of city life, maintain readiness for armed service, and provide self-discipline, self-control, public spirit, physical fitness and opportunities for teamwork.

## What is Desire?

According to Brewer (2003), in Aristotelian philosophy, there is an idea that taking pleasure in an activity is sometimes simply a matter of engaging in the activity wholeheartedly. However, as Brewer goes on to explain, the proponents of this idea have not made it clear what type of wholehearted engagement is needed to transform indifferent activities into pleasurable ones.

Brewer builds upon Gilbert Ryle's argument that taking pleasure in an activity is the same as engaging in the desiring to do the activity. However, we still need to ask what makes an activity *pleasurable*. Pleasure is not always the reason to perform the activities that give rise to the pleasurable sensation. The motivation for desire is found in an independent set of values – in other words, a pre-reflective outlook. If we examine many desires, we find that people have a tendency to view their thoughts about the desire *as* reasons to act on the desire. Scanlon (1998) called this class of desires 'desires in the directed-attention sense' (1998: 37). Such desires comprise a persistent tendency to direct our attention towards particular circumstances or considerations, and to *see* them *as reasons for* our action.

Scanlon's argument allows us to identify common features between such unrelated desires as sexual desire, the desire to be successful in our job, the desire for world peace, and the desire to wear stylish shoes: they all involve a tendency to dwell on certain things as counting in favour of some action or outcome. It is important to note, explains Brewer, that even primitive desires such as hunger or the desire to have children are pruned and shaped by moral education and reflection, for example most of us would not consider stealing a child because we desire to be a parent. What is important for the leisure researchers is the argument that pleasure and desire are formed and constrained within a given culture.

According to Jonathan Dollimore (1998), Christians have associated desire and pleasure in general to be associated with sex, sin and death; for Christians, uncertainty is closely associated with sin, in that it is found *inside* desire and can cause death. Saint Augustine in the 'City of God' argued that death and sexual desire are inseparable. Even though many societies have experienced greater secularisation and a relaxation of morality in many areas of social life,

the English speaking world has never totally rejected the Christian idea of sin. There is a psychology of sin that has an effect on our understanding of appropriate pleasure and desire.

The concept of desire is associated with an element of *loss* or *lack* in relation to self that is reflected in the metaphors for desire. Desire is often seen as an external force such as water: 'With a force that left her breathless, a wave of pleasure washed over her' (Patthey-Chavez, 1996: 89). Other metaphors associated with desire include:

- Desire is falling – 'fall in love'.
- Desire is insanity.
- Desire is loss of rationality.
- Desire is pain.
- Desire is illness.
- Desire is madness.
- Desire is appetite/hunger.
- Desire is animal.
- Desire is fire.

One of the central issues that needs to be addressed in relation to pleasure and desire is the paradox that people are very often aware that certain forms of consumption or behaviour are 'risky' and can cause illness and disease, yet people continue to participate. Lupton (1996) argues that people have personal health belief systems and that fulfilment of desire is central to our sense of self, including the ways we live in and through our bodies.

In 1999, the United Kingdom Prison Service and National Health Service announced a programme for developing closer links between prison health services and community health services. A central element of this programme was an increased focus on health assessment and the health promotion of prisoners. The people who find themselves in prison are not a randomly distributed group from within the whole population; lower socio-economic and other marginalised groups are much more likely to be represented. In addition, the 1999 government initiative found that the prison population has a much lower standard of physical and mental health than that of the rest of the population (Smith, 2002). However, many of the female prisoners that Smith (2002) interviewed rejected the dominant meaning constructed within the Prison Service health promotional discourse. The government assumes that the unhealthy condition of the prison population is associated with unhealthy or 'risky' lifestyles (illegal drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, diet, sexual promiscuity, cigarette smoking, etc.). Smith explains that the Prison Service attempts to control the diet of women in an effort to make them 'conform' to the rules of the prison; 'good health' is demanded from the inmates. Health promotion through the banning of 'unhealthy' food and dietary behaviour is seen as an effective strategy for enhancing the health of women prisoners and bringing about a personal lifestyle change on release.

