

Part I

Foundations for Programming

This book is predicated on the notion that programmers facilitate individuals' engagements in leisure experiences. To accomplish this, programmers must understand how leisure is experienced in social occasions, how to design programs to facilitate leisure experiences, and how leisure service organizations manage the development of recreation program services.

In Part I, a foundation for successful programming is developed. In the first chapter of this part, Chapter One, basic concepts of programming and operational definitions of leisure behaviors are explained. Chapter Two contains a discussion of social science theory that explains leisure behavior. This is one of the more difficult chapters in the book, but understanding its content is necessary to guide the professional programmer's development and management actions throughout the steps of the Program Development Cycle. The material in Chapter Three flows from the discussion in Chapter Two. The generic structure of the situated activity systems, in which leisure experiences occur, is explained in this chapter. Chapter Four explains the basic theory and practice of Benefits-Based Programming (BBP). Chapter Five is a discussion about how leisure service products may be packaged for distribution and sale. In Chapter Six, a method for developing goals and objectives that can organize and guide the development of leisure services in an organization is explained. At the end of this section is a two page diagram of the Program Development Cycle. Margin notes next to the diagram briefly explain the Cycle. A more complete explanation may be found on the supporting web site (www.recreationprogramming.com); however, each of the remaining chapters in the book explains the steps in the Cycle.

Chapter 1: Basic Programming Concepts

Chapter 2: How Individuals Experience Leisure

Chapter 3: Six Key Elements of a Situated Activity System

Chapter 4: Benefits-Based Programming

Chapter 5: Developing Leisure Service Products

Chapter 6: Using Goals and Objectives in Program Development





Beach Volleyball at the International Sea Festival, Long Beach, CA
Photograph courtesy of Long Beach Parks, Recreation & Marine
Photograph by Vic Sagers

Basic Programming Concepts

The ultimate goal of programming is to facilitate leisure experiences for program patrons. Accomplishing this requires that the programmer learn the concepts that tie together experiencing leisure, the definition of a program, the act of programming, and the management activities that must be implemented in an agency to produce programs (Rossman & Edginton, 1989).

PROGRAMMING CONCEPTS DEFINED

PROGRAM

A program is a designed opportunity for leisure experience to occur. Program is an elastic concept used to describe a variety of different operations, including activities, events, or services conducted by leisure service organizations. The term program can refer to a single activity, such as a bike ride or a class operated over several weeks. It can refer to a collection of activities, such as the cultural arts classes operated by an organization. It can refer to a single event, such as a softball skill workshop or a week-long festival. It can refer to the services offered by an agency, such as a drop-in auto hobby shop or a desk selling discount tickets to area events. It can also refer to the total set of operations offered by an agency, including all of its activities, events, and services. Any of these may be called a program.

This definition is broad and is intended to include more than typical programs organized with a face-to-face leader. The key point is the notion of design, in which the programmer conceptualizes a leisure experience and intervenes in some way to facilitate it for the patron. In some instances this intervention may be minimal, but in others it may be near total. The intervention may be through face-to-face leadership, a designed physical environment, or the regulation of leisure behavior through the development and enforcement of policies. Design always involves planned intervention, regardless of its type or magnitude.

Two assumptions in this definition need further explanation. First, the notion of design assumes that we know how leisure is construed and experienced by individuals (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) and that we can intervene to facilitate its occurrence. Second, it assumes that we know the attributes of the leisure experience, that is, we know why individuals label

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KEY TERMS

Program
Programming
Program
Development
Leisure
Recreation
Games
Play
Sport

“**The ultimate goal of programming is to facilitate leisure experiences for program patrons.**”

“...leisure is construed by how a participant processes his or her experiences of a program and interprets what has occurred.”

some experiences as leisure but not others. The ability to program requires a thorough knowledge of both the process of experiencing leisure and the outcomes that define the experience. This knowledge will be introduced in the appropriate sections throughout the book.

