

CHAPTER

1

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Foundations of Recreation and Leisure

My Passion: My Guitar

I am fairly certain that everyone in life has a passion, and if you don't have one, you haven't found it yet. If you haven't, I highly suggest exploring to find it to increase the quality of your life. From a very young age mine has been playing the guitar. I am definitely by no means a virtuoso and you won't hear me on next week's Top 40, but I absolutely love it.

Playing the guitar helps me in many ways. In my case it not only gave me a constructive activity to do, it kept me out of trouble as a youth. It helps me to relieve stress and escape from the daily struggles in life. The creativity and possibility for creativity are endless, the amount of things that you can learn are immense. No matter how good you get, or how good you think that you are, there is always a style of play or music that you can learn and improve on.

My father has played guitar for the majority of his life, and growing up in the house we were always around the guitar. At family get-togethers it was always something that we would do as a family and extended family. My father gave me a ukulele at the age of 7, but I didn't really become interested until the age of ten. He showed me three chords: G, D, and C, and told me that if I practiced these three chords, I could learn a great deal of songs. I practiced and practiced until my fingers were raw, and finally I learned the chords. After that, there was no stopping me, I couldn't get enough. I taught myself how to read and before long I was accompanying my Dad. This was the best part, I got to share something with him, spend time with him, and to this day we still play when we get together. As a teen it was how I communicated with my father, and I will forever have fond memories of these times spent with him, quality time.

Not only do I have this passion that I share with my father, I am passing the love for music and the guitar to my daughter. In the evening, when I pull out the guitar, my daughter is often found strumming along with me or dancing to the music that is played. She often strums along with her toy guitar and I can see how the passion for the guitar is being passed from one generation to another.

When I started practicing and practicing, my parents and I realized that I reached the ceiling of what I would be able to attain without formal lessons. We looked for a while and finally found one. This really helped because I learned not only about the guitar, but the theory behind it. How to read music and understand why certain notes sound good together. My understanding skyrocketed and soon I was learning more and more. My playing improved as well as my understanding of Music.

I took lessons for years and in high school stopped taking lessons when other activities such as sports took my time. I have never stopped playing and to this day I pick up the guitar whenever I have a chance.

My love for the guitar has extended past playing. I have been so intrigued by the guitar that I would like to learn how to build them. When I retire, I would love to use my Montgomery GI Bill that I will have received from serving my country in the U. S. Marine Corps to learn how to become a master craftsman. This way I can build the instrument that has greatly improved the quality of my life and the people around me from the joy to me. This way I can give that joy to others.

– “My Passion, My Guitar,” Courtesy of D. Dunn

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the motivations for participation using the concepts of presence of diversity, and participation in leisure and recreation.
2. Coherently express the development of the theories of play and how the theories contributed to contemporary views of play.
3. Discuss how an understanding of the flow principle impacts and influences individual and group perception of participation.
4. Explain individually and collectively how the six views of leisure meaning contribute to the definition of leisure.
5. Articulate and defend the meaning (definition) of recreation.
6. Acknowledge that play, leisure, and recreation have similarities and differences; explain the relationships between the three concepts and the importance and value of their study.
7. Link the theories, views, and definitions of play, leisure, and recreation into a coherent and defensible “first” philosophy of recreation and leisure.

INTRODUCTION

Recreation and leisure have multiple meanings based on individual experiences and perceptions. Recreation is defined from an individual perspective. It could include watching television, attending an opera, base jumping, mowing the lawn, taking your children to the zoo, playing checkers, downloading music, writing a book, spending an evening on the town, or whatever one chooses to make it. Leisure theorists 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 debate their meaning to society, individuals, and culture. 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, 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, hobbies, participatory and spectator sports, and travel and tourism. 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, (6) the development of recreation as a rich, diversified field of professional practice, and (7) trends influencing the future of recreation and leisure.

VARIED VIEWS OF RECREATION AND LEISURE

For some, recreation means the network of public agencies that provide facilities such 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; 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 cognitive disabilities, or a treatment center for physical rehabilitation. For some, 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. Resort destinations from Vail, Colorado, to Orlando, Florida, to Las Vegas, Nevada have developed travel and tourism with new levels of services and lodging, including a dramatic growth in timeshares.

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-based games, social networking, sharing music, instant messaging, and new ventures yet to emerge. The activity may be as dissimilar as sitting in front of a computer 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 as a participant, spectator, or video game player. ESPN has used key sponsorships and promotion to give extreme sports a cultural definition. The X-Games include activities such as inline skating, BMX racing, snow sports including snowboards and free-style 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. More frequently, the environmental movement includes a growing awareness and global perspective.

