

CHAPTER 1

RECREATION AND LEISURE

The Current Scene



A phone call is how the excitement all started. We made the decision to attend the NASCAR race in Las Vegas for the sixth year in a row. What is it that keeps drawing us back to this fun-packed weekend? Maybe it is the thrill of being involved in such an awesome event that truly puts the pedal to the metal. Preparing to get to a NASCAR race is just as exciting as being at the race. We go to dinner with the friends who are going with us at least once a month prior to the weekend of the race. The discussions we have about what we are going to do and how we are going to get there keeps the excitement alive. As the weekend gets closer and closer, our anticipation grows. The weekend before the race, we go to dinner one more time and finalize all of the weekend's plans. When we get to the race weekend, our anticipation is overwhelming. The behind-the-scenes action at the race is incredible. There is a carnival atmosphere behind the scenes that fans get to experience only when attending a race. You walk through the souvenir area and see all sorts of crazy items. In addition, there are over 20 NASCAR sponsors promoting their products from oil, to power tools, to home improvement stores. You walk through this carnival-like atmosphere and get caught up in the excitement because there are so many promotions and free goodies to take home. If you are lucky enough to get into the pits, this brings a whole different level of understanding and emotions. Going through the pits gets you close to the action of the race. It's amazing to see these pit crews make a simple adjustment on the race car simply to get it to go 1/10 of a second faster. You get caught up in their excitement and determination to win the race. In this sport, the drivers are incredible people; they truly believe that the fans are important to their success. When you walk through the pits and see your favorite driver, your emotions run high and you are on a natural high.

When you attend a NASCAR race and you have never been to one before, you get the real sense of the camaraderie among the fans. People from all walks of life are there, and have come together to watch this great sport. Your driver may not win the race, but the competition among the fans during the race keeps your level of adrenaline high. (One year we sat by a Jeff Gordon fan at a race. This fan was hilarious to watch as he showed so much emotion in his body language as Gordon was doing well—and then crashed.) It's fun to watch people interact as they talk about their favorite drivers. A local race track does not have the level of excitement as a NASCAR race does. It's exciting to meet people from all over the world. We are all there for one reason: to see a great race and experience the fun.



INTRODUCTION

Recreation and leisure have multiple meanings based on individual perceptions. Recreation, from an individual perspective, involves, as an example, watching television, attending an opera, base jumping, mowing the lawn, taking your children to the zoo, playing checkers, downloading music, writing a book, an evening on the town, or whatever one chooses to make it. Theorists even struggle to agree on what to call these types of experiences. Is it recreation, leisure, free time, available time, creativity, selfishness, or hedonism? One's own perceptions are so important in the defining of leisure and recreation that researchers continue to argue its meaning to society, individuals, and culture. However, as this book 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, recreation constitutes a major force in our national and local economies and is responsible for millions of jobs in such varied fields as government, travel and tourism, popular entertainment and the arts, health and fitness programs, hobbies, and participatory and spectator sports. Beyond its value as a form of sociability, recreation also provides major personal benefits in terms of meeting physical, emotional, philosophical, 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 in their leisure help to shape the character and well-being of families, communities, and society at large.

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

VARIED VIEWS OF RECREATION AND LEISURE

For some, recreation means the network of public agencies that provide such facilities as parks, playgrounds, aquatic centers, sports fields, and community centers in thousands of cities, towns, counties, and park districts today. They may view these facilities as an outlet for the young or a means of achieving family togetherness or pursuing interesting hobbies, sports, or social activities or as a place for growth and development for all ages.

For others, recreation may be found in a senior center or golden age club, a sheltered workshop for people with mental retardation, or a treatment center for physical rehabilitation.

For others, traveling, whether it be by trailer, motorcoach, airplane, train, or cruise ship, is the preferred mode of recreation. The expansion of the travel and tourism industry has been staggering. Travel clubs have become increasingly popular, with several airlines built around short trips through extended travel. Disney has initiated a line of cruise ships that focuses on family and has extended the idea of travel and tourism yet again.

For a growing generation of young people, recreation and leisure have taken on new meanings of adventure, risk, excitement, and fulfillment as they seek to meld technology and recreation. The idea of recreation participation may not include any physical activity but focus instead on Internet games, downloading or sharing music, instant messaging, and new ventures we have yet to see or understand. The activity may be as dissimilar as sitting in front of a computer screen to being involved in extreme activities such as skateboarding on a Bob Burnquist–designed and built 360-foot skateboard ramp with a 70-foot gap that must be negotiated to safely complete the experience. It may involve participation in ESPN's X-Games. ESPN has defined extreme sports through sponsorship and promotion and includes activities such as in-line skating, BMX racing, snow sports including snowboards and skiing, surfing, streetball, and motorcycles.

Environmentalists may be chiefly concerned about the impact of outdoor forms of traditional and emerging play on our natural surroundings—the forests, mountains, rivers, and lakes that are the national heritage of all Americans.

Without question, recreation and leisure are all of these things. They represent a potentially rewarding and important form of human experience and constitute a major aspect of economic development and government responsibility today. It is important to recognize that this is not a new development. Recreation and leisure are concepts



■ *Families enjoy recreation activities in community settings.*



■ Participants in extreme sport often take what many would call unnecessary risks.

that have fascinated humankind since the golden age of ancient Athens. Varied forms of play have been condemned and suppressed in some societies and highly valued and encouraged in others.

Today, for the first time, there is almost universal acceptance of the value of recreation and leisure. As a consequence, government at every level in the United States has accepted responsibility for providing or assisting leisure opportunities through extensive recreation and park systems, tourism support systems, and sport facilities and complexes.

Diversity in Participation

Often we tend to think of recreation primarily as participation in sports and games or in social activities and to ignore other forms of play. However, recreation includes an extremely broad range of leisure pursuits, including travel and tourism, cultural entertainment or participation in the arts, hobbies, membership in social clubs or interest groups, nature-related activities such

as camping or hunting and fishing, attendance at parties or other special events, and fitness activities.

