



Introduction to Recreation Services

Sustainability for a Changing World

Karla A. Henderson

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*Dedicated to my mom and dad—
They taught me about hard work so I could study
and enjoy leisure*

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Foreword

This textbook, *Introduction to Recreation Services: Sustainability for a Changing World*, explores the meanings of leisure for people and the importance of recreation services in society. The focus is on all sectors of the recreation services field, including public, nonprofit, and private business entities. The emphasis is on introducing students to career opportunities in recreation services and the benefits as well as challenges facing recreation professionals in a changing world. The philosophy that I unabashedly present in this book is that social, economic, and environmental sustainability concerns should underlie all recreation services. Many perspectives could be taken to provide an introduction to recreation services, but this book targets recreation services embodied in specialties such as parks and recreation, sports, tourism, event management, outdoor leadership and management, and therapeutic recreation.

Throughout this book, I refer to leisure experiences to mean primarily the outcomes that individuals receive because of their commitment of time and resources to pursue meaningful recreation activities. Recreation services are used collectively to describe the organizational structures for facilitating people's leisure. I also use the term 'sustainable recreation,' which can be defined as services that are capable of being supported, upheld, enduring, and maintainable. 'Sustainability' means to be responsible for upholding maximum social, economic, and environmental dimensions of leisure experiences and recreation services.

I believe passionately in the value of leisure to optimize human development and the potential of recreation services to facilitate social, economic, and environmental justice in communities. Inclusion and justice must be considered regardless of the sector in which services are offered. Inclusion refers to ensuring that all individuals—regardless of characteristics such as race, class, religion, physical or mental abilities, sexual identity, gender, or any other defining characteristics—have the right to leisure. Justice refers to facilitating equitable and fair recreation services for citizens as well as visitors.

This book is divided into four units, with short chapters within each unit. The first unit focuses on leisure, recreation, and society. We explore the meanings of leisure, recreation, and play and how opportunities for recreation services have evolved. In the second unit, the historical and comparative roots of leisure in society and the growth of professional recreation services are described.

Without an understanding of the past, people cannot move ahead successfully into the future to address emerging opportunities and challenges. In the third unit, a range of career opportunities in recreation services is presented. The final unit addresses issues and challenges regarding the facilitation of recreation services for sustainability.

Whether you are considering a career in some area of recreation services or just want to know more about your opportunities for awesome leisure experiences, I hope the value of leisure experiences and sustainable recreation services becomes apparent. The structured approach to facilitating leisure through recreation services now has over a century of history in the United States and around the world. A critical exploration of the meanings of leisure experiences and recreation services in society is a logical step toward the advancement of this field of study.

I am deeply indebted to many colleagues and friends in the preparation of this work. Although this book is new and not simply another edition of previous books, I have been deeply inspired by the individuals who laid the groundwork from previous books: Harold D. Meyer and Charles K. Brightbill, who I only know through history, and H. Douglas Sessoms, who was my friend, colleague, and mentor for many years. Some of the ideas for this new book came from my writing with previous University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill colleagues: Deb Bialeschki, John Hemingway, Jan Hodges, and Dana Kivel. My current colleagues at North Carolina State University have been highly supportive of this writing endeavor, including especially my Department Head, Dorothy Anderson. I also appreciate the assistance of graduate assistant Kelly McFadden. Linda Oakleaf, a former student of mine and now a faculty member at Benedict College in South Carolina, was invaluable in her assistance with the teaching materials that accompany this book. Further, I am grateful for the support of my family and friends including especially Deb Bialeschki, Leandra Bedini, Sherryl Kleinman, Kelly Myers, and the Sunday Hiking and Eating (SHE) group. Most of all, I am indebted to the professionals in recreation services who will provide the expertise and enthusiasm to promote sustainable recreation services into the future.

Acknowledgments

This book is new. However, my previous involvement in the 7th and 8th editions of earlier introductory books has greatly influenced the content of this new book with its broader focus on the sustainability of all areas of recreation services. Although new chapters have been added and all material has been updated and revised, I want to acknowledge the intellectual input from others in the 7th and 8th editions that guided my thinking for this book:

Leandra Bedini
Deb Bialeschki
Richard Gittleson
John Hemingway
Jan Hodges
Dana Kivel
Doug Sessoms

Thank you!

Chapter 1

Overview and Contemporary Society

Leisure experiences and recreation activities are important to most people. Some people feel they have too little leisure, while others may have too much. Too little leisure may create stress and anxiety. Too much leisure can create boredom. Having time, money, and opportunities to do what one really wants to do is important and significant. Leisure is associated with an individual's well-being and the quality of life in communities.