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 that have fascinated humankind since before 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 play, 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. Nonprofits and a wide variety of commercial enterprises provide recreation opportunities and experiences. Twenty years ago, the breadth of recreation and leisure opportunities was just beginning to explode.

Diversity in Participation

Often we tend to think of recreation primarily as participation in sports and games or in social activities, and 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. What was considered nontraditional 10 years ago has become mainstream. Today's recreation opportunities and experiences are expanding in ways not conceivable as little as 10–30 years ago.



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

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Recreation can occur anywhere and includes a variety of activities.

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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.

As discussed elsewhere in this text, the diversity and depth of participation are similar to looking inside a three-dimensional box (Figure 1.1) and seeing on the horizontal plane the diversity represented by the different kinds of activities and experiences one might engage in as part of recreation and along the vertical plane the depth or intensity of participation. On the third plane, which gives the box dimension, the aspect becomes more complex because one has to take into account why people participate (psychological aspects) as well as with whom they participate (social aspects), the time (free time versus obligated time) spent in the activity, and the costs associated with involvement or away from other activities (economic). Figure 1.1 shows in a very simple way the challenges faced when exploring a leisure activity. Researchers have invested years and written thousands of articles attempting to explain the leisure experience. Figure 1.1 depicts that challenge but fails to take into account individual perceptions of the experience, which are all-important. This text explores each of these aspects in detail. By the conclusion, readers will have gained an understanding of the diversity and complexity of the leisure environment, services, involvement, and participation.

Motivations for Recreational Participation

Many participants take part in recreation as a form of relaxation and release from work pressures or other tensions. They may be passive spectators of entertainment provided by television, movies, or other forms of electronic amusement. Other significant leisure motivations are based on the need to express creativity, develop hidden talents, enhance physical skills, or pursue excellence in varied forms of personal expression.

For some participants, active, competitive recreation may offer a channel for releasing frustration and aggression, or for struggling against others or the environment in adventurous, high-risk pursuits. Others enjoy recreation that is highly social and provides opportunities 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

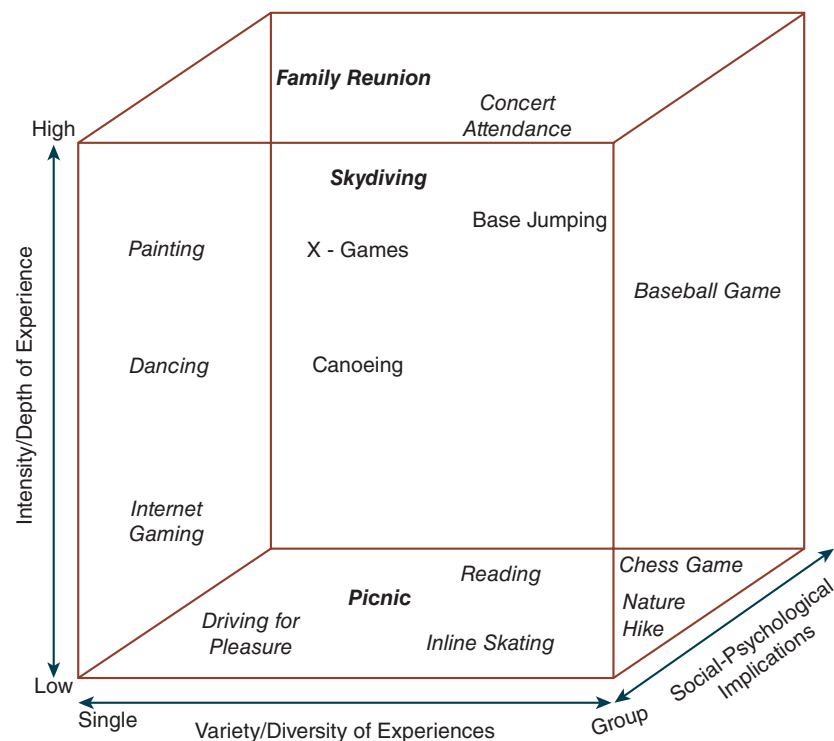


FIGURE 1.1 Simplistic Representation of the Complexity of Recreation and Leisure Experiences



AN ANALYSIS OF MY PASSION, MY GUITAR

The introduction to this chapter provides an excellent opportunity to analyze a leisure experience.

The experience is a lifetime engagement with a leisure activity, beginning as a young child. The exposure of the narrator's father playing the guitar was a motivation to "try it" for himself.

The author draws on the ukulele experience of learning how to play the instrument, sharing the discovery of learning the three chords and the motivation to learn more coming from that experience.

