

Dimensions *of* **Leisure** **for Life**

Individuals and Society



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Dimensions *of* Leisure *for* Life

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY



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Preface

Leisure is everywhere in many forms. This book addresses the myriad of ways that leisure can be understood. Most people would rather “find” leisure than “define” it, but the more we understand the dimensions of leisure that contribute to our quality of life and that of our communities, the more likely we are to appreciate leisure.

Leisure is sometimes perceived as insignificant in the large scope of life. When you are asked to board an airplane “at your leisure,” the suggestion is that it’s mostly about relaxing. To some people, leisure means “doing nothing.” On the other hand, leisure means doing a lot of things when we consider all the public, not-for-profit, commercial, and tourism industries around the world that provide many opportunities for leisure activities. Leisure can be serious and an integral part of our lives.

Several years ago a friend of mine was dying of cancer. She told me how fulfilling her life had been with her family and friends and the fun activities and vacations that had been shared. She never once mentioned that she wished she had worked harder or made more money. Assessing her life was about the many leisure connections that had existed. Therefore, although leisure is sometimes trivialized, it offers many opportunities for personal development, as you will see in this book.

This book is aimed toward young people—primarily college students who are taking a general elective class that focuses on an academic examination of leisure. Most of you have had a good deal of experience with leisure in your lives, from the time you were children, when daily “work” was playing, through adolescence, when you participated in structured activities like sports and music or informal opportunities such as interacting with the Internet and listening to music. Often leisure focuses on spending time with friends doing activities or just “hanging out.” We all have a context for leisure. We know what we like and don’t like and learn what we enjoy and do not enjoy. Sometimes people take leisure for granted, and that is not a negative thing. However, as people move beyond formal schooling, leisure sometimes becomes more elusive when full-time paid work and personal relationships take great amounts of time. Therefore, understanding more about the value of leisure and its many opportunities may be useful throughout people’s lives.

Some people have described 18- to 24-year-olds as *emerging adults*. Many of you probably fit that age category. You have the opportunity to hang on to your youth while preparing for adulthood. Different cohorts of people go through this period of development in varying ways. Clearly your lives are different than those of your parents and certainly much different from the lives of your grandparents, when the instantaneous world of communication that you know did not exist. In some ways, the psychosocial elements of the benefits of play, recreation, and leisure remain the same, and yet as emerging adults you will find that many more opportunities are available. Although this book examines leisure through an academic approach, you can link the concepts presented here to your lives if you consider the personal as well as societal aspects of each concept.

The title of this book is *Dimensions of Leisure for Life: Individuals and Society*. Dimensions refer to the scope and importance of leisure for individuals as well as

society. You can relate fairly easily to your personal take on leisure. However, the social impact of leisure, related to economics, health, and the environment, for example, is not as often considered.

The authors of this book explore many of these dimensions. A unique aspect of the notion of leisure is that it emanates from scholarly disciplines, as you will note in the chapters about geography, history, politics, health, economics, and the natural environment. The authors represent different areas of expertise related to these disciplines as they are applied to leisure. All these foundations together highlight how leisure can be viewed from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Many books about leisure were written in the 20th century, with most focusing on the past 40 years when predictions of a leisure society (which, by the way, has never come to fruition) emerged. Some of these books have focused on how recreation and leisure can improve the health and education of different populations. According to a noted leisure sociologist, Geoffrey Godbey, the focus early on was not necessarily on the intellectual aspects of leisure but rather on its moral importance. Another approach to leisure has focused on the social problem of dealing with free time in an industrializing world. This view largely examines leisure as juxtaposed to work as a social phenomenon. Leisure today cuts across both perspectives. Few other books have attempted to examine directly both the personal and social aspects of leisure.

This book is designed to lead you through the meanings of leisure, the vastness of the ideas, and the benefits as well as the negative implications of leisure. Not all leisure activities are good, and we hope this book will highlight the value of leisure as well as some of the concerns that leisure raises. For example, leisure that occurs in the outdoors can have negative environmental impacts. In addition to presenting academic content, the book includes a number of activities designed by the authors to help you experience leisure in different ways. Learning can be a leisure activity, although it is not always perceived in that way. We have tried to show the potential fun of learning experientially through and about leisure.

