

# **Introduction to Leisure Services: Career Perspectives**

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**Sagamore Publishing Inc.  
Champaign, Illinois**

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Production Manager: Janet Wahlfeldt  
Book Layout: Jennifer Polson  
Cover Design: Charles Peters  
Front Cover Photo by PhotoDisc

ISBN: 1-57167-482-9  
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 00-107471

SAGAMORE PUBLISHING  
804 North Neil Street  
Champaign, Illinois 61820  
[www.sagamorepublishing.com](http://www.sagamorepublishing.com)

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# Preface

**M**ost college and university departments of recreation, parks, and leisure studies offer one or more introductory courses designed to acquaint students with this field of community service.

However, since the field has been dominated by the public recreation and park movement, most such courses and textbooks have focused primarily on the work of public, tax-supported leisure-service agencies and have paid little attention to other types of specializations.

Gradually, this pattern has changed, as therapeutic recreation service, sport management, and tourism and hospitality have become increasingly important areas of professional practice. Today, no fewer than ten different types of leisure-service sponsors offer significant recreation programs throughout the United States. They represent an important source of employment for young men and women entering the overall field.

This text presents a detailed, comprehensive picture of these ten different types of leisure-service agencies and pays special attention to their personnel practices, goals, and programs and the career potential they offer to college students. Based on materials submitted to the authors by dozens of organizations of every type and supplemented by a systematic search of relevant Web pages through the Internet, this book presents detailed, up-to-date profiles of all types of leading leisure-service organizations.

While it is not possible to credit all of the individuals or organizations that responded to our search, credit should be given to the directors of public recreation, park, and leisure-service departments in the following communities: in California, the cities of Long Beach and San Mateo and the East Bay Regional Park District; in Arizona, Phoenix and Scottsdale; Westchester County, New York; Sarasota County, Florida; Prince George's County, Maryland; Vail, Colorado; and in Canada, Vancouver and Kamloops, British Columbia, and North York, in Ontario.

Numerous nonprofit youth-serving and special-interest organizations were helpful, including the Boys and Girls Club of America; the Police Athletic League, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; the YMCA, YWCA, and YM-YWHA; the Catholic Youth Organizations; Campfire Boys and Girls; the American Camping Association; the National Outdoor Leadership School; and Woodswomen, Inc. Among commercial recreation sponsors, several outdoor and adventure recreation companies provided materials, including Pocono Whitewater

Adventure and Whitewater Vacations in California and Chuck E. Cheese (CEC) Entertainment, Inc. which provided information on family play centers.

Therapeutic recreation agencies included Special Olympics, RCH Inc. in San Francisco, and the South East Consortium in New York. Campus recreation materials were provided by Northern Colorado University, Southern Illinois University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. An abundance of other brochures, reports, planning studies, and personnel guidelines was received from armed forces, private-membership, and major recreational sports organizations.

Supplementing the printed materials gathered from these sources are numerous illustrations, photographs, brochure covers, organization charts and similar visual materials—that should help students become more intimately familiar with all the different kinds of leisure-service agencies described in the text.

As a single example, recruitment Web pages and job descriptions drawn from a number of organizations help to illustrate the various and diverse job opportunities available in this field today. One thread that runs through the book is that recreation represents far more than simple “fun and games”—as it might have been thought of years ago. Instead, recreation is widely recognized as an important health-related field that is closely linked with other human services and is often responsible for key areas of community development.

It is our hope that *Introduction to Leisure Services: Career Perspectives* achieves its goal of helping students to understand this field and to become motivated to enter it professionally. Chapter-ending questions; a listing of important national organizations; suggested class assignments and student projects; and a comprehensive, up-to-date bibliography all should help it to achieve this objective.

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# Chapter 1

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## **Recreation and Leisure in American Life**

### **Introduction**

Recreation and leisure represent a major force in American life today. This chapter begins with a brief history of the field and an explanation of its key concepts. It outlines the growth of participation in various forms of leisure activity, including sports and games, hobbies, social pursuits, travel and tourism, and outdoor recreation.

This chapter also examines the motivations underlying participation in leisure activities, along with the important personal, social, environmental, and economic values and benefits derived from constructive forms of recreation.

Several important trends affecting recreation and leisure today are presented: (1) shifts in the amount of available free time for people in different socioeconomic groups; (2) demographic change, in terms of age trends, racial and ethnic shifts in the population, gender related and evolving family needs; and (3) the related forces of innovative technology, commercial development, and privatization as they affect the delivery of leisure opportunities and services.

Finally, the chapter shows how recreation in its varied forms has become the responsibility of a huge array of different types of organizations and program sponsors, and has become a major source of employment for men and women throughout North America.

## Leisure Participation Today: An Overview

If a visitor from the 25th century or from a distant planet were to pay a sudden visit to the United States or Canada today, he or she would probably be impressed by the degree to which men, women, and children were taking part in a host of playful pursuits—hobbies, video games, parties and social events, sports, hunting and fishing, visiting theme parks and enjoying sightseeing trips, engaging in the arts or other cultural pastimes, and other varied forms of entertainment.

This space-and-time traveler might also discover that many thousands of different kinds of organizations provide facilities, leadership, and program services to facilitate these nonwork experiences.

Our extraterrestrial visitor might ask, “What do you call all this activity? It’s not work. People don’t have to do it to survive; Why do they *do* it?”

The answer, of course, is that people are voluntarily taking part in recreation and leisure pursuits for a host of reasons. In some cases, their primary motivation is the pleasure or fun they gain from taking part in a competitive sports activity or watching a skilled performer in the arts. In other cases, their goal may be to improve their health and fitness, to enjoy the companionship of others, to express themselves creatively, to experience new environments, or simply to relax and enjoy a change of pace.