- ◆ Can you relate to a leisure experience in your life where you have been motivated to learn more after mastering the basics? Did you experience a greater intensity or depth as a result of your motivation? How did you feel as you became more competent and comfortable with your skill set? It doesn't matter if it was playing a guitar, skiing down a bunny slope, drawing a picture, playing a sport, or any myriad of leisure activities.
- ◆ In regard to Figure 1.1, there is an intensity related to this experience. There is also longevity to the experience. The depth can relate to the intensity of feeling toward the music being played. It can also relate to the technical challenge of a piece of music and, as it is practiced and perfected, a sense of mastery. The author related the social psychological implications when sharing feelings of stress relief and escape from daily struggles. Yet, the need to learn "there was no stopping me" addresses self-development and mastery.
- ◆ Finally, the author talks of sharing the music and playing with his father. He already anticipates sharing his love with his daughter and mastering the construction of guitars. As will be discussed later in this text, the author has moved to "serious leisure," a form of leisure that takes the participant to deeper and constructive levels of experience.



Watching a pit crew is part of the experience for NASCAR fans.
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games, smart phones with applications, iPods, the Internet, and much more. Others are deeply involved in forms of culture such as music, drama, dance, literature, and other forms of fine arts. Exploring new environments through travel and tourism or seeking self-discovery or personality enrichment through continuing education or various educational activities represents other important leisure drives.

AN ANALYSIS OF PLAY, RECREATION AND LEISURE

Any consideration of the broad field of recreation and leisure should include a clarification of terms and concepts. The words *play*, *leisure*, and *recreation* are frequently used interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. However, although related, they have distinctly different meanings and it is important for both students and practitioners in this field to understand their varied implications and the differences among them.



PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT

"Many children in public school are getting less and less time outside, despite the documented benefits of free play."¹ Play has long been determined essential for physical and emotional development of children. During the past two decades, play fell out of favor among some educators and parents, but not among park and recreation professionals. Today, there is a resurgence of research across many fields about the value and importance of play. By play, we mean unstructured or "free play," unbound from parental perceptions, video intrusions, planned activities, and the like. 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.

Case Study

Photography as Leisure: Why I take Photos

It sometimes feels like I have been taking photos for an eternity. I purchased my first "good" camera while I was in college, but I had been exposed to photography for years. My grandfather took photos for as long as I can remember. They were almost always photos of friends and family, but on occasion they were photos of scenes. I have inherited many of his photos from the 1940's, all of them taken as 35mm slides. As opposed to today, all photos were taken using film and you could do 24 or 36 photos to a roll. The film was expensive as was the processing, but when you got the photos back in slide format (for viewing through a projector) it was all worth it. Because of the expense we didn't take a lot of photos of the same subject. We took time to compose and think about the photo - much like the best photographers still do. Somewhere in my younger years I became fascinated with photography, but could not afford a good camera. I read books, took a college course, and finally purchased my first 35 mm single-lens reflex (SLR) camera. Ansel Adams, a noted western landscape photographer, was one of my heroes, as was Alfred Eisenstaedt, a noted photojournalist.

Having my own camera opened a whole new world for me. Learning to see the world through a viewfinder changed the way I saw the world! I wanted to take lots of "great" photos, but learned early on that great was in the eyes of the beholder. As a young father I took lots of photos of family, photos that years later have great meaning to myself and my family. At the time I was just trying to capture experiences. Now, as I near retirement, my children and grandchildren have fond memories. I would never have thought how my old family photos would find their way onto Facebook and other sites and bring meaning to so many people.

I've never really asked myself why I take photos. It was just something I wanted to do. I enjoyed the experience. Sometimes, like on a cold winter morning before dawn, I hoped that the clouds would be just right for photos of a desert mountain. Other times I hoped I could capture a special moment in one of my children's lives, one that could be shared. I originally took photos for selfish reasons - because I wanted to. It was not long, however, before I realized that I was helping to build family history and contributing to knowing who we were. These reasons became important to me.

Photography really is a single person activity. There may be lots of people around, but the act of shooting a photo is a single person activity (for me). I choose the location, I choose the time of day, I choose the day of the week, I choose the camera lens, I choose the lighting, the color, and so much more. For landscape photography I am at the mercy of the environment. I may want a calm clear day with no clouds, but instead get a blustery and overcast day. I have to learn how to adapt, to change my expectations, and to focus my creativity in a different way to achieve the results I hope for. The same is true for portrait photography, except the person being photographed has a significant influence on the outcome.