Recreation may be enjoyed along with thousands of other participants or spectators or may be an intensely solitary experience. It may be highly strenuous and physically demanding or may be primarily a cerebral activity. It may represent a lifetime of interest and involvement or may consist of a single, isolated experience.

Motivations for Recreational Participation

In addition to the varied forms that recreation may take, it also meets a wide range of individual needs and interests. Although later chapters in this text will describe play motivations and outcomes in fuller detail, they can be summarized as follows. Many participants take part in recreation as a form of relaxation and release from work pressures or other tensions. Often they may be passive spectators of entertainment provided by television, movies, or other forms of electronic amusement. However, other significant play motivations are based on the need to express creativity, vent hidden talents, or pursue excellence in varied forms of personal expression.

For some participants, active, competitive recreation may offer a channel for releasing hostility and aggression or for struggling against others or the environment in adventurous, high-risk pursuits. Others enjoy recreation that is highly social and provides the opportunity for making new friends or cooperating with others in group settings.

Other individuals take part in leisure activities that involve community service or that permit them to provide leadership in fraternal or religious organizations. Still others take part in activities that promote health and physical fitness as a primary goal. A steadily growing number of participants enjoy participation in the expanding world of computer-based entertainment and communication, including CD-ROMs, Internet games, video games, and personal digital assistants with games, iPods, the Internet, and much more. Others are deeply involved in forms of culture such as music, drama, dance, literature, and the fine arts. Exploring new environments through travel and tourism or seeking self-discovery or personality enrichment through continuing education or religious activity represent other important leisure drives.

SOCIAL FACTORS PROMOTING THE RECREATION AND PARK MOVEMENT

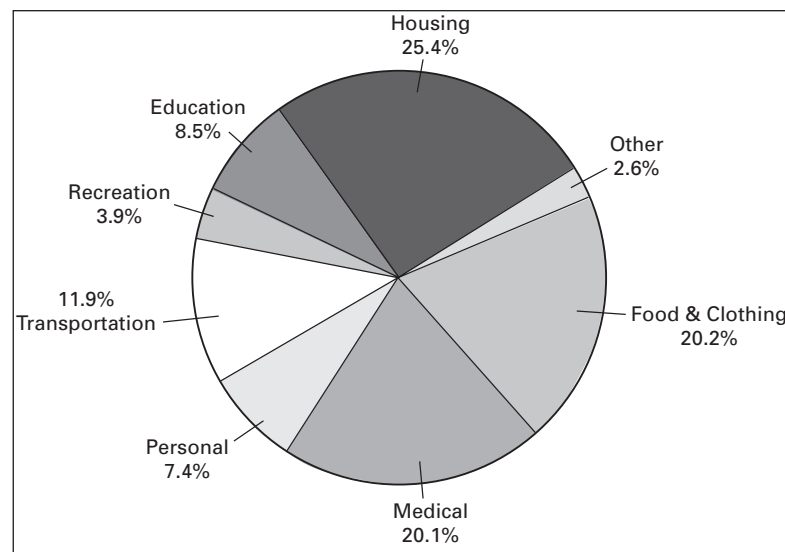
The social factors that helped bring about the growth of recreation and leisure programs and services in the United States stemmed from a variety of causes. Some of these involved changes in the economic structure of society or in dramatically shifting gender values and family relationships. Others were rooted in the kinds of social expectations that emerged as we moved from an essentially rural, agrarian society—where government played a limited role—to a complex industrial, urban culture where government assumed increasingly broad functions. As society moved out of the industrial age and into and through the information age, traditional forms of government support for public parks and recreation, participation patterns in recreation, and types of recreation activities have altered, contracted, and expanded. Ten of these important social trends are described briefly in the following section of this chapter and in fuller detail in later sections.

1. Increase in Discretionary Time The growth of individual discretionary time has long been considered a major influence in the increased participation in recreation activities. Between 1900 and 1990, the growth in leisure time was steady if not spectacular. Freedom from an agrarian economy, increased holidays, paid vacations, and shorter work weeks combined to give people more opportunities for participation in recreation than at any time in history. A debate about the actual availability of free time began in the early 1980s and still continues. As Chapter 4 shows, the availability of free time is changing and may be based on the career, income, family status, or other factors. We do know the 40-hour work week is nonexistent for many. Manufacturing firms frequently mandate 20 or more hours of overtime for their employees. Corporate executives, mid-level managers, supervisors, and service employees experience a 24-7 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) work life. The advent of the digital age has made everyone more available. The introduction of digital devices such as the Blackberry has made e-mail available anywhere, any time. Cellular telephones now are total communication devices with the availability of voice communication, video, Internet access, calendaring, text messaging, and more. Business travelers use their telephones or Blackberry devices until the flight attendants ask everyone to turn off their electronic devices. Vacations no longer provide time away from work, just time away from the office.

The availability of discretionary time is based on age, education, gender, and the presence or absence of a disability. Children and seniors have significantly more discretionary time than do individuals who are in the workforce. Children have less discretion about what they might participate in and seniors' physical, mental or economic condition may limit their ability to participate in recreation activities. Professionals and those with a college education typically work fewer hours than those in nonprofessional jobs, such as the service industry, manufacturing, construction, and the like. Many individuals with severe disabilities have limited opportunities to explore a range of recreation activities, but have long enforced hours of free time.

2. National Affluence—or Not! A second critical factor stemmed from the dramatic growth of the gross national product (GNP) and personal income. Between 1990 and 2004, the GNP more than doubled; personal consumption expenditures almost tripled. During this same period poverty fluctuated between 12.1 and 15 percent of the total U.S. population. There is a growing debate in the country about the presence of poverty in a society that is so blatantly affluent.

Recreation expenditures as shown in Table 1.1 have continued to grow. Three areas have shown strong growth and are related to technology (computers, music, video devices), spectator experiences, and amusement parks or other commercial amusement experiences. Expenditures as a part of total personal consumption (all dollars spent for personal use) represented 6.6 percent of all expenditures in 1985 and in 2003 grew to 8.5 percent. When one recognizes that the Commerce Department's figures do not include hundreds of billions of dollars spent on travel and tourism, gambling, liquor, and less-easily measured forms of amusement or the operational expenses of thousands of public, nonprofit, and private leisure-service agencies, it is apparent that total leisure spending is substantially higher than the amounts shown in the table. The figure below shows the distribution of expenditures for personal consumption in 2003. Recreation represents the largest expenditure of the perceived disposable income and reflects a continuing growth over a 20-year period.