## Recreation and Leisure: Underlying Concepts

If, finally, our space traveler were to question the essential meaning of recreation and leisure, it might be helpful to explain that recreation and leisure have long been recognized as important elements in human society.

Recreation is a form of human activity, carried on in one’s free or discretionary time. It is voluntarily chosen and was traditionally intended to help participants recover from the stress of toil and to restore themselves for renewed work. Today, it is often considered to be not only participation in an activity, but also an important kind of human experience, marked by a sense of accomplishment, self-discovery and creative growth, oneness with nature, or rewarding social contact.

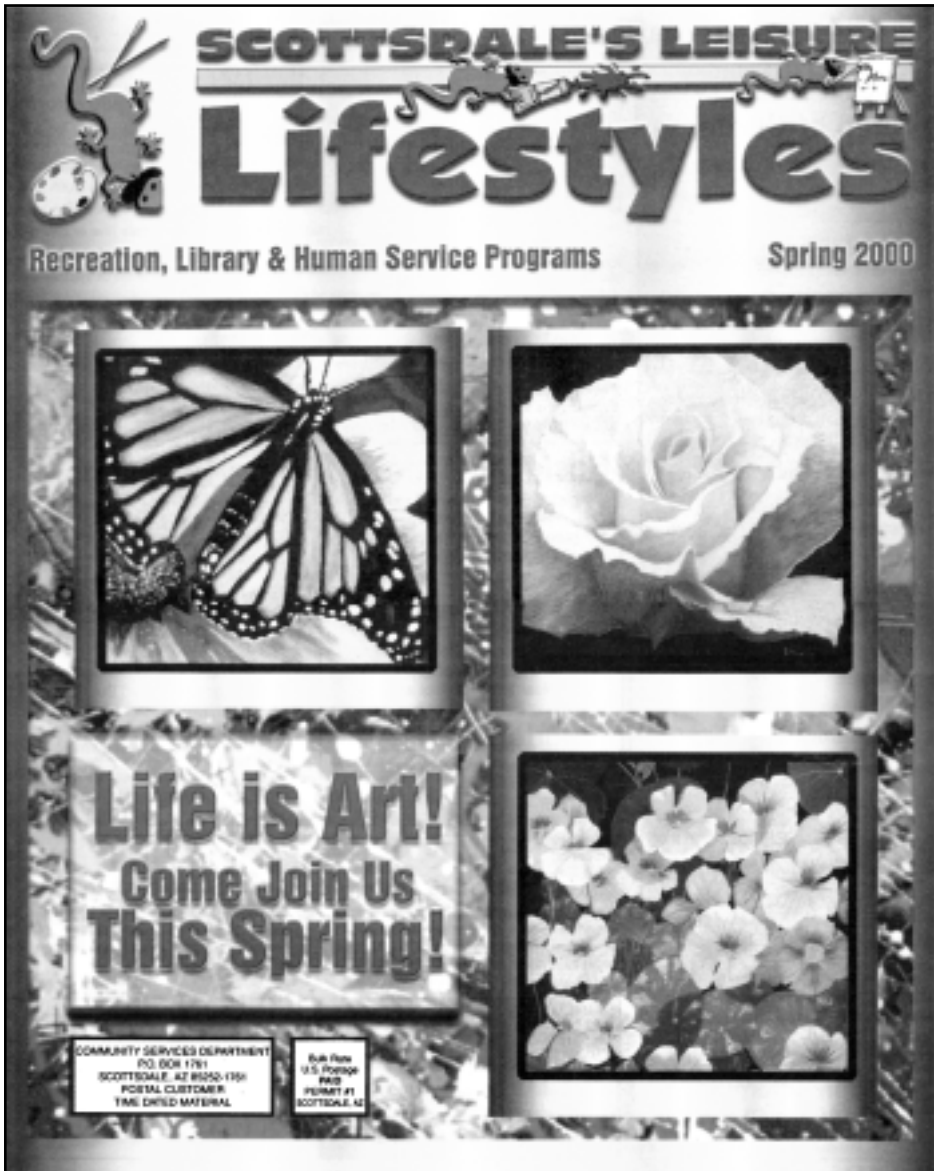
*Leisure*, usually defined as time that is free of work or work-related tasks or family or other civic responsibilities, provides the setting in which recreation is carried on. Like recreation, leisure is often thought of as a state of mind, a transforming experience marked by freedom of choice and personal enrichment. In a sense, leisure is broader than recreation in that it may be used for other nonplay purposes, such as continuing education, volunteer work in the community, religious involvement, or other cultural pursuits (see Figure 1-1).

Finally, both recreation and leisure may be regarded as social institutions because they are studied by economists, sociologists, and other social scientists and are provided or served by a huge network of governmental, voluntary, educational, commercial, and therapeutic agencies. This text is concerned with the *leisure-service system* that these agencies constitute, and it deals primarily with their role in providing recreational programs and facilities.

Figure 1-1

This brochure cover from Scottsdale, Arizona, conveys the important message that recreation and leisure are an important part of one's lifestyle.

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## **Recreation in Earlier Eras**

Throughout humankind's history, people in all societies have enjoyed varied forms of play and recreation. In earlier human cultures, religious rituals often included contests of various kinds, song and dance, and artistic pursuits, which ultimately were transformed into play.

Similarly, over time, survival-related activities such as hunting, fishing, or even warfare lost their original purposes and became recreational experiences. Today, rodeos, lumberjack contests, archery and riflery, yacht racing or fishing competitions all are modern-day vestiges of what once were serious occupations.

In ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, contests that ranged from track-and-field to boxing or wrestling to chariot racing and slaughters of wild beasts in huge arenas were carried on—originally as part of religious festivals and ultimately to entertain the masses.