Recreation and leisure are major forces in the economic and social life in the United States. Billions of dollars are expended for vacation trips, health club memberships, golf fees, concerts, weekend outings, and other forms of recreation. Statistics suggest that by 2020, over 40% of the jobs in the United States will be in the area of leisure and tourism. This figure is expected to grow to 50% by 2050 (Begun, 2000).

This textbook about sustainable recreation services is focused on the growing and changing roles of recreation services in U.S. society. Leisure and recreation are experienced around the world and many commonalities exist across countries and cultures. However, this book intentionally addresses the United States and the challenges of sustaining recreation services. 'Recreation' connotes all sectors of this field, including public, nonprofit, and private business opportunities. This book affirms that underlying sustainable recreation services is the mandate to tackle the meanings of leisure and to ensure inclusion and justice as vital service components in contributing to the quality of life in communities.

Sustainable recreation services are a means to optimize human development and create communities that can maintain and improve health and well-being for all residents and visitors. Recreation services, however, are not inherently good unless measures are taken to ensure sustainable and inclusive outputs and outcomes. Sustainable recreation includes activities that address social needs and interests by considering economic implications while preserving the environment and respecting people's lives.

Inclusion and social justice must be considered regardless of the sector in which services are offered.

Work and leisure are interrelated activities. The exact nature of this relationship has been the subject of speculation for years among economists, sociologists, and other social and behavioral scientists. Over 30 years ago, a leisure society was predicted where people would work no longer than it took to maintain their desired lifestyle, most workers would be content with subsistence, and most people would stop working when their incomes rose beyond that subsistence level (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980). That expectation has not held true since many workers seem to enjoy the consumption of more goods made possible by more work and higher wages (Schor, 1991). At the same time, Americans today generally *perceive* that they have less leisure than desired regardless of how much they work.

This perceived scarcity of leisure is noteworthy since leisure experiences and recreation activities are valued as desirable opportunities for creative expression and life satisfaction. Most Americans want a quality of life that includes adequate free time and meaningful activities. The economy grows on the assumption that people work for pay and spend their money on subsistence and recreation activities. Therefore, those recreation opportunities need to be diverse, well-managed, and successful in meeting human needs as well as people's free-time desires and interests. In this first unit of the book, we explore the relationships of leisure, recreation, and society, which lead to opportunities for recreation services in the United States.

Contemporary Society

Leisure experiences and recreation services are a product of industrialization as well as the desire that people have to enjoy activities during their free time. The Industrial Age established that because people spent specific time at work (i.e., they worked a particular number of hours each day), they wanted and believed that they had earned time for enjoyable activities during nonwork time or leisure. A system of services and activities in the public, nonprofit, and private business sectors evolved to meet needs, expectations, and desires of workers and their families. This recreation-services system in the United States began as a social movement during the early 1900s, and the evolution of these services continues into the 21st century.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA; the largest national organization addressing public parks, recreation, and conservation), nearly every county, city, and/or town in the United States has organized public recreation and parks services available to its citizens.

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Four out of five Americans use their local parks or recreation systems and 70% have a park or recreation facility within walking distance of their home. Billions of tax dollars are spent each year for the acquisition, construction, and operation of public recreation and park programs, areas, and facilities in cities and counties across the United States (<http://www.nrpa.org/Content.aspx?id=669>).

Nonprofit organizations and private commercial business offerings also are common in most communities and comprise numerous additional opportunities within the field of recreation services. Few industries, except maybe technology, have expanded more rapidly in the past century than those organizations and businesses that cater to people's recreation behavior. The demand for recreation equipment, vacation areas, and other recreation products and services sometimes exceeds the supply of goods and opportunities. Ball caps, tech t-shirts, sweatshirts, microfiber vests, and running shoes are standard wearing apparel for millions of youth and adults during their recreation. Millions of people attend sporting events and watch sports on TV.

Although leisure will not likely replace the importance of work in U.S. society, many factors influence leisure behavior and the choices people make about their recreation pursuits. Social, economic, and environmental changes influence how people in the United States think about and value their time and sense of well-being. These values translate into providing recreation services in the public, nonprofit, and private business sectors.