Leisure is not a set of identifiable activities, events, or services. The attributes that make them leisure experiences are not inherent in the activities, events, or services that are usually called leisure. Rather, leisure is construed by how a participant processes his or her experiences of a program and interprets what has occurred (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Kelly, 1987; Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1999). Modern programming is also more than simply searching for the most popular activity that can be offered. Programmers must understand that leisure is a state of mind most likely experienced when participants enter freely-chosen programs that enable them to achieve realistic personal goals by consciously directing interaction in a social occasion. Samdahl (1988) said, “Leisure can be viewed as a distinctive pattern of perceiving and relating to ongoing interaction. That is to say, leisure is a particular definition of a situation” (p. 29). Thus, a program provides an opportunity for leisure to occur but cannot ensure that it does, since this ultimately depends on how a patron experiences the event and interprets his or her participation.

PROGRAMMING

Programming is designing leisure opportunities by intervening in social interaction, that is, by manipulating and creating environments in a manner that maximizes the probability that those who enter them will have the leisure experiences they seek. Individuals achieve satisfaction from a leisure experience depending on how they guide and interpret their participation in the leisure occasion. Because the programmer understands what patrons must experience to construe an experience as leisure and how this experience is produced through social interaction, a program that facilitates (i.e., increases) the probability of a leisure experience occurring can be designed. This is a key notion. The practice of all professions, including a leisure service provision, is predicated on information developed through the scientific method and then applied to practical problems.

Designing social interactions that will facilitate the leisure experience must be based on knowledge about experiencing leisure and how it is produced in social occasions. Kelly (1999) has suggested that all definitions of leisure presuppose that it occurs in an action context: “Something happens in directing attention, processing information, defining meaning, and producing the experience” (p. 136). He goes on to say, “The distinctive element of leisure action is that it is focused on the experience rather than external outcomes. It is engaged in primarily for the experience of the action” (p. 136). It is the responsibility of the programmer to design programs with participation processes that will facilitate participants’ opportunities to engage in actions that will result in a leisure experience. Thus, how a program is operated is more important to facilitating a leisure experience than the specific activity itself.

Furthermore, modern programmers must understand that leisure is a multiphase experience (Stewart, 1999) and plan for total participation by including the three phases of human experience—anticipation,

“...leisure is a multiphase experience...”

Exercise 1-1: Comparing Programming Concepts

Compare the definitions of program, programming, and program development.

- How do the three concepts differ?
- What is the role of the programmer in each of them?

participation, and reflection (Busser, 1993; Little, 1993). Good programming, then, is designed intervention based on knowledge about social interaction and the social psychology of experiencing leisure.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Program development is the overall management process in which the programmer designs, manages, and delivers program services within the context of a specific agency. It includes understanding and developing an agency's mission, assessing needs, designing programs, delivering them, and evaluating them to document the benefits that have been provided, as well as to determine their future. All programs are delivered by some type of organization. Therefore the programmer must learn to manage program services successfully within an organizational context. Successful program development results in programs that meet the needs of the agency, patrons, and the community. Programming is one key function in program development. The overall process of program development is diagrammed in the Program Development Cycle (p. 90-91 in this volume). Now complete Exercise 1-1.

Leisure, play, recreation, games, and sport must be programmed differently.

DEFINITIONS OF RELATED CONCEPTS

Concepts we use influence how we act. The linguistic labels attached to various forms of human behavior shape our attitudes and actions. The lack of precise definitions in the recreation and leisure field is often a cause of concern to new students. This book offers concepts necessary to understand and accomplish programming: *leisure, play, recreation, games, and sport*. Each concept refers to a different type of leisure experience; therefore, each must be programmed somewhat differently. This section will discuss the concepts in relationship to each other in order to help clarify their meanings.