At the end of the day I pull my SD card out of the SLR and drop it into my computer, download the photos (no longer waiting for a week or more to see my photos), look at them, use various software to alter the light, the saturation, the contrast, the size, style and on and on. What used to take hours of time and experimentation in the darkroom can now be accomplished in minutes on a computer. On one trip returning from Europe I was able to sort, catalog, select, adjust, and have photos ready for processing by the time the airplane landed.

Why do I shoot pictures. It really gets down to the experience. It makes me feel good. It is something I like to do. It provides me with a sense of accomplishment and creativity. It builds my awareness of the world around me. It allows me to feel creative. At the end of a session of working with photos, whether shooting or adjusting, I feel positive about who I am and what I have accomplished

Questions to Consider

1. When you participate in recreation how are your feelings and motivations similar or different to those described in this case study? Why do you think they might be similar? Different?
2. Select a recreation activity you enjoy and write about it. Answer the following questions:
 - a. When did you begin to participate in the activity?
 - b. How do you feel when you participate? Is it a different feeling than when you first started to participate?
 - c. Why do you participate in the activity?
 - d. How do you feel when you are done with the activity? Is there any carryover of feelings to a later time?
 - e. Look at Figure 1.1 and place your activity on the graphic. Explain why you placed it where you did.

The rationale for stressing such conceptual understanding is clear. Just as a doctor must know chemistry, anatomy, kinesiology, and other underlying sciences to practice medicine effectively, so too the recreation and park professional must understand the meaning of leisure and its motivations and satisfactions if he or she is to provide effective recreation programs and services. Such conceptual understandings are critical to the development of a sound philosophy of recreation service and to interpreting leisure-service goals and outcomes to the public at large.

THE MEANING OF PLAY

The word *play* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *plega*, meaning a game or sport, 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 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. Although play is traditionally considered a child's activity, it is often recognized that people of all ages take part in play.

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 leisure 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.

Historical Perspectives

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.

Gradually, however, 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.²

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.

Surplus-Energy Theory

The English philosopher Herbert Spencer, in his mid-nineteenth-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.

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.

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.

Coupled with the surplus-energy theory, the catharsis 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.

CONCEPTS OF PLAY IN MODERN SOCIETY

During the first three decades of the twentieth 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.³

Play as a Social Necessity

During the late nineteenth century, leaders of the public recreation movement called for the provision of organized recreation for all children. Joseph Lee, who is widely regarded as the father of the play movement in America 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 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 on the streets. These values continue to be embraced by contemporary communities, as is evidenced by public and private support of parks and recreation departments, community recreation programs, after-school programs, and other play-based activities.

Typologies of Play Activity

In the twentieth century, more and more social and behavioral scientists began to examine play empirically. One such investigator, 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. Caillois established four major types of play and game activity: *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*.

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. Clearly, most modern games and sports, including many card and table games involving skill, are examples of *agon*.

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*.

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:

Case Study

Senior Playgrounds

According to a National Public Radio report, "Within parks, people tend to be more physically active on trails, at playgrounds and at sports facilities." (Research) This is, in fact, true for people of all ages. Age doesn't matter: People are more physically active at playground type places. Think about the last time you were at a playground. For me, it was when I took my children to play. I sat playing on my phone, but the laughing and fun going on around me was contagious. Pretty soon I was running around with my kids, running up the play structure, and sliding down the slide. My teenage kids were playing a game of 'horse' and I jumped in and played too. I really enjoyed myself that afternoon and I know that my kids enjoyed having me there with them. But I asked myself, "What if I didn't have children? What if I am a senior and I want to be active? Where could I go and what would the playground be like?"

Yesterday's adult playground equipment is static, uninviting, and mostly unused. Today's planners have greater options than ever before. While youth playgrounds have been reinvented numerous times since the 1970s, adult playgrounds, for the most part remained static. That is all changing! "Today's planners of fitness-zones have modernized alternative moving away from static to fitness devices with moving parts, as well as updated classics. Today's fitness zones have grouped stations in a single area, creating an outdoor fitness zone where people can work out together or individually.

As a bonus and because park and recreation agencies focus on all ages and abilities, many of the "stations are created to accommodate anyone from teens to seniors and out-of-shape newbies to highly fit, regular exercisers. In some parks, the equipment is so popular that lines often form as people wait their turn to use the stations. In addition, these new all-weather machines require little upkeep and maintenance, and are made to last." (Madren)

While talking to my uncle, he told me how their Florida retirement community has 20 different senior parks. He said they are wonderful and have gotten him and his wife out enjoying life again. They even have adult recumbent 'tricycles' that they ride.

