

DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY LEISURE SERVICES: An Holistic Approach

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Preface

The complexity and dynamics of community life in contemporary American society require continual evaluation and assessment on the part of administrators in order that they can comprehend the changing needs and requirements of a highly heterogeneous population to sustain a life support system and enhance the quality of life. The challenge confronting the Recreation and Park Movement involves the ability of its leaders to identify and then implement a diversified, flexible and comprehensive leisure service opportunity system which will embrace the needs of all people living on the frontier of a post-industrial society. The integration of human experience is viewed as an important conceptual approach that is necessary to enable the individual to realize one's potentialities within an environment which allows the person to flourish according to unique interests and capabilities, meet individual needs and find his or her own life solution.

The focus of the Recreation and Park Movement in the future appears to be centered on an understanding of the dynamics of community life and *all* aspects of the environment and whether they can be meshed to create a milieu serving a central goal of human development. This book serves to provide an overview of societal events and factors contributing to social change and how these relate to leisure behavior patterns; humanistic philosophical perspective; operational application of useful traditional and innovative approaches to management; political implications of service delivery; and evaluation of community leisure service agencies.

The major challenge in any leisure service agency is "making it happen." We hope that the text will provide a realistic overview of contemporary events and social issues which have an implication

for the operation of public, private and voluntary leisure service programs and through an analysis of community life can furnish a sound philosophical perspective and beneficial "workable" guideline for the operation of leisure service agencies. The text focuses on the recognition of the heterogeneity of community life which requires a varied response through differentiated strategies in providing leisure services; a concomitant need for personnel to look at alternative leadership and management roles and approaches; and an awareness of the interrelationships of the components which make up a community system.

The book is geared primarily to upper division students in leisure studies and park management curricula in community recreation, programming and administration courses. Practitioners seeking new approaches to management may also find the volume of value. We had a mutual interchange of ideas throughout the development and writing of the text and attempted to critically evaluate each other's material throughout the project.

The book is divided into three parts: Section I, Recreation and Leisure: Building a Community Life Support System (including chapters on Leisure as a Segment of Contemporary Society, The Nature of the Recreation Experience, The Meaning of Community, and Human Development as the Primary Goal of Recreation and Leisure Service); Section II, The Dynamics of Managing a Community Recreation and Leisure Service Agency (including chapters on The Setting: The Community as a System, The Delivery of Community Recreation Services and The Program Function); Section III, Summary (includes the chapter, Ecology of Recreation and Leisure Service: New Management Considerations).

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SECTION I

Recreation and Leisure: Building a Community Life Support System

CHAPTER 1

Leisure as a Segment in Contemporary Society

“The provision of community recreation has become a primary source in contemporary American society for fostering individual opportunities for self-expression, mastery and social interaction beyond the social groupings of occupational associations and kinship.”

An Overview of Contemporary American Society

We are on the threshold of a new era, similar to the Protestant Reformation, as we are experiencing a rapid shift in basic, previously unquestioned cultural premises, beliefs and values, and its pervasiveness is impinging upon every aspect of social institutions, custom and ways of life. We have reached a stage in which it has become paramount that everyone be concerned about preserving the earth's habitability and about creating societies conducive to each person achieving the highest degree of self-fulfillment. This includes pre-eminently, an image of man and woman as part of a whole, potentially capable of an awareness in which each person's identity with the whole and their awareness as chooser of the experiences that happen to them, become apparent.

We have experienced at an ever increasing rate the breakdown of conditions requisite to human dignity through fragmentation, perceptual change, ideological and aesthetic bankruptcy, and increasing depersonalization of experience. A massive change of

consciousness has resulted in a revolution of awareness, of values, of life styles, as a counter to alienation and dehumanization of life; indeed it is broader than cultural change, it seems to be part of the evolutionary development toward self-enlightenment. There is a growing recognition that a "Transformation" of human perceiving, feeling and being in personal, social, political and environmental issues must occur if we are to become spontaneous, empathetic, loving, sensitive human beings. Leonard states:

*"Institutions and human consciousness obviously reflect each other; one cannot long maintain a new shape without some kind of shift in the other."*¹

Western society has looked increasingly at Eastern cultures which have kept alive the conceptions of spirituality and social and psychic awareness which are largely in disuse in our own. The transformation to a "New Age" defines wealth, not in terms of acquisition and conspicuous display, but in terms of nature, of process and experience. Jerome warns that there is a need to consider the humanistic value system of the New Age or we may face destruction.