Kelly (1983) contends that leisure is central to today's society. He states that leisure is "crucial life space for the expression and development of selfhood, for the working out of identities that are important to the individual. [It is] . . . central to the maintenance of the society itself as a social space for the development of intimacy" (p. 23). Driver, Brown, and Peterson (1991) take the position that multiple behaviors or experiences (Stewart, 1999) are included under the concept of leisure. Leisure, then, is the broadest concept (Neulinger, 1981), encompassing play, recreation, games, and sport, each of which can be viewed as a form of leisure that can be distinguished by more specific, defining characteristics.

Leisure

Leisure has been defined in several different ways. Six types were identified by Murphy (1974): classical leisure, leisure as discretionary time, leisure as a function of social class, leisure as form of activity, antiutilitarian leisure, and a holistic concept of leisure. Neulinger (1974) suggested that all definitions of leisure are either quantitative or qualitative and concluded that leisure is a state of mind characterized primarily by perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation. Often, the discipline training of the individual defining leisure will influence the definition. Thus, we have definitions provided by economists, sociologists, psychologists, and social psychologists.

The perspective used throughout this book is that leisure is a social experience constructed through interaction in social occasions (Iso-Ahola, 1999; Samdahl, 1988). Iso-Ahola emphasized this point by stating that “leisure studies is a human service field in which social interaction is the main ingredient” (1980, p. 7). Samdahl (1992) found that over 50 percent of the occasions labeled as leisure by those involved included some type of social interaction. Hamilton-Smith (1991) has also assumed leisure is best understood as a social construct that can be defined in a variety of ways, including leisure as time, leisure as action, leisure as action within time and space, and leisure as experience.

Leisure is an experience most likely to occur during freely chosen interactions characterized by a high degree of personal engagement that is motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction that is expected to result. After a first reading, this definition may seem relatively simple, but it incorporates three complex concepts: freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, and engagement.

Freedom has been a central defining element of leisure since man first contemplated the meaning of leisure. Modern research has confirmed the primacy of freedom (Iso-Ahola, 1999). Freedom from something and freedom to have or do something have been primary themes of leisure definitions (Sylvester, 1987). In our society, the obligations of work, family, friends, civic duties, and so forth can obscure the meaning of “freely chosen” or “free choice,” or at least make it more difficult to sort them out. Some leisure occasions are determined by the degree to which they free individuals from social role constraints (Samdahl, 1988). The “freedom from” notion, then, occurs in situations where one is freed from social role constraints to explore and accomplish something.

The other operant condition is freedom to have “a sense of opportunity and possibility (Kleiber, 1999, p. 3).”. The notion of freely choosing something can only be determined from the perspective of the individual making the choice. Thus, the notion of freedom is a matter of individual perception (Neulinger, 1981). The evidence suggests that individuals must believe that they could have chosen not to do an activity before it meets the test of being freely chosen (Kelly, 1982). As Patterson and colleagues have explained, (1998) “Situating freedom is the idea that there is a structure in the environment that sets boundaries on what can be perceived or experienced, but that within those boundaries recreationists are free to experience the world in highly individual, unique, and variable ways” (p. 425–426).

Programmers should remember that leisure must be freely chosen from the perspective of the individual making the choice. Those individu-

“...leisure is a social experience constructed through interaction in social occasions.”

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als must perceive that they have options and choices in a program in order to explore, move forward in their own personal stream of experience, and to “become something new” by participating in a novel experience, that is, one that is experienced in this way for the first time. Freedom experienced in this manner creates a unique condition for an optimal, self-actualizing experience to occur (Csikszentmihalyi & Kleiber, 1991).

Thus, freedom plays a functional role in construing the leisure experience. Although optimal experiences may occur in other spheres of life, they are more likely to do so when the conditions of freedom just explained occur. Over-programming, by providing too much structure to an occasion, will leave the participant few or no choices. This may destroy the very experience the programmer is trying to facilitate.