During the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Europe, the wealthy and powerful nobility sponsored the arts—music, drama, and ballet—or hosted spectacular entertainment as royal celebrations. Knightly jousting, gambling, village fairs, folk crafts, and rustic pursuits also entertained people of all classes.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America, hours of work in factories, mines, mills, and on farms continued to be long and hard. Religious disapproval tended to condemn many forms of play and entertainment through much of the 19th century. Gradually, however, work hours were reduced—both through laws and the efforts of labor unions—and religious leaders and civic officials realized that there was an important need for organized forms of play.

## **Growth of Support for Organized Recreation**

During the second half of the 1800s and the early decades of the 20th century, there was growing support for organized leisure programs and facilities. It took several forms:

Cities, states, and the federal government in both the United States and Canada set aside major tracts of land as parks, both to preserve their natural beauty and, increasingly, as places for camping, wilderness exploration, and a host of other outdoor recreation pursuits.

Municipal governments and school systems built networks of playgrounds and established day camps and summer play programs—first serving children and youth and ultimately all age groups with diversified play activities.

Major national organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs, the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and other religious and secular youth-serving and character-building groups, initiated recreation, camping, and social programs and helped to serve other educational and citizenship functions.

In the years following World War I, often referred to as the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties, there was an explosion of interest in varied forms of popular recreation. Movies and radio offered new means of entertainment, and college and professional sports became national obsessions. During the 1930s, the United States, like the rest of the world, was challenged by widespread unemployment, bankruptcy, and foreclosures on homes and farms. But even this situation helped to promote public support for organized recreation, as

President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal provided jobs helping to build thousands of new parks, playgrounds, community centers, and sports fields and hired recreation leaders, writers, artists, and cultural performers in an effort to boost public morale.

Following the Allied victory in World War II, both the United States and Canada saw recreational interest and involvement reach new heights. In both nations, millions of young families moved from city streets to suburban or small-town settings, where they supported newly established park and recreation departments, joined the Parent-Teacher Association, formed Little Leagues, and engaged in a host of popular pastimes.

### **Factors Supporting the Growth of Mass Leisure**

Several factors were responsible for the emergence of recreation and leisure as key elements in national life during the 1950s and 1960s. First, there was steady growth in population numbers as the baby-boomer generation matured and was supported by a brisk economy during the post-World War II decades.

### **Growth in the Nation's Free Time**

Next, there was a striking increase in the amount of free time available to most Americans. The workweek had been cut sharply in the years before the war, and labor union contracts continued to reduce the average number of hours worked in many businesses. The increased number of holidays and expanded availability of vacations additional free time, as did Social Security and company pension plans that made earlier retirement possible for many older citizens. Labor-saving devices made many forms of work more efficient.

### **Concern about the Natural Environment**

Growing concern about the nation's natural environment led to a major research study and the report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission to Congress and the president in the early 1960s. The report highlighted the damage done to the nation's wildlands and waterways by overcrowding, pesticides, and pollution and led to a host of legislation and funding programs to reverse environmental decay, acquire and protect wilderness areas and create major new parks.

### **Recreation as a Social Instrument**

In the so-called "War on Poverty" initiated by President Lyndon Johnson in an effort to overcome both urban and rural unemployment and social pathology, recreation services became a key element in such national agencies as Job Corps, Model Cities, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs.

### **Expansion of Popular Participation**

The most striking evidence of recreation's new popularity was shown in the explosion of participation in varied forms of play, as shown by the statistics of involvement and leisure spending. In May 1977, *Newsweek* described the "dazzling world of play" that characterized American society:

Almost unnoticed, leisure-time activities have become the Nation's No. 1 industry, as measured by people's spending. Latest figures . . . show that Americans will spend more than 160 billion dollars on leisure and recreation in 1977. By 1985, the total is expected to climb to 300 billions. The expenditure is a clear indication, sociologists say, of how avidly Americans pursue "the good life" beyond the bounds of work and home.<sup>1</sup>

*Newsweek* reported that sports involvement, including boating, tennis, golf, archery, jogging, hunting, bowling, and other active forms of play, drew more than 700 million participants a year, with attendance at sporting events rising to 314 million annually. Participation in cultural activities had also increased dramatically, with hundreds of new opera, theater, and dance companies and symphony orchestras being formed. Over 78 million Americans visited museums annually, and 62 million attended at least one performance of live theater.

### **Growth of Employment in the Leisure-Service Field**

Inevitably, as recreation and leisure became key components in our national lifestyle, attention was focused on recreation's important contribution to the economy and on its emergence as a major new source of employment. Thanks to hundreds of new, government-sponsored recreation and park agencies, plus the manufacture and distribution of play-related goods and equipment and the expansion of travel and tourism ventures and other forms of new leisure enterprise, millions of Americans had begun to find jobs.

### **Higher Education**

In the early years of the 20th century, a number of colleges and teacher-training institutions had offered scattered courses in play leadership, and the National Recreation Association had also sponsored short-term training programs for recreation and park administrators. Beginning in the 1930s, a few institutions began to offer degree options in this field, with an emphasis on leadership and programming.

When the recreation and parks movements merged in the mid-1960s, with the formation of the National Recreation and Park Association in the United States and the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, the accompanying linking of formerly separate local recreation and park departments gave a new impetus to the field. Several hundred new curricula were established, including hundreds in two-year community college programs.

### **Diversification in the Leisure-Service Field**

Inevitably, the growth in the overall field and in its separate areas of program service led to a trend toward diversification among several different types of leisure-service agencies.

One of the most obvious areas in which professionals and educators have broken fairly sharply from the mainstream of recreation and park service is *therapeutic recreation*. This field not only developed a clearly defined philosophy and set of professional goals in the 1970s and 1980s, but also established its own certification process at an early stage.