Part I examines the broad dimensions of leisure. Chapter 1 provides an overview of how leisure has been described as well as the benefits associated with it and an explanation of the broad field called “leisure industries.” Chapter 2 illustrates how leisure can be studied as a social science.

Part II focuses on individuals and their lifestyles related to leisure. Chapter 3 explores how the individual dimensions of leisure affect the quality of people’s lives. Chapter 4 examines how leisure is connected directly to individuals’ health as well as to the health of the public. Chapter 5 looks at leisure’s impact on well-being and how it contributes to many other facets of their lives.

Part III moves beyond an individual perspective to the implications of leisure for society. Chapter 6 explores the history of leisure over the centuries, providing a foundational context for understanding leisure today. Chapter 7 overviews the way leisure fits into contemporary society. Chapter 8 details specific ways that leisure and technology interface. Chapter 9 argues that leisure cannot be sustained if the environment is not considered. Because leisure is big business, the economics of leisure is addressed in chapter 10. Finally, leisure does not just naturally occur nor is it inherently good. Therefore, the interface between politics and public policy is presented in chapter 11.

Part IV focuses specifically on you as a consumer of leisure in all its dimensions. Campus and community leisure resources are described in chapter 12. Chapter 13

discusses the importance of leisure for all regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status, or disability status. Chapter 14 examines the way that the geography of leisure plays into the experience of recreation spaces and places. Chapter 15 relates to life stages and leisure across the life span. The book concludes with chapter 16, which provides specific suggestions about how you can incorporate leisure into your life both today and into the future.

An online student resource (OSR) is also included with this book. Go to **www.HumanKinetics.com/DimensionsOfLeisureForLife** and click on View Student Resources to see supplemental materials for each chapter, such as the glossary list with and without definitions, chapter overviews, Web links, and research and response assignments.

For instructors, we have provided additional online resources, such as an instructor guide, test package, and presentation package. The instructor guide includes chapter overviews, extended learning activities, mini-case studies, and movie recommendations. The test package contains more than 290 questions, including multiple choice, true–false, and short answer. The Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentation package includes slides for each chapter, featuring some of the photos, illustrations, and tables that appear in the book.

We hope that after you read this book you will recognize that leisure is not a trivial matter. It can be examined from numerous perspectives. Making leisure scholarly does not take the enjoyment from it. The ideas of scholarship and enjoyment are not mutually exclusive. We hope that you will have some fun with this book, especially related to some of the activities that are suggested. We also hope that you recognize that leisure may be just as important to study as any other topic that prepares students for a career. One's well-being and quality of life are not trivial issues. Ironically, students spend years preparing for a career that may change a number of times during their lives. Yet, leisure education and quality of life issues are possibilities that last a lifetime. At the least, we hope some of the ideas in this book will help you understand further your own behavior and why leisure should be given its due in our society.