Intrinsic satisfaction is the second major dimension of leisure. Psychologists have used several different terms to describe participating in this experience, including autotelic activities, arousal-seeking behavior, and optimal experience. “The key element of an optimal experience is that it is an end in itself,” writes Csikszentmihalyi (1991, p. 67); it is intrinsically satisfying. The behavior associated with pursuing intrinsically satisfying activities has also been called “arousal-seeking behavior,” based on the need to maintain optimal arousal. This theory was proposed by Ellis (1973) and assumes that people are not normally quiescent; rather, they seek and act to increase stimulation.

Intrinsically satisfying activities provide satisfaction through the interactive engagement itself, and that satisfaction provides sufficient motivation for the individual to continue participating. Thus, no external reward is necessary. The feedback received from such participation indicates that what is occurring is congruent with one’s goals, thereby strengthening and validating the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). This affords a freedom from concern with oneself that frees one to focus psychic energy more intensely on the demands of the current interactive engagement. These engagements both demand and consume one’s complete, focused attention. The motivation to participate in interaction to seek this experience is powerful and real (Neulinger, 1981).

Programmers should understand how this occurs. Unfortunately, intrinsic satisfaction is not wholly contained within activities themselves. In fact, people similarly describe their optimal experiences in different activities, and their descriptions are consistent across sociological and cultural variables (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Iso-Ahola, 1999). So, it is not a matter of prescribing a list of intrinsically satisfying activities and expecting individuals to find intrinsic satisfaction in them.

Intrinsic satisfaction is a personally interpreted perception of a specific situation that is construed through interaction in a social occasion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Samdahl, 1988; Shaw, 1985; Unger, 1984). Individuals’ past experiences and current expectations help them determine whether or not an activity is intrinsically satisfying. What arouses an individual today is part of a stream of interactions between the individual’s natural abilities and previous experiences. Participants will conclude that they were intrinsically motivated when programs provide opportunities for developing competence, self-expression, self-development, or self-realization (Mannell, 1999). Different individuals find different activities intrinsically satisfying because of factors such as their own skill levels in an activity, their level of socialization into it, and the previous opportunities and experiences they have had with it.

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“**Intrinsic satisfaction is a personally interpreted perception of a specific situation that is construed through interaction in a social occasion.**”

To experience leisure one must engage in, interpret, and have a role in affecting the outcome of the event.

The programmer provides form and structure to create a situated activity system that facilitates a leisure experience.

Although these factors initially influence their likelihood of participating, their interpretation of the interactions in an activity on a given day will determine whether or not it is a leisure experience for them.

Thus, how an activity is operated and how an individual interprets his or her participation in it are more important in determining whether or not an individual will have a leisure experience than the activity type, e.g., softball, oil painting, and so on. Programmers need to devote more attention to how activities are operated rather than continually searching for the perfect activity that will provide a leisure experience.

Finally, to experience an event requires, at a minimum, that one engage in and interpret it. Leisure occurs in an action context. As Kelly (1999) writes, “Something happens in directing attention, processing information, defining meaning, and producing results” (p. 136). Experiencing is more than a passive state of mind; it denotes processing and ordering information in one’s consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Kelly, 1990). That is, one must engage in it. Leisure is more likely to occur when individuals play an active role in organizing and self-directing outcome, i.e., they have the opportunity for positive affect (Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1992; Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986). Ajzen and Driver (1992) reported that “perceived behavioral control” improved their ability to predict leisure behavior, again verifying the importance of having control over outcomes of the leisure experience. Thus, leisure experiences are those that are both interpreted in a specific way and are self-directed. People experience leisure by active engagement in and interaction with various combinations of elements in an environment; they thereby have the perception that they are directing the outcome of the event and are thus the cause of an act. When this type of engagement results in experiences that are enjoyable, fun, or pleasurable, the event is more likely to be construed as leisure (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997).