Other specialized leisure-service areas that gained separate identities in the 1970s and 1980s included *employee services*, *armed forces*, and *commercial recreation*, seen as an umbrella area that included a number of different program fields.

Linked to commercial recreation, but far from simply being an offshoot of the recreation and park movement, were *sports management* and *tourism* and *hospitality*. Today these areas

of professional service involve multibillion-dollar annual expenditures, dozens of specialized types of jobs, employment for millions of men and women and the development of a considerable number of trade associations or professional societies that promote their needs.

### **Common Elements: Leisure Motivations and Outcomes**

To better understand the nature of the complex leisure-service field, it is helpful to examine the reasons why people engage in recreation, as well as the outcomes and benefits that come from participation.

#### ***Motivations for Participation***

Clearly, the urge to play is a widely shared phenomenon, shared by animals of every kind and people in every culture and throughout history.

Ethnologists who specialize in the study of animals and birds report that every species—including cats, dogs, giant carnivores, primates large and small, and even insects—appears to engage in play activity, which is defined as behavior that includes competition, teasing, make-believe, exploration, and role-playing. Play seems to be instinctive, particularly among the young of each species, where it serves important functions related to learning social skills, defining one's place in the social order, and later, courtship rituals.<sup>2</sup>

However, not all recreation consists of play. Many forms of involvement, such as hobbies, serious and dangerous forms of outdoor recreation, commitment to artistic creation and performance, literary pastimes, or health-related and fitness activities, are not really playlike experiences. It is therefore helpful to recognize that researchers have identified a number of other important personal motivations for recreational participation.

*Adult Motivations.* In 1980, Rick Crandall developed a list of seventeen factors identified by a cross-section of American adults as reasons for taking part in varied forms of leisure activity, including

. . . enjoying nature and escaping civilization; escaping from routine and responsibility; physical exercise and health-related benefits; social contact and companionship; creativity and aesthetic expression; gaining a sense of power and influence; altruism and being of service to others; excitement or thrillseeking; enrichment of one's personality or self-actualization; and escaping boredom.<sup>3</sup>

*Other Age and Gender Factors.* Subsequent researchers have found that motivations for recreational involvement vary not only in terms of one's age group, but also with respect to gender and the type of activity one selects.

For example, research on the elderly and recreation shows that they value (1) the opportunity for creative self-expression; (2) companionship with others; (3) power, expressed as the need to feel competent in social situations; (4) compensation for lost abilities, including the need to develop new outlets; (5) security in taking part in safe and familiar activities; (6) service in volunteer roles that help others; (7) intellectual and aesthetic stimulation; and (8) a sense of self-sufficiency and the ability to spend time alone comfortably.

*Sexual Identity Factors.* Canadian researchers Bolla, Dawson, and Harrington examined the basic meanings of leisure for several thousand adult women. They found that these included such positive elements as gaining a feeling of competence, security, or playfulness and the expression of serenity, femininity or assertiveness.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, too, as many women seek to overcome the barriers that have limited their full participation in daily life, recreation represents an area in which they can engage in what were traditionally considered masculine roles and activities—particularly the area of sports (see Figure 1-2).

It has become increasingly clear that taking part in varied forms of recreation represents much more than simply having “fun” or “relaxing.” Instead, leisure pursuits satisfy important human needs and interests and often require deep commitment and self-discipline, as well as the willingness to risk one’s safety in challenging sports and outdoor recreation pursuits.

## **Benefits of Leisure: Recent Findings**

Within the past decade, a number of comprehensive research studies have identified the significant benefits and outcomes of recreation—particularly those stemming from organized leisure-service programs.

Driver, Brown, and Peterson, for example, defined the positive impacts of recreation, particularly government-sponsored recreation and park agencies) summarizing numerous professionally sponsored studies.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in the mid-1990s, a task force sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association initiated a systematic study that identified the contributions made by community recreation programs in terms of such problems as ethnic or racial relations, environmental protection, serving disabled persons, strengthening family life, and overcoming poverty.<sup>6</sup>

A detailed study funded by the U.S. Department of Education documented the positive effects of therapeutic recreation service carried out in medical and rehabilitational settings.<sup>7</sup>

Another report issued by the Parks and Recreation Federation of Ontario and several other cooperating Canadian organizations described the benefits of community recreation under four major headings: *personal*, *social*, *economic*, and *environmental* outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

## **Personal Benefits of Recreation**

The personal benefits of leisure involvement involve several important categories, all documented by research in recent years.

### **Health Benefits**

The physical rewards of active recreational pursuits are critical. The positive effect of regular, vigorous physical exercise—such as that gained through sport or outdoor activity—in terms of maintaining cardiovascular health, combatting obesity and reducing the incidence of such diseases as diabetes, certain forms of cancer, and stress-induced strokes, has been clearly shown.

### **Emotional Benefits**

Beyond its physical benefits, recreation can yield important emotional outcomes for the individual, helping to relieve boredom, tension, or depression. Through it, participants may



## Figure 1-2

### Summary of sports values for women. Compilation of research by Women's Sports Foundation (1999)

# 25

## Years of Making a Difference

*In celebration of the Women's Sports Foundation's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we want to remind everyone why the Foundation was established: to give more girls and women the opportunity to play! If you need to explain why this is so important, here are:*