*"The new scarcities are of unobstructed sunlight, clean air and water, uncontaminated foods, honesty and love in human relations, and the body, with all its riches. These commodities are abundant in the world at large and will be so in our culture when the hang-ups, perversions, and unnecessary exploitations of the old culture are eliminated."*²

Culture and Change

The acceleration of change in American society has been unprecedented in the twentieth century. Tremendous social and technological changes, precipitated by advancements in medical science, engineering, computer technology and educational literacy, have had a marked impact on the values, beliefs and knowledge of our American culture. The perceptions of the world at the turn of the century were manifestly concerned about economic security, gaining a measure of material comfort, and achieving a sense of individual identity and prosperity. Contemporary Americans are provided with a reasonable measure of economic security and material affluence. Most people no longer need cope with problems that beset them half a century ago. "Instead the individual faces the hard inner reality of alienation, insecurity, and anxiety, all related to the diminution or even the loss of identity . . . Old values have been eroded, new values develop too slowly to replace the loss effectively."³

A culture oriented five or six decades ago around horse power,

assembly line hardware, rural living, and kinship has been radically transformed into a new society in America dominated by computer software, bureaucracies, television, outer space travel and an instantaneous communication network. Our comprehension of the relationship of people, materials, knowledge and time has created a new consciousness. Kostelanetz states: "the new technologies create a radically different sense of space and a new experience of time . . . change in one dimension capitalizes upon transformations in another until wholly unprecedented potentialities become eminently possible."⁴

A rapidly changing society has created the need for new kinds of understanding and the development of an appropriate value system which will embrace a changed obsession with work to one of at least equal concern with leisure. Sessoms comments on the consequences of this stage of the industrial revolution (one dominated by cybernation) with its emphasis on communication and as a self-correcting mechanism:

*"We are literally creating new time blocks, new residential patterns, new consumptive behavior, and new approaches to life. We are in the midst of a social revolution where the issue is not scarcity but of having so much around us that we know not where to start."*⁵

Sessoms indicates that the first stage of the industrial revolution was identified with mechanization as the central force and in which work was an integrative activity. The second stage of the industrial revolution saw the rise of the corporate society with its organization for mass production; workers became like machines, elements of the assembly line, in which management synchronized the interdependent parts so that the product appeared whole. Workers no longer used machines as an extension of themselves as they became specialists, with accompanying loss of identity as the rhythm of work became the dictate of the production worker, not the laborer.

At present, there appears to be a search for identity — whether it be in work or leisure—a desire for activity and meaningful existence. Prior to the Industrial Revolution Sessoms⁶ indicates that leisure was essentially a philosophical notion. However, in the electric age of the "global village," characterized by more options and more opportunity for diversity, leisure is normally equated with free time. With an abundance of free time, the masses have unprecedented and unequalled access to "the good life" as never known before.

Recreation — A Humanistic Expression

Recreation and leisure service, an integral part of the allied human service profession, reflects the growing humanism, a philosophical justification for providing people opportunities for leisure expression. Humanism reflects a central concern for the dignity and worth of a person and the development of human potentialities. In recreation and leisure service it sees this as the fundamental consideration for human beings — that the individual should have a measure of choice, autonomy and self-determination. Humanistic psychology has become recognized as a “third force” transcending the two main schools of psychology, behaviorism and psychoanalysis. It seeks to study the “healthy personality” and recognize the essence and capacity of all human beings to be unique individuals.

Recreation and leisure service agencies which incorporate a humanistic approach to service would seek to promote the capacity and ability of individuals and groups to grow, to explore new possibilities, and to realize their full potential. For example, the Long Beach, California Recreation Commission, in its 1973–74 Annual Report, captured the essence of the humanistic perspective, by indicating that recreation provided children a sense of wonder, adults a sense of achievement, and senior adults a sense of fulfillment through its various and diverse recreation activities. In other words, recreation serves as a means of human fulfillment.