■ Personal consumption expenditures by category, 2003.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2005—Table 658*, (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2005).



In modern, postindustrial society, nonwork time has grown markedly for many individuals. Thanks to advanced mechanical equipment and automated processes in factories, agriculture, and the service fields, productive capacity increased dramatically during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. In effect, the workweek has been cut in half since the early days of the industrial revolution. In addition, more holidays and longer vacations are now taken for granted by most American employees. With improved Social Security benefits and pension plans, as well as medical advances leading to a longer life, many employees today are assured 15 or more years of full-time leisure after retiring from work. Finally, laborsaving devices in and around the home, such as dishwashers, snowblowers and lawnmowers, microwave ovens, and frozen foods, have simplified life's demands considerably. In fact, the term *throwaway society* has become more prevalent in describing the excesses of affluence.

TABLE 1.1

ANNUAL PERSONAL SPENDING ON RECREATION, 1985–2003

Type of Product or Service	1985	1990	1995	2000	2003
Total Recreation Expenditures (billions of dollars)	116.3	290.2	418.1	585.7	660.7
Percentage of total personal consumption	6.6%	7.6%	8.4%	8.7%	8.5%
Books and maps	6.5	16.2	23.2	33.7	38.5
Magazines, newspapers, and sheet music	12	21.6	27.5	35	36.6
Nondurable toys and sport supplies	14.6	32.8	44.4	56.6	60.2
Wheel goods, sports, and photographic equipment	15.6	29.7	39.7	57.6	68
Video and audio products, computer equipment, and musical instruments	19.9	53	81.5	116.6	121.3
Video and audio goods, including musical instruments	n/a	44.1	57.2	72.8	75.2
Computers, peripherals, and software	n/a	8.9	24.3	43.8	46.1
Flowers, seeds, and potted plants	4.7	10.9	14	18	18.8
Admissions to specified spectator amusements	6.7	14.8	19.2	27.3	35.6
Motion picture theaters	2.6	5.1	5.5	8.1	9.9
Legitimate theater and opera and entertainments of nonprofit institutions	1.8	5.2	7.6	9.8	11.6
Spectator sports	2.3	4.5	6.1	9.3	14.1
Clubs and fraternal organizations, except insurance	3.1	13.5	17.4	19	22.1
Commercial participant amusements	9.1	25.2	48.8	75.8	89.2
Parimutuel net receipts	2.3	3.5	3.7	5	5.3
Other (includes lottery receipts, pets, cable TV, film processing, sports camps, video rentals, etc.)	19.4	65.4	93.4	133.9	160.9

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2005—Table 1223* (revised 5 Aug 2004) (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2005). See this source for a fuller explanation of product and service categories.
All numbers, except for the second row (in percent), are in billions of dollars. Hence, 116.3 represents \$116,300,000,000.

Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor At the same time that millions of newly rich families are enjoying what one economist has described as “luxury fever,” there is strong evidence that the middle and lower socioeconomic classes have been left behind. A 2003 report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that between 2000 and 2002 the number of poor people rose to 34.6 million (12.7 percent of the U.S. population) and that those who were poor became poorer. The number of people who had incomes below the poverty line was greater in 2002 than at any time in history.¹

As a result, economists have concluded that the United States is the most economically stratified of nations. While a growing class of millionaires is able to enjoy a host of expensive forms of recreation, those in the nation’s urban ghettos and rural slums lack even minimal resources for needed recreation; a contrast that has been described as “recreation apartheid.”

3. Commodification of Leisure This contrast is heightened by what has been termed the “commodification” of leisure. Increasingly, varied forms of play today are developed in complex, expensive forms by profit-seeking businesses. More and more, giant conglomerates such as Time Warner, Disney, and Viacom have taken over control of huge corporations that run music, television, and movie businesses. These conglomerates also own sports stadiums and professional teams, cruise ships, theme parks, and other leisure operations.

Many elaborate new facilities offering varied forms of recreation are being developed as part of this trend toward commodification. In cities throughout the United States, huge public fitness centers that include aquatic areas, aerobics and dance rooms, and facilities for family play and a host of other activities are being built—often with charges for membership that cost several hundred dollars a year. Glenview, Illinois, operates a 100,000-square-foot community recreation center. The Plainfield, Indiana, Parks and Recreation Department constructed a \$25 million indoor community center with fitness area, family aquatic center (indoor and outdoor), meeting rooms, and much more. Many other recreation centers or programs operated by public recreation and park agencies today require the payment of substantial fees that exclude the poor.

Lippke shared concerns about the commercialization of leisure upon individuals and society.² Citing the concern of commercialization, he suggests individuals “are subtly and not so subtly encouraged to indulge themselves in a consumption binge that, temporarily at least, distracts them from the cares and concerns of everyday life.” The problem lies not with the distraction, but with the use of such leisure-time activities to replace what leisure theorists have called personal development, creativity, and flow. Lippke suggests that the commercialization of leisure promotes a lack of self-development, an increase in the inability of persons to direct their own lives as they become dependent on external stimulators. Third, the effects on social life focus on shallow relationships such as are promoted on today’s reality-based television shows such as *American Idol*, *Fear Factor*, and *Survivor*. The Harris Interactive Poll reports that teens particularly find reality television a common ground for discussions with other teens. In 2006, 70 percent of surveyed teens watched *Fear Factor*, 67 percent watched *American Idol*, and other reality shows fared well.³ Commercialization of recreation has created a competition for everyone to have the same things, or what one author called, “sneer group pressure.” Look at the cell phone marketplace as an example. The ever-increasing “all-in-one” cell phone has captured the market as youth in particular desire the newest

and coolest. Finally, there is a confusion about values and what is important. Advertisers and sellers of commercialization create expectations among potential buyers about believing life should be “filled with glamorous, exciting, or dramatic moments.”⁴

4. Population Trends In October 2006, the U.S. population passed the 300-million mark, making the United States the third most populous nation in the world behind China and India. The steady growth in the population and diversity has increasing impacts on recreation demand and participation.

