

Leisure and Settlement: Defining terms and processes for immigrant and refugee youth

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Introduction

Relevant literatures:

- Immigration studies
- Leisure studies
- Sociology of sport
- Reports by service providers, non-profits, other agencies

What is leisure?

Leisure consists of:

pleasurable or beneficial activities that one freely chooses and undertakes in time away from work and other obligations

Defining Leisure

- Definitions of leisure are contested
 - does time “free of obligations” really exist?
- Subjective nature of leisure
 - may vary across individuals and cultures
 - Tirone & Shaw (1997), Tirone & Pedlar (2000)

Studying Leisure

- Psychology
 - what leisure does for the individual
- Sociology
 - what leisure does for society
- “Serious Leisure Perspective”
 - Robert Stebbins, University of Calgary

Serious Leisure Perspective

- Ethnographic studies of different groups
 - Barbershop singers, gourmet cooks, white-water kayakers
- Casual leisure, serious leisure, project-based leisure
- Leisure can function as a career

Why Leisure and Settlement?

- Leisure and the individual:
 - improves well-being, mediates stress, assists with coping
- Leisure and society:
 - may help to build social capital, social networks
- Both individual and societal factors of leisure participation may have implications for newcomer settlement

Newcomer Youth Settlement

Challenges faced by newcomer youth

- Shifting family roles, stress
- Social isolation
- Poverty, unemployment
- High rates of early school-leaving
- Lack of information about available services
- More research needed; most focuses on immigrant adults and young children

Immigrant and Refugee Leisure

- Variety of factors can affect/constrain leisure:
 - Lack of information about local services
 - Lack of fluency in English
 - Poverty
 - Family separation, social isolation
 - Preference for leisure with family and friends
 - Immigration status
 - Religious practices
 - Discrimination or fear of discrimination

Immigrant and Refugee Leisure

- Studies of leisure among newcomer youth:
 - Yu and Berryman (1996)
 - Chinese immigrant youth in New York City
 - Youth spent leisure time with family, co-ethnic friends, or alone
 - Leisure time was spent indoors, i.e. Chinese-language mass media and music
 - Less organized, less expensive activities

Immigrant and Refugee Leisure

- Studies of leisure among newcomer youth:
 - Taylor and Doherty (2005)
 - English-language learners at an Ontario high school
 - Study focused on physical activity
 - Found that youth used physically active leisure to improve their English, relieve stress

Immigrant and Refugee Leisure

- Bridging or bonding social capital
 - Stodolska, Marcinkowski and Yi-Kook (2007); leisure only with co-ethnics lowers income
 - Tirone and Pedlar (2000); leisure may serve to strengthen cultural ties, identity
- Various purposes for leisure - cultural maintenance or bridge to receiving society
 - Allison and Geiger (1993)

Sport and Recreation

- **Recreation** is physically active leisure
 - Rational recreation movement
- **Sport** involves skill, physical exertion, external rewards; is institutionalized and competitive
 - Critics argue that traditional definitions exclude less formal activities (e.g. road hockey)

Sport and Recreation

- Historically in U.S. and Canada: sport and recreation as tools for assimilation of immigrant youth
- Seen as neutral way to combat social problems (youth crime, social exclusion, etc.)
 - More research needed to determine outcomes
 - Potential for inclusion or integration depends on context of program, conditions in society

Sport and Recreation

- Under-participation of recent immigrants in local sport and recreation programs
- Barriers to participation
 - Transportation
 - Cost
 - Lack of information (e.g. subsidies)
 - Discrimination
 - Lack of appropriate programming

Implications for Service Providers

- Service providers thought their services were open to all and attributed low participation rates by recent immigrants to lack of interest
- Immigrants were unaware of the services or faced other barriers to participation
- Outreach and effective communication essential to enhance participation

Avenues for Future Research

Questions for future study include:

- 1) What role does (or could) leisure play in the settlement process?
- 2) How does migration affect leisure?
- 3) Can we better understand the settlement experiences of youth through leisure?

Avenues for Future Research

- 1) What role does (or could) leisure play in the settlement process?
 - Need more research on leisure across transitions
 - Longitudinal studies of leisure during settlement
 - Studies of leisure and stress management and coping among immigrants and refugees
 - Research needed on the role of leisure in building social networks, accessing information
 - Leisure as therapy for refugee youth

Avenues for Future Research

- 2) How does migration affect leisure?
 - Determine conditions necessary for leisure
 - Russell and Stage (1996) examined lack of leisure among women in a refugee camp
 - Resources and social context
 - Identity re-negotiation
 - Leisure on hold during initial settlement?
 - Or does leisure take on a different purpose?

Avenues of Future Research

- 3) Can we better understand the settlement experiences of youth through leisure?
 - Youth's experiences go beyond school and work
 - Constraints on their leisure may also be barriers to settlement
 - Studies of how, where and with whom newcomer youth spend their leisure time may reveal their settlement experiences

Avenues for Future Research

- My proposed dissertation project:
 - Study settlement and leisure experiences of Afghan newcomer youth in Toronto
 - Conduct in-depth interviews with youth
 - Identify unmet settlement needs and potential gaps in service provision
 - Identify information practices (information seeking, use and sharing) around leisure

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!