This engagement can be as simple as reading a book and interpreting its meaning. In this case, the interpretation is being self-directed by the reader. It can also include participating in a lively social discussion with friends or family. Participating in rule-bounded games and sports also provides a significant number of opportunities for self-directed social interaction and self-directed outcomes. Overall, then, to experience leisure, an individual must freely choose to engage in an environment and perceive that this engagement provides intrinsic satisfaction that both rewards and sustains the engagement. Intrinsic satisfaction partly results from experiences that provide opportunities for positive affect, that is, self-directing the outcome of engagement. Experiencing leisure is something that individuals do, not something programmers do to individuals. Neulinger (1981) has insisted that leisure is not a noun, but a verb that implies action, process, and experience. Leisure is something to be consciously processed and experienced, not something that is acquired and possessed. It occurs in a social context with form and structure, that is, it is situated action (Kelly, 1999). In designing a program, the programmer is providing selected elements of a situation and thereby specifying form and structure for the leisure occasion. It is the programmer’s responsibility to provide the proper form and structure, thereby situating an activity system that facilitates a leisure experience. The notion of a *situated activity system* will be developed further in subsequent chapters.

GAMES

Games are leisure experiences with formal rules that define the interactional content, attempt to equalize the players, and define the role that skill and chance will play in determining the outcome. Formal rules create an unknown or problematic outcome, the resolution of which can only be achieved by playing the game. This applies to table games, athletic contests, and other gaming situations.

Games are rule bounded, and the rules delineate the arena of focused reality that will be addressed during the gaming occasion (Goffman, 1961). Games are popular leisure experiences because the rules of a well-constructed game create an area of focus with a high probability for a leisure experience. To create this focus, rules must clearly define the gaming encounter and the role that skill and chance will play in determining the outcome.

Game rules must define the focus of the contest and exactly what is being contested. A game winner should have exhibited more of the particular skill being contested in the game than have other participants. In some games, the rules minimize the role of chance and maximize the effect of skill on the gaming outcome.

On the other hand, chance is solely responsible for the outcome of some games. For example, the winner of “Chutes and Ladders,” a popular children’s game, is determined entirely by chance. Thus, parents often play the game with young children who are not able to play a game of strategy or skill. In a game whose outcome is determined entirely by chance, the players are immediately made equal—each is equally dependent on chance.

Some games require a mixture of skill and chance. This mixture is characteristic of many table games that must sustain interest among players with unequal levels of skill. “Trivial Pursuit” is a good example. No matter how many questions are answered, a lucky roll of the die is still necessary to land a token in the final winning position. A more highly skilled player can answer many more questions than other players and still lose the game because of unlucky rolls of the die.

The element of chance in a game is usually implemented with the toss of a coin, the roll of dice, or the use of some type of spinning device. More complex contests may begin with a coin toss or some other mechanism for determining the order of play or an initial position. In football, for example, the winner of a coin toss may choose which end of the field to defend, or to receive or kick the ball to start the game. Depending on weather conditions, this choice can affect the outcome of the game. Nonetheless, it is a matter of chance, unrelated to any of the skills that football is supposed to test. The use of chance, then, as a major determinant of the gaming outcome is often used to make unequal players equal, or to determine initial advantage totally unrelated to any game skill.

Game rules define the skills that will be contested and the role that skill and chance will play in determining the outcome. Leisure service professionals must understand the function of rules in games, because much game programming involves modifying rules or facilities to allow those with insufficient skills to participate.

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“*A good game is different every time you play it.* (V. Postrel, 1998, p.180)”

RECREATION

Recreation is leisure that is engaged in for the attainment of personal and social benefits. Recreation has always been characterized as socially purposeful and moral; that is, it incorporates a rightness and a wrongness. Hutchison (1951) stated that “Recreation is a worthwhile, socially accepted leisure experience that provides immediate and inherent satisfaction to the individual who voluntarily participates . . . ” (p. 2) . Jensen (1979) also commented on the inherent morality of recreation when he said that “in order to qualify as recreation, an activity must do something desirable to a participant” (p. 8). Recreation is considered to have a specific moral purpose in society.