Desire is often associated with sex. Pinkerton et al. (2003) argue that the desire for pleasure is one of the most important reasons why people engage in sexual activities. However, the desire for pleasure is not the only reason why people have sex. Whatever the reason, people have sex because it feels good. Pinkerton et al. (2003) argue that studies in the area conceptualise pleasure as a non-specific underlying motive for engaging in sexual activities. These studies are not specific in terms of what particular activities or behaviours people engage in and how much pleasure is derived from each activity. Hill and Preston (1996) and Whitley (1988) viewed the search for sexual pleasure in terms of a general characteristic of sexual hedonism. Based upon a sample of undergraduates (145 women and 78 men) at a Californian university, Pinkerton et al. (2003) devised a 'pleasure index' to measure the degree of pleasure derived from: vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, giving and receiving oral sex, masturbation alone and being masturbated by a partner, and asked the respondents to comment on their experiences of these activities. Their conclusion was that pleasure motivates sexual activity. Some people scored much higher on the 'pleasure index' than others, and Pinkerton et al. (2003) argue that people who find these acts more pleasurable are more likely to engage in them.

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### *Activity*

In many respects, leisure management is the 'social management of pleasure' but what is the optimal level of pleasure? And how is that optimal level of pleasure managed?

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Stebbins and Csikszentmihalyi have made important contributions to our understanding of the leisure experience. Personal beliefs, motivations and choices are important in terms of understanding leisure, however; leisure is more than a state of mind. The leisure experience exists within a range of cultural, ideological and structural constraints. In the late twentieth century, the nature of the leisure experience significantly changed. According to Rojek (2005), much of our non-work or free-time activity had become commercialised.

## Neo-Tribes and Leisure Identity

Leisure participation can also be motivated by the desire to construct an identity around the leisure activity. According to Best (2003), there are two key elements to identity:

1. To be like the other within a group and
2. A common categorising of outward phenomena, such as the clothes that people wear or the music they listen to.

For many people, 'self" consists of two components: firstly, an apprehension we may feel about other people's evaluation of us, for example in terms of our physical appearance in relation to other people in our social groups and secondly, our self-evaluation, for example how we come to judge what we have done as part of a group in relation to our personal standards. The argument here is that self-image is linked to leisure preference and participation through a series of emotional–symbolic meanings. The research into leisure in relation to the construction and maintenance of identity has looked at a wide range of leisure groupings: football fans, rave culture, outdoor pursuits and modern primitives (people who engage in 'body modifications') to name but a few. For such people, discontinuing a leisure activity may be costly in personal terms because of the loss of friendships developed through their leisure participation.

   In the latter years of the twentieth century, society moved from a rationalised social to an 'empathetic sociality' that manifested itself in terms of new ways of interacting with each other in public places. Taking his starting point from Durkheim's conception of solidarity, Maffescoli (1996) is concerned with understanding these new forms of 'interaction in public' by the drawing upon the concept of *tribus* or the metaphor of neo- or metropolitan tribe. These groups are made up of people who share the same *habitus* and the same politics of everyday life. They are described as 'elective affinity groups' – such groups help to bring together and segment people's patterns of consumption, the neo-tribes have no longevity and are not fixed but they are distinguished by their members' distinct lifestyle and taste. As such, the neo-tribes provide a temporary source of identification for people who choose to belong. There is free movement between tribes, but tribes often generate strict forms of conformity whilst a person is affiliated. Maffescoli's argument is based upon the assumption that people contain a 'quasi animal like' need for sociality – to form and reinforce common bonds, we have a need to connect, link or band together into unstable forms of 'groupism' or 'emotional community'. We are pushed towards each other by a social configuration or inherent energy for communal being-together that Maffescoli terms *puissance*, and it is this *glischomorphic* tendency in all human relationships that underpins our processes of identification. *Glischomorphic* is a term that describes a tendency for communal being-together that Maffescoli believes all people to have. For Maffescoli, there is a natural sociality or reciprocity connecting individuals, and the habitus we share 'determine[s] the mores and customs that constitute us … and we should not be afraid to say it – we lead what is quite an animalistic life' (Maffescoli, 1996: 89–90).

   Puissance is described by Maffescoli as 'the will to live' and is found wherever people can speak to each other freely in an open space such as nightclubs, cafes etc. Such spaces allow people to explore issues of difference and commonality.

   For Maffescoli, the habitus is made up of three elements:

- the *aesthetic* – or shared sentiment
- the *ethic* – or collective bond
- the *custom* – common aspects of everyday life.

Close friendship networks have no fixed purpose other than giving people the opportunity to congregate for its own sake, with others around an informal culture. People become attached to networks through a device that Maffescoli terms 'proxemics' – a process of correspondence through which one person introduces one person to another who knows another person and so it continues. However, desire is no longer a matter of simple individual choice in relation to fandom, hairstyle, style of dress or choice of music, argues Maffescoli, – rather, desire should be viewed as a form of conformity that is a consequence of global processes of massification.

Traditional class-based research on football fandom was based upon the assumption that individuals were locked into particular class-determined 'ways of being'; in contrast, Sandvoss (2005), drawing upon Maffescoli, views fandom as an active consumer choice that is central to a notion of self-constructed identity.