A humanistic perspective involves facilitation of growth potentials as well as a concern for eliminating barriers which hinder self-development. Typically, social science depicts an image of man and woman in society in relation to a set of institutions which are disposed to serve, control and facilitate human needs. Any conflicts, changes or alternative expressions are usually seen as deviations, not as relevant social processes. A humanistic approach to life seeks to embrace a person's positive capacities, his or her expressions of joy, freedom and self-fulfillment. Humanism is concerned with facilitating a person to become what one is capable of being. It asks, “What are the possibilities of human beings? And, from these possibilities what is an optimum person and what conditions will most probably lead to one's attainment and maintenance of such a state?”

The provision of community recreation has become a primary source in contemporary American society for fostering individual opportunities for self-expression, mastery and social interaction beyond the social groupings of occupational associations and kinship (with its myriad forms). The individual in a technological

society lacks the necessary support from traditional institutions to achieve and maintain self-identity. Rather than confront oneself, the individual submits to the lack of privacy, which is a striking characteristic of American life. The individual seeks identity through identification through a constant shifting of peers, work groups, neighbors and family. However, these temporary and shifting groups can provide only a pseudo-identification and uncertain refuge. Social mobility is a demanding and dynamic opportunity which leaves many people uncertain about themselves. "The person in search of identity must continue to live in a culture that provides no 'pause for transition.'"⁷ Because society will continue to be so unstable and afford the individual with little external support, institutions and agencies will need to provide opportunities for self-appraisal, more intensive social interactions, and experiences which allow the individual to realize personal aspirations.

In a constantly changing and dynamic society, the social fabric of community life has become depersonalized and fragmented for many and various forms of rituals and ceremony have broken down and collapsed altogether. Community life, representative of work, family and leisure, are inseparable components of living and essential ingredients to human life. Leisure involves social interaction, celebration and self-expression. These are not segmented aspects of living; they are a part of life and not antithetical to work and kinship. However, because of the influences of industrialization and technology, which have severed family ties by freeing individuals to express their life styles independently of others and divided and weaned out craftsmanship from work, there is an increasing need for recreation and leisure service agencies to improve the quality of human existence by bringing together the fragmented parts of community life and uniting the shredded and disjointed fusion into a whole.

Background of the Recreation and Park Movement

Recreation and leisure service agencies have historically responded to America's changing social conditions and implemented service approaches to meet the needs of youth, elderly, handicapped and deprived. The challenge of a highly urbanized and technological society will require once again that leisure service agencies alter "traditional" service values and approaches and provide meaningful opportunities to citizens. The disruptiveness of community life has had a marked impact on the human condition.

*"The challenge confronting the recreation movement today involves the ability of its leaders to identify and then implement a diversified, flexible and comprehensive leisure opportunity system which will embrace the needs of people posed by the new frontiers of a post-industrial society."*⁸

The recreation and park movement has progressed through seven stages of professional development. The initial development of organized recreation in the United States occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century by spirited socially concerned individuals, including Joseph Lee in Boston (considered to be the "father" of recreation in the United States), Jacob Riis in New York, and Jane Addams in Chicago (Nobel Peace Prize recipient and founder of the Hull House). These pioneers of the recreation and park movement were motivated primarily by deleterious conditions of urban living and the need to provide underprivileged youth constructive leisure opportunities amidst crowded and impoverished living conditions. According to Neumeyer and Neumeyer the initiation of the play movement (as it was then called) in the late nineteenth century grew out of the following factors impinging upon urban life.

*"It grew out of a situation of need owing to such factors as technological developments, particularly the introduction of modern machinery of production with its monotonous and nerve-racking work; urbanization, especially the overcrowded living conditions in sections of cities; changing home conditions and family disorganization; the speed of living, including increased mobility and daily rushing about; and the increase of leisure."*⁹

The efforts of the early pioneers to provide play opportunities for children and youth came from social and civic workers who provided funds for the establishment of the first playgrounds, community centers and settlement houses. The impetus led to the formation of the YMCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, Boys' Clubs and local governmentally supported recreation programs. Sessoms states:

*"Recreation activities were thought of as a means of building character, installing values, and providing informal teaching. The philosophy and programs of this period were distinctive; recreation was a means to an end — the building of better citizens."*¹⁰

Recreation was thought to be an important wholesome social and personal outlet for young people exposed in metropolitan slum and crowded urban areas to undignified and cheap forms of entertainment and improper delinquent activities. Butler indicates the several related issues which inevitably led to the formalization of an organized recreation movement in 1906.