Recreation has always been viewed as restoration from the toil of work. De Grazia (1964) assumed this view when he wrote, “Recreation is activity that rests men from work, often by giving them a change (distraction, diversion), and restores (re-creates) them for work” (p. 233). He credited recreation with having social significance by functionally relating it to work: Recreation is instrumental to work, because it enables individuals to recuperate and restore themselves in order to accomplish more work.

Recreation is not only good for individuals—it is also good for society. Recreation has been used as a diversion from government repression, war, economic depression, congested urban conditions, and so forth.

Recreation always has a morality associated with it, and there are good and bad forms of recreation. For example, drug use is considered morally degenerative. Therefore, to a recreation professional, the notion of “recreational drug use” is not possible.

Moreover, organizations that provide recreation services are viewed as social institutions that espouse the positive aspects inherent in the recreation activities they offer. Specific moral ends or purposes are usually attributed to providers such as municipal recreation agencies, churches, the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the armed services, and other similar organizations. More recently, recreation programs for at-risk youth have been developed to combat exposure to adverse social conditions and the general lack of positive opportunities.

Thus, recreation is a specific form of leisure behavior that is characterized as having a pervasive morality. It is an institutionalized form of leisure that is manipulated to accomplish socially desirable goals and objectives that are often defined by the sponsoring agency. It is the form of leisure behavior that programmers most often try to facilitate. In developing recreation programs, the programmer is often expected to go beyond providing a leisure experience and to also intervene to accomplish some additional socially purposeful goal.

PLAY

Play is leisure with the childlike characteristics of spontaneity, self-expression, and the creation of a nonserious realm of meaning. As a specific form of leisure, play has further defining characteristics.

Play incorporates a dualism that distinguishes it from the real world. Play involves a lack of seriousness in which interaction is free flowing, and it progresses from place to place and takes on new forms as focus, needs, and demands shift (Denzin, 1975). It is an expansive interactional form that is not guided by conventional rules of interaction. Hunnicutt

“Recreation always has a morality associated with it...”

“Play is the most spontaneous form of leisure behavior...”

(1986) has suggested that “Play may well be one of those things that we do to understand other things and to create a truth” (p. 10).

Play is the most spontaneous form of leisure behavior, and its occurrence depends totally on the consent and conscious participation of the players. Lynch (1980) has shown that players recognize and signal each other when interactions shift into a play mode. The inconsequential nature of play establishes for the player a sense of self and reality that cannot otherwise be attained in daily life. To “play with” an object, person, or an idea is to experience the meaning of the object, person, or idea in a fundamentally new way. Because of this, play is one of the most difficult forms of leisure to program.

SPORT

Sport is leisure that involves institutionalized competitive physical activity. It can be thought of as a game whose rules require physical competition. Many programmers are engaged in organizing sport competitions and managing sport venues.

In defining sport, one is faced with the question of professional athletes, i.e., is their participation leisure? Pragmatically, very few individuals are employed as athletes, although they are highly visible and well known to the wider population. Not completely resolving this issue does not influence a large number of individuals. Nevertheless, most sport scholars include professional athletes in the rubric of sport participation. For our purposes, we will assume that whether someone is paid or unpaid, it is the experience the athlete has while participating that determines whether or not an event, including participation in sport, is leisure.

Three key concepts define sport: physical exertion, rules, and competition of physical skills. Most academics who have studied sport agree that it includes only those activities that require physical exertion. They do not include activities such as card playing, chess, and others under the rubric of sport. In our sedentary world, the need to expend physical energy is one of the unique attributes of sport that separates it from everyday life.

Rules are a second attribute that define the sporting event and regulate participation: “The essence of sport lies in its patterned and regulated form. Through the social process of institutionalization—the formalizing and standardizing of activities—sport is regulated” (Leonard, 1998, p. 13). In addition to rules for actual competitions, sport as an institution is also regulated by league rules. The modification and enforcement of rules often becomes the focus of sport, attracting as much attention from the sport media and fans as the competitions themselves. Owners of professional teams will spend many hours contemplating rule changes. One is reminded of the use of instant replay in professional football. First it was not used, although the technology was available. Then it was used but later dropped. Now it is being used again in a more limited fashion.