Changing Social Structures

The face of the United States, as well as those of many other countries, is changing. The Baby Boom Generation (i.e., people born 1946–1964) is reaching retirement age and the Millennials (i.e., Generation Y; individuals born between about 1982 and 2002) are redefining the relationship between work and leisure. The definition of family is widening with multiple structures. Unfortunately, the economic gaps between the *haves* and the *have nots* seem to be growing. The changing roles of women and the acknowledgment that traditional minorities will undoubtedly become the majority of the population in the United States during the 21st century are important to note. The ready access to technology and the proliferation of social and digital media is changing the way people communicate. In addition, the recognition that climate change has specific implications for work and leisure cannot be discounted. Some of these changing situations

are useful to highlight, since they have implications for people's leisure and the delivery of recreation services.

Family Structure and Income

Society appears to be less stable in many ways and although family structures have changed, some equilibrium has occurred. For example, between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of children in two-parent families decreased from 85% to a little over 70%. In 2004, that percentage remained at about 70%. One in four children lives with a single parent (Roberts, 2008). Although negative associations often exist for children in single-parent families, the great majority of these children do well (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). The percentage of children living in two-parent families differs by race and ethnicity with 87% of Asian-Americans, 78% of non-Hispanic Whites, 68% of Latinos, and 38% of African-Americans in traditional two-parent families.

Each year, the Census Bureau calculates a poverty rate based on a family's pretax income compared to poverty thresholds. For example, a single individual under age 65 years has a threshold of \$11,344. Two adults with two children have a threshold of \$22,113 (<http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/>). In 2010, 15% of all persons in the United States lived in poverty. The poverty rate in 2010 was the highest since records have been kept for over 50 years (http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html). However, since the late 1960s, the poverty rate for people over 65 years has fallen dramatically. The poverty rate for people in households headed by single women (32%) remains significantly higher than the overall poverty rate.

The poverty rates also differ substantially by race and ethnicity. Poverty rates for African-Americans and Latinos exceed the national average. In 2010, 27% of African Americans and 27% of Latinos were poor, compared to 10% of non-Hispanic Whites and 12% of Asian-Americans. Although children represent only 24% of the population, they comprise 36% of the poor population (http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html).

Median incomes are a good way to assess the social and economic context of society. These statistics enable measuring the ability of a family at the midpoint of the income distribution to purchase goods and services required to raise children and have a desired quality of life. Real median household income was \$49,445 in 2010, which represented a 2% decline from 2009. Since 2007, median household income has declined 6% (from \$52,823) and is 7% below the median household income peak (\$53,252) that occurred in 1999 (<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/>
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income_wealth/cb11-157.html). The economic recession that started in 2008 has had a huge impact on the spending power in many households.

Despite the high unemployment rate in the United States during the late 2000s, women have continued to be employed in greater numbers. Women, in fact, are on the verge of outnumbering men in the workforce for the first time (http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-09-02-womenwork_N.htm). In 2009, women held half of the nation's jobs. This high represented trends that have been ongoing for decades. Women have tended to be in jobs (e.g., healthcare, education, and government) that have not felt the impact of the recent recession as severely as construction and manufacturing. Women will not likely outnumber men in the workforce, but equality in the workforce is reflecting the culmination of many cultural changes, especially regarding how families operate and how children are raised.

Baby Boomers are continuing to impact society. This generation waited longer to have children than did their parents. When they did start families, they were often smaller than past families. The growth in numbers of school-age children is slowing during the first two decades of the 21st century, but the median age of the population continues to increase. The oldest Baby Boomers are moving into their retirement years and will continue to be a population bulge. These older adults are more active, have more money, and are living longer than previous generations did.

Health Conditions

Even though people are living longer, health issues are of central concern. One major health issue is the prevalence of overweight and obese children and adults. Part of the energy equation (i.e., energy intake = energy output) relates to people being less physically active. This concern has received significant attention as more medical data link being overweight with hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. In 2010, one third of all adults were obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>). Begun (2000) predicted a decade ago that at the current rate, by mid-21st century, over three fourths of all males and females in the United States will be overweight, with over one third classified as obese. Unfortunately, this prediction has come to fruition. Further, in 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion each year. The medical costs paid for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher per year than costs for normal-weight individuals.

Children have also become fatter. An alarming study purports that, for the first time in over two centuries, the current generation of children may <http://www.sagamorepub.com/products/introduction-recreation-services?src=lipdf>

have shorter life expectancies than their parents. The rapid rise in childhood obesity may shorten children's lifespan by two to five years (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/17/health/17obese.html>). Almost one third of the children between the ages of 2 and 19 years are overweight, and 17% of those are classified as obese. The number of obese children has at least doubled since 1980, and some studies suggest that the rate has tripled or even quadrupled. The sad aspect is that 85% of obese children are likely to remain obese as adults, unless something changes drastically in their lives.

