

# **Implications from Leisure Studies and Recreation and Park Management Research for Active Living**

**Geoffrey C. Godbey, Professor**

**Linda L. Caldwell, Professor**

**The Pennsylvania State University**

**Myron Floyd, Associate Professor**

**University of Florida**

**Laura L. Payne, Assistant Professor**

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

# The Origins of Leisure Studies and Parks and Recreation

Purpose: To shape and reform recreation during periods of **industrialization** and **urbanization** in the late 19th century.

Used recreation to **improve the health, education, social adjustment and life chances of poor people, children, the elderly, "handicapped,"** and others who had few resources to help them replace the recreation patterns of peasant life.



**Leisure studies** -- originally concerned with the social problem of increasing free time in industrial societies.

**Sociological Origins:**

- **Everyday life**
- **Time use**
- **Suburbanization**
- **Industrial work**

**Subsequent topics:**

- **Effects of social class**
- **Impacts of technology**
- **Community life**
- **Organized leisure**
- **Work arrangements on leisure behavior**

**Since the 1980s, leisure studies has increasingly adopted a social psychological framework.**



# Major Journals

- Journal of Leisure Research*
- Leisure Sciences*
- Leisure Studies*
- Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*
- Therapeutic Recreation Journal*



# Government Recreation and Park Services

An important function of government in all modern nations. Such services are found at the **municipal, county and state levels**, as well as **special park and recreation districts**, which have taxing authority.



# American's Use of Parks

Some Use -- 4 out of 5 people

Occasional use ranged from—

**57% for younger adults**

**27% for those ages 76+**

Participation in recreation activities and programs ranged from --

**39% among those age 15-20**

**11% among those age 76+**

# Spending on Recreation and Park Services

- Per capita expenditures averaged **\$74.58** in 1999-2000, of which about **\$20** was for capital projects
- About one of three operating dollars came from **USERS**.





# Despite Expenditures

There is little experimentation or innovation in terms of design of parks, playgrounds, and other recreation areas in the U.S.



**Brisbane,  
QLD**



**Typical U.S. Playground**

# Recent Focus

- Municipal recreation and park services concerned with **health** of the population.
- Programs and services designed to increase **physical activity** and **reduce stress**.



# Recent Activities

- Partnerships established between National Recreation and Park Association and
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - National Cancer Institute
- Recreation and park faculty involved with training seminars sponsored by the Active Living Research Program
- Recreation and park faculty adopting a prevention approach to research (Society for Prevention Research)

# Concepts and Methods in Leisure Studies & Recreation & Park Management

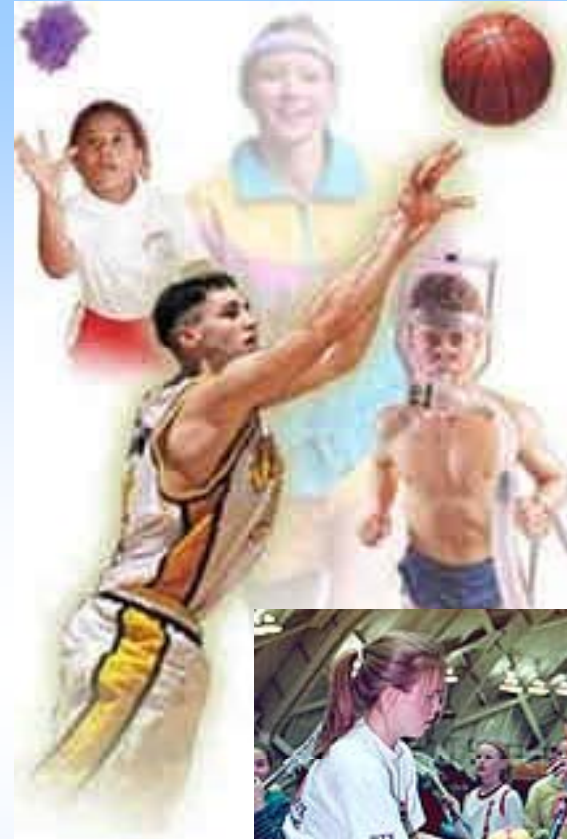
Humans motivated  
to:

- Self-regulate
- Construct meaningful experiences
- Connect with others



*No other life domain provides opportunities for social interaction and personal competence more readily than leisure.*

Understanding **active living** from a leisure perspective may shed light on **O'Donnell's** observation that although opportunities for fitness and amateur sports increase in the U.S., there has been no decrease in rates of obesity and physical inactivity.