Most sports are games with rules that function like the game rules previously discussed, except that all sport games involve physical exertion and are contests of physical skills. Rules affect the character of a game, including the strategies used to compete and the skills that may be needed to participate. Rules often differ for collegiate versus professional competitions or national versus international competitions. Programming sporting competitions will inevitably involve the programmer in rule discussions as teams try to manipulate rules to

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“Three key concepts define sport: physical exertion, rules, and competition of physical skills.”

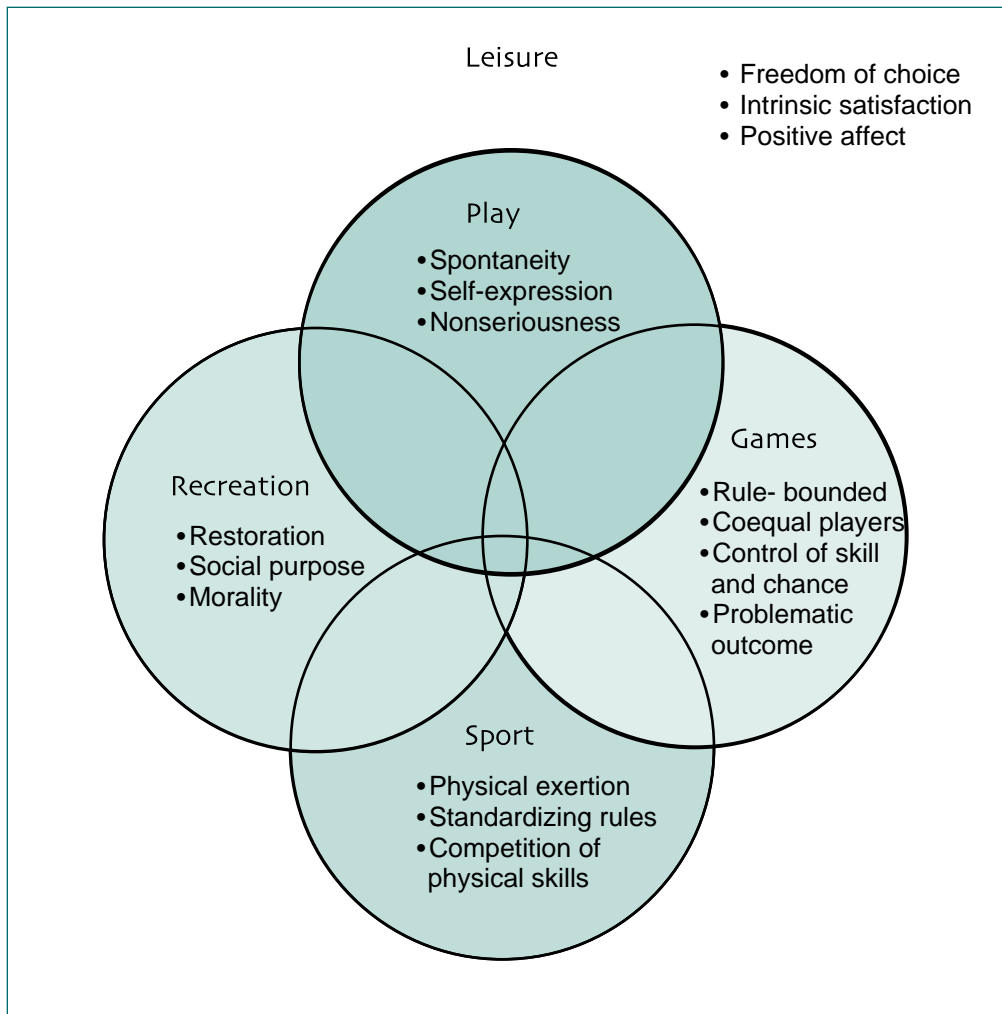


Figure 1-1: Relationships Among Central Definitions of Leisure, Recreation, Play, and Games

assure themselves of a competitive advantage on the playing field.