Overweight and obesity are a function of caloric imbalance. More calories are consumed than are expended through physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that 80% of adults do not achieve the recommended amount of regular physical activity (<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=33>). Inactivity increases with age and is more common among women than men and among those individuals with lower income and less education compared to higher income or greater education. In addition, over half of young people aged 12–21 years are not vigorously active on a regular basis. Physical activity tends to decline dramatically during adolescence, with female adolescents becoming more physically inactive than males.

Attitudes about the Future

Health issues include more than just physical health. They also include mental health and what individuals believe about their social environments. A study conducted in 2009 examined U.S. high school students' views about the future (<http://www.voanews.com/content/a-13-2008-08-28-voa41-66759882/563487.html>). The study indicated that U.S. teenagers were less hopeful than they were five years ago about society's ability to address critical problems such as the economy and global warming. However, these young people remained optimistic about their own futures and their potential to succeed in life. Almost two thirds said they were confident that they would be able to achieve their life goals.

American teens also indicated in this survey that they knew they needed to prepare for an increasingly competitive global economy. One third said the most important school subjects were science and technology. However, many high school students said they used the Internet more for entertainment and social networking than for researching their homework. Almost one third of the surveyed teens said online bullying was a greater threat than the physical bullying already taking place in many U.S. high schools.

Issues surrounding the social environment for people also related to environmental concerns. The survey showed a rise in American teens' interest in voting and playing a role in issues of national importance including the environment. The survey showed that 72% of American teens believed global warming is an urgent or serious problem.

Environmental Concerns

Both young and old are concerned about the environment. Some people are far more concerned than are others. Most environmental concerns are not new but little progress has been made in addressing some of them. An alarmist concern in the 1970s with environmental degradation led to some changes in federal and state laws. For example, some endangered species facing extinction in the latter half of the twentieth century have now experienced some repopulation as concerns about habitat preservation rose. However, many people remain complacent about environmental issues. Further, in difficult economic times, the tension between economic development and environmental sustainability often rises to the surface.

Climate change is an area that has received increased attention in the early-21st century (<http://webecoist.com/2008/08/18/most-important-environmental-issues-of-today/>). Global warming has concerned scientists for decades, but Al Gore brought the concern to a wider audience with his controversial film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The melting polar ice caps, catastrophic weather, and threatened ecosystems suggest that climate change is real and is a result of the production of greenhouse gases, mainly stemming from carbon dioxide and methane.

Clean water is also an environmental commodity that is in short supply. In the United States, many people do not think about this issue but one in five humans across the globe does not have access to safe water (<http://webecoist.com/2008/08/18/most-important-environmental-issues-of-today/>). Land management is also a concern that may be particularly important to recreation services providers. Little land is left that is undeveloped and all land seems to be threatened by light and noise pollution.

Other environmental issues have also been described, such as renewable energy, energy dependence, fracking, biofuels, and offshore drilling, to mention only a few. Landfill waste is an issue that often is overlooked, since many people have taken for granted the throwaway society in which we live. Unfortunately, people have come to consume resources in a way that is simply not sustainable. This lifestyle is not healthy or maintainable given the earth's resources.

Values as a Basis for Change

These statistics paint a picture of a changing society and the challenges of living sustainable lifestyles. The future is bound to the social and personal values that are expressed. A person's value system gives direction for choosing between alternative forms of behavior and the relative importance of any experience. Every society develops a social value system and socializes young people to honor what is deemed acceptable and essential. As societies evolve, value systems may also change. The questions of how individuals shape society and how society shapes individuals relate to these values. Each person has perceptions and beliefs about how life ought to be lived, which results in specific behaviors. For example, social drinking is acceptable in some groups but not in others. Some groups place a premium on family activity, while others stress individual pursuits and interests. A multitude of personal value structures exist, yet most reflect the dominant values of cultures and the U.S. society.

The United States has become an urban society with an urban value system. The values of conspicuous consumption (e.g., buying products to show how wealthy one is whether needed or not) and conspicuous display (e.g., wearing name-brand clothing), as well as most people's desire for immediate gratification, have had their effects on personal and social behaviors and the concomitant attitudes about recreation and leisure. For example, most people expect as much convenience as possible in what recreation activities they undertake (e.g., Wi-Fi in parks, plenty of available parking).

Time, and the lack of it, has had great impact on values and the changing American lifestyle. Time traditionally has been measured and valued in its economic sense. Labor is paid for by the hour, wages by the week, and pensions according to the number of years worked. Time off is something most workers look forward to, whether as vacations or over weekends. People are time conscious and want to make the most of their time.

