



Kraus'

# Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society

TWELFTH EDITION

Amy R. Hurd  
Denise M. Anderson  
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**50<sup>TH</sup>** Anniversary Edition







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# Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society

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20602-9

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Cover Image: Top Photo: © Jordan Siemens/Getty Images;

Bottom Photo: © Lee Cohen/Getty Images

Printing and Binding: LSC Communications

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

LCCN 2021005552 | ISBN 9781284205039 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Recreation—North America—History. | Leisure—Social aspects—North America. | Play—North America—Psychological aspects. | Recreation—Vocational guidance—North America.

Classification: LCC GV51 .M34 2022 | DDC 790.097—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021005552>

6048

Printed in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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# Preface

Recreation and leisure touch the lives of almost everyone, whether through participating in sports and games, attending a theater production, visiting an art museum, traveling to another country, attending a street concert, or simply enjoying a local park. A world without recreation and leisure is unfathomable—no parks, no open space, no swimming, no lounging on beaches, and no traveling to other parts of the world just for fun. We often take these things for granted. The purpose of *Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society, Twelfth Edition* is to assist students in achieving an understanding and appreciation of the value of leisure and the leisure-service industry from multiple perspectives. This text provides a comprehensive survey of the leisure spectrum and profession, exploring its foundation, history, expansiveness, and continuing evolution. Leisure participation is viewed from the perspective of age, race, gender, and ethnicity and includes societal and personal benefits. It will demonstrate that recreation and leisure is a viable career option employing millions of people in North America. A career overview includes knowledge about public, commercial, and nonprofit recreation, as well as recreation therapy and the growing areas of tourism and sports.

This is the twelfth edition of a text that has been used by hundreds of departments of recreation, parks, and leisure studies at colleges and universities throughout the United States. It is designed for use in courses covering the history and philosophy of recreation and leisure and the role of organized leisure services today in American communities. This text is revised to reflect recent societal changes and the challenges that face leisure-service managers in the twenty-first century. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the basic concepts of recreation and leisure, the motivations and values of participants, and trends in the overall field of organized community services. Throughout the text, several important themes and emerging issues are emphasized, including the following:

- The dynamic dialogue surrounding the nature of the political, economic, and social environment has forced parks and recreation agencies to reevaluate traditional approaches to delivering public park and recreation services by becoming simultaneously innovative, responsive, and entrepreneurial.
- This is a dynamic profession where an understanding of recreation, play, and leisure and what it means to diverse groups of individuals as well as to the professional working in the field is key to facilitating meaningful experiences.
- Wellness continues to be a major issue in the field, with obesity being the most immediate concern facing public parks and recreation agencies. Major efforts are being made to provide health and wellness opportunities, control obesity, and preserve cardiovascular health through parks and recreation. *Well-being* has become an inclusive term, looking beyond traditional wellness indicators.
- Tourism is the world's largest economy. Many communities are presenting themselves as a tourist destination in order to increase resources available to community members through jobs, attractions, and revenue generation.
- The generation commonly referred to as “Baby Boomers” are hitting retirement age at a rate of more than 10,000 per day, and the younger Millennial Generation has become the largest generation.<sup>a</sup> The impact and influence of these two generations on the parks and recreation profession requires organizations to rethink traditional service models. Members of the Baby Boom Generation have more discretionary income than ever before and are willing to spend it on experiences—through travel and tourism, participating in programs, health and fitness activities, and adventure recreation.\* Some people from other generations are interested in “now” activities and opportunities that simultaneously offer individual and group engagement, and they are eager for change.<sup>b</sup>
- Sport is increasing its influence and importance in the local, national, and international arena. Youth sport is taking on the forms and actions of professional sport, frequently to the detriment of the participants. Sport and tourism have become major community partners

<sup>a</sup><https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/by-2030-all-baby-boomers-will-be-age-65-or-older.html>.

<sup>b</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>.



emphasizing economic community development. However, youth sport influence and participation has begun to wane as parents have become aware of life-changing injuries happening at young ages that may appear immediately or years later.

- Outdoor recreation has grown as a sector of the profession as an emphasis on recreation in nature, including adventure or experiential recreation, and is seen as necessary for the development of a greater appreciation for natural resources as well as a recognition of the numerous beneficial outcomes of nature-based recreation. Responsible management of these resources is also critical to ensuring their conservation and preservation for years to come.
- Globalization has impacted leisure through the ability to share models, lessons learned, adaptation to local settings, and the greater awareness that a global perspective brings to the profession.
- Multiple sociocultural factors impact leisure through available opportunities, activity choices, and the ways in which leisure is experienced; this is particularly evident when differences in socioeconomic status is considered. Urban communities often provide expanding services at increasing consumer costs, while inner-city urban areas continue to struggle to provide basic leisure services to residents.
- Trends both today and tomorrow from demographic shifts to changes in programming such as esports will continue to impact the field in ways both positive and negative. In addition, large-scale national as well as worldwide events such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic must be better understood in order for the professional to effectively meet the recreation and leisure needs of their constituents while having a positive impact on individuals and groups as well as our environments, economies, and societies.

Society is changing so rapidly that it is a challenge to capture the diversity and depth of change. The latest research, trends, and issues in the field are included in this edition. The parks and recreation profession is continually faced with providing services to a diverse population expanding far beyond race and gender. The latest edition of this text focuses on service provision for all people. A considerable amount of discussion is aimed at the role of parks and recreation departments on the health and wellness of our communities, as well as a means to combat the obesity epidemic that is plaguing North America. New case studies incorporated in the chapters allow students to apply knowledge of technology in leisure, the value and benefits of play, and changing family structures, to name a few.

Recreation's expanding roles in health, wellness, the obesity epidemic, quality of life, and environmental awareness and disengagement are examples of the breadth of the profession. Where once recreation professionals delivered programming and provided areas, facilities, and resources, they now face the need to partner, nurture, follow, and lead into new opportunities. Gone are the old socially contrived boundaries between disciplines and professions, replaced by a fluid composite of public, private, and nonprofit organizations and ever-growing numbers of unique stakeholders, all with a claim on recreation and leisure. Expectations of recreation professionals involve knowing about its history and foundations while embracing today's emerging social and physical challenges. It involves simultaneously honoring what was known yesterday and selectively engaging what will be known tomorrow. The fluidity of change in the leisure profession is captured in this text and challenges the reader to look to the past in looking to the future, ultimately learning from that past to strengthen the future. The text concludes with a strong assessment of the challenges and opportunities the future may promise.

## Why We Study Recreation and Leisure

This text is intended to provide comprehensive information that will help its readers develop sound personal philosophies, gain a broad awareness of the leisure service field, and answer questions, not with learned-by-rote solutions, but rather through intelligent analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving. Leisure-service professionals should have an in-depth understanding of the full range of recreational needs and motivations as well as agency programs and outcomes. This understanding should be based on a solid foundation with respect to the behavioral and social principles underlying recreation and leisure in contemporary society. To have a sound philosophy

of the goals and values of recreation and leisure in modern life, it is essential to understand recreation's history and to be aware of its social, economic, and psychological characteristics in today's society. Should recreation be regarded chiefly as an amenity, or should it be supported as a form of social therapy? What are the recreation needs of populations such as girls and women, those who are aging, those who are disadvantaged, ethnic and racial minorities, persons with disabilities, or others who have not been fully served in the past?

Throughout this text, these contemporary issues are discussed in detail. This text promotes no single philosophical position; its purpose is to clarify the values promoted by recreation and leisure in modern society. What environmental priorities should recreation and park professionals fight to support, and how can outdoor forms of play be designed to avoid destructive ecological outcomes? How can leisure-service practitioners strike a balance between entrepreneurial management approaches, which emphasize fiscal self-sufficiency, and human service programming that responds to individual and community needs? Ultimately, these values are responsible for the field's ability to flourish as a significant form of governmental or voluntary agency service or as a commercial enterprise.

## Key Features

- **Learning Objectives:** Guide the reader through the content and set the stage for focused reading. The learning objectives are provided as a guide to assist students in identifying key learning outcomes.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Defend the importance of a strong conceptual foundation for effective leisure-service professionals.
2. Describe the conceptual evolutions of the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
3. Articulate the meaning of the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
4. Explain the various connections and relationships between the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
5. Accept the challenge to develop your personal "why" for wanting to pursue a career in the field of leisure services by the end of this text.

### CASE STUDY: Finding Flow

Csikszentmihalyi's flow principle requires that a person's skill matches the challenge in the activity at hand. If there is not a balance between skill and challenge, negative feelings can occur. The individual experiences boredom if they are too skilled for the challenge or anxiety and frustration if they are under skilled for the challenge. For an individual to experience flow in play several factors must exist. The activity should provide:

- A clear set of goals: The outcomes, or goals, of activities are known. For example, games and sport have clear goals because rules guide play; music is dictated by a score; a marathon runner has a goal to finish. These goals are attainable based on the skill of the individual.
- Immediate feedback: It is clear how well the individual is performing in relation to the activity at hand. A runner knows how well they are progressing, an artist sees his or her work come together, and a team understands how well they are doing in a game.
- A loss of self-consciousness: People do not worry about how they look or are performing; they simply feel good about the activity and their involvement in it.
- A sense of distorted time: The individual loses all sense of time and what seems like minutes can actually be hours.
- An autotelic experience: One participates for the activity itself (intrinsic motivation) and no other reward. Pure enjoyment of the activity is the only justification needed.
- Strong concentration and commitment: The individual totally focuses on the activity and directs all concentration toward it.
- A sense of personal control: The individual feels she or he is in control of the situation and her or his skills to achieve the desired outcome.

#### Questions to Consider

- Describe an activity that you enjoy. Does it enable you to experience flow? What elements of flow do you most experience with this activity?
- Could work allow you to experience flow? Why or why not?
- Is flow a state that younger people could achieve more so than older people? Justify your answer.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). *Flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

- **Case Studies:** Provide the reader a basis for in-depth exploration of current issues that are relevant to each chapter. The questions that follow the case studies allow the reader to apply the knowledge gained to real life scenarios, provoking further discussion and exploration.

- **Side Bars:** Highlight important information on current and related topics.



### WANT MORE PLAY IN YOUR LIFE? START BY TAKING YOUR PLAY HISTORY

One of the methods Stuart Brown used to inform the conclusions about play he proposed in his 2009 book *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*, was to collect "play histories" from over 6,000 people. He encourages adults to use the same method to rediscover play in their own lives. Here are some steps to conduct your own play history:

Step 1: Recall what you did for play when you were younger. What activities really got you excited? Gave you joy?

Step 2: Reflect on those joyful activities to understand your "play temperament." What did it feel like? Who did you do them with or were you alone? Were they more physical or mental activities?

Step 3: Identify activities you could do now that would re-capture that playful spirit. As Brown explained, "Inventory the whole of your life, with an eye toward play, and look for ways to accentuate joy."<sup>12</sup>

Here are some questions to help you conduct your play history:

- When have you felt free to do and be what you choose?
  - Is that part of your life now? If not, why not?
  - What do you feel stands in the way of your achieving some times of personal freedom?
- Search in your memory for those times in your life when you have been at your very best.
- What have been the impediments to play in your life?
- How and why did some kinds of play disappear from your repertoire?
- Have you discovered ways of reinitiating lost play that work for you now in your life?

Brown, S. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul* (pp. 206–209). New York: Penguin Group.



### BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

Throughout the chapter you've read stories from real people about their experiences with play, recreation, and leisure. Now it's your turn to tell your story.

Identify something in your life that you do semi- to very regularly that you would label as play, recreation, leisure, or some combination of those ideas.

Write a short story (500–750 words) that describes your thoughts about the play/recreation/leisure thing you just identified. Here are some questions to help guide your storytelling.

1. When did you start doing the play/recreation/leisure thing (we'll call it "it" for the rest of the questions)? How did you get introduced to "it"?
2. How do you feel when you take part in "it"? Have your feelings evolved over the time you've done "it"?
3. Why do you continue to take part in "it"?
4. How do you feel when you're done taking part in "it"? Is there any carryover of feelings to a later time?

Once you've written your story, analyze it based on what you've just learned about the three concepts.

1. What elements of play, recreation, or leisure do you see reflected in your story?
2. Which of the three concepts would you label your "it" with? Is it more play, recreation, or leisure to you?

Want a chance for your "Beyond the nuts and bolts story" to be published in an upcoming edition of this book? Email your completed story to Kraus12e@gmail.com.

- **Questions for Class Discussion or Essay Examination:** Feature critical thinking questions to spark discussion and classroom engagement with the topics presented in the chapter.

#### QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION OR ESSAY EXAMINATION

1. What parts of this chapter most resonated with you as you develop your personal "why" for wanting to pursue a career in the field of leisure services?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Read one of the Stories of Play, Recreation, and Leisure in the chapter. Conduct an analysis of the story, answering the following questions: (1) Does the experience the author describe in the story sound most like play, recreation, or leisure to you? Why? (2) Identify what you believe to be the play, recreation, and leisure components of the activity, explaining each of the components.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If motivation is important in the study of play, recreation, and leisure, explore some of the motivations you identify in leisure participation. How does knowing your motivations for participation in play, recreation, and leisure influence your desire to study the field of leisure services?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Compare and contrast the early theories and contemporary theories of play. First, identify the commonalities in the theoretical development of play, and second, the differences.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Organization

In the following chapters, this text focuses on multiple aspects of leisure and recreation. The content provides the reader with an in-depth discussion of present-day recreation, leisure, sports, tourism, outdoor recreation, and parks in American culture. The intended outcome is for the reader to gain an enhanced appreciation and understanding of how leisure affects individuals, groups, and society, and the roles that leisure plays in people's lives and in our society. This text looks at the roles of leisure in everyday life; the impacts of leisure on our culture; and how leisure influences individual choice, society mores, social engagements, the economy, and individual and community quality of life.

**Chapter 1** introduces the concept of play, recreation, and leisure. It discusses what play, recreation, and leisure mean to different people, along with who participates in play and recreation and why. It also introduces the reader to theories of play and leisure, focusing on their origins, influences, and importance to earlier and contemporary society. Six views of leisure provide students with insights into how theorists, practitioners, and participants view leisure today. The foundation provided in this chapter prepares the student to understand how leisure fits into our society, is influenced by societal change, and influences society and individuals. The terms *leisure*, *play*, and *recreation* and their various interpretations are also discussed in this chapter, providing the reader with insights into their use by researchers, practitioners, and participants.

**Chapter 2** is an introduction to motivations for participating in leisure and recreation. It includes an in-depth discussion of physical, social, and psychological motivation as it relates to recreation participation. The chapter also examines motivation from the perspective of taboo recreation and serious leisure.

**Chapter 3** recognizes the growing influence cultural and social factors have on play, recreation, and leisure. Included in this chapter are discussions of age, family structure, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Understanding how these factors have traditionally affected leisure is as important as understanding how the factors are changing the perceptions of leisure and recreation in the twenty-first century.

