

**Leisure and
Recreation:**

Introduction and Overview

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Leisure and Recreation:

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Preface

This book emphasizes facts and insights into leisure time and leisure time activities and what these mean and will mean to Americans. Further, attention is given to the recreation and park field as a profession, and particularly to professional preparation and professional opportunities. The text was prepared with the following main purposes in mind:

To provide an overview of present conditions and trends relating to leisure time and to the recreation and park movement.

To dwell on the opportunities that have resulted and will result from leisure trends, and to describe the conditions under which these opportunities can be more fully realized.

To identify specific problems relating to leisure time and to discuss the potential solutions.

To help those entering the recreation and park profession see more clearly its scope and magnitude, and to better know the job opportunities and conditions of employment.

To cause all those who read the book to understand more thoroughly the social and economic forces that influence work and leisure, and to be aware of trends and potential results, both positive and negative.

It is intended that the book will be especially interesting and useful as an introductory text for those entering college preparation programs in recreation and related fields, and as a text for collegiate general education courses in recreation and leisure studies.

The book contains the most current and pertinent information available on the various topics that would logically appear in a book of this kind, and a dedicated effort was made to present the information in an interesting and highly readable style. It is sincerely hoped that everyone who reads the book will be stimulated, and will gain insight into how to use his or her own leisure more wholesomely and how to influence desirable uses of leisure by others, through either professional or nonprofessional channels.

The author expresses special appreciation to Drs. Clark Thorstensen and Richard Heaps for their contributions in the areas of sociology and psychology.

Provo, Utah

CLAYNE R. JENSEN

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Leisure and Recreation:

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1

Interpretations, Meanings and Concepts

At the time our nation was born a little more than 200 years ago, many aspects of people's living patterns were essentially as they were at the beginning of the Christian era. The nation's population was predominately rural, and the life style had strong agrarian characteristics. Technological advances were few, and the industrial revolution had not yet begun. Transportation was by non-mechanized methods, communication techniques were still primitive and the many conveniences afforded by electricity and power-driven machines were unheard of. Even as recently as 100 years ago the living patterns had not changed very much. In the last century, however, and particularly in the last half century, the life styles of Americans have changed markedly in almost every respect. Change has been our most consistent and dominant characteristic. Compared to standards of early times, change is still occurring with bewildering rapidity, and apparently this trend is going to continue during the foreseeable future.

Our present circumstances would certainly have to be viewed as an overall improvement over the conditions of earlier times, but still the rate and magnitude of change have caused some difficult social and personal problems. Our new style of living has created an environment where people live in parts. Most members of the work force seldom see the whole of their efforts in the final product. Thus work has lost much of its satisfaction, and many workers have less interest and less pride in their jobs. Tailors, lacemakers, pottery makers and cobblers of previous times would see their items of craftsmanship begin with raw materials and end in finished products, with pride to be gained from the quality of the end-result. Such pride never comes to a factory worker who runs a machine that only sews labels in shirts, or one who turns bolt #32 on new automobiles as they move along the assembly line. Factory work and assembly line production have had a deteriorating effect on workers' satisfaction and sense of achievement. As a result

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more people are seeking achievement and personal reward in off-the-job activities.

With the giant gains that we have made in economic productivity combined with the search for satisfaction and accomplishment during leisure time, a tendency has developed among the population to think that everything that is needed can be purchased. People try to buy status, acceptance, fuel for the ego, this and that, even happiness. The theme of the third century of this country may well be "they thought they could buy it, but it wasn't for sale."

It is true that in some respects increased purchasing power, when used wisely, can contribute positively to life. It can contribute only in certain respects and only up to a certain point, however, and beyond this more purchasing power has little meaning. Several important ingredients of success and happiness—accomplishment, service to others, and self-development—simply cannot be bought. It is important for us to recognize this and conduct our lives accordingly.