Another marked influence on leisure programs has been the dramatic diversification, in racial and ethnic terms, that has taken place in the United States. A result of growing waves of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and some third-world regions, often with markedly higher birth rates, the nation’s identity as a primarily white society based heavily on northern European and English traditions is rapidly shifting. Hispanics are now the largest minority in the United States, surpassing African Americans in the 2000 census. The two largest growth minorities in terms of percentage of growth between 1990 and 2000 were Hispanics and Asians.

The aging of Americans has significant implications for recreation participation and delivery. By 2011, the first baby-boomers will be ready for retirement and by 2025, there will be twice as many people over 65 as there will be teenagers. By one estimate, the United States will need 31,000 geriatricians, compared to the 1,000 present in 2004.⁵ This population represents the most financially independent aging group in history. The 55-plus age group controls more than 75 percent of the country’s wealth. This group utilizes their financial resources to remain involved; to engage in travel, sport, and active leisure; and to continue their involvement in family and society. The



■ *Children playing in the urban core frequently have less opportunity for varied recreation experiences.*

new aging population cannot be considered “seniors.” Programs of previous generations of seniors will not work with the new generation. They are already more active, have a more mobile lifestyle, are healthier, have a longer life expectancy, and use technology as a compensation for particular deficiencies, and will do so even more in the future. They are as diverse as any group in society and are changing the way recreation is considered for an aging population.

As later chapters will show, the emphasis in popular culture, sports, and other leisure-related areas reflects these population changes, with African Americans, Hispanics, and, to a lesser degree, Asian Americans playing a far more visible role.

Both in public recreation and park agencies and in major youth-serving organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, and YMCA and YWCA, recreation programming and staffing practices today reflect a strong multicultural emphasis.

5. Where People Live: Urban, Suburb, Exurb History has recorded the decline of rural populations, the growth of cities and industrialization, the growth of suburbs and exurbs, the decline of the inner city, and the simultaneous revitalization of cities and urban areas. In the 1950s, people began to commute into the city. In the 2000s, commuting has become even more of a way of life, but urban residents are as likely to commute to the suburbs to work as suburbanites are to commute to cities’ business centers. Beyond the suburbs are the exurbs, a difficult to define, but easy to describe area. They exist beyond the suburbs in traditionally rural areas, that are now dotted with individual homes on acreage, subdivisions, and may include cities of 50,000 or more people. They are adjacent to large metropolitan areas and their distinctive feature is the residents’ choice of place over people where the primary commonality is the need to commute to work. The exurbs are growing population areas as individuals are more willing to increase travel time for a perceived improved quality of life.

Recreation and park development has been seen as a key factor in promoting the revival of many larger cities, as the wealthy and young professionals have moved into newly rehabilitated or developed residential areas (the process has become known as gentrification). Rundown waterfront or factory areas have been transformed into attractive sites for shopping, sightseeing, cultural activities, and entertainment. Recreation has been stressed as critical to making cities more livable, attracting tourists, and retaining middle-class and wealthy residents. In numerous other communities, public recreation and park departments have constructed new water-play parks, tennis complexes, creative arts centers, marinas, and other recreational facilities. At the same time, there has been a pronounced shift of millions of residents from the older cities of northern and midwestern states to such sunbelt states as Florida, Arizona, and southern California. Millions of older men and women have retired to communities in these states, and many others have moved to them to find jobs in their flourishing economies.

Within each of these population shifts, recreation and leisure play an important role. Many individuals and families place high value on the recreational and cultural opportunities that are available in communities that they are considering moving to, and large corporations regard this factor as an important element with respect to staff recruitment and retention.

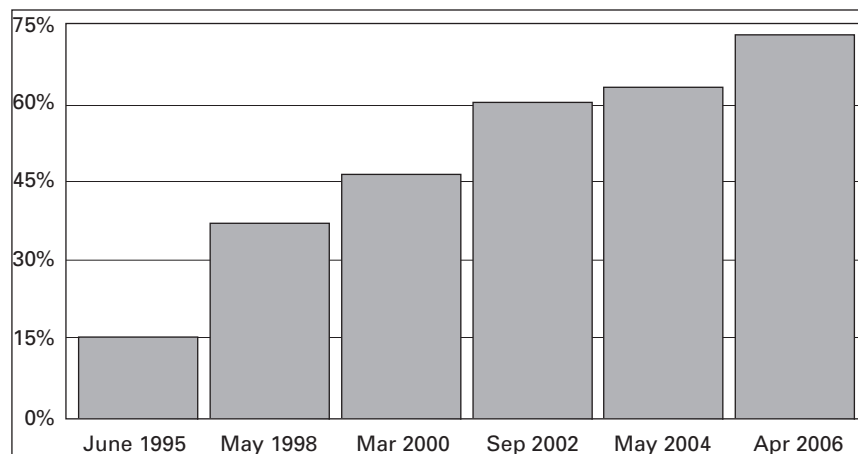
Parks and recreation areas and programs are increasingly important to urban, suburban, and rural residents. Increasing attention is being given to urban recreation and parks as reported by the Urban Institute and the Wallace Foundation.⁶

The “new view” of urban parks calls attention to the broader contributions they can make to the vitality of communities and their residents. These contributions include

- helping youth choose rewarding paths to adulthood by providing programs and opportunities to build physical, intellectual, emotional, and social strength;
- helping new entrants to the workforce find productive jobs by offering decent, entry-level employment opportunities in the community;
- helping community residents improve their health by providing a place to enjoy fresh air and exercise; and
- helping citizens join together to make their communities better, by encouraging them to participate in park planning and management.