*"Bad housing conditions resulting from the growth of tenement slum areas, the great influx of immigrants, the rising tide of juvenile delinquency, the increase in factories accompanied by the evils of child labor and unsanitary and unsafe working conditions, the spread of commercialized amusements which were often associated with vice — all helped to create a condition which made the provision of wholesome recreation a necessity."*¹¹

At the same time social group workers were initiating urban recreation programs, conservationists and park planners were busy setting aside open spaces and park areas. They were designed as pleasant, passive surroundings in which people could enjoy leisure at their own pace. The construction of Central Park in New York in 1858, Franklin Park in Boston in 1883, Fairmount Park in Philadelphia in 1867 were examples of the establishment of park areas in large cities to provide relief from the tensions of urban living and opportunities for city dwellers to enjoy "country" living and natural landscape without having to travel long distances outside the city. Such early efforts of park professionals were oriented primarily at providing opportunities for peaceful enjoyment and beautiful surrounding of a naturalistic kind.¹²

The third stage emerged following World War I when the importance of recreation as a necessary and fundamental part of community life was increasingly recognized. Local public authorities were pressured to assume responsibility for the provision of recreation.

*"High governmental officials, prominent organizations, citizens and economists voiced the opinion that public parks and recreation centers were like schools, essential to the health, safety and welfare of the community. State legislatures passed enabling laws empowering municipalities and counties to conduct recreation activities."*¹³

The influence of World War I and the War Camp Community Service is particularly important for the Recreation Movement as over 600 recreation programs were established in communities near military bases. For the first time in many parts of the country recreation activities were conducted for all family members and it was this broadening role of recreation which led to an improved image and the "recreation for all" motto became a symbolic concept as a consequence of wider and more representative recreation opportunities for everyone.

During the 1930's and early 1940's as a result of The Depression and the resulting enforced unemployment, impoverished conditions, and a surplus of free time, recreation became a diversionary instrument of community life for breaking the monotony of poverty. Sessoms comments on its accelerated growth during World War II.

*"This movement toward comprehensive organized recreation was accelerated during World War II, when the need to get away from the tragedy of war increased the demand for activities of amusement and diversion for all groups."*¹⁴

The diversionary approach to community recreation service continued into the 1950's with more comprehensive programs being provided all family members, although the emphasis was still on youth, particularly sports oriented activities.

During the 1960's two notable patterns emerged. First, the tumultuous period of the 1960's was marked by a period of civil unrest and social upheaval and stimulated a return by the recreation and park movement to issues of social concern, particularly as influenced by rioting, youth dissent and racial disorders. It is felt by many that it was not until the decade of the 1960's that the recreation and leisure service field began to give special attention to the complex needs of the poor — especially the non-white poor living in urban slum areas. It was only after several riots and "civil disorders" in many of the nation's cities that the needs of inner-city residents were brought forcefully to the attention of the public. Many of the efforts initiated by municipal recreation departments were typically oriented to providing special summer "crash, cooling off" programs and were partially or totally subsidized by the federal government's Office of Economic Opportunity. The role summer enrichment programs played in the development of recreation expanded service profile in the community, although only a temporary stop-gap effort in many instances, did revitalize its service role "as a means of improving the self-concept of participants, of overcoming apathy, and encouraging community involvement."¹⁵

During this period recreation and leisure service came to be seen as a *threshold* activity which drew participants to other forms of involvement for the purposes of improving community life, organizing neighborhoods for socially constructive activity and an opportunity to actualize their potential for leisure expression. Recreation and leisure service increasingly became equated with the opportunity to improve the quality of life, reduce social disease, nurture constructive human values and generally make communities a better place to live. It became more apparent that recreation experience contributes to individual growth and to social development.

Second, a tremendous increase in outdoor recreation participation occurred which was particularly encouraged through the expansion of state and federal provision for additional camping and water sports opportunities and the promotion of vacation travel.¹⁶