**Chapter 4** narrates the history of recreation and leisure from early civilizations to the present day. It is influenced by a European and North American perspective but recognizes the increasing influences from other cultures emerging in local and national society. The discussions of modern-day leisure are American, focusing on the influences of religion, colonization, and societal organization, and trace how different historical periods have acted on our perceptions of leisure and recreation. The chapter focuses on the dramatic changes that have occurred since World War II, recognizes the growing influence of globalization, and introduces the impact of technology on how people play and recreate.

Leisure and recreation traditionally have been represented from a community perspective and as a community resource. In **Chapter 5**, the 10 social functions of leisure are discussed. Social functions of leisure influence public policy, public commitment to organized leisure and recreation, and community development, all of which are critical in the twenty-first century.

**Chapter 6** presents the different types of leisure-service organizations. The three organizational types include government, nonprofit, and commercial. This chapter identifies the three types of organizations, expands on them to address subtypes, compares and contrasts them, discusses their purpose, and generally identifies who is served, types of programming, types of services and areas, and intended outcomes.

The leisure industry, what makes it a profession, and philosophies of leisure service delivery are presented in **Chapter 7**. This chapter lays the foundation for Chapters 8 through 11 which focus on career areas for leisure services professionals.

Specialized leisure service organizations and areas are discussed in **Chapter 8**. Included are recreation therapy services for people with disabilities, armed forces recreation for military personnel and their dependents, employee services recreation for corporate employees, campus recreation for university students, private-membership recreation for private club members, meeting and event planning, and faith-based recreation. This chapter concludes with a comparison of the different types of organizations.

**Chapter 9** addresses outdoor recreation and natural resources management. The history and legislation that have impacted individuals' ability to utilize natural resources for recreation are outlined followed by an examination of the ways they are used from land and water-based adventure recreation and therapy to opportunities to learn more about the world around us through environmental interpretation. Our understanding of outdoor recreation is further enhanced through an examination of the role sociodemographic factors play in usage as well as issues related to conservation and preservation.

**Chapters 10** and **11** explore travel and tourism and sport. While these industries have grown independent of leisure and recreation in recent years, their roots remain firmly within the leisure field. Chapter 10 provides an overview of the travel and tourism aspect of the hospitality and leisure industries. This approach allows the reader to better understand how travel, tourism, and leisure complement each other. Chapter 11 shows how sport has grown into a major commercial enterprise over the last 30 years and is increasingly seen as an economic engine versus a leisure experience. However, much of sport remains strongly fixed in the leisure sector. This chapter explores the growth of sport as a worldwide phenomenon, its place in the business sector, its roots in the leisure context, the role of participation at different levels, and spectating. Finally, it looks at sport from a business perspective as well as the potential for negative outcomes surrounding sport.

Finally, **Chapter 12** addresses the future of leisure and recreation and specifically looks at trends, influences, economic impacts, societal impacts, and predictions for the future. The chapter presents the influence of technology; how demographics and the growth of minorities are changing the way leisure is perceived and delivered; the impact of youth and a youth culture on society, especially as it contrasts with the baby boomer culture; global climate change issues, local environmental concerns, and how they relate; and finally, globalization and its influence on leisure and recreation.

## **New to the *Twelfth Edition***

In marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of the book, the authors have opened each chapter with a quote from the original edition. In some instances it provides a reflection of the continued importance of the role of play, recreation, and leisure in our lives that we hope will never dim but continue to grow. In other areas a quote may help shine a brighter light on changes that have occurred over the last 50 years that have had a lasting impact on the field.

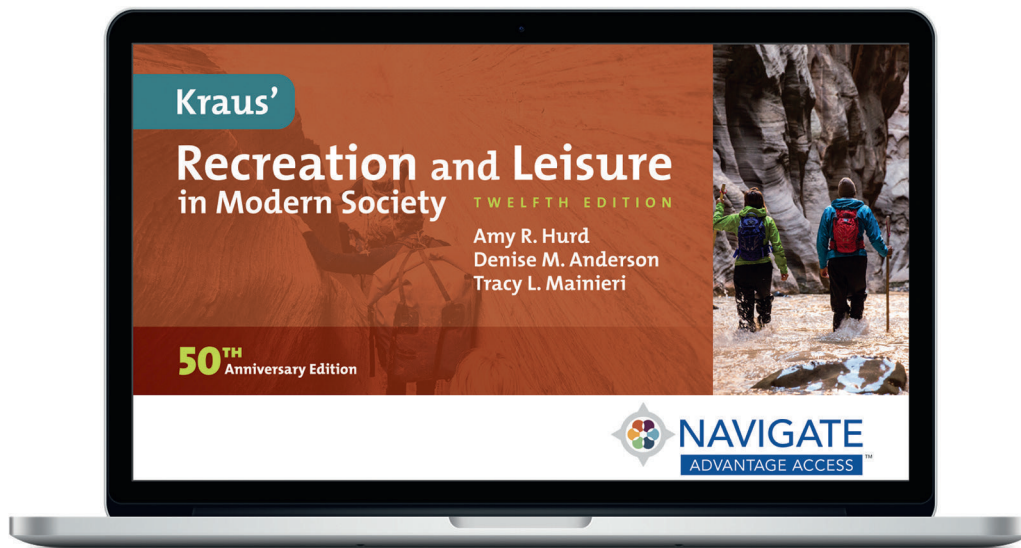
For the *Twelfth Edition* we have added a new coauthor to provide a fresh view of leisure. Among the most notable changes, we have added a new chapter on outdoor recreation while rearranging other chapters to create a better flow of content. We feel the changes are advantageous to the text and the student and allow the instructor greater flexibility in the delivery of the material.

Many of the case studies have been replaced, with the previous ones now appearing in the instructor materials. Other case studies have been updated to reflect recent trends. In general, chapter content has been updated to reflect changes in the field since the last edition. Multiple



chapters address the current COVID-19 pandemic but, as this text goes to press, much is still unknown as to the long-term impacts of this worldwide event.

- Chapter 1 integrates new information throughout the chapter that provides non-Western perspectives on play, recreation, and leisure. It provides updated personal stories about play, recreation, and leisure to illustrate the concepts and a new focus on why foundational concepts are helpful for leisure services professionals. The updated chapter ends with a new charge to readers to discover their “why” for pursuing a career in leisure services.
- Chapter 2 provides updates on physical activity and health data, including obesity rates, across multiple generations and races and incorporates two new case studies. The chapter also expands on the concept of deviant leisure and related examples.
- Chapter 3 features new and expanded information about gender identity and sexual orientation to utilize the latest understandings on those topics, including a new section about transgender people and leisure. The chapter shares updated statistics on all sociocultural factors and new case studies and examples throughout.
- Chapter 4 has added additional information related to the impacts of race on leisure participation and leadership. A new case study has also been added.
- Chapter 5 incorporates a new case study as well as updated data and examples throughout.
- Chapter 6 creates a foundation for the delivery of leisure by looking at 10 major elements of the delivery system. Updates have been incorporated into the sections on different agencies in government providing recreation services, as well as the private and nonprofit sector and a new case study has been added.
- Chapter 7 showcases a new set of professionals and what their careers are like on a day-to-day basis. They are all young professionals that current students can aspire to be in the near future.
- Chapter 8 adjusts terminology to reflect more current practices of referring to therapeutic recreation as recreation therapy. New case studies have been added, and more current information related to campus recreation has been added as well as sections on meeting and event planning as well as faith-based recreation services. The material on outdoor recreation was removed and inserted into a new chapter (Chapter 9) dedicated to outdoor recreation and natural resources management.
- Chapter 9 is a new chapter to this edition with a focus on outdoor recreation and natural resources management with related case studies.
- Chapter 10 includes new statistics on the impact of travel and the ever-evolving trends in the industry as well as new case studies emphasizing these trends. The chapter also addresses both the current state of travel and tourism in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as potential future long-term impacts of this event on travel and tourism.
- Chapter 11 views sport from the perspective of the participant and spectator and expands the participant perspective to include a discussion on the structure of sport including recreational and developmental sport, interscholastic sport, intercollegiate athletics, and professional sports. The issues in sport were updated to include the most pressing matters in sport, and section on finding careers in sport was added.
- Chapter 12 features new and updated information that supports the readers in becoming professionals with an eye to the future and provides updated statistics and new examples throughout. The chapter also features new sections addressing eSports and the post-COVID-19 pandemic landscape. Finally, the chapter now concludes with a call for readers to articulate their “why” for pursuing a career in leisure services, first mentioned in the updated Chapter 1.



## For the Instructor

Qualified instructors can receive access to the full suite of instructor resources, all of which have been revised to reflect the content of the *Twelfth Edition*. These resources include the following:

- Instructor Manual, including chapter outlines, suggested assignments and projects, and additional case studies
- Slides in PowerPoint format
- Test Bank, featuring more than 300 questions
- Sample Syllabus

## For the Student

Additional resources are available online for the student, including the following:

- Interactive eBook, featuring embedded weblinks and practice Knowledge Check questions tied to specific sections of the text
- Flashcards
- Slides in PowerPoint format
- Lecture Outlines

*Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* is meant to make readers think about the field and how it impacts their lives on a daily basis. Its aim is to make the reader appreciate the recreational opportunities that are available in North America and to educate each reader on what it means to be a parks and recreation professional.



# Acknowledgments

Completion of this text was more of a challenge than usual with our deadlines being in the midst of a pandemic. That only enhanced our excitement about the end result as we could leave that behind and immerse ourselves in a field that we dearly love. The best part of working on the twelfth edition of the text was gathering the stories, examples, brochures, reports, photos, and information provided by the numerous public, nonprofit, commercial, and other organizations that have given material to us. Although it is difficult to thank everyone who has supported this edition, we truly appreciate the support of Illinois State University and Clemson University, as well as our families who understand the sacrifices needed to complete this project.

We would also like to acknowledge the important contributions and influence a number of practitioners and leading recreation and leisure-studies educators whose work and mentoring influenced our thinking. While it is not possible to name all of these individuals, they include: Karla Henderson, Debra Jordan, Fran McGuire, Dan McLean, Ellen O’Sullivan, Ruth Russell, Kim Shinew, and Robert Toalson.

We welcome Tracy Mainieri from Illinois State University as our new coauthor. She brings a rich knowledge of parks, recreation, and leisure that helps to keep this text current and relevant. Tracy stepped in for Dan McLean, who retired and served as a long-time author for the seventh through eleventh editions. We owe Dan a debt of gratitude for reshaping this text and bringing on a young coauthor fresh out of doc school, bringing on a new author a few years later with innovative ideas and a vision for the future, and setting us up to form this current writing team whose voices and ideas will continue to evolve with each edition.

We thank the reviewers of the *Twelfth Edition*, whose comments and suggestions have truly made this a better text:

- Glen Bishop, PhD, of Arkansas Tech University
- Brooke Burk, PhD, of Minnesota State University – Mankato
- Jonathan Hicks, MS, PhD, of Minnesota State University – Mankato
- Paul Keysaw, of Fresno City College
- Alice Morgan, PhD student, of West Virginia University
- Jodi Murray, MA, of Conestoga College
- Ben F. Tholkes, PhD, of Western Carolina University
- Barbara Vano, MA, of St. Thomas Aquinas College

This text could not have been published without the efforts of the staff at Jones & Bartlett Learning: Whitney Fekete, Product Manager; Carol Guerrero, Content Strategist; Dan Stone, Project Specialist; Benjamin Roy, Rights Specialist; Troy Liston, Senior Media Development Editor; and Andrea DeFronzo, Director of Marketing. Also special thanks to Praveen Babu and team for composition.

We are particularly indebted to the late Dr. Richard Kraus. To carry on his work is both important and critical. His efforts for more than 40 years as a writer, practitioner, and educator helped to shape this profession. This text has become a standard, and, as future editions are prepared, we hope to stay close to the roots that Dr. Kraus nurtured while remaining current with the changes in the profession.







# Chapter 1

# Conceptual Foundations of the Field of Leisure Services

*“Leaders and administrators in recreation and park agencies have become skilled in the planning and development of facilities, personnel policy, and financial management. Yet, in a field intended to meet significant human needs, it is essential that the practitioner become capable of doing more than a ‘nuts and bolts’ job. [They] must have a thorough and sophisticated understanding of the role of recreation and leisure in human life and the changing functions of recreation in modern society.” (pp. xi–xii; original emphasis; pronouns changed for inclusivity)<sup>1</sup>*

*-From the first edition of Kraus’ Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society, published in 1971*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Defend the importance of a strong conceptual foundation for effective leisure-service professionals.
2. Describe the conceptual evolutions of the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
3. Articulate the meaning of the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
4. Explain the various connections and relationships between the terms play, recreation, and leisure.
5. Accept the challenge to develop your personal “why” for wanting to pursue a career in the field of leisure services by the end of this text.

## Introduction

Any consideration of the broad field of recreation and leisure should include a clarification of terms and concepts. The words *play*, *recreation*, and *leisure* are frequently used interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. However, although related, they have distinctly different meanings. Leisure theorists struggle to agree on what to call these types of experiences. Is it recreation, leisure, play, free time, available time, creativity, selfishness, or hedonism? One's own perceptions are so important in the defining of play, recreation, and leisure that researchers continue to debate their meaning to society, individuals, and cultures. However, as this text will show, recreation, parks, and leisure services have become an important part of government operations and a vital program element of nonprofit, commercial, private-membership, therapeutic, and other types of agencies. Today, play, recreation, and leisure constitute major forces in our national and local economies and are responsible for millions of jobs in such varied fields as government, travel and tourism, popular entertainment and the arts, health and fitness programs, therapeutic settings, hobbies, and participatory and spectator sports. Beyond their value as a form of sociability, play, recreation, and leisure also provide major personal benefits in terms of meeting physical, emotional, cognitive, and other important health-related needs of participants. In a broad sense, the leisure life of a nation reflects its fundamental values and character. The very games and sports, entertainment media, and group affiliations that people enjoy help to shape the character and well-being of families, communities, and societies at large.

For these reasons, it is the purpose of this text to present a comprehensive picture of the role of leisure services in modern society, including (1) the field's conceptual base; (2) the varied play, recreation, and leisure pursuits people engage in; (3) their social and psychological implications; (4) both positive and negative outcomes of play, recreation, and leisure; (5) the network of community organizations that provide leisure services; (6) the development of leisure services as a rich, diversified field of professional practice; and (7) trends influencing the future of the leisure-services profession.

## Why Is a Conceptual Foundation Important for Leisure-Services Professionals?

You may be asking yourself this very question. As a student striving to become a professional in the field of leisure services, why should you care about having a strong understanding of the foundational concepts of our field? Here's one way to think about it. A doctor must know chemistry, anatomy, kinesiology, and other underlying sciences to

practice medicine effectively. An entrepreneur must know business, economics, accounting, and customer service philosophies. A farmer must know agriculture, biology, environmental systems, and business. Each profession has a range of foundational concepts, theories, and philosophies that allow someone to be an effective professional in and advocate for their field. This idea is no different for a leisure-services professional. A leisure-services professional must understand the foundational concepts of our field to provide effective, meaningful experiences for our participants and clients. These foundational concepts can act as inspiration for the leisure-services professional and provide deeper meaning for why we do what we do. Indeed, such conceptual understandings allow you, as a future leisure-services professional, to develop your own personal philosophy of leisure services that can motivate you in your work and allow you to advocate for the value of our field to others. As the chapter's starting quotation from the first edition of this textbook argues, the job of the leisure-services professional is more than just the "nuts and bolts"; to move beyond the nuts and bolts, leisure-services professionals need to consider the "why" behind their profession. That's where a solid grounding in our field's foundational concepts comes in. To help us move beyond the nuts and bolts as we explore the three foundational concepts of our field, we have included stories from real people about their experiences with play, recreation, and leisure throughout the chapter. You'll find these stories in boxes titled, "Beyond the nuts and bolts: Stories of play, recreation, and leisure." We hope they help us stay grounded in the "humanness" of our field.