Even though time for leisure is valued, and is often considered a right to be enjoyed, the work ethic remains at the heart of the American value system. Most Americans believe that people should earn leisure by working hard, being self-supporting, and taking pride in achievements. Some people in the United States disdain people who are homeless or on welfare because they are not a part of the employment system. Career and economic success is valued. People believe that those who use their skills wisely to advance the economy should be rewarded. Unfortunately, some people lack the physical or mental abilities to develop or use their skills to contribute economically to society.

Many of these values have shaped changes in leisure interests as well as recreation services. Americans have approached the provision of recreation services in much the same way they have handled educational and welfare programs. Nonprofit and private business resources add to what the government can supply. To meet the changing interests and needs of society, recreation services professionals must use the information available about demographic characteristics, values, and behaviors to facilitate sustainable recreation opportunities to promote enjoyment as well as the quality of life in communities.

Challenges for Leisure

Although enjoyment and happiness are important, leisure experiences and recreation services are not always highly valued. The work ethic dominates in the United States. Work is sacred, and most other activities have been second to economic productivity. As noted earlier, when economic times are difficult, leisure may be viewed as a threat to economic growth. For example, George Bernard Shaw said, “a perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell.” In addition, Schor (1991) noted:

The danger of increasing leisure time voluntarily is that it could replace one inequity with another—as inequality of income creates inequality of time. The poorest third would work just as many hours as ever—or more, as more work became available—while the top two-thirds would gradually become a leisured class. The people who would gain free time would be those who already had the financial resources that make it possible—education, homes, and a bank account. They would be mainly white and mainly upper and middle class.

A *leisure society* has been predicted for many years but has been slow to materialize because most people really do not want such a society. The 40-hour workweek has been accepted as the standard, although some people question whether the workweek is really 40 hours since people now spend more time traveling to and from the job than they did in former years. Some people work more than 40 hours a week in their professional jobs, while other people spend some of their work time socializing with others and using the Internet for personal tasks. Further, with the increase in technology, people are doing more work at home at all times of the day. Technology has also enabled people to be connected to work all the time if

they wish and has raised the expectation that if one can work faster, he or she should also get more work done. For many women in the paid workforce, more hours continue to be spent in a *second shift* doing housework after spending the day at work (Hoschild & Machung, 1990). In addition, the number of temporary or part-time workers who may hold two or more jobs has risen. Without benefits, these workers have to work much longer than if they had one full-time job.

Yet other scholars (e.g., Robinson & Godbey, 1999) have argued that people have more leisure today than in the past. A problem arises, however, when people's time diaries show they have more leisure, but they do not feel like they do. Many people feel stressed and under great pressure and do not recognize opportunities for leisure. Further, because of technology like smartphones and tablet computers, many people can be plugged into work 24/7. Scheduling recreation opportunities has become increasingly difficult for many families with two adults working, children in year-round schools, and multigenerational family responsibilities. When people have free time, they are frequently too exhausted to seek out opportunities other than watching TV. Television watching is generally *not* perceived as leisure by a majority of people.

The U.S. Congress enacted legislation in 1968 designating that certain holidays (e.g., Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day) were to be celebrated on Mondays, thereby giving federal employees several long weekends each year. However, the United States still ranks below almost all industrial nations in the average number of vacation days granted workers. The U.S. average of 20 days of holiday and vacation per year is half the number taken by workers in most European countries. Although movements such as the Take Back Your Time (<http://www.timeday.org/>) initiative have been instigated to challenge the epidemic of overwork—as well as over-scheduling and time famine that now threaten health, families and relationships, communities, and the environment—progress has been slow.

Nevertheless, changes are occurring in society. These changes have a direct impact on how people use their time and resources, which may influence their perceptions and behaviors around leisure. The changes in society and the way that people choose to use their time and money have many implications for recreation services in all sectors, which are explored in the next chapter.

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think are the significant changes influencing leisure today in U.S. society?
2. What social, economic, and environmental changes are most likely to affect your leisure in the future?
3. As a young adult, what are your positive as well as negative beliefs and attitudes about the future?
4. What would a leisure society look like? Is that something that should be a goal in the United States? What would be its value and limitations?
5. Why do people work? Getting a paycheck is certainly important, but what might be other reasons?
6. How do you value work and leisure in your life? Does your family make these same value distinctions? What relationship do you hope leisure and work will play in your life when you begin your professional career?