6. Influence of Technology Over the past several decades, sophisticated technology has played a key role in providing new forms of play for the American population. Outdoor recreation, for example, makes use of increasingly complex and expensive devices in such activities as skydiving, hang gliding, scuba diving, boating, hunting, fishing, rollerblading, skiing, and snowboarding. Computer dating provides a new form of social contact for single adults, and video games offer interactive competition or exposure to new varieties of play settings and virtual realities.

In 1995, 15 percent of U.S. adults were online. In April 2006, it was over 70 percent and growing at a slow, but steady rate.⁷ The Internet may reflect the most dynamic change in American society in 50 years. The percentage of adults on the Internet has grown dramatically over an 11-year period (Figure 1.2) and is reflective of the influences of technology on daily life. It is the television of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Teens outpace adults as Internet adopters and users. In 2005, 87 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds used the Internet. Eighty-four percent own a computer, cell phone, or personal digital assistant.⁸ The iPod has had a tremendous influence in teens. By 2005, 20 percent of the under-30 population had MP3 players and 11 percent of the over-18



■ Percent of adults on Internet.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project. www.pewinternet.org.

population had MP3 players. Americans are changing the way they work, play, communicate, and think. The most popular television program in 2006 would not make the top 10 in 1975. It is not because television is less popular in 2006, but because of the availability of choice. In 1975, there were four networks, including public television. Today, there are over 200 networks. Technology mixed with affluence has allowed people to have greater choice than at any time in history.

The use of computers and technology, the growth of the Internet, and the availability of instant voice and data communications have become an integral part of travel and tourism, with airlines, cruise ships, resorts, and major parks maintaining Web pages that provide information and expand reservations and vacation choices.

Within every aspect of professional recreation, park, and leisure-service management, computer software has become indispensable in program planning, scheduling, public relations, fiscal and personnel management, and maintaining agency information systems. Home-based recreation has become increasingly dependent on varied forms of electronic entertainment, with television, interactive video games, CD-ROMs, cassette players, and similar devices. Some have speculated that reliance on such gadgetry has become an obsession for many individuals, with retreat into a virtual reality, "cyberworld" environment taking the place of face-to-face social contact with other humans.



■ *Digital music devices, or MP3s, are becoming common among pre-teens, teens, and young adults.*

The idea of the economy of abundance is an example of the influence of the Internet society. In today's technology-based society, Chris Anderson has suggested an economy based on scarcity is in decline. In his book, *The Long Tail*, he shows how the Internet and technology allow business owners to enter marketplaces that were heretofore unavailable or unprofitable. In a society where affluence continues to grow and personal expenditures are growing, consumers are no longer constrained to shopping at the local music store. Instead, they can download millions of songs from Amazon.com, iTunes, Napster, and other Internet music sites. The economy of abundance has grown out of the idea of gathering information across the Internet. It reflects not just the acquisition of goods, but also the acquisition of information. David Hornik states on his blog, "The Economy of Abundance allows business owners to defer choices to the end users. What better way to find out what consumers want than to give them everything and see what they actually buy. That is the paradigm of abundance. Why get your news programmed by CNN.com when you can have your news bubble up from the collective

wisdom of end users at *Newsvine* or *Reddit*? Why get your television programmed by CBS when you can leverage the collective wisdom of the Web to find great shows like *Lonelygirl15* or *Ask a Ninja*? No longer will the success or failure of content be dictated solely by the Economy of Scarcity (e.g., Walmart). Rather, it will be dictated by the will of the consumers, as empowered by the Economy of Abundance.”⁹

7. Recreation’s Contribution to Health and Fitness A key trend continuing in our society is public interest in exercise and physical fitness programs. Realizing that modern life is frequently inactive, sedentary, beset by tensions, and subject to a host of unhealthy habits such as overeating, smoking, and drinking, popular concern developed about improving one’s health, vitality, and appearance through diet and exercise.

Participation in such activities as walking, aerobics, swimming, running and jogging, racquet sports, and similar vigorous pursuits has more than physiological effects. It also has psychological value; those who exercise regularly look and feel better. Experts have concluded that fitness is not a passing phase; the public’s desire to be healthy and physically attractive is supported by continuing publicity, social values, personal vanity, and solid business sense.

Research showed that the most successful fitness programs were likely to be those that provided an ingredient of recreational interest and satisfaction. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recognizes the value of fitness and health and sponsors local involvement in “Step Up to Health: Start in the Parks,” a nationwide fitness program delivered by local park and recreation agencies. Each agency is encouraged to develop fitness programs that encourage employee and community participation. Sandy, Utah, held a sprint triathlon composed of a 400-yard swim, a 9-mile bike ride, and a 5-kilometer run. Columbus, Georgia, sponsors two annual festivals, one in the spring and one in the fall, to encourage fitness in the parks. The Decatur, Illinois, Park District hosted a teen fitness summit. NRPA provides over 60 examples of programs on their website.



Parks provide an excellent location for individuals to improve personal fitness. Healthy People 2010, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, suggests that community parks, greenbelts, walking, bridle, and bicycle paths are key components in improving individual health. Cities can improve the utilization of these areas by locating them close to residential areas, maintaining safe, attractive, and accessible areas, and where they are perceived as part of the community. Building partnerships with other community groups, health care providers, and youth and senior groups all adds to the success of parks and health.

Certain recreational sports, such as youth soccer, volleyball, and ice hockey, have grown in popularity. Among high school boys, football remains the most popular sport, with over one million participants in over 13,000 high schools. Among girls, basketball is the most popular sport, with over 450,000 participants in over 17,000 schools. Sports participation in organized high school athletic programs is at an all-time high for girls and boys. Participation levels have grown at a steady rate for over 30 years. At the same

time, a growing number of state school systems have reduced or eliminated physical education requirements, which means that organized recreation programs represent an even more important means of promoting physical fitness for children and youth.

8. Environmental Concerns As later chapters on the historical development of recreation and leisure will show, the establishment of public recreation programs in the United States was closely linked to the growing number of national, state, and local park systems. National park creation was an outgrowth of the preservation movement and occurred independent of the city parks movement. The recreation movement, while occurring about the same time as the public parks movement, was also independent. The first large city park was New York City's Central Park in the 1850s followed by Yellowstone National Park in 1872. Boston lays claim to the founding of the recreation movement. It has been the systematic and sometimes political additions to the public park and recreation estate at all levels of government that have positively influenced American's environment ethic.