There are significant benefits that are physical, social and emotional to the participants. KaBOOM! suggests the areas are "a great connector for adults and seniors and the children in their lives." Research suggests there are cognitive and physical benefits of play, that can include stress reduction. Community parks with adult playgrounds can serve as a gathering spot, combatting the isolation and loneliness some seniors have, nurturing social and mental health. Some new senior parks feature adult focused low-impact exercise equipment for seniors and those who have not exercised for some time. These parks were started abroad, but now the US is on board with having them. In 2012 England, Finland, Germany, Spain and throughout Asia senior parks were a reality.

The term bio-healthy parks have been applied to senior parks. The focus is on movement, socialization, and keeping the mind exercised. Research shows that participation in physical activity, even if it is not stressful or extended, positively influences physical and cognitive well-being in seniors. The challenge for seniors not living in planned communities is to get them out of their home and engaged in physical and mental activities.

In Spain, senior parks are all the rage. "On one recent morning, in the Spanish coastal town of Vilassar, a kiddy park with its slides and seesaws is empty. But right next to it, 20 retirees shout out during roll call. Then they take up positions by tiny balance beams, elevated walkways, pedals fixed to benches and twisting metal bars. The day's workout session begins. 63-year-old retiree Manuel Francisco Martin spins a suspended metal disk with two hand cranks, while walking in place. "The point is to be able to keep going, he said. "To never stop. Because once you stop moving, things go badly." Several grey heads nod in agreement. "If you exercise you feel better," he says. "When you go up a couple of steps you don't get out of breath. When you walk for 10 minutes you feel calm and relaxed." The body is like everything else, he said: any parts that aren't used eventually break down. This outdoor exercise park was designed somewhere with a decidedly short season for parks: Finland. The company behind the project was Lappset and they've sold tens of thousands of these parks worldwide. But Spain has been an especially good market. It has 600 already and orders in for hundreds more. Each time a new park opens here, Lappset physical therapist Paz Vidal shows up to explain how each station works. They're not overly complicated. But Paz said the seniors generally need a walk-through. And encouragement. . . These parks aren't just about getting winded. They're designed for the mind too. A few of the stations are in fact games, where you match colors, or shapes, or numbers. . . The point of these outdoor exercise spots isn't just to give elderly folks something to do. Officials say it

makes good fiscal sense as well. Analysts estimate that 40 to 45 percent of the population in Spain will be retirees by 2050. Spending a few bucks on parks to keep that population alert and healthy, the thinking goes, could save a lot in expensive health care costs.” (Hadden) I thought it was very interesting that Spain wasn’t just thinking about the health benefits of senior parks, but also that it made good fiscal sense too.

Questions to Consider

1. How many people over 60 do you know who exercise on a regular basis?
2. Compare them to people who don’t exercise on a regular basis. Is there a visible difference?
3. Do you think that a person can keep exercising after they turn 75 or 80? Why? Why not? What do you think the limitations would be?
4. How can recreation and park planners improve opportunities for seniors to be engaged in physical activity?

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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.⁵

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.

Contrasting Styles of Play

Caillois also suggested two extremes 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 the four forms of play may be conducted at either extreme of *paidia* or *ludus* or at some point on a continuum between the two.

The Play Element in 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



ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAY, C. 1948

In 1949, Elmer Mitchell and Bernard Mason identified the essential characteristics of play in their book *The Theory of Play*.⁴ They acknowledged an absence of consensus on the meaning of play, but suggested that there was more agreement on the characteristics of play.

1. Play is activity; it is not idleness, but is in contrast with it. Loafing and dawdling are not play ... a slumping of activity because of lack of interest, indicates a loss of the play spirit.
2. Play is not limited to any particular form of activity; it may be neuromuscular, sensory, mental, or a combination of all three.
3. The value of play in education is due to its power to interest the player, absorb his attention, and arouse him to enthusiastic and persistent activity.
4. Whether an activity is play or not depends on the attitude of the mind of the doer toward the thing he is doing. It follows there is no particular activity. What is play one day may be drudgery another day.
5. There is a general accord ... that the play spirit is an attitude of mind, but there is not so full an agreement as to the nature of this attitude.

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.⁶

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PLAY

Over the past several decades, numerous authorities in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis have examined play and its role in personality development, psychoanalytical perspectives, play as creative exploration, and related areas.

Play in Personality Development

The theoretical foundations of play have a long history with little consensus on one overall theory of play. Over the past 40 years, much research has been done on the benefits of play. The psychological aspects have been prominent. 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.

Psychoanalytical Perspectives on Play

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychoanalysis, had a number of distinctive views regarding the meaning and purpose of play. 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.