Actually the most meaningful and useful commodity that any of us has is time. If time is effectively applied to the more important aspects of life, it can make a greater contribution to success and happiness than any of the other conditions we are able to control. That portion of our time known as *leisure* has increased significantly, and this means more time for travel, additional education, meaningful entertainment, cultural activities, community service, and neighborliness. Arnold Toynbee stated, "Time must and should occupy the center of man's intellectual and emotional interests. The essence of time, like that of man's existence itself, is only a permission to partake creatively in a world whose contents and properties offer a great variety of worthy experiences."¹

There are some who believe that the use of leisure time is the final test of a civilization—the most accurate measure of society's values. It is true that when people have a reasonable amount of security combined with sufficient leisure they can seek social, cultural, and spiritual rewards that are not available in a toil-dominated environment. The choices that people make under these circumstances determine the kind and quality of their leisure activities, and this has a large influence on the tone of society and in effect it measures the level of civilization.

Certainly the present concern over the impact of increased leisure upon the stability of society and the progress of civilization is no idle matter. The scores of published articles and books dealing with this and related topics emphasize the important implications of leisure time. The elements of the American culture that function to create more and more leisure—lengthening life expectancy, earlier retirement, increased mechanization and automation, shorter work weeks, rising standard of living and improved communication and transportation—

continue at an accelerated pace. Fortunately we now stand at a point in history when the potential and opportunity for “the good life” through increased leisure are unparalleled. How we reached this point, which factors have contributed toward it, what are its unique characteristics, and what we should be doing about it form the basic content of this book.

Since one of our principal users of leisure time is recreation, it is only natural that the terms *leisure time* and *recreation* are often used together and are considered closely related. It follows then that the content of the book has to do primarily with leisure time and recreation.

LEISURE AND LEISURE TIME

The word *leisure* is derived from the Latin word *licere* which means to be free. It is also related closely to the long-existing French word *loisir*, to be permitted. The essence of leisure seems to be freedom—freedom of time and attitude. In terms of time, leisure is that period of life not spent in making a living or in self-maintenance. As an attitude it is related to free will, lack of compulsion and freedom of choice.

Certain specialists in recreation, sociology and economics have made some rather fine-line distinctions among the terms *free time*, *leisure time* and *leisure*. Even though the distinctions are too fuzzy to be meaningful to many people, it seems worthwhile to present some of the statements made by noted authorities. However, it should be recognized that, despite the close distinctions made by those who study the subject, most of the population consider free time, leisure time and leisure as essentially the same—and in a general sense they are the same, because these terms represent uncommitted or off-the-job hours, and the things that people choose to do during those hours. They indicate the portion of life separate from biological and economic requirements, that which is left over after the requirements of existence and subsistence have been met.

Miller states that *free time* is the time available to the individual to be spent at his discretion after the necessary work and other survival duties are accomplished. He says that *leisure time* is that portion of available free time devoted to the pursuit of leisure values. He goes on to say that *leisure* is different from free time or leisure time in that it is the complex of self-fulfilling and self-enriching values achieved by the individual as he uses leisure time in self-chosen activities that recreate him.²

de Grazia believes that *free time* is thought of as the opposite of work and therefore as unproductive. He believes that *leisure* and free time are entirely different, stating “. . . today’s time is considered free when not at grips with work. Work is the antonym of free time, but not of leisure. Leisure and free time live in two different worlds.”³

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Nash claims, "It is possible to be free from the pressures of daily life and still not have leisure. This occurs when one has no interest in leisure and no ability to make worthy use of his free time, is subject to conditions that are not propitious, or lacks the facilities that enable him to express his interests, make use of his abilities, and take advantage of his conditions."⁴

If the distinctions made in these statements are accepted, then the term *leisure* is synonymous with the meaning of recreation, and is different and yet closely related to the meaning of leisure time and free time. However, there are other well-known authorities who choose to group free time, leisure time and leisure into one generalized category with only minor distinctions in their meanings. This is illustrated by the following statements.