Outdoor recreational activities such as camping, biking, backpacking, boating, hunting, fishing, skiing, and mountain climbing depend heavily on parks, forests, and water areas operated chiefly by public recreation and park agencies. However, the concern of many people regarding the health of the nation's outdoor resources stems from more than the need for outdoor recreation spaces. LaPage and Ranney point out that one of the most powerful sources of America's essential cultural fiber and spirit is the land itself:

The roots of this new nation and its people became the forests and rivers, the deserts and mountains, and the challenges and inspirations they presented, not the ruins of ancient civilizations most other cultures look to for ancestral continuity. Thus, America developed a different attitude and identity.¹⁰



■ *Natural, scenic, and historic areas are part of the recreation estate available to all Americans.*

For such reasons, the environmental movement receives strong support from many recreation advocates and organizations. At the same time, it is recognized that such activities as fishing and hunting are just part of a bigger scene that requires clean—and safe—air and water and wise use of the land.

Growing national concern about the need to protect the environment was buttressed by the 1962 report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. During the following two decades, there was a wave of federal and state legislative action and funding support in the United States that was designed to acquire open space; to protect

imperiled forests, wetlands, and scenic areas; to help endangered species flourish; and to reclaim the nation's wild rivers and trails. This movement was threatened during the early 1980s, when a new administration sought to reduce park and open space funding, eliminate conservation programs and environmental regulations, and subject the outdoors to renewed economic exploitation. In the mid-1990s, and again under the second Bush administration in the early- and mid-2000s, the effort to open protected wilderness areas to increased oil drilling, cattle grazing, lumbering, and other commercial uses gained strong political support.

Organizations such as the nonpartisan League of Conservation Voters, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, and Nature Conservancy have been in the forefront of the continuing battle to protect the nation's natural resources. Numerous outdoor recreation organizations have joined with such groups, and the struggle will clearly continue as an important political issue in the years ahead.

As the world celebrated Earth Day 2000, 30 years after the first Earth Day in 1970, it was clear that North American air was cleaner and its water purer than for many past decades. There was more protected open space in national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas yet there is still cause for concern. Americans are purchasing large inefficient vehicles at a faster rate than ever before. Even as gasoline has hovered around or exceeded \$3.00 per gallon, it does not seem to stem the tide of large auto purchases. While the world is struggling to come to grips with global warming and the potential impacts on the environment, there remain politicians who deny its reality. Americans, in the meantime, are growing away from their traditional environment ethic. Attendance is down at state and national parks, children are not exposed to the natural environment, and campers stay in the parks in their motorhomes and demand electricity, water, sewer, and cable and broadband hookups. Going outdoors is no longer fashionable. America's appreciation of the outdoors and the environment is clearly in jeopardy.



The emergence of managed-care systems with third-party payment by insurance companies that dominate the provision of medical care and rehabilitation has meant that socially oriented services such as therapeutic recreation often receive little support. Too often, hospitals have been forced to cut back their programs sharply or have been overwhelmed by excessive patient loads and limited budgetary support. At some levels, the development of independent intermediate care centers and outpatient rehabilitation centers has met some of these needs.

9. The Changing Family Over the last 30 years, families have changed more than in the previous 200 years. The era of the stay-at-home mother, the single-income source, three or more children, family dinners, church on Sunday, and marriage as a lifetime commitment is disappearing. The nuclear family is as out of date in today's society as the transistor radio. World War II changed the United States as a society. Women experienced a freedom; soldiers coming home from the war had the GI Bill and gained



Although public interest in women's sports continues to be considerably lower than support for boys' and men's sports, there is growing interest in women's tennis, golf, gymnastics, track and field, and similar events on every level of competition. The U.S. women's soccer team won the World Cup in 1999 and fueled girls' participation in the sport. At the college level, Title IX has changed the face of women's sport. More women are participating in sport activities now than at any time in history. For many, increased participation in vigorous athletics and outdoor pastimes is symbolic of the need to overcome the past view of women as fragile, overemotional, or lacking in courage and drive. Outstanding women athletes in particular have helped to create a new image of feminine strength, determination, and self-confidence, which is closely linked to women achieving a higher degree of acceptance in formerly male-restricted fields such as the military, aviation, police and fire departments, law, and medicine.

more education than any generation before them. The 1960s and 1970s saw a change in societal mores, traditional family values, and perceptions. The notion of a traditional family changed with society. Politicians and the conservative religious movements have focused on the decay of the nuclear family, yet the facts show the nuclear family has been in decline for over 40 years. As early as 1960, the traditional nuclear family only comprised 45 percent of American households. The 2000 U.S. Census reported for the first time that less than one-quarter (23.5%) of American households consisted of a married man and woman and one or more of their children.¹¹

Today's families are characterized as traditional nuclear, adoption with no marriage, wedding after the baby, single moms, two dads, two moms, and single dads. David Elkind calls these permeable families: "The permeable family is more fluid, more flexible, and more obviously vulnerable to pressures from outside itself."¹²

Today, less than 25 percent of American households are comprised of a single-wage earner; that means 75 percent of households are dependent on two or more wage earners. This places greater stresses on families, parents, and children. Many fathers are becoming more involved in the lives of their children—from changing diapers to taking time off for sick children. The roles of fathers are in transition because larger numbers of men are indicating a desire to be more nurturing with their children. Mothers always assumed the extra burden of the home, work, and child rearing and are more frequently sharing these duties. Contemporary research suggests effective strategies and positive outcomes for working mothers that strengthen families.

The challenge for recreation and family service agencies is to determine how to serve the new permeable family. Traditional after-school programs may no longer work when mothers expect to pick children up later in the day. Many agencies have gone to extended after-school programs, frequently partnering with schools to mix tutoring and leisure.