Traditional theories of fandom were concerned with the degree to which support for a team could be correlated with other key variables, such as class, gender, age and ethnicity. The focus on the shared 'authentic origins' of the individual fan made the modern fan-base appear to be internally homogeneous, with a set of shared social experiences that were rooted in a shared class location. Fan identity was read as something that was tightly bound, non-contradictory and 'pure'. A good example of such a modernist conception of fandom is found in the work of the Leicester School (Dunning et al., 1988) – most of the Leicester City fans they investigated were from a non-incorporated, rough, working-class council estate in Leicester and these fans shared a very strong 'place identity'. Place identity has an emotional meaning and it refers to 'the symbolic importance of a place as a repository for emotions and relationships that give meanings and purpose to life' (Williams and Vaske, 2003: 831). It has been linked with the concept of self-identity (Williams et al., 1992), and is seen as a part of one's self that results in developing emotional attachment to a specific place (Williams et al., 1992). Place identity can enhance an individual's self-esteem and supporting the local team can increase feelings of belonging to the community. Such forms of fandom are a simple reflection of class culture within tight-knit communities and are not the product of the actions of individual choice or human agency. Such approaches have the tendency of reifying fandom around the concept of class and say nothing about the real enjoyment that people experience at a game. However, there are now new ways of doing fandom involving many different ways of engaging with the accelerated commodification of European soccer economies. These 'customer' sports fan identities involve subscription to satellite television sports channels and the use of the internet. Such fans are said to lack the deep-rootedness and personal commitment of fans in the past.

### Activity: What is a fan?

John Fiske (1992) suggests that a fan is an 'excessive reader' and therefore not opposed to non-fan or ordinary people, except in that fans collect a great

deal of information about the thing they are fans of. For Fiske, fans accumulate a high degree of cultural capital in relation to the thing they are fans of – this cultural capital often takes the form of textual or semiotic productivity as, for example, found in fanzines. In other words, fans collect a great deal of information about the thing they are fans of and reconstruct that information in a supportive manner that allows them to communicate with other fans with a degree of authority.

Reflect for one moment on your own fandom. Are you a fan of a football team, a band or some other form of activity? What makes you different from non-fans? Traditional theories of fandom were concerned with the degree to which support for a team could be correlated with other key variables, such as class, gender, age and ethnicity. Is your own fandom related to your class, gender, age and/or ethnicity?

Gary Crawford (2004) rejects what he claims to be the false opposition between 'authentic' supporters and 'inauthentic' fan consumers. As the more 'traditional' sources of community identity – family, work, the church, neighbourhood networks – decline in relative importance in the late modern era, the sense of community and 'primary group' belonging offered by contemporary sport becomes increasingly important and is increasingly commodified. Liquid modern football becomes both a product to be sold to eager consumers and a way for people to 're-invent' or to 're-imagine' a sense of locality through their sporting ties. Crawford draws upon Maffescoli's (1996) concept of 'neo-tribes' to account for today's more fluid and more dynamic sports fan cultures. Crawford concludes that being a football fan is first and foremost a consumer act and, hence, fans should be seen, first and foremost, as consumers. Large European clubs have attempted to market themselves without reference to 'place' or 'location'. English Premier League clubs provide potential fans from across Europe and beyond with signification value and opportunities for self-projection through acts of consumption. In a similar fashion, Sandvoss' (2003, 2005) focus is on fandom in relation to the construction of self-identity via narratives. Fans draw upon texts in a narcissistic manner and mirror or refashion their conception of self through interpretations of texts. In this case, a text is not simply a written document such as a match-day programme or fanzine, but can include hairstyles and products endorsed by celebrity players, Sandvoss develops the concept of 'neutrosemy' to explain how fans take bits of meaning from a wide range of texts to define the boundaries of self.

## Rave Culture and Identity

McRobbie argues that the act of dancing 'carries enormously pleasurable qualities for girls and women which frequently seem to suggest a displaced, shared and nebulous eroticism rather than a straightforwardly romantic, heavily heterosexual "goal-oriented drive"' (1984: 134). In a similar fashion, rave culture can be central to the construction of an identity. Green (1998) argues that