Leisure is commonly thought of as surplus time remaining after the formal duties and necessities of life have been attended to. It is the free time, enabling a person to do as he chooses.⁵

Leisure: For purposes of social analysis the concept is usually narrowed and widened to mean simply freedom from activities centering around the making of a livelihood.⁶

Leisure—discretionary time, time to be used according to our own judgment or choice.⁷

Leisure, then, is essentially a block of time. The fact that the word "leisure" conjures up many things in the minds of men should not blind us to the fact that when we are concerned with leisure we are primarily concerned with a period of time in which the feeling of compulsion is minimized. This is in contrast to those hours when we are compelled to work or prepare for work.⁸

True leisure is not the opposite of work in the sense of being opposed to work. In work there is a narrowing, a focusing, a concentration of faculties. During true leisure there is a widening of consciousness, an unfocusing, a broadening and expanding, and a greater diffusion of attitudes, interests and pursuits. Because of our dedication to work schedules and other highly structured aspects of life, we tend to bind ourselves to the clock and feel that leisure time is something to be occupied, an hour's worth of fulfillment for every hour spent, and everywhere there are diligent efforts to do just that. The good in leisure time is possible only for those who can free themselves from the time machine. Conversely, leisure time cannot be equated with idleness. Leisure is a positive attitude while idleness is a negative one.

Significance of Leisure Time

Aristotle described leisure as "the first principle of all action." Leisure has also been described as the main content of a free life and the nurse of civilization. Like virtue and unlike labor, leisure is its own chief reward. The amount and quality of any society's leisure activities set its tone, define its version of the good life, and measure the level of its civilization.

Bertrand Russell said, "To be able to fill leisure time intelligently is the last product of civilization," and a century earlier Disraeli had stated, "Increased means and increased leisure are the two civilizers of man." Long before that, Socrates said, "Leisure is the best of all possessions." Time to do as he pleases—to create, to play, to seek enrichment and satisfaction—has long been a dream of the common man. The dream has become at least partly true, with the promise of still more to come, but with such freedom of time must come an understanding of its potential for quality or lack of quality, for good or for bad.

Sebastian de Grazia has warned us that, if the trend toward automation continues, one of our great challenges will be to construct a worthwhile society largely on the concept of leisure rather than totally on the concept of work.⁹ He indicates that America stands on the threshold of an era when the opportunity for a good life through increased leisure time is unequaled. Dr. Alexander Reid Martin of the American Psychiatric Association calls this time "the latest and greatest freedom of all."

The basic problem associated with increased leisure time is that it is not inherently good or bad, but has tremendous potential for either. It simply presents a new opportunity to succeed to greater heights or to fall lower. It does not guarantee better individuals or an improved society, but requires the making of choices; to assure wise choices we must provide adequate education and good leadership.

RECREATION

For centuries recreational activities were regarded as significant only because they were thought to restore an individual's energy and enable him to take part again in work. It was the restoration of the power to work that made it valuable, not any significance of its own.

In the first professional textbooks on the theory of recreation and play that appeared in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, recreation was emphasized as a form of human activity that needs no other purpose, and is engaged in primarily for its own sake. The idea was fostered that recreation and play were activities carried on during free time, voluntarily chosen, pleasurable, and not concerned with meeting economic or social goals. However, this view of recreation did not last long. As more and more public and volunteer agencies began to sponsor leisure programs, the conviction grew that recreation should be designed to make a significant contribution to the individual and society. It should be goal oriented and conform to acceptable standards of social morality.

Recreation Defined

Recreation is a term which probably cannot be defined in a manner acceptable to all. Some view it as a *process of involvement* in activities of a great variety through which people achieve their recreational objectives. Others view recreation as a *result* or *outcome* and not a process, and claim that whether recreation actually occurs depends on what happens to the individual, physically, mentally, and emotionally, in