Play can be viewed from developmental, psychological, anthropological, creative, and cultural perspectives.

© Photos.com/Getty.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released a report about the importance of play and stated that “Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children. Despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children.”⁷

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.⁸

A number of Freud’s other theories, such as the “pleasure principle” and the “death wish,” have also been seen as having strong implications for the analysis of play. The Freudian view of play influenced many psychotherapists and educators in their approach to childhood education and treatment programs. Bruno Bettelheim, Erik Erikson, and Anna Freud, Freud’s daughter, all experimented with the use of play in treating children with mental and emotional issues.

Play as Creative Exploration

Other contemporary theories of play emphasize its role in creative exploration and problem solving. Studies of arousal, excitement, and curiosity led to two related theories of play: the stimulus-arousal and competence-effectance theories.

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.⁹



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

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With the obesity epidemic at record levels, a new focus has been put on the value of play. Organizations such as the U.S. Play Coalition, Voice of Play, and many others are providing resources and information on the value of play to parents, community leaders, and parks and recreation professionals. This overview of play theories and the role of play provides a foundation for the value of play that should be instilled in recreational professionals.

Case Study

Organizing My First Ukulele Summer Camp

THE IDEA

Camp Villages is a nine-week summer program for the grandchildren, ages 5 to 18, of the residents of The Villages, the largest 55+ community in Florida. 2016 was the 16th summer for the program. Resident clubs organize the programs. I volunteered in 2015 with the Air Gun Club program. I thought our Ukulele Players Club could sponsor a summer camp program in 2016. I took the idea to our club's Performance Group, our core ukulele players. They agreed to help and placed me in charge.

ORGANIZING

The recreation department limits the Camp Villages programs to 2 hour sessions. The sessions can be offered as often as a club wishes. Clubs submit proposals to the special activities director, outlining what's being offered, number of sessions, requested dates and times, resource requirements, and limits on number and ages for participation.

For the Ukulele program, we requested two sessions, one each in July and August. We limited participation to 20 grandchildren per session, ages 10 and up. The recreation department provided a list of dates and times from which we chose. We asked for copy support (student handbooks), room setup, water, ice, coffee, digital projector, and screen. A recreational department liaison was assigned to assist.

A first priority was ukuleles. Initially we anticipated borrowing ukuleles from club members. Upon reflection, we decided to raise money and purchase as many ukuleles as possible so the campers would be playing similar instruments. When I explained what we were doing to a local music store, they gave a significant discount. We raised money from donations from club members of our club, as well as members of two other ukulele clubs. Additionally, one member donated a ukulele which we raffled off. We were able to raise enough to purchase twenty-two ukuleles and buy support materials such as binders, ukulele straps, and tuners.

We also wanted gift bags for the campers. We contacted several ukulele vendors asking for promotional items. The response was excellent. They sent catalogs, lanyards, stickers, wooden nickels, pens, etc. One company did even more, sending ten free ukuleles in addition to their other materials. One of our members was able to get a local business to provide bags for the gifts. At each session, campers were presented with a bag containing catalogs, stickers, lanyards, pens, and a binder with songs and lesson materials.

Next was developing the ukulele lessons for the camp. With two hours for the session, we developed five lessons. We modified a lesson plan template we found on the internet and developed first an outline of the lessons, then full lesson plans. Finally, we took the lesson plans and wrote computer presentations including diagrams, chord charts, fill in sections, and songs. Picking appropriate songs that would catch the interest of young campers but still include all the musical information was a challenge.

The whole summer camp program is built on volunteers, and, the ukulele camp was no different. Our club has upwards of two hundred members. During the summer many are gone. Our Performance Group provided the bulk of our volunteers. With twenty campers each session we planned for fifteen volunteers. This gave us sufficient people for a minimum of one volunteer for each two campers, plus people to check in the campers, someone to run the computer during the lessons, a photographer, and a presenter. Eighteen different volunteers took part during the two sessions.

Volunteers brought snacks and drinks to each session.

After each session we had a brief discussion of the pros and cons of the session and discussed improvements. Several improvements were included in the second session.

RESULT

The first session went very well, the second even better. Both sessions were near to full. The grandparents, who by camp rules, had to be present, seemed to enjoy the camp as much as the campers. Because of the extra ukuleles, some

grandparent had the opportunity to take part. With extra ukuleles we were able to have a drawing each session, and one lucky camper went home with their ukulele. The recreation department liaison was very happy with the results and asked us to increase the number of sessions next year. Importantly, the volunteers were extremely pleased and proud of what we'd done. Some of the campers came to our regular club meeting later in the week and played with us.