—Karla Henderson



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PART

I

Dimensions *of* Leisure

1

Importance of Leisure to Individuals and Society

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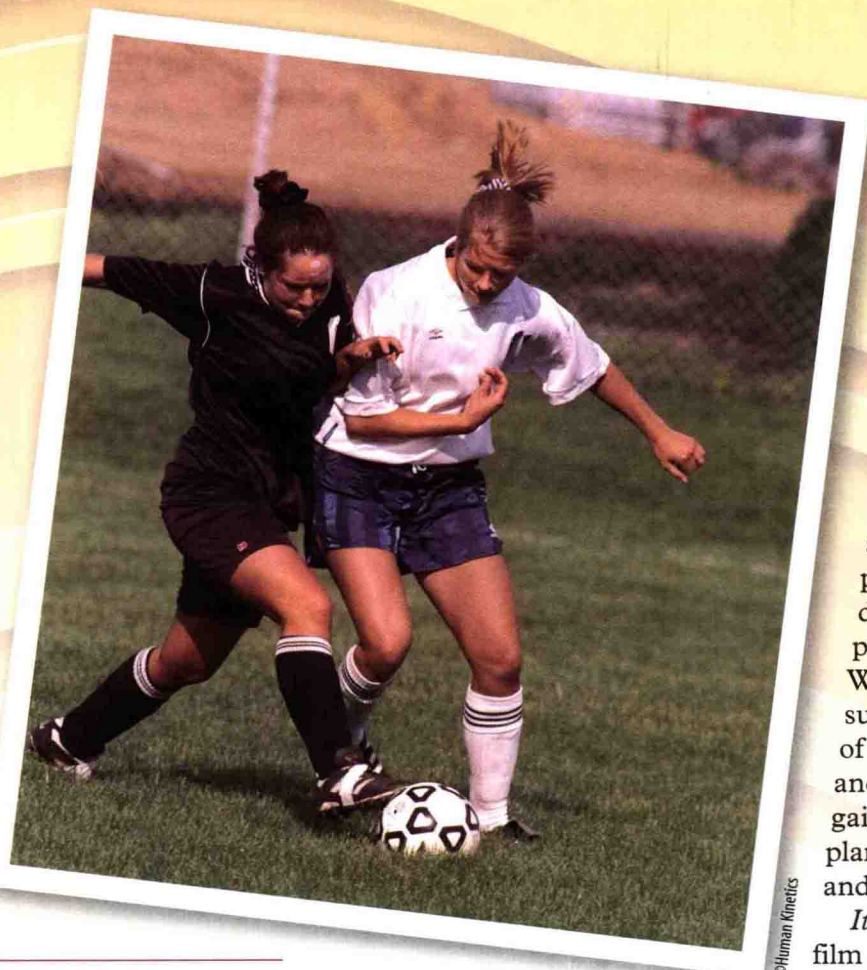
Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- ▶ identify the definition of leisure that is most meaningful for you,
- ▶ list at least five benefits of recreation and leisure,
- ▶ explain the relationship between quality of life and leisure,
- ▶ describe the differences among the three major sectors of the leisure industry, and
- ▶ discuss the constraints to leisure.

Vocabulary Terms

benefits	not-for-profit organizations	sports
commercial recreation	park	sport tourism
cyclical time	parks and natural resources	state of being or state of mind
enjoyment	place	tourists
leisure	play	work
leisure education	quality of life	work ethic
leisure industry	recreation	
linear time	space	



Leisure opportunities abound throughout the world. Pick something you enjoy or have always wanted to try, and jump in!

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Leisure and recreation can be viewed as a right, a privilege, a healthy experience, and a commodity. The world would be a dreary place if people did not have places to play and if organizations such as governments did not set aside space to be used for recreation and the public good. In this chapter, the terms associated with leisure, recreation, and play are discussed; the chapter also discusses the leisure industry, which provides opportunities for recreation. We'll discuss the contributions that leisure and recreation make to the quality of life of individuals and communities and the myriad of **benefits** that can be gained. Regardless of whether leisure is planned or spontaneous, social or solitary, and passive or active, it enriches our lives.

It's a Wonderful Life is a 1946 American film that takes place in the fictional town of Bedford Falls shortly after World War II.

George Bailey is a businessman who has financial difficulties and considers suicide on Christmas Eve. A guardian angel is sent to help him and through a series of flashbacks shows George how many lives he has touched. By seeing what people's lives in his community would have been like without him, George realizes what a difference he has made. This story provides a way of thinking about what the world would be like without recreation and leisure. If opportunities for recreation and leisure did not exist, the world would be quite different, just as it would have been if George Bailey had never existed.

What would life be like if no one had leisure or free time? People would labor all day in the paid workforce. Stay-at-home moms would devote every waking second of their lives to house cleaning and taking care of children. Children would study and do chores at home, with no time to play. People would never retire from their jobs. College students would not be able to watch their favorite athletic events or attend concerts. Technology would be used strictly for work and not for social networking. Fitness equipment manufacturers would not exist, nor would movie theaters and sports complexes.

If people had free time but no recreation places or opportunities, their lives would be diminished. If no park, recreation, sport, arts, or outdoor opportunities existed in the United States, people would have no places to relax outside their homes. Children would have no playgrounds. Picnic areas would not be available. We would have no intramurals, no youth sports, and no baseball, softball, and other team leagues. Where would children learn to swim? Older adults would have no senior centers in which to congregate. Where would families go on vacation when they wanted an opportunity to see the natural wonders of the country? Private individuals with wealth would own the land and keep the general public out.