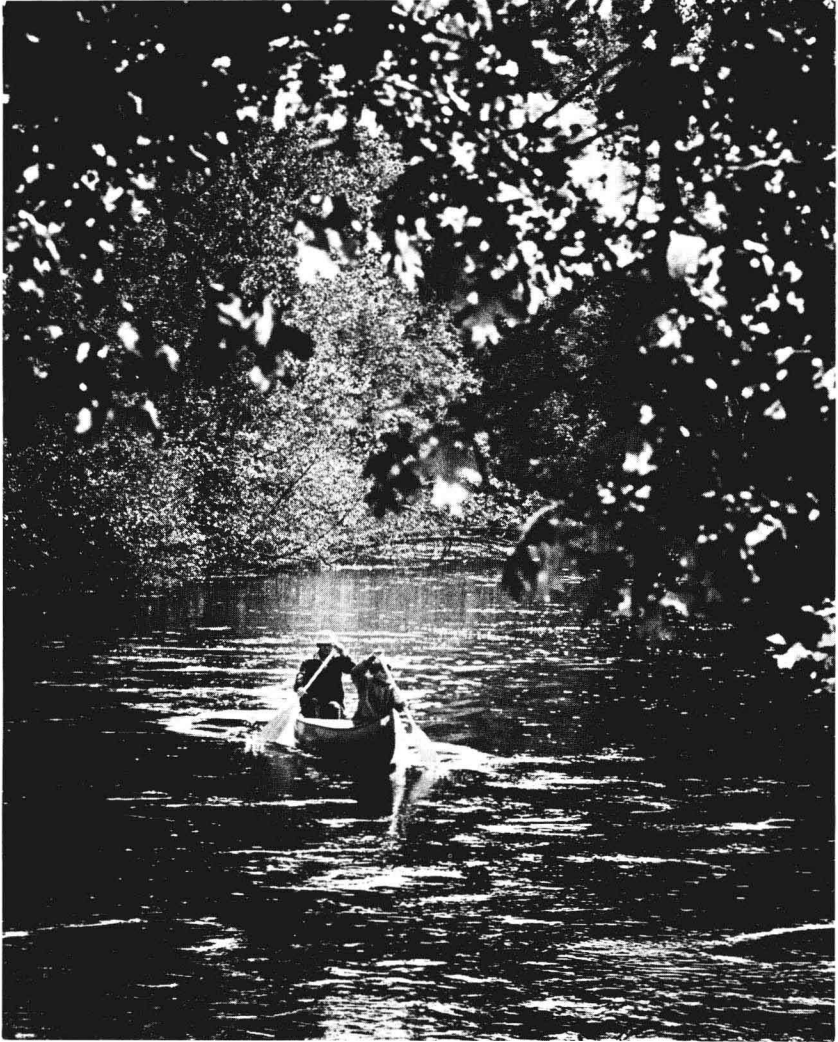


Figure 1. Tranquility can be one of the treasured benefits of leisure. (National Park Service photo.)

other words whether he reaches a recreated state. A basic question then is whether recreation should be defined as a *process* or a *state of condition*.

To the typical man on the street, recreation simply means what we do for fun—our hobbies, amusements, pastimes—the activities that provide pleasure, relaxation, and entertainment during our free time. However, it is important for professionals in recreation and education to be more exact. What we are talking about and what we are dealing with must be clearly understood. We must have some agreement as to what is and what is not included.

Following are some definitions that view recreation as a *process* or *involvement*.

Recreation consists of activities or experiences which are carried on voluntarily in leisure time. They are chosen by the participants either for pleasure or to satisfy certain personal needs. When provided as part of organized community programs, recreation must be designed to achieve constructive goals.¹⁰

Any activity pursued during leisure, either individual or collective, that is free and pleasurable, having its own immediate appeal, not impelled by any immediate necessity.¹¹

Any activity which is not consciously performed for the sake of any reward beyond itself, which is usually engaged in during leisure, which offers man an outlet for his physical, mental, or creative powers, and in which he engages because of inner desire and not because of outer compulsion . . . recreation is any form of leisure time experience or activity in which an individual engages from choice because of the enjoyment and satisfaction which it brings directly to him.¹²

The tendency of some people to describe recreation as a *result* or a *state of condition* is illustrated in the following quote from *Parks and Recreation Magazine*: "We are beginning to rethink what recreation is. In the emerging view, the traditional emphasis of leisure and activities is not central; it is the effect on people that is the core of the definition."¹³ Following are some definitions along this line:

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 dependent on activity, leisure or social acceptance.¹³

Recreation is a feeling of well-being and results from experiences in which the individual receives the pleasurable and gratifying response to the use of his physical, mental or creative powers. In short recreation is the essence of any experience in which the individual directly gains personal enjoyment and satisfaction.¹⁴

There is no need to debate which of the definitions is correct because none of them is incorrect. Certainly recreation can be logically viewed from either of these vantage points. It seems that we most frequently think of recreation as a form of involvement or participation, but certainly we can also correctly think of it in terms of a result or state of condition of the participant.