LESSON LEARNED

Planning is everything. Having more lessons than we could possibly get through meant we didn't have to worry about running out of material. Limiting each lesson to 25 minutes or less kept the campers' attention. When working with campers as young as 10, having enough volunteers was critical. We usually place one volunteer with each of the youngest campers. Having a book with all the student material and songs for the campers was important. They took notes, filled in blanks on the diagrams, and used it as reference. Some of the songs just didn't work. Either they were in the wrong key for the presenter to sing or they weren't age appropriate. Next year we'll replace some of the songs. Tempo for strumming, chord practice, and singing songs had to be kept slower than normally. Changing chords is difficult when you're first learning. Have time during the practice when only the campers are playing (volunteers stop and watch).

HOW DID IT FEEL?

Campers, grandparents, recreation department personnel, and volunteers, all agreed that it was successful. All the hard work, time, and money were well invested. The club is already planning for next year's Villages Ukulele Camp.

(Courtesy, D. R. McLean)

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think were the recreation experiences for this senior group as they provided a recreation activity?
2. What were the potential recreation experiences for the participants and their grandparent(s)?
3. What was the value of this program to the participants? to the leaders?
4. Could this be considered a leisure activity for both groups? Why? Why not?

THE MEANING OF LEISURE: SIX VIEWS

What exactly is leisure? The concept of leisure as a unique, desirable component of the human experience was first articulated by ancient Greeks. In more recent centuries, scholars attempted to define leisure in terms of both its role in society and impact on the individual. For the Athenians particularly, leisure was the highest value of life and work the lowest. Because the upper classes were not required to work, they were free to engage in intellectual, cultural, and artistic activity. Leisure represented an ideal state of freedom and the opportunity for spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. Within modern philosophies of leisure that have descended from this classical Athenian view, leisure is still seen as occurring mostly in time that is not devoted to work. However, it is considered far more than just a temporary release from work used to restore one for more work. Etymologically, the English word *leisure* seems to be derived from the Latin *licere*, meaning “to be permitted” or “to be free.” From *licere* came 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.

The Classical View of Leisure

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.

Case Study

Finding Flow

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. A sense of distorted time: The individual loses all sense of time and what seems like minutes can actually be hours.
5. 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.
6. Strong concentration and commitment: The individual totally focuses on the activity and directs all concentration toward it.
7. 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

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

Source

M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

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 with work that is respected in our society, and it should have a meaningful relationship to work. The implication is that leisure should be calm, quiet, contemplative, and unhurried, as implied by the word *leisurely*. Obviously, this concept would not apply to those uses of leisure today that are dynamic, active, and demanding or that may have a degree of extrinsic purpose about them.

Leisure as a Symbol of Social Class

The view of leisure as closely related to social class stemmed from the work of Thorstein Veblen, a leading American sociologist of the late nineteenth century. 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.¹⁰

Leisure as Unobligated Time

The most common approach to 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 activity 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.

Leisure as Activity

A fourth common understanding of leisure is that it is activity in which people engage during their free time. Obviously, this concept of leisure is closely linked to the idea of recreation (as you will see in the section on 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 procreative 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. 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 a State of Being Marked by Freedom

The fifth concept of leisure places the emphasis on the perceived freedom of the activity and on the role of leisure involvement in helping the individual achieve personal fulfillment and self-enrichment. 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.¹¹

This concept of leisure implies a lifestyle 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 part of a whole in which the individual explores his or her capabilities, develops enriching experiences with others, and seeks "self-actualization" in the sense of being creative, involved, expressive, and fully alive. The idea of leisure as a state of being 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.¹²

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 his or her sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation.

Leisure as Spiritual Expression

A sixth 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 nineteenth century were a driving force behind the growth of public and philanthropic leisure services during that time. During the early decades of the twentieth 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. However, leisure plays a major role in spirituality. The most common 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 Defined

Recognizing that each of the six concepts of leisure just presented stems from a different perspective, a general definition that embraces several of the key points follows.

Leisure is that portion of an individual's time that is not directly devoted to work or work-connected responsibilities or to other obligated forms of maintenance or self-care. Leisure implies freedom and choice and is customarily used in a variety of ways, including to meet one's personal needs for reflection, self-enrichment, relaxation, pleasure, and affiliation. Although it usually involves some form of participation in a voluntarily chosen activity, it may also be regarded as a holistic state of being or even a spiritual experience.