## Exploring the Three Major Concepts: Play, Recreation, and Leisure

Our understanding of the three major concepts in leisure services, play, recreation, and leisure, is heavily informed by scholarly writing and research. Writings on the concepts of play, recreation, and leisure are, of course, prominent in the scholarly field of leisure studies, but they also make frequent appearances in the scholarly writings of other fields, such as education, health, psychology, sociology, and child development. As we explore these three main concepts, you will see perspectives from these various fields interwoven into the discussion. When you start to explore the writings about the concepts of play, recreation, and leisure, you may notice that a large majority of these writings originate and describe experiences from Anglo-European Western cultures. Indeed, when Ito, Walker, and Liang reviewed 1,891 articles published in five leisure studies journals between 1990 and 2009, they found that only 4.1% of those articles were non-Western or cross-cultural.<sup>2</sup> The authors noted that the percentage of such articles in the five journals had increased



## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

Embracing Joy

Fiona Zachel

The sounds of stomping feet pour from a brightly lit hall, tied together with the tunes of fiddle, flute, and drum. The wood floor, golden and polished from many years of furiously dancing feet, trembles in time with the music, a unified heartbeat of the bodies filling the dance hall. Faces of all ages shine with sweat, smiles blooming across each dancer as they weave between each other in a wondrous pattern of collective joy and connection. All combine into a spell that unleashes a deep yearning in my spirit, to become part of some larger existence. To experience a mere taste of the euphoria I see before me.

This was my introduction to social dancing, the small but dedicated crowd of contra dancers in my Alaskan hometown. I was lucky enough to have friends who were both dancers and musicians and were always eager to welcome a curious soul in search of something different.

I still remember that first night of contra dancing with piercing clarity, where I discovered a new way to converse with my fellow human beings that required no words. Just the touch of a hand, the beat of the music, and the enthusiasm of my own body into a swirling current of collective joy.

I danced until my socks were littered with holes, and bloody blisters began to blossom on my feet. That was my first, true taste of happiness, where my mind, body, and soul seemed to move in perfect harmony for the first time.

To be held, spun, and twirled with such compassion, to feel every concern, worry, or stress evaporate from my mind as I focused solely on another human being. The beat of the music in my bones, the strength of my limbs, all culminating in the soaring of my spirit. Trepidation turns into trust, shyness is exchanged for fearlessness, and if only for a few hours, an unwavering belief in the very best of humanity settles deep in my heart.

When I am dancing with another person, the rest of the world falls away. Nothing exists beyond the connection between me and my fellow dancer. All the fears, doubts, and uncertainties that await me outside the dance hall are banished.

That was many years ago, and I have wandered far from my contra dance days, my favorite dance halls now found in Chicago and Minneapolis. I envelope myself in the rhythms of salsa and bachata, the embrace of Argentine tango, and the recently birthed Brazilian zouk. My euphoria is no less, yet my ability to listen and learn from my fellow dancers has grown. As I move from one dance to another, each is a study in connection, nurturing the ability to communicate with people wherever I go in the world. No words, no borders, just a mutual love of dance and a willingness to hold another human, a stranger with whom you have only exchanged eye contact a few seconds before.

As I gain years and my body begins to wear, I find it is the moments of stillness that are the most cherished. The collective breath before a step, the embrace before the beat drops, precious moments of serenity suspended in time.

Each of us has memories of past dances that we treasure. Moments of magic with another person that transformed us, sent us into spirals of rapture, and ushered us into a more harmonious existence. That is what I strive to become, what fills me with contentment as I leave the dance floor. We carry dances in our hearts forever, stories without words that resonate through our lives years after a dance has ended.

The lights of the dance hall have gone dark and the final notes of music have faded into the dawn. An endless well of joy rests inside my heart, waiting to be unleashed once again.

fivefold in the time period they reviewed, which is encouraging. It remains, however, that a vast majority of the writing about play, recreation, and leisure as concepts in the field of leisure studies centers around Anglo-European, Western voices. As we explore these concepts, we will be intentional in naming this Western bias and bring in voices from other cultures, as we can. We are hopeful that with each edition of our text, our understanding of these concepts from a truly cross-cultural perspective will continue to advance.

### Exploring Play

“Many children in public school are getting less and less time outside, despite the documented benefits of free play.”<sup>33</sup> Play has long been determined essential for physical and emotional development of children. During the past 2 decades, play fell out of favor among some educators and parents but not among leisure-services professionals. Today, there is a resurgence of research across many fields about the value and importance of play. Researchers are suggesting



that play is an organic way of learning, that unstructured play builds skills that will create happy and productive adults, and that under the right conditions, schools that integrate play will enhance the learning, self-awareness, and confidence of their students. Play, long a fabric of cultures across the world, is finding greater evidence to support its importance to children and adults.

### ANALYZING THE WORD PLAY

The noun *play* in English is derived from the Old English *plega*, meaning a game or sport, brisk activity, skirmish, fight, or battle. This is related to the Latin *plaga*, meaning a blow, stroke, or thrust. It is illustrated in the idea of striking or stroking an instrument or playing a game by striking a ball. Other Western languages have words derived from a common root (such as the German *spielen* and the Dutch *spelen*) whose meanings include the playing of games, sports, and musical instruments. As a verb, the word *play* is traced to the Old English *plagen*, meaning to frolic, to move about sportively, to divert or amuse yourself. Play also may relate to the Middle Dutch *pleyen*, which means to dance, leap for joy, rejoice, and be glad.

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT PLAY

Throughout Western history, perspectives about play have swung between a place of value and a force of threat in society. In ancient Greece, play was assigned a valuable role in the lives of children, based on the writings of Plato and Aristotle. The Athenians placed great value on developing qualities of honor, loyalty, and beauty and other elements of productive citizenship in children. For them, play was an

integral element of education and was considered a means of positive character development and teaching the values of Greek society. Later, as the Catholic Church gained dominance among the developing nations of western Europe, play came to be regarded as a social threat. The body was thought to detract from more spiritual or work-oriented values, and every effort was made to curb the pleasurable forms of play that had been popular in the Greek and Roman eras. Eighteenth- and 19th-century educators and philosophers such as Froebel, Rousseau, and Schiller came to the defense of play as an important aspect of childhood education. For example, Froebel wrote of play as the highest expression of human development in childhood:

Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage. . . . A child that plays thoroughly with self-active determination, perseveringly until physical fatigue forbids, will surely be a thorough, determined man, capable of self-sacrifice for the promotion of the welfare of himself and others.<sup>5</sup>

Twentieth-century education scholars expanded the notion of the importance of play in society. For example, Vygotsky argued in a 1933 lecture on “Play and its role in the mental development of the child” that, “The child moves forward essentially through play activity. It is in this way that play can be termed a leading activity that determines the child’s development.”<sup>6</sup> Now, there are concerted efforts in the United States to emphasize the value of play not just to children but throughout the lifespan. For example, the U.S. Play Coalition, the Alliance for Childhood, and numerous regional and local organizations are advocating for play as essential throughout the lifespan.



## PLAY IS NOT JUST FOR KIDS! JUST ASK THE Q'ERO PEOPLE OF PERU

As we consider play as a concept, often the concept is associated with children. However, recent research and advocacy has made clear that play is essential across the lifespan. One unique way to illustrate how play can be important past childhood is the concept of *pukllay* (pook-lee-eye), meaning sacred play in English, in the Q'ero people in Peru. Though the word *pukllay* is used more broadly in other areas of Peru, for the Q'ero people, the word takes on a more specific meaning, one that views play as spiritual activity. Ross offers this explanation of *pukllay*:

For the Q'ero, *pukllay* is a biopsychospiritual relational activity that causes the individual to heal, mature, and learn in order to become a fully developed human. *Pukllay* is exhibited through dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, competing in games, enacting ritual, engaging in healing practices, making offerings, and participating in festivals. These joyful, heart-centred actions help Q'ero individuals, communities, and the earth to evolve in mutually enhancing, symbiotic relationships.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast with Western ideas of play as a temporary state most often associated with children, the play of *pukllay* is a strictly nonchild play and is a state of mind and being integrated throughout life. *Pukllay* can be aimed to provide purification, rejuvenation, relationship building, awakening, and even leadership development and selection.

This example demonstrates that play can be meaningful not just for children but also for adults. What evidence have you seen in your own life that play is not just for kids?

## THEORIES TO HELP UNDERSTAND PLAY

Beyond understanding the origins of the word *play* and the evolution of perspectives about play, we can further explore the concept of play by considering the numerous theories about play that have been proposed throughout Western history. A theory is a set of principles that explains how a particular behavior or phenomenon works in society. Theories of play, then, are testable propositions about how play works in the real world. We will first explore some early theories of play then move on to some more contemporary theories and concepts of play.

### Early Theories of Play

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of influential scholars evolved comprehensive theories of play that explained its development and its role in human society and personal development.

**Catharsis Theory.** The catharsis theory is based on the view that play—particularly competitive, active play—serves as a safety valve for the expression of bottled-up emotions. Among the ancient Greeks, Aristotle saw drama as a means of purging oneself of hostile or aggressive emotions; by vicarious sharing in the staged experience, onlookers purified themselves of harmful feelings. Biking a long distance after a hard day at work, playing a musical instrument after an argument with a friend, and hitting a bucket of golf balls to blow off steam after a nonproductive meeting are all examples of the catharsis theory of play.

**Surplus-Energy Theory.** Similar to the catharsis theory, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, in his mid-19th-century work *Principles of Psychology*, advanced the view that play was primarily motivated by the need to burn excess energy. This theory asserts that running, playing soccer, or jumping rope on the playground are done because people have excess energy to use. A criticism of this theory is that play also occurs in people with little energy and does not account for nonphysical play.

Coupled with the catharsis theory, the surplus-energy theory suggests a vital necessity for active play to help children and adults burn excess energy and provide a socially acceptable channel for aggressive or hostile emotions and drives.

**Relaxation Theory.** An early explanation of play that was regarded as the converse of surplus energy was relaxation theory. Rather than to burn excess energy, play was done to restore it. Play was seen as a means to energize a person who was exhausted from work, school, or the stresses of daily life. It was believed that when a person is either mentally or physically tired, play can restore energy. So, exercising after a long day at work can serve to help an individual relax and restore. Spending time on Facebook during a study break or playing after school are both examples of relaxation theory.

**Preparation Theory.** Preparation theory suggests that play is a means for children to practice adult life. Children who play house, doctor, or school are preparing to experience these things as older children or adults. Preparation theory also suggests that people learn teamwork and role playing in their play. A weakness of this theory is that it does not account for adult play.

### Contemporary Theories and Concepts of Play

During the 20th century, a number of psychologists and educators examined play, particularly as a developmental and learning experience for children.

**Self-Expression Theory.** Two leading physical educators, Elmer Mitchell and Bernard Mason, saw play primarily as a result of the need for self-expression. Humans were regarded as active, dynamic beings with the need to find outlets for their energies, use their abilities, and express their personalities. The specific types of activity that an individual engaged in were, according to Mitchell and Mason, influenced by such factors as physiological and anatomic structure, physical fitness level, environment, and family and social background.<sup>7</sup>

**Stimulus-Arousal Theory.** This approach is based on the observation that both humans and animals constantly seek stimuli of various kinds, both to gain knowledge and to satisfy a need for excitement, risk, surprise, and pleasure. Often this is connected with the idea of fun, expressed as light amusement, joking, and laughter. However, the expectation that play is always light, enjoyable, pleasant, or humorous can be misleading. Often, play activities can be frustrating, boring, unpleasant, or even physically painful—particularly when they lead to addiction (as in the case of drug, alcohol, or gambling abuse) and subsequent ill health or economic losses.

**Competence-Effectance Theory.** A closely related theory holds that much play is motivated by the need of the player to test the environment, solve problems, and gain a sense of mastery and accomplishment. Typically, it involves experimentation or information-seeking behavior, in which the player—whether human or animal—observes the environment, tests or manipulates it, and observes the outcome. Beyond this, the player seeks to develop competence, defined as the ability to interact effectively with the environment. Often this is achieved through repetition of the same action even when it has been mastered. The term *effectance* refers to the player's need to be able to master the environment and, even when uncertainty about it has been resolved, to produce desired effects in it.

**Csikszentmihalyi "Flow" Principle.** Related to the competence-effectance theory is Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's view of play as a process in which ideally the player's skills

balance the challenge level of the tasks. If the task is too simple, it may become boring and lacking in appeal. If it is too difficult, it may produce anxiety and frustration, and the player may discontinue the activity or change the approach to it so that it becomes more satisfying. This balance between skill and challenge results in what is called “flow.” Csikszentmihalyi suggests that a sense of flow is a unique element in true play, which he identifies as a sense of flow. This is the sensation players feel when they are totally involved with the activity. It includes a feeling of harmony and full immersion in play; at a peak level, players might tend to lose their sense of time and their surroundings, and experience an altered state of being. Such flow, he argues, could be found in some work situations, but it is much more commonly experienced in play such as games or sport.<sup>8</sup>

**Play as a Social Necessity.** During the late 19th century, leaders of the public recreation movement called for the provision of organized play for all children. Joseph Lee, who is widely regarded as the father of the play movement in the United States and who promoted the establishment of numerous playgrounds and recreation centers, was instrumental in the public acceptance of play as an important force in child development and community life. Jane Addams, founder of



If the waves match the surfer's ability, surfing is an optimal activity in which an individual might experience flow.

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the Hull House Settlement in Chicago and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, advocated the need for organized play opportunities that served as an alternative to the difficult life children living in poverty faced. These values continue to be embraced by contemporary communities, as is evidenced by

### CASE STUDY: Finding Flow

Csikszentmihalyi's flow principle requires that a person's skill matches the challenge in the activity at hand. If there is not a balance between skill and challenge, negative feelings can occur. The individual experiences boredom if they are too skilled for the challenge or anxiety and frustration if they are under skilled for the challenge. For an individual to experience flow in play several factors must exist. The activity should provide:

- A clear set of goals: The outcomes, or goals, of activities are known. For example, games and sport have clear goals because rules guide play; music is dictated by a score; a marathon runner has a goal to finish. These goals are attainable based on the skill of the individual.
- Immediate feedback: It is clear how well the individual is performing in relation to the activity at hand. A runner knows how well they are progressing, an artist sees his or her work come together, and a team understands how well they are doing in a game.
- A loss of self-consciousness: People do not worry about how they look or are performing; they simply feel good about the activity and their involvement in it.
- A sense of distorted time: The individual loses all sense of time and what seems like minutes can actually be hours.
- An autotelic experience: One participates for the activity itself (intrinsic motivation) and no other reward. Pure enjoyment of the activity is the only justification needed.
- Strong concentration and commitment: The individual totally focuses on the activity and directs all concentration toward it.
- A sense of personal control: The individual feels she or he is in control of the situation and her or his skills to achieve the desired outcome.