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David Gray offers a suggestion which somewhat unites the two lines of thinking: "Recreation is the process of engaging in activities during leisure time, with a set of attitudes that makes possible the obtainment of leisure values."¹⁵

Regardless of the viewpoint from which recreation is defined, people generally agree that it has the following specific characteristics:

1. It directly involves the individual for the purpose of achieving individual values.
2. It is entered into voluntarily, usually if not always during leisure time.
3. The motivating force is enjoyment or satisfaction as opposed to material or social gain.
4. It is wholesome to the individual and society.

A Characteristic of Quality

The deeper meaning of the term recreation goes beyond the amusement and hobby concept to include those activities of the highest order of creativity, cultural, and civic values which enrich the lives of human beings and elevate the tone of society. Clear definition and effective perpetuation of this enlarged concept of recreation among recreation professionals and community leaders are critical, because it is a concept of fundamental importance which is already lagging well behind.

The term *recreation* implies that the participant is recreated in some manner, physically, psychologically, spiritually, or mentally; that he becomes refreshed and enriched; that he is revitalized and more ready to cope with the routines and trials of life. Recreation should be clearly distinguished from simple amusement, time fillers and low-quality activities. To qualify as recreation, an experience must do something of a quality nature to the participant.

If we accept the idea that recreation actually recreates the person, then many of the so-called recreational pursuits are not recreation at all, but only time fillers and time wasters, which in many cases are actually detrimental rather than constructive, which fatigue rather than rejuvenate, deplete rather than recreate and actually deprive participants of the enrichment opportunities vital to them.

Experiences that frequently provide recreation take many forms. People enjoy fishing, skiing, singing, photography, dancing, playing a guitar, swimming or going to a good play; nevertheless one person's recreation may be another person's drudgery. Building a boat, for example, can be an ideal form of recreation to one person, whereas to another it would be work. Even with the same individual an activity that is recreational at one time or under certain conditions does not always yield satisfaction which makes it recreation. Sometimes a person feels like playing golf or participating in a square dance group; at other times he prefers a much different form of involvement. When a person is physically fatigued he usually has little need for vigorous

physical recreation. When he is mentally or emotionally fatigued, activities that require heavy concentration are not usually appealing. Recreation can be experienced by a person alone, with a few others or in a large group. In some forms it consists of enthusiastic participation; in others, a quiet relaxation, listening or watching. Recreation often takes the form of diversion and helps to bring one's life into balance.

The appeal of certain forms of involvement varies with age, physical ability, intellectual development, and individual change. With maturity a person's recreation tends to change from simple to more complex, and from frivolous to more serious in terms of defined personal and social objectives. As one's economic status improves his recreation involvement usually changes toward activities which are more sophisticated and socially prestigious. With advanced age the trend is from more active to less active participation, and with increased education people tend toward structured or group-oriented activities.

Dr. James S. Plant, a noted psychiatrist, has pointed out that it is in the doing of a thing rather than in the results it produces that we have the real elements of recreation.¹⁵ In other words an essential characteristic of recreation is that it is an end in itself and has value per se. Dr. Plant further emphasized the fact that "recreation is an integrating experience for the individual because it catches, strengthens and projects his own rhythm." In illustrating this he points to the difference between the tool and the machine. The tool is an expansion of the individual, is subject to his control, and moves at his pace. The machine on the other hand imposes its rhythm on the individual, who must adjust himself to its commands. This is a fundamental difference between the machine age and earlier times of individual craftsmanship.

A recreational experience is truly recreative and valuable on a continuing basis when:

- It is interesting, and artificial motivation is not necessary to arouse interest
- It is fun, and can remain so over a good portion of one's life
- It is refreshing to the body, mind and spirit
- It is engaged in for its own sake and not for some extraneous reward
- It releases energy, tension and emotion
- It provides for human association, recognition, response and understanding
- It leads to other worthwhile interests
- It does not exploit or harm anyone else
- It maintains the participant's dignity and status as a person
- It leads to social sensitivity and cooperation
- It makes life meaningful and well rounded
- It gives one opportunity to spend some time being idle without concern, walking with nowhere to go, thinking without problems to solve, and making things that sometimes have no practical use
- It is its own great reward