---

## 25 Benefits of Playing Sports

1. Sports are FUN!
2. Girls and women who play sports have a more positive body image than girls and women who don't participate.
3. Girls who participate in sports have higher self-esteem and pride in themselves.
4. Research suggests that physical activity is an effective tool for reducing the symptoms of stress and depression among girls.
5. Playing sports teaches girls how to take risks and be aggressive.
6. Sport is where girls can learn goal-setting, strategic thinking and the pursuit of excellence in performance and other achievement-oriented behaviors — critical skills necessary for success in the workplace.
7. Playing sports teaches math skills.
8. Sports help girls develop leadership skills.
9. Sports teach girls teamwork.
10. Regular physical activity in adolescence can reduce girls' risk for obesity.
11. Physical activity appears to decrease the initiation of cigarette smoking in adolescent girls.
12. Research suggests that girls who participate in sports are more likely to experience academic success and graduate from high school than those who do not play sports.
13. Teenage female athletes are less than half as likely to get pregnant as female nonathletes (5% and 11%, respectively).
14. Teenage female athletes are more likely to report that they had never had sexual intercourse than nonathletes (54% and 41%).
15. Teenage female athletes are more likely to experience their first sexual intercourse later in adolescence than female nonathletes.
16. High school sports participation may help prevent osteoporosis.
17. Women who exercise report being happier than those who do not exercise.
18. Women who exercise believe they have more energy and felt they were in excellent health more often than nonexercising women.
19. Women who are active in sports and recreational activities as girls feel greater confidence in their physical and social selves than those who were sedentary as kids.
20. Women who exercise miss fewer days of work.
21. Research supports that regular physical activity can reduce hyperlipidemia (high levels of fat in blood).
22. Recreational physical activity may decrease a woman's chance of developing breast cancer.
23. Women who exercise weigh less than nonexercising women.
24. Women who exercise have lower levels of blood sugar, cholesterol, triglycerides and have lower blood pressure than nonexercising women.
25. Regular exercise improves the overall quality of life.

gain needed satisfactions and a sense of accomplishment, freedom, and control of their lives, leading to improved psychological well-being.

### **Social Development**

Clearly, games and sports, clubs and parties, involvement with others in creative arts programs, and other shared experiences are important ingredients in helping children and youth develop well-rounded, resilient social personalities. They learn to place group needs above their own, to accept rules and discipline, and to value traits of good sportsmanship and working toward common goals.

### **Cognitive Values**

Many forms of recreation may also contribute to cognitive or intellectual development. Studies have shown that physical activity tends to be linked to mental performance. For young children, play becomes a means of exploring the environment and gaining problem-solving skills. Puzzles, quizzes, and computer and table games and kits help participants to develop their powers of observation and analysis and improve their decision-making skills.

### **Societal Benefits**

In addition to the positive values of recreation for individuals that have just been summarized, leisure activities may also provide important benefits for the community at large.

From a social perspective, recreation often provides a focal point around which neighborhood residents may mobilize in an effort to improve their shared lives. Through holidays, community celebrations, neighborhood cleanup campaigns and similar events, or the volunteer management of youth sports programs, families are brought closer together, and community residents gain a strong sense of pride.

Similarly, recreation may provide a useful tool in overcoming racial or religious prejudice and in helping to provide fuller understanding of the customs, traditions, and cultural backgrounds of others. Recreation is also part of the spectrum of social services needed to improve the lives of individuals with varied forms of physical or mental disability.

### **Economic Benefits of Recreation**

From an economic perspective, the most obvious benefit of recreation is that it represents a giant diversified industry with hundreds of billions of dollars spent each year for the purchase of various goods and services (see Table 1-1). The leisure services and enterprises listed here provide jobs for millions of men and women in American and Canadian society. However, the economic picture presented here is incomplete in that it does not include other major forms of spending on recreation.

For example, the huge amounts spent each year on building, maintaining, and staffing a host of different types of leisure attractions and structures—from theme parks or cruise ships to ski centers and multiplex theaters—represent enormous leisure-related expenditures.

**Table 1-1**  
**Annual Personal Spending on Recreation: 1985 to 1996**

<b>Type of Product or Service</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1996</b>
Total Recreation Expenditures (billions of dollars)	116.3	281.6	431.1
Percent of Total Personal Consumption	6.6	7.3	8.3
Books and maps	6.5	16.5	23.2
Magazines, newspapers, and sheet music	12.0	21.5	26.5
Nondurable toys and sport supplies	14.6	31.6	45.4
Wheel goods, sports, and photographic equipment	15.6	29.8	42.0
Video and audio products, computer equipment, and musical instruments	19.9	53.8	89.7
Radio and television repair	2.5	4.2	5.1
Flowers, seeds and potted plants	4.7	11.1	14.9
Admissions to specified spectator amusements	6.7	15.1	22.1
Motion picture theaters	2.6	5.2	6.3
Legitimate theater and opera and entertainments of nonprofit institutions	1.8	5.6	9.3
Spectator sports	2.3	4.4	6.4
Clubs and fraternal organizations except insurance	3.1	8.9	13.0
Commercial participant amusements	9.1	23.0	46.2
Parimutuel net receipts	2.3	3.4	3.5
Other (includes lottery receipts, pets, cable TV, film processing, sports camps, video rentals, etc.)	19.4	62.7	99.6

Sources: Statistical Abstract of the United States U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999.  
See this source for a fuller explanation of product and service categories.

Table 1-1 does not include several hundred billions dollars a year spent on tourism and travel, hunting and fishing, and a variety of gambling other than parimutuel racetrack betting.

Taken all together, estimates of leisure spending in the United States are well over a trillion dollars annually, vividly underlining the critical importance of recreation in the nation's economy.

However, recreation's economic benefits extend beyond its contribution to the overall employment picture.

Well-designed and beautifully maintained park systems, beaches, and other facilities for play help to make cities and towns appealing and attractive both to potential residents and to companies that are considering new sites for relocation. Cultural institutions and facilities such as museums, library systems, theaters, and concert halls or opera and ballet companies have a similar value.