10. Maturation of Organized Leisure-Service Field The nature of municipal, state, and federal governments has changed dramatically in the almost 140 years of organized recreation in the United States. Today's city government is markedly different from that of our grandfathers and fathers. Government is more dependent on alternative



■ *Recreation centers are community gathering places for recreation, social activities, health-related opportunities, libraries, and other social services.*

income sources and less reliant on taxes. Public park and recreation agencies have, of necessity, become entrepreneurial. Where few fees once existed, now public agencies are dependent on fees and charges to make up as much as 90 percent of their operating budget. Parks and recreation agencies are hard pressed to serve all of those who either desire or have a need for services. Nonprofit and commercial agencies fill the gap in many instances. In today's rapidly changing demand for different types of leisure activities, public, commercial, and nonprofit organizations strive to respond, but often public and nonprofits do not have the resources, financial capital, or ability to respond. Commercial enterprises typically respond more quickly to what initially may appear as fringe activities such as paintball, skateboarding, laser tag, and the like.

Maturation does not suggest the organized leisure-services field is not changing, but rather that growth in the public and nonprofit sector is constrained by available funds, politics, public interest, and the perceived opportunity for growth. Public and nonprofit agencies have developed an infrastructure of parks, recreation centers, sports fields, cultural centers, and others that become a burden to the agencies to rapidly change. The traditional programming of public and nonprofit agencies remains in place, although there is less of it, and more of the emerging programs, but change is coming slowly. Where communities once built a 50-meter swimming pool, today they build a small to medium waterpark, except when politicians or other influential groups intervene and demand a traditional or old-fashioned approach. The leadership is changing and new, younger leaders are emerging. Values are being reassessed, commitments rethought, demands evaluated, and expectations challenged. Ten major categories of service providers make up the mature leisure-service delivery system:

1. *Public agencies*—federal, state, and local departments of recreation and parks that provide leisure services as a primary function, as well as hundreds of other agencies (such as those concerned with social service, education, special populations, and the armed forces) that offer or assist recreation programs as a secondary responsibility.
2. *Nonprofit organizations*, which are nongovernmental, nonprofit agencies, both sectarian and nonsectarian, serving the public at large or selected elements of it with multiservice programs that often include a substantial element of recreational opportunity. Such organizations include national youth programs such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and the YMCA, YWCA, and YM-YWHA (Young Men's—Young Women's Hebrew Association).
3. *Private-membership organizations*, such as golf, tennis, yacht, athletic, and country clubs, along with a wide range of service clubs and fraternal bodies, that provide recreational and social activities for their own members and in some cases assist community recreation needs as well. Under this heading are the recreation sponsors connected to residence, as in the case of swimming pools, sports or fitness complexes, or clubs attached to leisure villages, apartment or condominium units, or retirement communities.
4. *Commercial recreation enterprises*, including a great variety of privately owned, for-profit businesses, such as ski centers, bowling alleys, laser tag centers, Internet cafes, nightclubs, movie houses or theaters, health spas or fitness centers, dance schools, amusement or theme parks, and other enterprises that provide leisure services.
5. *Employee recreation programs*, which serve those who work for given companies or other employers by providing recreation, often as part of a total personnel benefits package linked to other services concerned with employee health and fitness.
6. *Armed forces recreation*, which, although it is obviously a form of government-sponsored activity, is unique in its setting and purpose. Each of the major branches of the armed forces tends to operate an extensive network of recreation facilities and programs worldwide. In times of national emergency, the demand for these services is even greater.
7. *Campus recreation*, which includes intramural athletics or sports clubs, social activities, trip-and-travel programs, performing arts groups, entertainment, lounges, film series, and numerous other forms of recreation on college and university campuses.
8. *Therapeutic recreation services*, including any type of program or service designed to meet the needs of persons with physical or mental disabilities, individuals with poor health, dependent aging persons, socially deviant persons in correctional facilities or other treatment settings, and similar special groups.
9. *Sports management*, including professional sports, collegiate sports, public parks and recreation, private sport enterprises, youth sports, sports for individuals with disabilities, and the many other forms of sport.
10. *Tourism, and hospitality management*, which involves all of the travel and tourism industry, such as airlines, cruise ships, destination resorts, conference and resort centers, amusement parks, festivals, and the like.



■ *Park employees and rangers are symbols of authority, stability, and safety.*

Need for Professional Leadership

Within each of these fields of specialization, there is a continuing need for qualified professional leadership. Too often, people assume that the task of organizing and conducting recreation programs is a relatively simple one and that “anyone” can do it without specialized training. They do so because they see that many youths and adults in society provide recreational leadership without such training. Volunteer leaders or coaches in the scouting movements, Little League, hospitals, and similar organizations often help run excellent programs.

However, the professional’s assignment within the organized recreation field tends to be far more complex and difficult than that of the typical volunteer leader or coach. It must involve carefully thought-out goals and objectives and often requires sophisticated planning techniques. Reflecting on community needs, wants, and capabilities while balancing demands and resources requires a trained recreation and park professional. Today’s training looks more and more like a business model and less and less like a social justice model.

To pick a dramatic example, in the large-scale commercial recreation enterprises, consider the far-flung Disney theme park operations, including Disneyland in California; Disney World, including Epcot and other attractions in Florida; and other parks in Japan and France. The immense investment that is at stake requires shrewd marketing, management, and creative design approaches. Literally hundreds of millions of dollars are involved in such ventures.

Even when the scope of the program is on a lesser scale, professional management involves such varied tasks as planning and building recreation facilities that may range from golf courses to swimming complexes, supervising leadership and maintenance



■ *Playground equipment in some park settings is in a serious state of disrepair. An example of the challenges of sufficient funding for parks and recreation.*

personnel, carrying out effective public relations campaigns, and assessing public needs and demands. Often it will require working closely with boards or commissions, advisory groups, or civic officials; it may also involve effective liaison with other levels of government.

In the case of therapeutic programs that serve persons with disabilities, the recreation specialist may need an intensive knowledge of illness and its effects, medical terminology, anatomy, kinesiology, and psychopathology. Those working with the aging must have a solid understanding of geriatrics and gerontology and should be aware of the varied roles played by other community agencies that work with older populations.