Musicians would have no place to play. Art would not be available to the public. People would become fatter and lazier because of fewer places to be active. Without recreation and leisure, our world would be a radically different place.

Fortunately, most people value their leisure and have access to a variety of recreation opportunities in their communities and throughout the United States. Many people take these opportunities for granted, but without them adults' and children's quality of life would be greatly diminished. The **leisure industry** is huge not only in the United States but throughout the world. Recreation, parks, tourism, sports, and other leisure opportunities are ubiquitous. However, the meanings of these opportunities and the values they provide require further exploration.

PERSONAL LEISURE

Think about what leisure opportunities you have had during the past month. Would you say you had too little, too much, or just the right amount of leisure time? What would you do if you had more time for leisure? Is having leisure a priority in your life? What are the priorities in your life?

What are your favorite things to do during your leisure? What are the primary leisure activities of your parents or grandparents? Are your preferred leisure activities like or unlike theirs? What would you say were the primary leisure activities of other students at your university during the past month? Are your leisure preferences like or unlike theirs?

DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

In a research study I once undertook, one of my interviewees announced that “finding leisure is much more important than defining leisure.” That statement rings true. However, to understand leisure and its components, common understandings are needed through definitions. Note that *understandings* is plural because there is no single meaning of the terms associated with leisure and recreation. Recognizing the ways that scholars have used the words in research as well how these words have been described in daily lives may be useful. Such understandings allow researchers to measure phenomena such as the amount of free time people have or the economic value of an activity such as sport tourism and help us determine whether opportunities meet the expectations of participants. The following terms are discussed next to establish some common understandings: *leisure, recreation, parks and natural resources, tourism, commercial recreation, sports, play, work, space, and place*.

**To be able to fill leisure intelligently
is the last product of civilization.**

*Arnold Toynbee (British economic historian
and social reformer)*

Leisure

Leisure is probably the most nebulous of these ideas and has been subject to many interpretations related primarily to use of free time, participation in recreational activities, and state of mind. Leisure is often associated with social and cultural contexts of life as well. When some people think of leisure they think of “doing nothing,” which in a work-oriented society



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For many people, leisure activities double as a social experience.

puts leisure in a negative light. In my research, I ask women to tell me about their leisure. Often they reply that they have none, and yet they go on to describe the enjoyable times they have with friends or the super family vacation they had the previous summer. Leisure obviously is not understood in the same way by everyone nor can the concept be limited to a single definition.

As an experience interpreted by individuals within varied contexts, leisure during the 20th century has typically been discussed from three approaches: time, activity, and state of mind. In the postmodern 21st century, the approaches to and applications of leisure are expanding, as you will read about in all the chapters of this book.

Some individuals view leisure as a period of time they call free or unobligated time. Time exists as cyclical and linear. In **cyclical time**, people organize themselves around cycles or recurring events from the natural world, such as the year's seasons. **Linear time**, on the other hand, is ordered around specific beginning and ending points and is how time has been structured in the industrial and technological world. Linear time is given meaning by its applications, and thus people use calendars or PDAs to keep track of classes, tasks, and appointments. Leisure as free time emphasizes how time is used. Furthermore, defining leisure as free time defines leisure in terms of what it is not (i.e., leisure is not work) rather than what it is (i.e., an opportunity for something).

Some people see leisure as earned activities that generally occur outside paid or unpaid work activities. It's the idea that you probably heard as a child: "You can go out and play once your homework is done." The activities undertaken in leisure are generally associated with recreation and are pursued mainly for **enjoyment** or fun. **Recreation** activities can be categorized into groups that share important characteristics, such as competitive sports, cooperative games, outdoor endeavors, cultural pursuits, and socializing (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Leisure described as recreational activity is usually measured by the distribution and frequency of participation in specific activities.

Other people conceive of leisure as an attitude, a psychological construction, or a state of being related to personal experiences. The amount of free time can be counted quantitatively as can the number of activities a person pursues. Psychological experiences or state of mind, however, have distinct qualitative connotations. For example, leisure as a state of mind connotes that it is freely chosen, not compulsory, and is done for its own sake (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and not