Some of the economic values of recreation and leisure cannot easily be measured. However, having a network of impressive cultural resources, professional sports teams, and nearby outdoor recreation attractions clearly contributes to the positive image of cities—and thus to the volume of tourism that helps to sustain a city's economic well-being.

## Environmental Benefits of Recreation

In its linkage with the parks movement, recreation accepts an important responsibility for protecting millions of acres of wildland, rivers, streams and beachfronts, historic monuments, and scenic areas.

Major government agencies such as the National Park Service and the Forest Service provide the opportunity for varied outdoor recreation pursuits and commit themselves to preventing the overuse of natural resources. Numerous other public agencies on federal, state and provincial and local levels in the United States and Canada have struggled to overcome pollution, restore damaged waterways, and reduce air pollution.

Many nonprofit organizations such as the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society and Nature Conservancy promote environmental values and causes today, encouraging ecological policies and uses of the wilderness for constructive recreation purposes.

## Leisure Trends at the Beginning of the 21st Century

In the very last days of 1999, an editor of the *New York Times* commented that during the past 100 years, most Americans had experienced a “wild ride”

... from rural isolation and industrial drudgery to communities and comforts once unimaginable. The country's population grew from 76 million to 275 million, but that only hints at our dizzy metamorphosis. Consider instead how 14,000 motor vehicles in 1900 exploded to more than 200 million in 2000, with vast reverberations of density or dispersion. Or consider the psychic dislocations that occurred as a day's travel was redefined from 10 miles by horse to 10,000 by jet.

And how can we grasp the effects of the 100-year surge in the typical American's life span from 42 years to 76? Or the growth of the over-65 population from 3 million to 35 million, even as the workweek has shrunk from 60 hours to 38 . . . ?

Clearly, the past century represented an era of immense growth and change in every respect—dramatic population expansion, the shift from rural to urban environments, and business development. The 1900s saw a steady improvement in educational opportunity, the elimination of many aspects of racial and gender- discrimination, a growing environmental concern, and steady improvement in the quality of life for most Americans.

Leisure has been an important element in this progress, as this chapter has shown. Today, increasing numbers of individuals and families take part in recreation on every level: sports, hobbies, entertainment and cultural activities, social programs, and travel and tourism (see Table 1-2).

Numerous other research reports by the U.S. Department of Commerce and other agencies confirm that public participation in varied leisure pursuits—including the purchase of books, musical recordings, and lawn and garden supplies; the care of pets; outdoor recreation, cultural arts, and tourism—also climbed steadily in the final years of the 20th century.

At the same time, a number of significant economic and social trends that gained momentum in the recent past seem certain to influence the role of organized leisure services in the years ahead.

**Table 1-2**  
**Growth of amusement and recreation services**  
**Statistics summarize annual receipts of selected categories of leisure-service enterprises in millions of dollars.**

<b>Type of Business</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1996</b>
Motion pictures	\$39,982	60,205
Production, distribution, and allied services	28,888	46,223
Theaters	6,088	7,035
Videotape rental	5,006	6,946
Amusement and recreation services	50,126	85,769
Dance studios, schools, and halls	626	1,036
Theatrical producers, bands, orchestras, and entertainers	10,735	19,679
Bowling centers	2,800	2,719
Commercial sports	8,636	14,632
Professional sports clubs and promoters	3,702	8,877
Racing, including track operation	4,934	5,755
Miscellaneous services	27,329	47,702
Physical fitness facilities	3,623	4,970
Public golf courses	2,254	3,976
Coin-operated amusement devices	2,146	3,486
Amusement parks	4,922	6,775
Membership sports and recreation clubs	4,825	7,439

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998.  
 U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 260.

## **Changing Patterns of Work and Free Time**

Until the latter decades of the 20th century, all reports indicated that the workweek was growing shorter and shorter and that free time would continue to expand for all Americans. Then, in the mid-and late-1980s, Harris polls and a number of other studies concluded, on the basis of extensive interviews, that employees throughout the nation were working longer and harder hours and that leisure time had declined dramatically.

While this trend was generally accepted as factual, other research by social scientists at the University of Maryland and the University of Michigan concluded that for the bulk of workers, free time had actually increased from the 1970s through the 1990s. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which regularly monitors 400,000 nonfarm businesses and thousands of randomly selected households, found that

. . . the average workweek in the companies studied “trended down” from 38.8 in the mid-1960s to 36.1 in the mid-1970s, 34.9 in the mid-1980s and 34.6 in 1998.<sup>10</sup>

Other studies have confirmed these findings. However, it is clearly the case that for a segment of the population—chiefly business managers and executives, successful professionals, and other high-level personnel—the hours of work *have* lengthened, along with the increased stress and pace of work, due to the use of computers, e-mail, fax machines, and other job pressures. Also, for the growing number of individuals holding two jobs, or for single parents who must work *and* maintain a family, leisure hours are sharply limited.

Ultimately, the challenge to the leisure-service movement will be to serve both groups in the population: those who are overworked and will require restorative forms of play in their limited free time, and the larger group which who, many economists believe, may be underemployed and may not be able to afford expensive forms of leisure activity.

## **Impact of Multiculturalism**

All demographic and census reports make it clear that the population of the United States has become increasingly multiracial and multiethnic over the past half a century. Due to increased immigration from so-called Third World countries and nations close to us in the Caribbean and Central American regions and because of a higher birth rate among these groups, the proportion of those of non-European descent in America has grown steadily.

As of the early 1990s there were in the United States 30 million African Americans, 7.3 million Asian Americans, 22.4 Hispanic Americans, and 2 million Native Americans—with these numbers rising steadily. In a comprehensive report on population change, *Time* magazine described the “browning of America” and predicted that within a few decades, the Caucasian population would be outnumbered by racial and ethnic minority groups.