On all levels, recreation professionals should be familiar with a wide range of activities and their potential values and outcomes. They should possess the skills needed for direct leadership and supervision, understanding and controlling group dynamics, assessing patients or clients, and have the ability to carry out basic evaluation or research and write literate and meaningful reports. Underlying each of these areas of competence is a need for recreation professionals to be fully aware of the meaning of recreation and leisure in human society and of the history and traditions of this field.

Professional Identity

As employment in recreation, park, and leisure-service agencies and programs grew over the past several decades, it gained public recognition as a flourishing career field. Millions of men and women became employed in various specialized sectors of leisure service, with hundreds of thousands holding professional-level jobs as recreation leaders, supervisors, planners, managers, and resource specialists.

Emerging professionalism had a number of important aspects: the identification of recreation as a specialized field of service, making significant contributions to society and requiring unique competencies and skills; heightened visibility for the field itself and the development of means for influencing public policy in matters related to recreation and leisure; and a higher level of status for those working in the field, accompanied by the widespread acceptance of recreation as a legitimate field of social responsibility. Particularly through the efforts of national and state societies, higher

standards for practice were developed and professional certification and academic and public agency accreditation were established.

Influence of Professional Specialization

As the overall leisure-service field expanded, each of its specialized disciplines also gained strength and a sense of unique identity. Specialists began to form their own professional societies in such areas as armed forces recreation, therapeutic recreation, campus recreation, and employee services. In some cases, they established their own certification processes and set up linkages to other professional disciplines functioning in areas related to their specializations.

It must be understood that recreation leadership and management does not represent a single, unified field of professional practice today. Its practitioners have varying areas of responsibility and have developed specialized missions and operational strategies suited to their unique service areas.

However, representatives of each of the 10 types of program sponsors within the overall leisure-service field have a common concern with the provision of constructive recreation programs that meet societal needs and contribute to individual physical and mental health and positive community relationships. Increasingly, they are joining in partnerships that share human, fiscal, and other agency resources to achieve such goals. It is essential that all leisure-service practitioners seeking to be regarded as professionals recognize that they must have more than nuts-and-bolts competence in conducting program activities.

In addition to such competence, recreation professionals must meet high standards of specialized training, be affiliated with appropriate professional societies, and have a rich understanding of the full range of public leisure needs and of the social challenges that face this field.

CHALLENGES FACING THE LEISURE-SERVICE FIELD

This chapter outlines a number of the critical social trends that were responsible for the growth of recreation's popularity in modern society—and that also pose a number of serious challenges to its practitioners and planners. Leisure-service professionals therefore must be able to deal creatively with the following kinds of questions.

- How can the organized recreation movement contribute to a public understanding of leisure's role in daily life and to upgrading the level of the public's choices of leisure pursuits?
- What role can public, voluntary, therapeutic, and other community-based agencies play in helping to improve family life and to reduce crime, violence, substance abuse, and other serious societal problems?
- How can recreation contribute to promoting positive intercultural understanding and relationships and to enriching the lives of persons with disabilities?
- How can the organized recreation movement play a meaningful role in a society that has increasingly become dominated by commercial interests—particularly conglomerates in the mass media of communication and entertainment—that place dollar profits at a higher priority than important human values?

- How can recreation, park, and sport organizations help build communities that create a quality of life that positively affects all community members?
- In an era marked by striking economic prosperity, how can recreation and leisure-service professionals develop programs designed to serve the less fortunate in society?
- Particularly for practitioners in park agencies that sponsor outdoor recreation services or manage extensive natural resources, what policies will serve important ecological needs in the years ahead?

PURPOSES OF THIS TEXT

This text is intended to provide comprehensive information that will be helpful to its readers in developing sound personal philosophies and gaining a broad awareness of the leisure-service field and in answering questions not with learned-by-rote solutions, but rather through intelligent analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Leisure-service professionals should have in-depth understanding of the full range of recreational needs and motivations and 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 such populations as girls and women, the aging, the disadvantaged, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, or others who have not been served fully in the past?

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 the issues raised in this chapter?

Throughout this text, contemporary issues are discussed in detail. Through a vivid depiction of the field's conceptual base, history, and current status; through an examination of existing agencies and programs; and through a comprehensive summary of research studies and recent reports, the reader should gain a full, in-depth understanding of the role of recreation and leisure in modern society.

Although this text promotes no single philosophical position, its purpose is to clarify the values promoted by recreation and leisure in modern society. Ultimately, these values will be responsible for the field's ability to flourish as a significant form of governmental or voluntary-agency service or as a commercial enterprise.

SUMMARY

This chapter provides an introduction to the study of recreation, park, and leisure services, seen as vital ingredients in the lives of Americans and as growing areas of career opportunity and professional responsibility. It outlines several of the unique

characteristics of leisure involvement, such as the diverse forms of recreational involvement and play motivations shared by persons of all ages and backgrounds. It then presents several important factors or social trends that have promoted the growth of the recreation and park movement. These trends range from the increase of discretionary time and growing affluence to expanded interest in health and fitness and concern about the natural environment. Emphasis is placed on the development of the organized recreation system over the past several decades, with a discussion of different types of leisure-service agencies that are responsible for facility development and activity program management.

The chapter ends by briefly describing the recreation, park, and leisure-service profession and emphasizing the need for specialized educational preparation for those holding responsible positions in this field. It also suggests a number of critical social challenges that will face leisure-service practitioners in the years ahead; these will be discussed more fully in the chapters that follow.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION OR ESSAY EXAMINATION

1. Identify and discuss at least three important social factors (example: increased affluence) that have contributed to the growth of recreation and leisure concerns over the past several decades.
2. What are the special meanings and values of recreation and leisure for different population groups in modern society, based on socioeconomic, age, gender, or ability/disability factors?
3. This chapter briefly summarizes the growth of professional leadership in recreation and parks management roles. Why should leisure-service professionals be expected to have an understanding of the history, psychology, and sociology of recreation and leisure?
4. What do you regard as some of the most critical challenges facing recreation leisure-service agencies and practitioners in the years that lie ahead? Justify your response.

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