when ravers are banned from public leisure spaces, many 'choose individually or collectively to create their own private space for leisure' (Green 1998: 178). According to Glover (2003), Hilker (1996), Linder (2001), Stiens (1997) and Weber (1999), in the early years of the 1990s, rave culture provided many young people with an opportunity to rebel against their parents' norms of behaviour, escape their conventional identity and feel a sense of belonging with other ravers. The unsupervised and hedonistic nature of the rave scene made rave a form of resistance. Rave culture provided middle class youths, in particular, with the opportunity to adopt a deviant identity and an opportunity to play with other 'members of a community by actively sharing and partaking in the rave' (Linder, 2001: 4). The use of recreational drugs such as Ecstasy enhanced feelings of harmony and well-being. Weber (1999) suggests that the choice of music is central to understanding why people were attracted to a rave. Dance music was used to change people's assessment of the situation and mood, and became central to the construction of the raver's identity. The music was said to encourage ravers to hold people close and touch in a way that was affectionate, not explicitly sexual. Tomlinson (1998) found that: 'rave is something you immerse yourself in with other people. There is no guitar hero or rock star or corresponding musical-structural figures to identify with … You are just one of many other individuals who constitute the musical whole' (Tomlinson 1998: 203).

Glover (2003) draws on research by Martin (1999) to argue that Ecstasy disrupts the Freudian concepts of the self and creates 'a unity between the Id and the Ego, and a unification of these with the sensuality of the body and the intensity of the moment of the dance' (Martin, 1999: 92).

Bennett (1999) draws upon Maffescoli's conception of neo-tribes to explain the engagement of young people in dance music. Unlike the class-based conceptions of subculture popularised by the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s, the notion of neo-tribe rejects the traditional class-based assumption that individuals were locked into particular class-determined 'ways of being'. In contrast, engagement with dance music is viewed as an active consumer choice that is central to a notion of self-constructed identity.

However, it should be noted that Maffescoli's theoretical and conceptual framework remains unsupported. He assumes that giving a new name to an old problem or issue is sufficient. It is not. If Maffescoli wants to argue that people are herd animals, or have an instinctual need to form groups, he needs to do much more than simply name this as *puissance*. Not all fandom is a form of consumer-based, unstable and shifting cultural affiliation. We need to know how fandom is constituted, and why there has been a change in relation to the way people engage with commodities. Is there more to identity than the creative use of commodities?

Emotional involvement is a significant component of leisure experiences and much research suggests that strong emotions are evoked by wilderness experiences, experiences that would appear to be far removed from the world of

commodities. Scherl (1989, 1990) asked a sample of adult participants on an Outward Bound programme in the Australian wilderness to keep a diary of their perceptions, feeling states and emotions over a nine-day period. Their personal narratives had a focus on self-awareness, especially in relation to coping when other group members were not available for support. These findings are reinforced by McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998) in a study of a black-water rafting trip in a cave in New Zealand, and by Arnould and Price (1993) in their study of a lengthy raft trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

Leisure is a significant factor in the construction of an identity that people feel comfortable with, but it is important to recognise that leisure constraints, those factors that may prevent or restrict leisure participation, are also factors that limit the person's ability to construct their preferred identity. It is important to note that a number of researchers have identified 'structural' barriers to leisure participation and these constraints can impact upon our identity. Shores et al. (2007), for example, found from their study of outdoor recreation amongst Texans that individuals' socio-demographic characteristics, notably the respondents who were elderly, female or ethnic minorities with lower socio-economic status (SES), experienced more constraints to their participation in outdoor recreation. This is a finding reinforced by Martin (2004) who conducted a simple content analysis of racial representation in over 4000 magazine advertisements for outdoor recreation pursuits placed in *Time, Outside* and *Ebony* between 1984 and 2000. Martin argues that his research provides evidence of a racialised outdoor leisure identity represented in the advertisements. Black models were much more likely to be found in urban and suburban settings, whilst absent from wilderness leisure activities.

Floyd and Gramman (1993) argued on the basis of their own findings that the under-representation of people of a Mexican-American heritage in outdoor recreation was a product of socialisation of children into activities other than those associated with outdoor recreation.

However, as we shall discuss in later chapters, many African-Americans point to safety concerns, the fear of crime and perception of discrimination as factors constraining their participation in outdoor recreation activities.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the nature of the leisure experience. The idea that leisure is a relatively self-determined activity or experience that falls into one's economically free time is widely accepted. Leisure can be a period for self-reflection and personal growth. Whatever definition of leisure we choose to use, the leisure experience is commonly assumed to be different from the work experience; leisure experiences often take place in specific places or leisure venues, and the leisure experience is something we look forward to participating in with positive expectations.

Leisure can be therapeutic leisure, it can provide people with coping strategies and the social world is often made meaningful for people through leisure.

So-called 'healthy' leisure experiences may not have positive benefits for all participants.

A number of social science perspectives have emerged to make sense of the socio-economic and cultural arrangements within which the leisure experience is to be found. It is to these perspectives on leisure that we now turn.

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