Responding to this trend, many public recreation and park agencies have introduced special programs of workshops, holiday events and multicultural festivals to increase understanding among different populations and to celebrate the nation’s growing diversity as a source of future strength and cultural richness.

## **Growing Influence of Technology**

Technological innovation will continue to have a mayor impact on every element of American society, including business, education health care, and government. Within the recreation, parks, and leisure service field, it will have two primary kinds of effects: (1) the creation of new and exciting forms of recreation, made possible by scientifically-based invention; and (2) the use of technology within the operation of leisure-service agencies, to deliver and manage recreation programs.

## **New Leisure Experiences**

The history of recreation and leisure during the past century has been one in which technology created entirely new kinds of play and entertainment possibilities. The invention of radio, motion pictures, television, sound recordings, tape recorders and players, CDs, and similar devices clearly expanded the leisure lives of Americans young and old.

Outdoor recreation was radically influenced by technology, with the creation of snowmobiles and off-road vehicles, scuba diving equipment, Jet Skis, gliders, and sky-diving

equipment. Downhill skiing expanded with the creation of chair lifts and snow-blowing systems, and artificial ice rinks made it possible for cities in the Deep South to host ice hockey teams and enjoy recreational skating.

During the past two decades, video games and other computer-based pastimes have become a major preoccupation, with the Internet giving millions of individuals the opportunity to explore new hobbies and interests or engage with others in chat rooms that provide contact at a moment's notice. Figure 1-3 shows how computer technology has been adapted to create new forms of childhood play.

### **Computers and Agency Management**

Similarly, electronic forms of analysis and communication are widely used by public, commercial, and other types of leisure-service agencies. Computers are invaluable in planning and information-management processes and also in monitoring financial functions, facility maintenance operations, personnel performance, and a host of other management tasks.

Increasingly, computers are also used in contacts with the public in terms of public relations, informing participants about program opportunities or counseling them, registering for classes, courses and leagues, and similar tasks.

### **Commodification of Leisure Services**

Commodification—meaning the systematic commercialization of given types of agencies, professions and services—has become an increasing reality in American life.

Leading professions, such as medicine or law, have become heavily commodified through the development of managed care chains, the linkage of professional societies with commercial products, and the establishment of major chains that advertise heavily and promote their services nationally.

The degree to which many forms of recreation have become “big business” is illustrated in Figure 1-4, an advertisement of a huge travel, sport and outdoor recreation exposition, typical of hundreds of such events held each year throughout the United States.

Many public recreation and park agencies, initially designed to be free service departments, similar to highways or public education, today make extensive use of programs and services that rely heavily on fees and charges. Classes, courses, fitness and aquatic centers, day-camp registration, equipment rental, and a host of other publicly sponsored leisure activities come at a price—and clearly must satisfy bottom-line revenue expectations.

Similarly, many nonprofit organizations have adopted a forceful marketing orientation, in terms of developing public support and involvement, gaining sponsorship, “target” marketing, sophisticated advertising and pricing methods, and similar commercial strategies. While sandlot baseball or schoolyard basketball were once viewed as casual, spontaneous, and free play activities for American youth, today almost every form of organized sport requires a fee for participation, as shown in Figure 1-5.

While youth-serving public or nonprofit organizations often provide scholarships, fee discounts, or other waivers for those lacking financial capability, too often individuals or families in the poverty population are unable to enjoy the rich range of leisure opportunities available to their wealthier neighbors. This problem promises to present a severe challenge

## Figure 1-3 Catalog advertisements for children's computer play products.

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Figure 1-4  
 Example of outdoor recreation trade show,  
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to public and nonprofit leisure-service agencies in terms of the widely accepted mission and social goals of community recreation organizations.

### **Meeting Social Needs**

Responding to this challenge, many public and nonprofit leisure-service agencies in the 1990s initiated vigorous new programs designed to counter negative trends in American society.

Organizations of all types today sponsor family-oriented programs to combat the fragmentation of American family structures that had occurred during the second half of the 20th century. Nonprofit agencies such as the YMCA and YWCA and Boys and Girls Clubs, developed services to assist girls and women in coping with their new roles in economic, family-related, and other spheres of American life.

Through the 1990s, there was growing concern with the major episodes of gun-related violence by at-risk youth that culminated with the tragic slaughter at Columbine High School in Colorado. Witt and Crompton sum up the growing concern with teenage needs, writing that there was a remarkable resurgence of elected officials' interest in issues involving youth:

... a series of events—drive-by shootings, increases in gang membership, and rising teenage-pregnancy, school dropout, single-parent family, and drug-use rates—coalesced to force teen issues to the forefront of the political agenda.<sup>11</sup>

Major national and regional conferences were held to revitalize programs that would serve youth from high-risk environments. Sponsored by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration, these conferences and other national meetings encouraged local recreation and park agencies, in particular, to combat delinquency and other antisocial behavior. For example, a list of program services offered by the member agencies of the California Park and Recreation Society included such elements as

... programming for latch-key children; juvenile curfew support; gang prevention and intervention; academic support, vocational training and career counseling; youth mentoring and youth leadership programs; substance abuse prevention; individual and family counseling; teen pregnancy; and physical and mental rehabilitation services—all linked to appealing and positive youth recreation programs.<sup>12</sup>

### **Benefits-Based Management**

This final important trend affecting the delivery of leisure services gained momentum during the latter part of the 20th century. Essentially, it represented a determined effort to validate the value and social contribution made by recreation, park, and leisure-service organizations in concrete terms, rather than with vague platitudes and claims.

Traditionally, many public recreation and park departments had justified their existence through general statements about the importance of recreation in community life and by statistical summaries of attendance or participation in programs and the use of facilities.