#### Questions to Consider

- Describe an activity that you enjoy. Does it enable you to experience flow? What elements of flow do you most experience with this activity?
- Could work allow you to experience flow? Why or why not?
- Is flow a state that younger people could achieve more so than older people? Justify your answer.

public and private support of parks and recreation departments, community recreation programs, after-school programs, and other play-based activities.

**Huizinga's Theories of Play and Culture.** Probably the most far-reaching and influential theory of play as a cultural phenomenon was advanced by the Dutch social historian Johan Huizinga in his provocative work *Homo Ludens (Man the Player)*. Huizinga presented the thesis that play pervades all of life. He saw it as having certain characteristics: It is a voluntary activity, marked by freedom and never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty. It stands outside the realm of satisfying physiological needs and appetites. It is separate from ordinary life both in its location and its duration, being "played out" within special time periods and in such special places as the arena, the card table, the stage, and the tennis court. Play is controlled, said Huizinga, by special sets of rules, and it demands absolute order. It is also marked by uncertainty and tension. Finally, it is not concerned with good or evil, although it has its own ethical value in that its rules must be obeyed.

In Huizinga's view, play reveals itself chiefly in two kinds of activity: contests for something and representations of something. He regarded it as an important civilizing influence in human society and cited as an example the society of ancient Greece, which was permeated with play forms. He traced historically the origins of many social institutions as ritualized forms of play activity. For example, the element of play was initially dominant in the evolution of judicial processes. Law consisted of a pure contest between competing individuals or groups. It was not a matter of being right or wrong; instead, trials were conducted through the use of oracles, contests of chance that determined one's fate, trials of strength or resistance to torture, and verbal contests. Huizinga suggested that the same principle applied to many other cultural institutions:

In myth and ritual the great instinctive forces of civilized life have their origin: law and order, commerce and profit, craft and art, poetry, wisdom, and science. All are rooted in the primeval soil of play.<sup>9</sup>

**Caillois's Theories for Categorizing the Play Experience.**

The French sociologist Roger Caillois examined the play experience itself by classifying the games and play activities that were characteristic of various cultures and identifying their apparent functions and values. In doing so, he established four major types of play and two contrasting styles of play.

Caillois's four major types of play and game activity were:

1. *Agon* refers to activities that are competitive and in which the equality of the participants' chances of winning is artificially created. Winners are determined through such qualities as speed, endurance, strength, memory, skills, and ingenuity. Agonistic games may be played by individuals or teams; they presuppose

sustained attention, training and discipline, perseverance, limits, and rules. Most modern games and sports, including many card and table games involving skill, are examples of *agon*.

2. *Alea* includes games of chance—those games or contests over whose outcome the contestant has no control; winning is the result of fate rather than the skill of the player. Games of dice, roulette, and baccarat, as well as lotteries, are examples of *alea*.
3. *Mimicry* is based on the acceptance of illusions or imaginary universes. Children engage in mimicry through pretend play. This category includes games in which players make believe, or make others believe, that they are other than themselves. For children, Caillois writes:

The aim is to imitate adults. . . . This explains the success of the toy weapons and miniatures which copy the tools, engines, arms and machines used by adults. The little girl plays her mother's role as cook, laundress and ironer. The boy makes believe he is a soldier, musketeer, policeman, pirate, cowboy, Martian, etc.<sup>10</sup>

4. *Ilinx* consists of play activities based on the pursuit of vertigo or dizziness. Historically, *ilinx* was found in primitive religious dances or other rituals that induced the trancelike state necessary for worship. Today it may be seen in children's games that lead to dizziness by whirling rapidly and in the use of swings and spring riders. Among adults, *ilinx* may be achieved through amusement park rides such as roller coasters and a variety of adventure activities, including skydiving and bungee jumping.

Caillois also suggested two contrasting styles of play behavior. The first of these, *paidia*, involves exuberance, freedom, and uncontrolled and spontaneous gaiety. The second, *ludus*, is characterized by rules and conventions and represents calculated and contrived activity. Each of Caillois's four major types of play (*agon*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*) may be conducted at either extreme of *paidia* or *ludus* or at some point on a continuum between the two.

**Brown's Theories about Play and the Brain.** Stuart Brown, a medical doctor and psychiatrist, advanced the understanding of play by connecting the study of play with the latest advancements in the field of neuroscience (study of the brain). In his 2009 book, *Play*, he proposed the following properties of play:

- Apparently purposeless (done for its own sake)
- Voluntary
- Inherent attraction (fun)
- Freedom from time
- Diminished consciousness of self
- Improvisational potential
- Continuation desire<sup>11</sup>





## WANT MORE PLAY IN YOUR LIFE? START BY TAKING YOUR PLAY HISTORY

One of the methods Stuart Brown used to inform the conclusions about play he proposed in his 2009 book *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*, was to collect “play histories” from over 6,000 people. He encourages adults to use the same method to rediscover play in their own lives. Here are some steps to conduct your own play history:

Step 1: Recall what you did for play when you were younger. What activities really got you excited? Gave you joy?

Step 2: Reflect on those joyful activities to understand your “play temperament.” What did it feel like? Who did you do them with or were you alone? Were they more physical or mental activities?

Step 3: Identify activities you could do now that would re-capture that playful spirit. As Brown explained, “Inventory the whole of your life, with an eye toward play, and look for ways to accentuate joy.”<sup>11</sup>

Here are some questions to help you conduct your play history:

- When have you felt free to do and be what you choose?
  - Is that part of your life now? If not, why not?
  - What do you feel stands in the way of your achieving some times of personal freedom?
- Search in your memory for those times in your life when you have been at your very best.
- What have been the impediments to play in your life?
- How and why did some kinds of play disappear from your repertoire?
- Have you discovered ways of reinitiating lost play that work for you now in your life?

Brown, S. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul* (pp. 206–209). Penguin Group.

Though the first property he listed for play was its apparent lack of purpose, Brown goes on to argue that play, in fact, has great purpose for humans throughout the lifespan. Indeed, he argued that the fact play is, at its core, purposeless or nonessential allows it to be a powerful force of brain development. Ideas, actions, and connections made in play are made in a relatively “safe” space, without huge threats to physical or mental well-being or “real world” consequences. Play, then, is a space to simulate life and test things out.

### BENEFITS OF PLAY

In addition to developing the variety of theories describing play, the work of scholars and researchers over the past half century has documented the benefits of play to children, in particular, and adults. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released a report about the importance of play that highlighted the importance of play to the holistic well-being of youth, including physical, mental, social, and emotional development.<sup>12</sup> The AAP later went on to encourage pediatricians to give prescriptions for play, arguing that play is essential to prosocial brain development of youth, especially when it involves play with peers and adults. Indeed, play can be a vital resource for building healthy relationships between youth and their caregivers.<sup>13</sup> Let’s explore some of the benefits that play produces for children and adults.

Personality is shaped by play in many different ways. Play prompts enjoyment, freedom, and fun. It prompts

self-expression, creativity, imagination, and self-confidence. Play allows children to learn to interact with others through cooperative, sharing, and conflict-resolution activities. All of these experiences affect an individual’s personality and contribute to the type of person the individual will become.

Play also aids in the psychological development of children, outlined in depth by Sigmund Freud. Freud saw play as a medium through which children are able to gain control and competence and to resolve conflicts that occur in their lives. He believed that children are frequently overwhelmed by their life circumstances, which may be confusing, complex, and unpleasant. Through play, they are able to reexperience threatening events and thus to control and master them. In this sense, play and dreams serve a therapeutic function for children. In general, Freud thought that play represented the child’s way of dealing with reality—in effect, by playing with it, making it more acceptable, and exerting mastery over it.

Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him? It would be wrong to think he does not take his play seriously; on the contrary he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotion on it. The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real.<sup>14</sup>

A recent focus has been put on the value of play to healthy development. Play can prevent and combat a

number of conditions that can have a negative impact on a child's health including childhood obesity, anxiety and depression, and weak bone development.<sup>15</sup> Play helps children develop motor skills, balance, and coordination. Organizations such as the U.S. Play Coalition, Voice of Play, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and many others are providing resources and information on the health benefits of play to parents, community leaders, and parks and recreation professionals.

Because of what we now know about how play affects healthy brain development, play also provides cognitive benefits that are essential for children in contemporary society. The AAP argues that “play is fundamentally important for learning 21st-century skills, such as problem solving, collaboration, and creativity, which require the executive functioning skills that are critical in adult success.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, a recent study indicated that play can be essential for children to release and play out the emotions they hold in relation to recent societal events such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the social injustices and protests that occurred throughout the summer of 2020.<sup>16</sup> Importantly, these brain benefits of play are not limited to children. Brown argued that play can have important, similar impacts for adults, particularly at work, including increased creativity, innovation, and skill mastery.<sup>11</sup>

### A WORKING DEFINITION OF PLAY

As you can see, what we may consider, at first, the simple concept of play actually has numerous associated theories, benefits, and concepts that have been developed over a couple of centuries of thought. It is difficult to arrive at a single definition of play because it takes so many forms and appears in so many contexts. However, a general definition would describe play as a form of human or animal activity or behavioral style that is self-motivated and carried on for intrinsic, rather than external, purposes. It is generally pleasurable and often is marked by elements of competition, humor, creative exploration and problem solving, and mimicry or role playing. It appears most frequently in free time activities but may be part of work. It is typically marked by freedom and lack of structure but may involve rules and prescribed actions, as in sport and games.

## Exploring Recreation

The second major foundational concept for the field of leisure services is recreation. Of the three concepts, many may find recreation to be the most concrete and understandable. Having said that, the concept of recreation has a variety of historical and contemporary nuances that are important for leisure-services professionals to consider.

### ANALYZING THE WORD RECREATION

The term itself stems from both the French *recreation*, meaning the action or process of creating again or anew and the Latin word *recreātiō*, meaning the action or process of restoring. When you look up the noun *recreation* in the



Recreation occurs in many forms with group involvement highly desirable for some individuals.

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modern dictionary, interestingly you see two versions of the noun. The first version, *recreation*, means the action of refreshing or entertaining oneself through a pastime or, more simply, an activity or pastime pursued for pleasure. The second version, though, is important to note as you explore your own “why” for being a professional in the field of recreation, as we started talking about at the beginning of this chapter. The second definition of the noun recreation you will find in the dictionary appears as *re-creation*, meaning the action or process of creating again or in a new way. Though we focus primarily on the first meaning here, you will notice that both versions retain the idea that recreation has something meaningful to do with helping people to refresh, or re-create, themselves.

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT RECREATION

Historically, recreation was often regarded as a period of light and restful activity, voluntarily chosen, that permits one to regain energy after heavy work and to return to work renewed. This point of view lacks acceptability today for two reasons. First, as most work in modern society becomes less physically demanding, many people are becoming more fully engaged, both physically and mentally, in their recreation than in their work. Thus, the notion that recreation should be light and relaxing is far too limiting. Second, the definition of recreation as primarily intended to restore one for work does not cover the case of persons who have no work, including the growing retiree population, but who certainly need recreation to make their lives meaningful.

In contrast to work, which is often thought of as tedious, unpleasant, and obligatory, recreation has traditionally been thought of as light, pleasant, and revitalizing. However, this contrast too should be reconsidered. A modern, holistic view of work and recreation would be that both have the potential for being pleasant, rewarding, and creative and that both may represent serious forms of personal involvement and deep commitment.



## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

### How I Discovered Backpacking

Rocio Rivadeneira

My family was on an amazing road trip the summer before my younger two children started kindergarten in 2012. We had excavated dinosaur fossils in Montana because my three young kids loved dinosaurs. Following the dig, we saw similar fossils displayed in the Museum of the Rockies, spent a few days in Yellowstone, and we were now spending our nights in a tent in Grand Teton National Park. The scenery was spectacular. Jenny Lake reminded me of a beautiful puzzle we had when I was a kid. I remember looking at the beautiful, jagged mountains and clear lake. As we were heading back to our minivan after hiking and a dip in the lake, we got passed by a group of Boy Scouts. They were in uniform and loaded with their packs. I remember one of the boys taking off his pack, kneeling to the ground dramatically, raising his arms above him and exclaiming, "Finally! Civilization!" I laughed, but I was also impressed at what they had seemingly accomplished.

I looked at my two daughters, both Girl Scouts in troops that I led. We were celebrating 100 years of the organization that year and had traveled to Washington, DC earlier in the summer to celebrate. I loved what the Girl Scout movement had given us: Skill development, community engagement, and leadership opportunities. It had given me the opportunity to gain outdoor skills that I had not developed having grown up in Los Angeles. Because of Girl Scouting, I had pushed myself to become comfortable outdoors and had started to take my older troop camping on Girl Scout property. As I saw this troop of Boy Scouts come down the mountain, I wondered if I could ever feel as comfortable as their leaders seemed leading young people into the wilderness. I made a vow right there and then not to let my discomfort and inexperience keep any of my Girl Scouts from experiencing all they could.

When I got home, I started to research primitive and back country camping. I subscribed to *Backpacker* magazine. I read the book *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed. I became fascinated by what could be gained on a backpacking trip. Not only did I want to learn backpacking skills for my girls, but now I also became fascinated by the promise of adventure. I signed up for a Backpacking 101 class with a friend and we headed into the Smoky Mountains with a guide who demystified the entire process for us. That year all my Christmas gifts were backpacking gear. I had an acquaintance who was section hiking the Appalachian Trail and I asked her to join me on a trip. Another acquaintance had heard about our plans and invited herself on our trip. That summer of 2015, three acquaintances went into the woods and emerged as close friends.

There is nothing like backpacking to bring you closer to others. You are reliant on each other for your survival. You often sleep in close quarters. You are each other's entertainment and when you stop and take in a jaw-dropping view, you have only each other to truly share that moment. That summer started a tradition of taking annual trips together. We love our adventures. We have been worried about bears, a falling tree in a big windstorm, or the strange sounds we hear in the middle of the night. We have laughed so hard we cried. We have lifted each other up (figuratively and literally). We have shared birthdays and anniversaries on the trail. We have developed traditions on our trips. For example, we always start our first night with wine and cheese. It may be box wine and Babybels but it feels extravagant when you combine the beautiful locations where they are consumed. Our friendship developed in the back country.

Six years after seeing that Boy Scout exclaim words of gratitude for reaching civilization, I took five junior high Girl Scouts into the wild. It only took multiple trips with friends, a Wilderness First Aid class, and years of research, to finally feel ready. Nothing beat watching these girls pitch their tents near a beach, filter water, practice Leave No Trace principles, cook on a small backpacking stove, and hang their bear bags. They learned how to take it slow and enjoy each other's company without the competing distraction of electronics. They hiked over 22 miles, worked as a team, and learned to depend on each other. They made memories, rose to the challenge, and earned their Primitive Camper badge. These girls are now in high school and have become such experts they just taught their own Backpacking 101 workshop to junior high girls. This includes my younger daughter and her troop of Girl Scouts who are now ready for their first back country trip!

### CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS OF RECREATION

Typically, definitions of recreation found in the professional literature have included the following elements:

- Recreation is widely regarded as activity (including physical, mental, social, or emotional involvement), as contrasted with sheer idleness or complete rest.

Recreation may include an extremely wide range of activities, such as sport, games, crafts, performing arts, fine arts, music, dramatics, travel, hobbies, and social activities. These activities may be engaged in by individuals or by groups and may involve single or episodic participation or sustained and frequent involvement throughout one's lifetime.

- The choice of activity or involvement is voluntary, free of compulsion or obligation.
- Recreation is prompted by internal motivation and the desire to achieve personal satisfaction rather than by extrinsic goals or rewards.
- Recreation is dependent on a state of mind or attitude; it is not so much what one does as the reason for doing it, and the way the individual feels about the activity, that makes it recreation.
- Although the primary motivation for taking part in recreation is usually pleasure seeking, it may also be meeting intellectual, physical, or social needs. In some cases, rather than providing “fun” of a light or trivial nature, recreation may involve a serious degree of commitment and self-discipline and may yield frustration or even pain.

Most modern definitions of recreation fit into one of three categories: (1) recreation has been seen as an activity carried on under certain conditions or with certain motivations; (2) recreation has been viewed as an outcome—a specific set of emotions or psychological states that results from participation in recreation pursuits; and (3) recreation has been perceived as a social institution, a body of knowledge, or a professional field.

### Recreation as Activity under Certain Conditions or Motives

The first category of modern definitions of recreation in the professional literature aligns well with the first dictionary definition we discussed: recreation as an activity carried on under certain conditions or with certain motives. Although it is generally accepted that recreation participation should be voluntary and carried out without any degree of pressure or compulsion, often this is not the case. We tend to be influenced by others, as in the case of the child whose parents urge him to join a Little League team, or the gymnast or figure skater who is encouraged in the thought that he or she



Recreation can occur anyplace and includes a variety of activities.

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might become a professional performer. Although ideally recreation is thought of as being free of compulsion or obligation, once one has entered into an activity—such as joining a company bowling league or playing with a chamber music group—one accepts a set of obligations to the other members of the team or group. Thus, recreation cannot be entirely free and spontaneous and, in fact, assumes some of the characteristics of work in the sense of having schedules, commitments, and responsibilities.

Definitions of recreation generally have stressed that it should be conducted for personal enjoyment or pleasure—ideally of an immediate nature. However, many worthwhile activities take time to master before they yield the fullest degree of satisfaction. Some complex activities may cause frustration and even mental anguish—as in the case of the golf addict who is desperately unhappy because of poor putting or driving. In such cases, it is not so much that the participant receives immediate pleasure as that they are absorbed and challenged by the activity; pleasure will probably grow as the individual’s skill improves.

What about the view that recreation must be carried on for its own sake and without extrinsic goals or purposes? It is essential to recognize that human beings are usually goal-oriented, purposeful creatures.

James Murphy and his coauthors identified different recreational behaviors that suggest the kinds of motives people may have when they engage in activity:

- *Socializing behaviors*: Activities such as dancing, dating, going to parties, or visiting friends, in which people relate to one another in informal and unsteretyped ways.
- *Associative behaviors*: Activities in which people group together because of common interests, such as street rod car clubs; stamp-, coin-, or gem-collecting groups; or hobbyists.
- *Competitive behaviors*: Activities including all of the popular sport and games and also competition in the performing arts or in outdoor activities in which individuals compete against the environment or even against their own limitations.
- *Risk-taking behaviors*: An increasingly popular form of participation in which the stakes are often physical injury or possible death.
- *Exploratory behaviors*: In a sense, all recreation involves some degree of exploration; in this context, it refers to such activities as travel and sightseeing, hiking, scuba diving, spelunking, and other pursuits that open up new environments to the participant.<sup>17</sup>

To these may be added the following motives:

- *Vicarious experiences*: Activities such as watching movies or sports events.
- *Sensory stimulation*: Activities that might include drug use, sexual involvement, or listening to rock music.



- *Physical involvement:* Activities that are done for their own sake, as opposed to competitive games.
- *Creative arts:* Activities that stimulate creativity and imagination through such mediums as the visual or performing arts.
- *Intellectual pursuits:* Activities that require cognitive skill such as reading, puzzles, strategic games, playing a musical instrument, or crocheting.

### Recreation as an Outcome

Recognizing that different people may have many different motives for taking part in recreation, Gray and Greben suggest that it should not be considered simply as a form of activity. Instead, they argue that recreation should be perceived as the outcome of participation—a “peak experience in self-satisfaction” that comes from successful participation in any sort of enterprise.

Recreation is an emotional condition within an individual human being that flows from a feeling of well-being and self-satisfaction. It is characterized by feelings of mastery, achievement, exhilaration, acceptance, success, personal worth, and pleasure. It reinforces a positive self-image. Recreation is a response to aesthetic experience, achievement of personal goals, or positive feedback from others. It is independent of activity, leisure, or social acceptance.<sup>18</sup>

Historically, researchers have focused on the social-psychological outcomes of recreation. More recently, significant attention has been given to physical outcomes. Researchers and practitioners are particularly interested in the relationship between recreation participation and physical health outcomes, including reduction of obesity and other chronic health conditions.

### Recreation as a Social Institution

Recreation is identified as a significant institution in the modern community, involving a form of collective behavior



People are motivated to engage in high-adventure activities because of the risk involved.

Courtesy of Billy Heatter/U.S. Air Force.

carried on within specific social structures. It has numerous traditions, values, channels of communication, formal relationships, and other institutional aspects.

Once chiefly the responsibility of the family, the church, or other local social bodies, recreation in contemporary society is the responsibility of a number of major agencies in today's society. These may include public, nonprofit, or commercial organizations that operate parks, beaches, zoos, aquariums, stadiums, or sports facilities. Recreational activities may also be provided by organizations such as hospitals, schools, correctional institutions, and branches of the armed forces. Clearly, recreation emerged in the 20th century as a significant social institution, complete with its own national and international organizations and an extensive network of programs of professional preparation in colleges and universities.

Beyond this development, over the past century, there has been general acceptance of the view that community recreation, in which citizens take responsibility for supporting organized leisure services to meet social needs, contributes significantly to democratic citizenship. Community recreation is offered through city or county park and recreation departments.

### A WORKING DEFINITION OF RECREATION

Acknowledging these contrasting views of the meaning of recreation, the following definition of the term is offered.



Gardening is an example of a recreation activity that is freely chosen and has elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

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## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

### Bike Riding

Beth Venable, MS, LPC

Living in New York City in the late 90s was an incredible life adventure. Having grown up in a family that valued outdoor activity, moving to the Big Apple was a big change of pace. It was challenging to figure out how to integrate outdoor play into what quickly became a very indoor life. Walking and running in my local parks was fun and convenient. But, it was the decision to step into my local Brooklyn bike shop that brought the pieces together. Having not really ridden a bike since I was a kid, I made the life-changing purchase of a commuter bike in my favorite shade of green.

One of the great pleasures of cycling is the speed at which I get to move through a landscape. Soon after buying that first “grown-up bike,” my route became a new freedom lifting me over the Brooklyn Bridge, up the West Side Highway along the Hudson to the gardens of the Upper West Side. Flying along the edge of the city gave me a different perspective, a chance to sort through the mental clutter of the week. More than 20 years later, this is still the most compelling reason for me to ride, to lift up and out, to gain a different perspective.

Over the years, the commuter bike gave way to a mountain bike, a road bike, and a gravel bike. Athleticism entered the equation. Growing up I was an arts kid. While other kids went to practice, I went to dance class or rehearsal. Other high schools had Friday night football, while mine had performances and gallery openings. It was surprising to wake up one day in my thirties and self-identify as an athlete. Although cycling allows my mind to clear, it allows my body to take root in something tangible, measurable, and empowering.

In 2019, after I had more than a year of treatment for breast cancer, my brother noticed I was looking like myself again and asked me what had gotten me through. I said, “My bike.” “Yeah,” he replied, “But, what else?” Again I answered, “My bike.” Of course, there is a longer answer to this question that includes family, friends, and a ton of medical intervention. What no one told me about chemo, surgery, and radiation was how much it would challenge my identity. The reduction to “cancer patient,” the loss of privacy, agency, and the overwhelming grief and fear eroded my confidence in that internal knowing of who I was. Every pedal stroke I took during treatment and for the year after was a tiny bit of taking back my own whole self.

Every 10 years my “why” seems to grow a bit. Freedom and clarity gave way to empowerment and then to healing. More recently it has shifted to include community and social justice. On the bike, I am forced to lift my eyes and really look around at the rural southern city I call home. I try to reconcile how the thread of my ride through this community relates to the larger tapestry. Sometimes that means frustration and futility. Other times it leads to compassion and understanding. Over a hundred years ago the bike was instrumental in providing women access to transportation so that they could organize for the right to vote. Bikes continue to be the most affordable, environmentally friendly transportation for millions making their way to work or school. They also offer developmentally appropriate adventure and independence for children.

Reflecting on the impact of cycling in my life, I feel compelled to leverage whatever influence I have to fostering ways bikes can positively influence the health and well-being of others. When we find our favorite recreation, I believe it transcends our own personal benefit to the benefit of those around us. For me, biking lifts, empowers, heals, and creates more empathy just like a wheel generating power with each stroke of the pedals.

Recreation consists of human activities or experiences that are voluntarily chosen for intrinsic purposes and are pleasurable, although they may involve a degree of compulsion, extrinsic purpose, and discomfort, or even pain or danger. Recreation may also be regarded as the emotional state resulting from participation or as a social institution, a professional career field, or a business.

### Exploring Leisure

The third foundational concept of the field of leisure services is, perhaps, the most abstract. What exactly is leisure? Leisure is a term we hear a lot in everyday use—people discussing their leisure time, taking a leisurely walk, or dreaming about

living a “life of leisure.” But what is leisure when considered through the eyes of a leisure-services professional or a leisure studies scholar? How can these specialized views about leisure advance our everyday understanding of the concept? Let’s explore the answers to these questions together.

### ANALYZING THE WORD LEISURE

The English word *leisure* seems to be derived from the Latin *licere*, meaning to be permitted or to be free. Also derived from *licere* were the French *loisir*, meaning free time, and such English words as *license* (originally meaning immunity from public obligation) and *liberty*. These words are all related; they suggest free choice and the absence of compulsion.

The early Greek word *scole* or *skole* meant “leisure.” It led to the Latin *scola* and the English *school* or *scholar*—thus implying a close connection between leisure and education. The word *scole* also referred to places where scholarly discussions were held. One such place was a grove next to the temple of Apollo Lykos, which became known as the *lyceum*. From this came the French *lycée*, meaning “school”—again implying a bond between leisure and education.

It’s useful to look beyond the English word for the concept of leisure as we start our exploration of our third foundational concept. Indeed, as we analyze the word for leisure outside of Western word origins, we find that though the concept of leisure appears in many non-Western cultures, the word itself is not as easily translatable. For example, let’s look a term closely related to, but not a direct translation of, leisure in Chinese, *Xiū xián*, and its origins. The Chinese characters (休闲 or 休閒) that represent *Xiū xián* can be traced back at least 3,000 years. In ancient Chinese, the first character represented a person leaning on a tree and has evolved to mean taking a rest, relaxing, or fine quality. The second character represented the concept of moonlight coming through the planks of a door in ancient meaning, with its contemporary meaning being free and unoccupied.<sup>19</sup> In the evolution of the term *Xiū xián*, we see that the concept of leisure in Chinese culture, tracing back 3 millennia, has representations of physical rest, psychological feelings, and freedom in time. This brief exploration of a leisure-like term highlights the need for leisure scholars and professionals to try to look beyond conventional, Western views of not just leisure but play and recreation as well. In doing so, we can start to understand the definitions and value different people place on the concept of leisure through different cultural lenses, allowing us to have a deeper appreciation for these foundational concepts of our field.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT LEISURE

The Western classical view of leisure centered largely on ancient Greece. Aristotle regarded leisure as “a state of being in which activity is performed for its own sake.” It was sharply contrasted with work or purposeful action, involving instead such pursuits as art, political debate, philosophical discussion, and learning in general. The Athenians saw work as ignoble; to them it was boring and monotonous. A common Greek word for work is *ascholia*, meaning the absence of leisure—whereas we do the opposite, defining leisure as the absence of work.

How meaningful is this classical view of leisure today? Although the Greek view of leisure as a necessary and integral piece of a holistic life has merit, this view has two flaws. First, it is linked to the idea of an aristocratic class structure based on the availability of a substantial underclass and slave labor. When Aristotle wrote in his *Treatise on Politics* that “it is of course generally understood that in a well-ordered state, the

citizens should have leisure and not have to provide for their daily needs,” he meant that leisure was given to a comparatively few patricians and made possible through the strenuous labor of the many. In modern society, leisure cannot be a privilege reserved for the few; instead, it must be widely available to all. It must exist side by side, and integrated, with work that is respected in our society, and it should have a meaningful relationship to work.

A leading American sociologist of the late 19th century, Thorstein Veblen, showed how, throughout history, ruling classes emerged that identified themselves sharply through the possession and use of leisure. In his major work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, he points out that in Europe during the feudal and Renaissance periods and finally during the industrial age, the possession and visible use of leisure became the hallmark of the upper class. Veblen attacks the “idle rich”; he sees leisure as a complete way of life for the privileged class, regarding them as exploiters who lived on the toil of others. He coined the phrase “conspicuous consumption” to describe their way of life throughout history. This theory is dated because of the rise of greater working-class leisure and because many members of extremely wealthy families work actively in business, politics, or other demanding professions.

To some degree, however, Veblen’s analysis is still relevant. The wealthy or privileged class in modern society continues to engage in a wide variety of expensive, prestigious, and sometimes decadent leisure activities even though its members may not have an immense amount of free time. They tend to travel widely, entertain, patronize the arts, and engage in exclusive and high-status pastimes. Recent scholars have characterized contemporary leisure in Western cultures as consumerist and motivated by the pursuit of diversionary experiences that can be purchased. Ramsey expresses the following critique of consumerist leisure:

So the nasty face of consumerist leisure expresses acquisitiveness, possessiveness, what the ancient Greeks called *plenoxia*: the desire for more than one’s appropriate share. . . . The paradox around obligation-free leisure time is the drive quality, the compulsions and obsessions around purchase and use, to which many people are vulnerable due to the sheer vastness and success and ease of consumerism.<sup>20</sup>

We can also learn about historical perspectives about leisure from non-Western civilizations. Both Taoism and Confucianism developed around the same time as the philosophers we discussed from ancient Greece, in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The ancient writings from these two systems of thinking both contained insights about leisure-like concepts and both have strong influences on many Eastern cultures today.