THE MEANING OF RECREATION

In a sense, recreation represents a fusion between play and leisure and is therefore presented as the third of the important concepts that provide the framework for this overall field of study. The term itself stems from the Latin word *recreatio*, meaning that which refreshes or restores. Historically,



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

Courtesy of Deb Garrahy.

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.

CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS OF RECREATION

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 a process or state of being—something that happens within the person while engaging in certain kinds of activity, with a given set of expectations; and (3) recreation has been perceived as a social institution, a body of knowledge, or a professional field.

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

1. 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.
2. The choice of activity or involvement is voluntary, free of compulsion or obligation.
3. Recreation is prompted by internal motivation and the desire to achieve personal satisfaction, rather than by extrinsic goals or rewards.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Within this framework, many kinds of leisure experiences may be viewed as recreation. They may range from the most physically challenging pursuits to those with much milder demands. Watching television, listening to a symphony orchestra, reading a book, or playing lacrosse are all forms of recreation.

Voluntary Participation

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 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.

Motives for Participation

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 he or she is 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 have 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 unstereotyped 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, but 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.¹³

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.¹⁴

Historically, leisure 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 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,



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

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



EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT TO SPORT

The degree to which many individuals become deeply committed emotionally to their recreational interests may be illustrated within the realms of sports and popular entertainment. So fervently do many Americans root for popular sports teams and stars that sport has increasingly been referred to as a form of religion. The glorification of leading athletes as idols and the national preoccupation with such major events as the Stanley Cup, the World Series, or the Super Bowl demonstrate the degree to which sports—as a popular form of recreation—capture the emotional commitment of millions of Americans today.



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

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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 twentieth 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.

Recreation Defined

Acknowledging these contrasting views of the meaning of recreation, the following definition of the term is offered. Recreation consists of human activities or experiences that occur in leisure time. Usually, they 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. When provided as part of organized community or voluntary-agency programs, recreation should be socially constructive and morally acceptable in terms of prevailing community standards and values.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PLAY, LEISURE, AND RECREATION

Obviously, the three terms discussed in this chapter are closely interrelated. Leisure, for example, provides an opportunity to carry on both play and recreation. Much of our free time in modern society is taken up by recreation, although leisure may also include such activities as continuing education, religious practice, or community service, which are not usually thought of as forms of recreation. In turn, it should be understood that although play and recreation tend to overlap, they are not identical. Play is not so much an activity as a form of behavior, marked stylistically by teasing, competition, exploration, or make-believe. Play can occur during work or leisure, whereas recreation takes place only during leisure.

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. As a social institution, recreation has broader applications than play or leisure in two ways: Recreation is often provided by institutions that do not have leisure as a primary concern, such as the armed forces or business concerns; and recreation agencies often provide other social or environmental services and may in fact become an important linkage between municipal governments and the people they serve.

Leisure is a subject of scholarly study for many economists and sociologists; it also has come increasingly under the scrutiny of psychologists and social psychologists. However, to the public at large, leisure tends to be a somewhat abstract or remote concept. Although many academic departments and some community agencies use the term *leisure* in their titles, it lacks a sense of urgency or strong appeal as a public issue or focus of government action.

Of the three terms, *recreation* is at once the most understandable and significant for many people. It is easily recognizable as an area of personal activity and social responsibility, and its values are readily apparent for all age groups and special populations as well. For these reasons, it is given primary emphasis in other chapters, particularly in terms of program sponsorship and professional identity.

The themes that have just been introduced are explored more fully throughout this text, as the historical development of recreation and play and the evolution of the present-day leisure-service system are described. Throughout, issues related to the social implications of recreation and leisure and to the role of recreation and park professionals are fully discussed, along with the challenges that face practitioners in this field in the twenty-first century.

Summary

Play, recreation, and leisure represent important basic 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 Greek 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 Freudian theory or to exploratory drives of human personality.

Six concepts of leisure are presented that depict it as the possession of the upper classes or aristocrats throughout history, as free time or activity, as a state of being, and as a form of spiritual expression. Recreation is also explored from different perspectives, with a key issue being whether it must be morally constructive or socially approved to be considered recreation. The role of recreation as an important contemporary social institution and force in economic life is also discussed.

Questions for Class Discussion or Essay Examination

1. Read the case study *Photography as Leisure: Why I Take Photos*. Conduct an analysis of the case study, answering: 1) Why this is recreation? 2) Identify what you believe to be the recreation components of the activity, explaining each of the components.

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

3. Compare and contrast the early theories and contemporary theories of play. First, identify the commonalities in the theoretical development of play, and secondly, the differences. How has play been influenced by leisure and play theorists?

4. 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 and recreation is concerned?

5. 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.

6. 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?

Endnotes

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