In the 1980s and 1990s, when tight government budgets meant that many forms of public service had to reduce staffing, programming, and maintenance operations, it was

**Figure 1-5**  
**Example of Little League bulletin.**

***Attention all boys 5 -18,  
and all girls 5 -12:***

***if you live in the area bounded by Tennis Avenue,  
Welsh Road, Fort Washington Avenue,  
Highland Avenue and Bethlehem Pike,***

***you are now eligible to play  
officially sanctioned Williamsport  
Little League and Senior League Baseball!***

---

<p>Congratulations! You are now eligible to participate in Lower Gwynedd Little &amp; Senior League Baseball. This means that you now have the option of playing officially sanctioned Williamsport Little League Baseball and Softball, or Senior League Baseball in the Lower Gwynedd Baseball program.</p> <p>Our program is one of the finest in the area, and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tea Ball - Boys &amp; Girls ages 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>Machine Pitch - Boys &amp; Girls ages 7 &amp; 8</li> <li>Softball - Girls only, ages 8 -10</li> <li>Minors - Boys &amp; Girls ages 9 &amp; 10</li> <li>Majors - Boys &amp; Girls ages 11 &amp; 12</li> <li>Seniors - Boys ages 13 - 18</li> </ul> <p>Fees are \$70 per player age 5-12 (includes \$25 purchase of opening day raffle tickets, which can be resold), and \$110 per player age 13-18.</p>	<p>Our season runs from April through June for Little League, and through July for the Senior League. It includes a lot of fun, family activities as well as great Little and Senior League Baseball.</p> <p><b>HOW TO SIGN UP:</b> Just bring your parent, a copy of your birth certificate and insurance company name and policy number to any of the following registration sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sat., Jan. 8, from 9 to 11 AM</li> <li>Sun., Jan. 9th, from 1 PM to 3 PM</li> <li>Wed., Jan. 19th, from 7 to 9 PM</li> <li>Sat., Jan. 22nd, from 1 to 3 PM</li> </ul> <p><b>WHERE:</b> Come to the Lower Gwynedd Township Building, 1130 North Bethlehem Pike, Spring House.</p>
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recognized that more convincing kinds of evidence were needed to maintain public support. At this point, a *benefits-based management* approach was adopted, containing four key elements. Leisure-service managers needed to do the following:

1. Establish a clearly defined *mission* or *philosophical statement*, leading to the precise listing of *agency goals* and *objectives* that could realistically be attained, and that were capable of measurement.
2. Plan and carry out *programs* and other *services* specifically designed to achieve these goals and objectives, within agreed-on time frames.

3. Rigorously and systematically *monitor* and *evaluate* program outcomes to identify the actual benefits derived from programs.

4. *Report* and *publicize* their findings in order to familiarize civic officials and the public at large with the positive value and contribution of recreation, park, and leisure services.

By focusing not only on the numbers of participants, but also on the documented benefits of recreation in such terms as reduced incidence of juvenile delinquency or school dropout or improved health statistics and measures of fitness, the benefits-based approach became widely accepted throughout the leisure-service system in the United States and Canada by the turn of the century.

## **Leisure Services and the Future**

Having examined the past and the present, we must now ask: What are the prospects for the recreation and leisure-service field in the 21st century that lies ahead?

Social scientists and futurists are generally agreed upon a number of the changes to be expected and the social and economic trends that are likely to continue in the coming decades. They foresee the continuing reliance on information technology and the development of an “interactive society” in which electronic communication dominates many aspects of business, government, and social life.

They expect the continuing diversification of our society in racial and ethnic terms, with changing patterns of family and gender relationships. Increasing globalism of the business and entertainment world, environmental concerns, and radical shifts in the world of work are also likely to develop.

One author speculates grimly about tomorrow’s urban society, in *The Futurist*:

Imagine a world with almost twice the current population. Imagine cities with 40 or 50 million inhabitants. Think of urban strangulation; overwhelmed buses, trains, and highways; lung-choking pollution; ranks of unemployed; alienated families; overstressed individuals; escalating crime; chronic terrorism.

Nightmarish fantasy? No. These images reflect current trends and portray what big-city life may well be like only a generation from now<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, many social scientists are highly optimistic about the future, envisioning a world of economic and agricultural abundance, in which many of our current problems are solved by technological and social-policy innovations. They predict

. . . a new “macroindustrial era”—an age of abundance and prosperity. Within this oncoming period of turbocharged economic and technological growth, it is expected that there will be general improvement in the human condition on a global scale marked by increased ability to direct the course both of nature and of human societies.<sup>14</sup>

Whichever scenario comes to pass, it is safe to predict that recreation and leisure will play increasingly important roles in the social and economic lives of Americans in the years ahead. Given this certainty, it is appropriate to systematically examine the total leisure-service system today in terms of its agencies, processes, and career-related potentials.

## Suggested Questions for Class Discussion or Essay Examinations

1. What were the most important social and economic factors and trends that led to the growth of leisure involvement in the United States after World War II? What role did the government play in developing recreation and leisure programs or policies at that time?
2. People in the past tended to think of recreation as “fun and games.” What arguments would you cite to broaden their view of the leisure-service field? In your discussion, you might include information from the text, as well as your own personal experiences or observations.
3. The chapter outlines four major areas of benefits derived from organized recreation and leisure services which have been documented by research in recent years. Select any two of these and explain them in full detail.
4. Following a long period in which the workweek was reduced steadily, reports in the 1980s indicated that Americans were working significantly longer hours, and leisure hours had been reduced. In your view, is this true, or is the work-leisure relationship more complex than this research suggests? In today’s society, who has more free time, and who has less?
5. Three major trends of the 1990s that seem certain to continue into the 21st century and that affect leisure services are multiculturalism, commodification, and evolving technology. Explain these trends and show their implications for the leisure field.

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