For example, a primary figure in the development of Taoism was Chuang Tzu (369–286 BCE). In his writings, he encouraged withdrawing from world affairs and reconnecting

with nature. In doing so, he believed that people could live more authentically. Chuang Tzu also talked about the great use in seemingly useless things.<sup>21</sup> His writings emphasized living a leisurely lifestyle and finding happiness in being completely unoccupied.<sup>19</sup> Kong Tzu (known in the West as Confucius; 551–479 BCE), the founder of Confucianism, also included in his writings insights about leisure-like concepts. He emphasized the value of striving for a life of leisure. He wrote about a need for both a free and leisurely mind and care for people and the nation. Indeed, he postulated that one can only obtain a true leisurely lifestyle if the nation is governed well; if it is, then everyone could live such a life.<sup>21</sup>

Confucianism and Taoism both influenced a later Chinese scholar, Wen Zhuenheng (1585–1645). Passages of

his *Zhang Wu Zhi (Treatise on Superfluous Things)* describe the leisure thoughts and interests of the Chinese literati (the educated class of China between the 17th and early 20th centuries). In this work, he proposed that leisure involved withdrawing from society, escaping mainstream ideology, and countering national politics. By refusing involvement in government and retiring to the countryside, the literati avoided being under control of the centralized government, allowing them freedom, calm, and happiness. Leisure activities like playing the ancient instrument Guqin, drinking tea, and appreciating painting and calligraphy provide comfort and reflect interests of individuals. Like Veblen, Wen Zhuenheng cautioned against extravagance in the leisure life of the literati.<sup>20</sup>



## LEISURE-LIKE CONCEPTS IN CONFUCIUS'S *THE ANALECTS*

*The Analects* represent a collection of passages that tell of the teachings and experiences of Confucius and his disciples. The work was compiled after the death of Confucius by his disciples and is considered one of the core texts of Confucianism. It also offers a classic passage that has been associated with the concept of leisure. In this passage, the Master (Confucius) is asking four of his disciples what their deepest wish would be. The wish expressed by Dian is the one scholars point to as reflecting notions of leisure. Give the passage a read:

Zi Lu (You), Zi Xi (Qiu), Zan You (Chi), and Gong Xihua (Dian) were sitting with the Master. Confucius said, "Although I am a day or so older than you fellows, forget about it for the time being. You are all always saying: 'Our talents are unrecognized.' Suppose your abilities were fully acknowledged. What would you do then?"

Zi Lu jumped to reply first, saying: "I would like to be in the position of the charge of a thousand-carriage state (a relatively small state) which was being threatened by the armies of the surrounding larger states, and suffering from crop failure. If I were in this position, within three years my people would be fearless and know how to take care of themselves."

Confucius laughed at him.

He turned to Qiu and said, "What about you?"

Qiu said, "Let me have the government of a territory of 60 to 70 *li*, or maybe 50 to 60 *li*, for three years, and the people would have all they need. As for handling the affairs of ritual and music, I would seek the services of a noble man."

"Chi, what about you?"

Chi said, "I cannot say I am capable of what the other two have proposed, though I would like to work toward it. At the services at the ancestral hall, or at the audiences with the Prince, I would like to serve as a minor assistant, dressed in the ceremonial gown and cap."

"Dian, what about you?"

Dian set his lute down with its strings still ringing, and stood up. "What I would like to do," he said, "is quite different from these three." The Master said, "What harm can there be? Please speak as the others have."

Dian said, "At the height of spring, all decked out in spring clothes, I would like to take five or six young men, and six or seven youngsters to go for a swim in the Yi river, enjoying the cool breeze at the Rain Dance Festival, and make our way back home, singing."

Confucius sighed, and said, "Ah, lovely. I am with you, Dian."<sup>22</sup>

### Questions to Consider

1. What connections do you see between Dian's wish and the concept of leisure?
2. How is the concept of leisure in Dian's wish similar to your own ideas about leisure? Different?

## CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS OF LEISURE

Now that we've explored some of the historical perspectives about leisure, let's delve into current definitions of leisure. As we discuss these definitions, be on the lookout for hints about how the historical perspectives we just explored have affected our current understandings of the concept of leisure. As with the definitions of play and recreation, narrowing leisure down to one definition is extremely difficult. Indeed, some leisure scholars argue that leisure is a concept that defies definition! However, if we as leisure-services professionals are going to advocate for the value of our field, we must be able to offer a definition of this primary concept. The literature about leisure does contain some common themes that help us to understand how we might go about defining leisure today. These themes can be organized into two categories: objective and subjective definitions of leisure. Walker, Kleiber, and Mannell offered this method of categorizing leisure phenomena.<sup>23</sup> The definitions in the objective category (leisure as time, leisure as activity, and leisure as setting) describe what, when, and how people do leisure whereas the subjective category (leisure as spiritual expression and leisure as state of mind) describes what people think and feel before, during, and after experiencing leisure. We will explore both categories before offering a working definition of leisure.

### Objective Definitions of Leisure

**Leisure as Discretionary Time.** The most common approach to defining leisure is to regard it as unobligated or discretionary time. Discretionary time is time that is not used for work obligations and personal maintenance. This view of leisure sees it essentially as time that is free from work or from such work-related responsibilities as travel, study, or social involvements based on work. It also excludes time devoted to essential life-maintenance activities, such as sleep, eating, and personal care. Its most important characteristic is that it lacks a sense of obligation or compulsion. This approach to defining leisure is most popular among economists or sociologists, who are particularly concerned with trends in the economic and industrial life of the nation. Other scholars, including feminists, have found this definition useful in the study of time constraints faced by working adults in contemporary society.

Although this definition appears to be convenient and largely a matter of arithmetic (subtracting work and other obligated tasks from the 24 hours that are available each day and coming out with a block of time that can be called leisure), it has some built-in complexities. For example, is it possible to say that any time is totally free of obligation or compulsion or that any form of leisure is totally without some extrinsic purpose? Is it also possible to say that all unobligated time is intrinsically rewarding and possesses

the positive qualities typically associated with leisure? For example, some uses of free time that are not clearly work or paid for as work may contribute to success at work. A person may read books or articles related to work, attend evening classes that contribute to work competence, invite guests to a party because of work associations, or join a country club because of its value in establishing business contacts or promoting sales. Within community life, those nonwork occupations that have a degree of obligation about them—such as serving on a school board or as an unpaid member of a town council—may also be viewed as part of a person's civic responsibility.

The strict view of leisure as time that lacks any obligation or compulsion is suspect. If one chooses to raise dogs as a hobby or to play an instrument in an orchestra, one begins to assume a system of routines, schedules, and commitments to others. When this happens one has to question if it is really leisure by this definition of unobligated time. This dichotomy between unobligated leisure time and obligated nonleisure time becomes even more suspect when we look outside of Western cultures. For example, when Iwasaki, Bartlett, Gottleib, and Hall conducted interviews with urban-dwelling Aboriginal people in Canada, they found that those participants did not categorize leisure as something separate from other aspects of their lives or completely free of obligation. Instead, they reported that the times they would label as leisure-like, including family, friend, and relationship pursuits, helping people in the community, and spiritual and cultural activities, were enjoyable and meaningful ways to live their culture throughout their everyday lives. Many of the examples they shared that were leisure-like simply did not follow the notions of leisure as unobligated time and nonleisure as obligated time.<sup>24</sup>

**Leisure as Activity.** Another common understanding of leisure is that it is activity in which people engage during their free time or nonwork activities. Obviously, this concept of leisure is closely linked to the idea of recreation because it involves the way in which free time is used for activity purposes. Early writers on recreation stressed the importance of activity; for example, Jay B. Nash urged that the proactive act be thought of as an active, "doing" experience. Recuperation through play, he wrote, isn't wholly relegated to inertia—doing nothing—but is gained through action.

For many individuals, Nash's view of leisure would be too confining. They would view relatively passive activities, such as reading a book, going to a museum, watching a film, or even dozing in a hammock or daydreaming, to be appropriate leisure pursuits, along with forms of active play.

Feminist scholars have criticized conceptualizations of leisure as activity as irrelevant for many women whose everyday life experiences cannot be easily categorized into a



work/leisure dichotomy. For example, when conducting research with women in Uganda, Adams et al. found that the ways that those women described their leisure-like experiences confirmed that we cannot discount activities that are strenuous or that have productive outcomes as possibilities for leisure, particularly for women who carry a large proportion of the burden of child-rearing and home maintenance.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, definitions of leisure as activity do not accommodate individual perceptions about particular activities. Some individuals may view preparing a meal as a pleasurable activity of self-expression, whereas others view the activity as a monotonous, domestic obligation. In response to this criticism, contemporary scholars who study leisure as activity are primarily concerned with the outcomes of a particular activity rather than the activity itself.

**Leisure as Setting or Place.** Closely related to, and sometimes hard to separate from, the notion of leisure as activity, is the concept of defining leisure based on the setting in which it occurs. We can probably all think about typical “venues” where leisure-type activities or experiences often occur such as recreation facilities, arenas, fields, outdoor spaces, parks, and so on. The setting, or environment, can have important impacts on people’s experiences in relation to leisure. And such settings can take on important personal meanings for people in themselves, becoming places of meaning that people become attached to or identify with. Having acknowledged those realities, we can see that defining leisure strictly by the setting can become problematic, particularly when we consider that different people have different amounts of access to traditional leisure settings.

### Subjective Definitions of Leisure

**Leisure as Spiritual Expression.** Another way of conceptualizing leisure today sees it in terms of its contribution to spiritual expression or religious values. Newly founded faith-based social welfare organizations in the late 19th century were a driving force behind the growth of public and philanthropic leisure services during that time. During the early decades of the 20th century, play and recreation were often referred to as uplifting or holy kinds of human experiences.

A more modern approach to spirituality moved beyond religion to an inner peace, understanding of the values that drive a person, and the meaning people assign to their lives. Leisure’s connection to spirituality may not seem immediately obvious. The most commonly cited spiritual leisure pursuits are outdoor and nature activities. Walking through the woods, sitting on the bank of a creek, or paddling a canoe across a calm lake are means to spirituality for some. Others may prefer meditation, yoga, or other relaxation and contemplative exercises.

**Leisure as a State of Mind.** The final concept of leisure places the emphasis on the role of leisure involvement in helping the individual achieve personal fulfillment and self-enrichment. Often this definition of leisure is related to the perceived freedom of the activity. Neulinger writes:

To leisure means to be engaged in an activity performed for its own sake, to do something which gives one pleasure and satisfaction, which involves one to the very core of one’s being. To leisure means to be oneself, to express one’s talents, one’s capacities, one’s potentials.<sup>26</sup>

This concept of leisure implies a mental experience that is holistic, in the sense that one’s view of life is not sharply fragmented into a number of spheres such as family activities, religion, work, and free time. Instead, all such involvements are seen as potentially providing a leisure experience in which the individual explores their capabilities, develops enriching experiences with others, and seeks “self-actualization” in the sense of being creative, involved, expressive, and fully alive.

In Western concepts of leisure as a state of mind, this definition places great emphasis on the need for perceived freedom. Recognizing the fact that some constraints always exist, Godbey defines leisure in the following way:

Leisure is living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces of one’s culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internal compulsion in ways which are personally pleasing and intuitively worthwhile.<sup>27</sup>

Such contemporary leisure theorists stress the need for the true leisure experience to yield a sense of total freedom and absence from compulsion of any kind. Realistically, however, there are many situations in which individuals are pressured to participate or in which the activity’s structure diminishes their sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation.

Recent investigations into leisure-like concepts in non-Western cultures has also illustrated that what may be the most important factors in the “leisure state of mind” may diverge from Western scholars’ emphasis on perceived freedom. For example, Chinese in mainland China may prioritize a sense of belonging more than perceived freedom.<sup>28</sup> For Ugandan women, perceived choice was most defining:

Rather than being defined by non-obligated time, in many cases, leisure was a mental time-space where Ugandan women experienced personal choice, achievement, building relationships, a sense of accomplishment, stress relief, and a sense of enjoyment. Both discretionary time and productive time were only considered leisure when women perceived they were engaging by choice.<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of what is the primary emphasis that defines leisure as a state of mind, it seems that the subjective concept of leisure as mental state that happens within

the individual seems to connect across cultures in the limited cross-culture explorations that have happened so far. For example, when surveying what Chinese university students in China and Euro-Canadian university students in Canada defined as leisure and as not leisure, both groups seem to find the subjective definitions, such as leisure as state of mind, to be the most unique to leisure. In other words, these subjective definitions of leisure seemed most essential as these two groups of students sorted through what leisure was to them, in their own cultural terms.<sup>28</sup>

### A WORKING DEFINITION OF LEISURE

Each of the definitions of leisure discussed here has its strengths and its limitations, meaning that if we were to define leisure strictly from one of them, we may miss essential defining factors of leisure. Further, as we've seen, concepts of leisure can not only vary from person to person but also may vary greatly depending on the culture within which an individual is situated. To counter these shortcomings, Gui, Walker, and Harshaw devised what they view as a cross-cultural definition of leisure, based on their research. Their definition says leisure is, "positive mental states (e.g., fun, relaxed, related) experienced through typically unobligated activities (e.g., media use, outdoor recreation, travel, sports) that take place during free time with little time pressure."<sup>28</sup> We will use their definition as the basis for our working definition in this text. Therefore, leisure is a positive mental state individuals experience internally that typically, though does not have to, takes place during unobligated activities and during discretionary time. Leisure-like experiences are often characterized by some combination of perceived freedom, pleasure, belonging, self-growth, and motivation.

## Connecting the Three Major Concepts

Obviously, the three terms discussed in this chapter are closely interrelated. All three concepts involve some discussion of the concept in objective terms (what people do) and in subjective terms (what people think or feel). Of the three, recreation is the concept that seems to be most related to objective terms as it's more defined as activity, whereas play and leisure seem more defined by being a type of mental state. All three concepts tend to be associated with positive feelings or described as beneficial experiences, though all three can involve discomfort in the moment and can produce negative outcomes. All three have been topics of debate in terms of the concept of time, with all three being most likely to occur during people's discretionary time, though both play and leisure can be experienced during work or other nondiscretionary time. All three concepts also have been linked to the

ideas of freedom and motivation. With all three concepts, times when people experience high perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation seem to be most likely to be labeled as play, recreation, and/or leisure, though people may experience structure, compulsion, or constraint in all three. Of the three, play seems to be the concept most defined by intrinsic motivation, carried out for its own purpose. Recreation obviously includes many forms of play, but it also may involve distinctly nonplay-like activities such as traveling, reading, going to museums, and pursuing other cultural or intellectual activities.

There are also clearly things that make each of the three concepts distinct from one another, which we have explored in detail. Beyond what we've already discussed, two further distinctions are important for us to note. First, recreation is the concept that has been most recognized as a distinct social institution or as a practitioner career field. Second, leisure seems to be the most abstract of the three concepts. Although we would be likely to say that participation in recreation may result in people experiencing a leisure state of mind, we might be less likely to say, for example, that leisure results in a recreation state of mind. In this way, it seems that the experience of leisure may be an ideal state to strive for. Leisure also seems to be the experience that can occur across the widest range of life spheres—during work, nonwork, passive activities, active activities, education activities, religious activities, community service...even housework! We have chosen to refer to our broad field in this text as "leisure services" because of these distinctions, though we acknowledge that some of the specific career paths within our field may occur in institutions that do not have leisure as a primary concern, such as the armed forces or business concerns, and in institutions that often provide other social or environmental services.