The final attribute of sport is that it involves a competition of physical skills. The rules of each sport require participants to possess and showcase specific physical skills, e.g., eye-hand coordination (table tennis), flexibility (gymnastics), strength (weight-lifting), endurance (marathon running). The most popular sports, such as basketball, football, baseball, and hockey, require athletes to possess multiple physical skills in various combinations to succeed. Often, programmers will be involved in developing rule modifications to accommodate participation of individuals in sport who possess less physical skill than needed to compete successfully in open competitions.

A significant amount of association with sport in the United States involves individuals watching others participate in sport, i.e., being a *sports fan*. This type of involvement does not, of course, provide the

Exercise 1-2: Programming Leisure Experiences

In class, discuss the differences among programming sport, play, games, and recreation.

- How do the differences among these four forms of leisure demand different programming approaches?
- Which of these four forms of leisure is the most difficult to program?
- Why?

benefits or challenges of actually participating in sport. In general, it is not part of a programmer's daily tasks, except for contending with sport fans who attend sporting events organized by the programmer and occasional trips that may be organized to attend sporting events.

Additionally, much of a recreation programmer's time may be spent in organizing participation in youth sports. In many cases, the programmer will be working with adult groups who organize and operate youth sports. Currently, the focus of programmers in operating youth sports has been to improve the skills of adults coaching youth and to deal with the behavior of parents who attend youth sport games. The behavior of parents at youth sporting events has become a national problem. To ensure that children may play in a nonthreatening environment, agencies have instituted various regulating policies and practices such as "Silent Sundays," where parents are not allowed to cheer, or mandatory sportsmanship classes for parents (if mom or dad do not attend, the youngster may not play; Eng, 1999).

PROGRAMMING IMPLICATIONS

Leisure is considered the most general and encompassing concept; recreation, play, games, and sport are viewed as specific forms of leisure. The central defining concepts of each leisure form and its relationship to others is illustrated in Figure 1-1 on page 12. The boundaries of each form overlap, illustrating the nebulous character of each form of leisure. For example, game rules are often structured to allow players to play in a spontaneous, free-flowing, and creative manner. Nonetheless, when game players serendipitously discover a new move or game strategy that gives them an advantage, rules are modified to quash it or to accommodate it within the rule structure of the game.

When recreation activities are programmed, they are often made to appear as much like leisure as possible: perceptions of free choice and intrinsically rewarding activities are included in the program. However, the programmatic goals of the agency sponsoring and operating a program may foster an activity structure that does not permit ongoing freedom of choice in the activity. The use of prescriptive programming methods such as Benefits-Based Programming can lead to highly structured programs that impose the agency's desired outcome on participants. Programmers need to realize the central concepts of each of these forms of leisure and should design and operate programs that

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“Programming is the central focus of the leisure service profession and the primary mission of leisure service organizations.”

are least obstructive to participant’s desired experiences. Programmers often are faced with the situation in which the best programmatic manipulation is simply to avoid destroying the experience desired. In this case, the programmer must understand the experience and make sure that the design or operation of a program does not have built-in blocks to the leisure experience desired by the participant or intended by the agency. Now complete Exercise 1-2 on page 13.

CONCLUSION

Programming is the central focus of the leisure service profession and the primary mission of leisure service organizations. Programmers provide opportunities for leisure to occur. Leisure is the primary social space in modern society for exercising free choice and the development of self. Leisure occurs through interactions in social occasions that are characterized by perceived freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, and opportunities to experience positive affect. Recreation, games, play, and sport are all specific forms of leisure with additional defining concepts.

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