Volunteers form Adopt-a-Park programs to enhance local parks and build social capital within the community.

Courtesy of Deb Garrahy.



## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

Coming Home

Courtesy of Ania Pathak.

Dance greets me—often literally—like a warm hug from an old friend. It has shaped who I am, how I exist in space and time, and how I connect to others. Dance also appears across cultures and history, creating a sense of taking part in something timeless, fundamentally human, and bigger than oneself.

Specifically, dance gives me presence and connection to myself, others, and the world around me. I find presence and connection to the ground, gravity, momentum; with the space that surrounds me, the sound filling that space, the movement of others; with the moods of the people and music and movement, the culture and history of the dance, and the ambience. Incredibly, dance exists only in the people who do it, emphasizing the role and creation of community and interpersonal connection through shared experience.

Dance brings me into the present, allowing me to escape everything that is not the here and now, cultivating something restorative and meditative. Dancing requires awareness and presence of both my entire body and its surroundings. Aware of space and sound enveloping me, I am present with how they morph as time passes between two beats—creating an acutely present moment void of anything other than existing in harmony with the world around me. Listening to fellow dancers—this feeling keeps many of us coming back. Dance feels like the harmonizing of the human body with both time and space through movement to sound.

This restorative present creates room for reflection, growth, and healing. I am able to process existence and experience. There is room for curiosity. It is play—but in the deeply significant and needed for development and growth kind of way—the way play is fundamental and critical for the healthy development of children. Play that allows for exploration, and facilitates growth, while connecting and synthesizing and processing experience more totally, leaving us better, happier, and more able and ready to both be ourselves and give to the world.

There was always a natural draw to dance for me, an undercurrent that makes itself evident when I look back on my childhood in retrospect. I took ballet when I was 3 or 4, and remember a Christmas gift from those years being an illustrated book of the famous ballet, Giselle. I have wisps of memories of twirling to music at family gatherings, receiving coos and accolades the way only a 4-year-old can elicit when they are truly immersed in experience and freedom of expression that comes with not yet knowing self-consciousness. What a freeing thing to reflect upon and to witness—a child so honestly present in the world they're in, unabashedly swept up by song. What a beautiful simplicity—to lack regard for and capacity to comprehend not just the judgment of others, but the judgment of ourselves. I suspect dance as adults brings us back to this state.

I could say I inherited it. My grandmother was nearly adopted by traveling dancers wanting to develop her talent after they saw her dance as a child in her small Polish village's festival. My great grandparents declined. My big brother ballroom danced competitively in college. And boy, did I look up to him. When he came home from school to visit, he would dance with me, and it felt like magic.

I shared what he taught me in a single high school talent show performance, and then off to college I went. Overhearing a conversation about ballroom in the dorm cafeteria, I sat down with a junior who would found the Michigan State University ballroom dance team that year. I also joined the salsa club because it met in my building, and I had interested friends.

Within a few years, I served as co-president of both those clubs and dabbled in swing dancing. I developed a competitive ballroom partnership, started taking private lessons, grew tremendously as a competitive dancer, and made friends across the Midwest traveling to compete. I was hooked, and poured my heart and soul into it. I danced from 10 p.m. to midnight, 4 nights a week. Then I'd head back to my dorm, finish my homework, and go to bed at 3 a.m. I traveled for private lessons on weekends if we could afford them, taught community lessons, and attended four or five competitions a year. The whole experience taught me dedication and skill and cultivated an insatiable desire to never live without the freedom of flying, unweighted, suspended in time, in harmony with time and space and the character of a dance with another person, to music. It also solidified my love for sharing that with others.

When we graduated our ballroom partnership ended. Missing dancing really wore on me. Transitioning from a dedicated, 5-year, competitive partnership to social dancing was difficult. I always left feeling like no one was my partner and no one danced with me like he did (because they weren't and didn't). But in time, I kept coming back.



## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE (CONTINUED)

I rekindled my love for dance through new dances and techniques: blues and fusion, some west coast swing. I joined a modern dance company for a year. I dived back into salsa, bachata. All while courting zouk and kizomba before I even knew what they were called, exposed to them through videos from people I had danced with in college. I went through an Argentine tango bout, too. And now, I spend most of my time dancing zouk and kizomba, with some bachata, salsa, and Argentine tango.

I feel immense happiness being part of these communities and calling these dances home. They're part of me. They're a refuge, a space for both meditation and play. And play is development, leisure is healing, community is support, and sensory integration is the making of knowledge and meaning and connection. Dance has given me all of that, over my entire lifetime—growth, healing, support, meaning. Now a part of me, dance is no longer a matter of always coming back, but of knowing I'll always have a home.



## BEYOND THE NUTS AND BOLTS: STORIES OF PLAY, RECREATION, AND LEISURE

Throughout the chapter you've read stories from real people about their experiences with play, recreation, and leisure. Now it's your turn to tell your story.

Identify something in your life that you do semi- to very regularly that you would label as play, recreation, leisure, or some combination of those ideas.

Write a short story (500–750 words) that describes your thoughts about the play/recreation/leisure thing you just identified. Here are some questions to help guide your storytelling.

1. When did you start doing the play/recreation/leisure thing (we'll call it "it" for the rest of the questions)? How did you get introduced to "it"?
2. How do you feel when you take part in "it"? Have your feelings evolved over the time you've done "it"?
3. Why do you continue to take part in "it"?
4. How do you feel when you're done taking part in "it"? Is there any carryover of feelings to a later time?

Once you've written your story, analyze it based on what you've just learned about the three concepts.

1. What elements of play, recreation, or leisure do you see reflected in your story?
2. Which of the three concepts would you label your "it" with? Is it more play, recreation, or leisure to you?

Want a chance for your "Beyond the nuts and bolts story" to be published in an upcoming edition of this book? Email your completed story to [Kraus12e@gmail.com](mailto:Kraus12e@gmail.com).

## A Challenge for Readers

Before moving on, we need to return to where we started – Why is a conceptual foundation important for leisure-services professionals? Why should you, as a student aiming for a career in this field, care about these foundational concepts? At the start of the chapter, we provided our own thoughts about how these ideas are useful for professionals in moving past the "nuts and bolts" and consider the "why" of our profession. We've offered you stories throughout the chapter that highlight the "humanness" of play, recreation, and leisure. Though we hope our thoughts are useful for you, ultimately, it's up to each leisure-services professional to determine and articulate their own "why" for what they do. So we offer each of you a challenge here. As you consider all

of the topics in this text, keep this question in the back of your mind: What parts of this text most resonate with you as your personal "why" for wanting to pursue a career in the field of leisure services? Track the things that most resonate with you. Write them down. These items can form the basis for your own "why" of our profession. When we reach the end of the text, we will help you articulate your "why."

In the meantime, the themes that have just been introduced here in this chapter are explored more fully throughout this text, as the historical development of play, recreation, and leisure and the evolution of the present-day leisure-service system are described. Throughout, the social implications of play, recreation, and leisure and the role of leisure-services professionals are fully discussed, along with the challenges that face practitioners in this field in the 21st century.



## SUMMARY

Play, recreation, and leisure represent important foundational concepts that are essential aspects of the overall field of organized leisure services. They have been explored by philosophers, psychologists, historians, educators, and sociologists from ancient civilizations to the present.

Play may best be understood as a form of activity or behavior that is generally nonpurposeful in terms of having serious intended outcomes but that is an important element in the healthy growth of children and in other societal functions. The chapter presents various theories of play, ranging from the classical views of Herbert Spencer to more contemporary concepts that link play to advancing knowledge about brain development.

Recreation is also explored from different perspectives, with a consideration of historical conceptions of recreation and contemporary definitions. The role of recreation as an important contemporary social institution and force in economic life is also discussed.

The concept of leisure is discussed in terms of its historical context in different cultures as well as the primary contemporary definitions of the concept. These contemporary definitions can be categorized into objective (leisure as time, leisure as activity, leisure as setting) and subjective (leisure as spiritual expression and leisure as state of mind).

## QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION OR ESSAY EXAMINATION

1. What parts of this chapter most resonated with you as you develop your personal “why” for wanting to pursue a career in the field of leisure services?  


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2. Read one of the Stories of Play, Recreation, and Leisure in the chapter. Conduct an analysis of the story, answering the following questions: (1) Does the experience the author describe in the story sound most like play, recreation, or leisure to you? Why? (2) Identify what you believe to be the play, recreation, and leisure components of the activity, explaining each of the components.  


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3. If motivation is important in the study of play, recreation, and leisure, explore some of the motivations you identify in leisure participation. How does knowing your motivations for participation in play, recreation, and leisure influence your desire to study the field of leisure services?  


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4. Compare and contrast the early theories and contemporary theories of play. First, identify the commonalities in the theoretical development of play, and second, the differences.  


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5. Discuss the contrasting meanings of play, leisure, and recreation, and show how individually and collectively they overlap and differ from each other in their meanings. Which of the three do you feel is the more useful term as far as public understanding of leisure services is concerned?  


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6. Play is considered by many to be the domain of youth, and yet we see the creation of senior playgrounds, adult sport activities, and participation by adults in more and more recreation activities that could be called “play.” Explain why

play is defined as a youth activity and adults use the term recreation. Are they really that different? Are the motivations similar? Expand on this discussion.

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7. Examine your free time as a student. Do you have more or less free time than you did before college? Explain how your free time has changed. Compare it with your parents' or older siblings' free time and explain the difference. What causes these differences?

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## Chapter 2

# Leisure Motivation

*Mentally healthy people participate in some form of volitional activity to supplement their required daily work . . . Their satisfaction from these activities meets deep-seated psychological demands, quite beyond the superficial rationalization of enjoyment . . . There is considerable scientific evidence that the healthy personality is one who not only plays, but who takes his play seriously. Furthermore, there is also evidence that the inability and unwillingness to play reveals an insecure or disordered aspect of personality.*

*. . . the youngster who gets plenty of exercise . . . is more likely to do better academic work and be freer from tension than his passive, non-athletic roommate . . . Participation in sports relaxes and challenges the student and enables him [sic] to concentrate more intensely.<sup>1</sup>*

*-From the first edition of Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society, published in 1971*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define and provide examples of physical, social, and psychological motivators to leisure.
2. Discuss the utilization of motivators in recreation programming.
3. Explain serious leisure as a unique form of leisure.
4. Define deviant recreation and identify examples of activities that would be classified as deviant recreation.

## Introduction

Having reviewed the foundations of leisure and recreation, we now examine them from personal and social perspectives. This chapter outlines the varied motivations that impel individuals to take part in a wide range of recreational activities. These motivations are examined from the perspective of positive leisure experience, recreation activities that involve extreme risks, and those activities that are considered to be deviant, such as illegal drug use and gambling.

## Motivation: What Is It?

Why do people choose to watch television for hours on end, play competitive sports, or conquer Mount Everest? The reasons are as varied as people are. Recreation enthusiasts derive different qualities from their activities, and these qualities are what drive them to participate. These driving factors are called *motivators*. Motivation can be defined as an internal or external element that moves people toward a behavior. A recreation-related motivator could be the desire to develop soccer skills or to learn about the visual arts.

When discussing motivation at the theoretical level, the names Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan always emerge. They have studied motivation for many years and developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT is a general psychological theory that assumes that “humans are inherently motivated to grow and achieve and will fully commit to and engage in even uninteresting tasks when their meaning and value is understood.” SDT focuses on the intrinsic motivation of the activity and not the extrinsic (defined shortly).<sup>2</sup>

Ryan and Deci outline six different types of motivation on a self-determination continuum that spans from no control over a situation to complete autonomy:

- *Amotivation*: Performance done without any intention of doing so. For example, amotivation is present when a parent takes a child to see a baseball game when the child has no desire or interest in seeing it. The child goes along because he has no choice and it is beyond his control.
- *Extrinsic motivation*: Performance of an activity because of an external force or reward. For example, a professional athlete receives compensation for playing for his or her team. This compensation is an external reward and is most likely one of the driving factors behind the athlete’s participation. Another example of an extrinsic motivator is that of the golfer who plays with a regular foursome and bets \$5 per hole with her friends. If she plays because of the money involved, this is an extrinsic motivator.
- *Introjected motivation*: Performance of an activity to alleviate guilt and anxiety or to enhance ego. Participation occurs in an activity because others

desire that participation and the individual would feel guilty or anxious about letting people down. In terms of enhancing the ego, some participate in activities simply because they can demonstrate their skills to others. A professional athlete may continue playing the sport because of the admiration from the fans when in reality the athlete does not really enjoy playing.

- *Identified motivation*: Performance is done because the individual sees the value in the activity and gets something out of it. This could be building skills or increasing physical fitness. For example, if a person is running to enhance her fitness level and increase weight loss and not for the pure love of running, she is experiencing identified motivation.
- *Integrated motivation*: Performance of an activity matches the individual’s values and desires, yet there are external reasons too. For example, the individual who runs for fitness and weight loss understands the need for physical health and has chosen running as an activity to achieve it.
- *Intrinsic motivation*: Performance of an activity for the behavior itself and the feelings that result from the activity. For example, completing a half-marathon for the first time could lead to a sense of accomplishment and pride in the fact that a goal was reached. These feelings are intrinsic motivators. The half-marathon was done because of the benefits of the activity and not because an external reward was dictating or influencing the person’s behavior. The rewards are internal to the person, and the activity is done for its own sake.<sup>3</sup>

In leisure services, intrinsic motivation is most desired. Ryan and Deci summarize the importance of intrinsic motivation by saying, “Perhaps no single phenomenon reflects the positive potential of human nature as much as intrinsic motivation, the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one’s capacities, to explore, and to learn.”<sup>4</sup> Intrinsic motivation is enhanced and more likely to occur when there is a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy is the freedom to determine your own behavior, to guide your own actions, and to be in control of the situation. Competence occurs when an individual feels capable, skilled, and able to meet an acceptable level of challenge. Feelings of competence result from effective and positive feedback from performance. Last, relatedness is a sense of belonging, security, and connection with others. These three things enhance the likelihood of intrinsic motivation. The following sections look at motivation from a variety of perspectives.

Although there is a plethora of ways to look at motivation, including by activity type, age, and gender, it is important to look at broad motivating factors that relate to leisure preferences. In describing the major areas of human development, behavioral scientists use such terms as *cognitive*

(referring to mental or intellectual development), *affective* (relating to emotional or feeling states), and *psychomotor* (meaning the broad area of motor learning and performance). Because these terms are somewhat narrow in their application, this chapter instead uses the following more familiar terms: (1) *physical*, (2) *social*, (3) *psychological*, and (4) *emotional*. Most, if not all, motivators of leisure participation can fit into one or more of these four categories.

## Physical Motivators

Active recreational pursuits such as sport and games, dance, and even such moderate forms of exercise as walking or gardening have significant positive effects on physical development and health. The value of such activities obviously will vary according to the age and developmental needs of the participants. For children and youth, the major need is to promote healthy structural growth, fitness, endurance, and the acquisition of physical qualities and skills. It is essential



Youth baseball serves as a physical motivator where health, wellness, and other physical qualities are gained.

© Creatas/Thinkstock/Getty.

that children learn the importance of fitness and develop habits of participation in physical recreation that will serve them in later life. This is particularly important in an era of electronic games, labor-saving devices, and readily available transportation, all of which save time and physical effort but encourage a sedentary way of life.

Physical motivators can best be summarized as control of obesity and preserving cardiovascular health. Although each is discussed separately, they are intertwined. Most of what drives people who are motivated by the physical aspects of leisure is achieving wellness. A means to wellness is cardiovascular health and reduced obesity. Society is changing and starting to realize how important an active lifestyle is, and parks and recreation play an active role in this.

## Control of Obesity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines overweight and obesity in terms of body mass index (BMI). BMI is a calculation of height and weight. Table 2-1 demonstrates the level of BMI in an adult 5'9".

BMI for children is calculated a bit differently and takes into account age- and sex-specific percentiles. However, as a measurement of obesity, BMI has its critics as it can incorrectly flag people who are muscular as overweight and it can result in “normal” scores for people who carry excess weight in body areas that are more risky. For this reason, other key measures of weight and health risk include waist circumference as well as risk factors including high blood pressure, high-density lipoprotein (HDL; good) cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL; bad) cholesterol, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood sugar, high triglycerides, family history of heart disease, smoking, and physical inactivity.<sup>5</sup> Scientists agree that physical activity plays a major role in weight control. Obesity among American adults has grown steadily and is now a serious health problem in this country as well as in Canada. Nearly 72% of the U.S. population is overweight, and of those the percentage considered obese is

**TABLE 2-1** Sample Adult BMI Chart

Height	Weight Range (lbs)	BMI	Considered
5' 9"	124 or less	Less than 18.5	Underweight
	125–168	18.5–24.9	Healthy weight
	169–202	25.0–29.9	Overweight
	203 or more	30 or higher	Obese

Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Defining adult overweight and obesity*. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/defining.html>



approaching 40%. Children are not exempt from this weight problem because one in three children is considered overweight and 18.5% of these children are obese.<sup>6</sup> In Canada 61% of adults are overweight or obese with almost 27% classified as obese while 12% of children and youth are classified as obese.<sup>7</sup>

Not only is there a difference in obesity rates based on age, but race and geography also show differences. The obesity rate among Hispanic people is 47%, followed by non-Hispanic black people at 46.8%, non-Hispanic white people at 37.9%, and non-Hispanic Asian people at 12.7%.<sup>8</sup> The states with the highest percentage of population (greater than or equal to 35% of the population) who are overweight or obese include North Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, and Kentucky. The healthiest states with 20% to less than 34% of the population overweight or obese are Colorado, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia. In general, the states in the south have a tendency to be fattest, and the states in the West and Northeast are the slimmest.<sup>9</sup>

The main reason for obesity is inactivity. In 2018, only a small percentage over half (53.3%) of Americans aged 18 to 64 met the 2008 federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity, and only 23.2% of them met the guidelines for aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening activity.<sup>10</sup> Although these numbers are not stellar, they are, however, higher than they were in 2015. For both categories, the highest levels of inactivity for every age group were found among women, with 58% of men meeting aerobic activity guidelines compared to 50.5% of women.<sup>11</sup> The numbers are similar when adding muscular strengthening exercise into the mix, with 27.3% of men meeting the guidelines, whereas only 20.7% of women did.<sup>12</sup> Age is also a factor; whereas

64.8% of adults aged 18 to 24 meet aerobic guidelines, the number plummets to 32.3% for those aged 75 and older.<sup>13</sup> The same is true for the combination of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity, with a drop from 34% of those aged 18 to 24 to 10.2% of those aged 75 and older meeting guidelines.<sup>14</sup> With respect to race, 47.6% of Hispanic people met the guidelines for aerobic activity compared to 46.4% of non-Hispanic black people and 57.4% of non-Hispanic white people.<sup>15</sup> The trend is similar for a combination for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity, with 21.3% of Hispanic people meeting guidelines compared to 25.6% of non-Hispanic black people and 20.1% of non-Hispanic white people who met the guidelines.<sup>16</sup> Each of these percentages is also trending in a positive direction since 2015.

Education is also an indicator of regular physical activity levels. As education increases, so does physical activity. People without a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate are least likely to meet federal recommended guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities at only 9%, followed by those with a high school diploma or GED (15.1%) and those with some college or more (28.1%).<sup>17</sup> The benefits of getting regular physical activity are proven for both children and adults, with decreased obesity rates and decreased incidences of coronary disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke. Although many of these diseases do not occur in children, obese children are more likely to become obese adults.

Because of these statistics, public, nonprofit, and commercial agencies have come together to offer programs and education to help people become more active. For example, the Healthy People 2030 Framework, as the next stage of the Healthy People initiative, is dedicated to helping people live longer and have a better quality of life. It

## CASE STUDY: Calculating Your Waist Circumference

Waist circumference helps screen for possible health risks associated with overweight and obesity by taking into consideration where a person carries excess fat. Go to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website ([http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/risk.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/risk.htm)) to calculate your waist circumference as well as your BMI.

### Questions to Consider

- Were you surprised by your waist circumference or BMI? Do you have any risk factors as described by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute?
- What changes, if any, need to be made for you to reduce any risk factors you may currently have?
- If you are at a healthy weight, what do you do on a regular basis to maintain that healthy weight?
- Think about your family, including grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles. Is there a weight issue within the family as a whole? Explain.
- What do you first think when you see an obese younger child?



includes 10 indicators as to what makes a person healthy, and physical activity is woven throughout the overarching goals.<sup>18</sup>

## Preserving Cardiovascular Health

Of all the fitness-related aspects of active recreation, maintaining cardiovascular health may represent the highest priority. Cardiovascular diseases include such things as high blood pressure, heart failure, stroke, and coronary heart disease. Johns Hopkins Medicine reported that approximately 121.5 million people in the United States have cardiovascular disease, causing about 840,678 deaths in 2016. Furthermore, about approximately one-third of cardiovascular disease deaths occur before age 75.<sup>19</sup>

Even with these known statistics, physical inactivity is the main culprit, with a sedentary lifestyle being every bit as bad for one's heart as smoking, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure. The American Heart Association suggests that adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Moderate-intensity aerobic activity increases a person's heart rate and can be accomplished by participating in activities that increase the heart rate in episodes of at least 10 minutes. As such, a person could walk briskly or ride a bike three times a day for 10 minutes each time to achieve the standard. Vigorous-intensity activity, such as running or riding a bicycle at an accelerated speed, causes rapid breathing and a substantial increase in heart rate. It is also recommended that adults

### CASE STUDY: Kids Can Bike!

Knoxville, Tennessee's Childhood Obesity Coalition launched the Kids Can Bike! program in the spring of 2012. The 7-week bicycling program was designed to increase physical activity, teach safe cycling skills, and explore local parks and greenways while having fun. After-school and summer program participants in third–fifth grades were eligible for the program. Once a week, the children were transported to a safe riding location while the City of Knoxville Department of Parks and Recreation transported bicycles to the corresponding location. The Department of Parks and Recreation provided staffing and the University of Tennessee provided student volunteer assistants. The instructors were trained to deliver a safe cycling curriculum that included both physical activity and education components. With a focus on the impact of the program on bicycle knowledge as well as the children's experience with the program, the Obesity Coalition surveyed the children at the beginning and end of the 7-week program with results indicating an increase in knowledge as well as high satisfaction. With a goal of building lifelong bicyclists, the program provided youth with the equipment they needed, a safe location for practicing, as well as a fun program to motivate continuation of what they had learned.

#### Questions to Consider

- What other kinds of physical activity programs for youth are you aware of either in your hometown or surrounding communities? What ages do they target and what activities do they offer?
- Why might a cycling program in particular be a good way to encourage physical activity among all ages?

Data from Chandler, J. L., Flynn, J. I., Bassett, D. R., Aaron, K., Walsh, J., Manual, K., Fernandez, R., Epperson, E., & Zavisca, E. (2015). A community-based after-school program to promote bicycling skills and knowledge: Kids Can Bike! *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 33(4), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPARA-2015-V33-I4-6083>.



## HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020

Healthy People is a governmental organization under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that is dedicated to providing science-based national objectives to improve the health of Americans. This group has published three reports, or 10-year agendas, that give guidelines and strategies for building healthy people and communities—Healthy People 2000, Healthy People 2010, and Healthy People 2020. Healthy People 2020 strives to:

- Identify nationwide health improvement priorities.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of the determinants of health, disease, and disability, and the opportunities for progress.
- Provide measurable objectives and goals that are applicable at the national, state, and local levels.
- Engage multiple sectors to take actions to strengthen policies and improve practices that are driven by the best available evidence and knowledge.
- Identify critical research, evaluation, and data collection needs.

Data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). *About Healthy People*. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/about/default.aspx>



## NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five times per week as well as training each major muscle group 2 or 3 days each week through resistance training. However, it likely takes more than the minimum activity levels to facilitate weight loss or weight maintenance.

select activities that will increase muscle strength and endurance at least twice per week.

In 2018, just over half (53.3%) of Americans aged 18 and older met the guidelines for aerobic activity and 23.2% for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.<sup>20</sup>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends children aged 6 years and older should get at least 1 hour a day of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity. The American Heart Association lowers this age to 2 years and older. Three days per week a child should do activities that are muscle strengthening, and another 3 days should include activities that are bone strengthening. Muscle-strengthening activities work the major muscle groups such as the legs, arms, and chest. These can include rope climbing, tree climbing, swinging, climbing walls, or cross-country skiing. Bone-strengthening activities put a force on the bones and help them grow and strengthen through impact with the ground. Bone-strengthening activities include such things as hopping, skipping, jumping, running, volleyball, and gymnastics.<sup>21</sup>

However, recent research involving thousands of men and women indicates that even moderate forms of exercise, including such activities as walking, stair climbing, gardening, and housework, have a beneficial long-term effect on one's health. Although high-intensity, pulse-pounding workouts yield the most dramatic benefits, more modest forms of exercise do yield significant benefits. Beyond these findings, other research demonstrates that regular exercise reduces the incidence of other diseases such as diabetes, colon cancer among men and breast and uterine cancer among women, stress, osteoporosis, and other serious illnesses.

Although there is a plethora of reasons why people should be physically active and the implications of not being active are widely known, the obesity rate is still quite high. A line of research on the constraints to physical activities demonstrates some of the reasons why. Constraints are things that keep people from participating in leisure activities or participating as much as they would like or that compromise the quality of participation. A few findings that researchers uncovered about physical activity suggest the following:

- The healthier a person is, the less likely that person will find reasons not to participate in physical activity.<sup>22</sup>
- The more people see the benefits of being physically active, the more likely they are to choose these types of activities.<sup>23</sup>
- Time, family obligations, and lack of energy are the main reasons people give for not participating in physical activity.<sup>24</sup>
- Enjoyment of an activity is a major predictor of selecting an activity, including sedentary activities.<sup>25</sup>
- Cost, work obligations, time, and other priorities diminish the likelihood of participating in physical activity.<sup>26</sup>
- An increased preference for sedentary activities has been found among children who are overweight or obese.<sup>27</sup>

Given all of this, the most effective forms of physical activity are those that are most enjoyable to different people. The challenge comes with those who prefer sedentary over physical activities.

If people are motivated to participate in parks and recreation activities based on physical motivators, then there are plenty of opportunities to be found. More and more employers have fitness facilities, offer discounted memberships at local clubs, or give paid time off for employees to participate in fitness activities. Organizations such as the Y, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), local parks and recreation agencies, and hospitals all provide activities to get people moving. Even the travel industry is trying to help. Seeing the value of health and fitness, the travel industry is taking action by making health easier for guests. Many hotels offer more healthy options on room service menus, but more important, they are catering to the health conscious and expanding beyond the typical fitness facility with a half dozen pieces of equipment. For example, Omni Hotels brings a workout kit to the guest's hotel room. The Get Fit Kit arrives in a canvas bag and includes a floor mat, dumbbells, exercise bands, and a workout booklet. The Hilton McLean Tysons Corner and the Hilton San Francisco Union Square have yoga and cardio rooms where guests can stay. These rooms have a king-sized bed and the equipment needed to work out. Other hotels are offering boot camp classes daily.<sup>28</sup>

## Social Motivators

The need to be part of a social group and to have friends who provide companionship, support, and intimacy is at the heart of much recreational involvement. It helps to explain why people join sororities, fraternities, or other social clubs, sports leagues, tour groups, or other settings where new acquaintances and potential friends may be met. It is an underlying element in sport in terms of the friendships and bonds that are formed among team members. There are a number of specific social motivators that must be mentioned, including being with others, reducing loneliness, and developing social norms among people.

### Being with Others and Reducing Loneliness

Many adults today find their primary social contacts and interpersonal relationships not in their work lives but in



Building social relationships through leisure helps reduce loneliness.

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voluntary group associations during leisure hours. Even in the relatively free environment of outdoor recreation, where people hike, camp, or explore the wilderness in ways of their own choosing, interaction among participants is a key element in the experience. Only 2% of all leisure activities are done alone. This indicates that people like to participate in activities with others.

Social contact, friendship, or intimacy with others is key to avoiding loneliness. Loneliness is a widespread phenomenon among all ages. Typically, as many as three-quarters of all college students report being lonely during their first term away from home. As adults age, they begin to experience increased loneliness as significant others and friends begin to pass away and children leave home. Loneliness can have unpleasant and even life-threatening consequences and often is directly linked to depression, obesity, high blood pressure, and heart problems.<sup>29</sup>

Involvement in recreation activities with others can alleviate feelings of loneliness. People can join the Y, YWCA, their local recreation center, or take classes at their local parks and recreation department where they can learn new skills or exercise while also meeting others who enjoy these same activities. Keep in mind, there is a difference between loneliness and solitude. Russell suggests that time spent alone is an important part of our lives and can be a much desired state. People participate in certain activities to reduce loneliness, but they also do things to escape or focus totally on themselves such as the case with solitude.<sup>30</sup>

### Social Norms

Clearly, different types of recreation groups and programs impose different sets of social norms, roles, and relationships that participants must learn to accept and that contribute to their own social development. For children, play groups offer a realistic training ground for developing cooperative, competitive, and social skills. Through group participation, children learn to interact with others, to accept group rules and wishes, and, when necessary, to subordinate their own views or desires to those of the group. They learn to give and take, to assume leadership or follow the leadership of others, and to work effectively as part of a team.



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND SOCIALIZING

In a survey of 140,000 Americans, it was found that people are happiest when they spend 6 to 7 hours per day socializing. People who are alone all day are least happy and experience higher levels of stress than those who are more social. Furthermore, there is a weekend effect where people experience more happiness and less stress than during the week.