# Movement of the Human Body by Cultural Function

- PA for paid and household work, personal care, child care
- PA as means to improve health or to escape negative health consequences
- PA inherently part of pleasurable leisure experience



*In the next few decades, the greatest potential to increase human movement in daily life will be by increasing participation in physical activity that has meaning aside from exercise – leisure, play, recreation, sport, and contact with nature.*



Leisure studies is centrally involved in the study of such behavior.



# Leisure Theory

- Common theories used
  - Self-determination theory (SDT)
  - Csikszentmihalyi's "Theory of flow"
  - Selective optimization with compensation (Baltes & Baltes)
- Leisure-based theories
  - Constraints to leisure behavior
  - Leisure specialization
  - Leisure substitutability
  - Serious leisure
  - The amateur
  - Leisure socialization





# Applied Theories

- Social groups, including crowding and conflict
- Race, ethnicity, culture
- Social justice



# Common Methods

Historically, leisure studies has employed small scale, survey-based methods, although there have been some experimental studies.

- Larger longitudinal studies have been undertaken
- Qualitative research methods
- Experience sampling method (ESM)
- Single-subject designs

# **National Survey on Recreation and the Environment**

- Extensive series of large-scale surveys (funded by federal government)
- 1999-2000 NSRE latest in the series that began in 1960

*Percent and number of people 16 years and older in the U.S. participating in land-based recreation, 1999-2000.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>% of pop 16+</b>	<b>Millions</b>
<b>Walking</b>	81.8	169.6
<b>Bicycling</b>	39.2	81.3
<b>Visit wilderness</b>	33.4	69.2
<b>Hiking</b>	32.3	66.9
<b>Gather berries</b>	26.2	54.3
<b>Team sports</b>	22.5	46.6
<b>Mountain biking</b>	20.3	42.1
<b>Developed camping</b>	19.5	40.4
<b>Backpacking</b>	12.6	26.1
<b>Primitive Camping</b>	12.2	25.3

# Findings About Environmental Factors

- Policy policy or managerial action promotes physical activity in public parks
- Regulation needed on types of uses, equipment and activities, as well as temporal spacing of activity types
- Aesthetic appearance
- Visibility and accessibility
- Hours of operation
- Pricing
- Programming
- Safety
- Marketing



# Findings About Biophysical Characteristics

- Distance between a place of residence and a recreation opportunity
- Degree of naturalness and woody vegetation increased the perceived
- Scenic quality of park environments



*However, naturalness and vegetation correlated negatively with perceived safety*

# Transportation & Recreation and Parks/Leisure Studies

- Roadways historically not designed to promote physical activity
- Innovative solutions being developed
- Connection between transportation planning and recreation and park planning and design needs strengthened



# Need for Reliable, Valid Measures

- Much research neglects impact of cognitive dissonance
- Inflated results from attitude-behavior surveys
- Objective measures needed
  - Pedometer
  - Accelerometer
- Triangulation of methods needed
  - Direct observation
  - Videotaping



# Need to Partner with Allied Industries

- Beyond governmental policy...
  - Build relationships & partnerships with major recreation equipment manufacturers and landscape architecture firms
  - Playworld Systems, Inc., for example, has already collaborated with recreation and park and kinesiology researchers to produce the LifeTrail

# Environment-based Questions

- What is the role and relative influence of park and urban form characteristics on facilitating or limiting park use?
- Determine effect of aesthetics and perceived scenic beauty on park use and physical activity levels.



# Environment-based Questions

(con't.)

- How do social conditions, such as crowding and conflict, influence levels of physical activity?
- Does geographic placement of parks and recreation areas affect equity in park distribution and quality of facilities?
- How does site design and facility placement influence physical activity patterns?

# Life Span Questions

- Can alternative policy, design, and social marketing strategies increase physical activity in the K-12 student population?
- What factors influence initiation, maintenance and ceasing of physical activity in the transition to college and life after high school? Can these be influenced through intervention?
- What are key factors in initiating and maintaining regular physical activity among middle-age and older adults?

## Life Span Questions (con't.)

- What is the role of park and recreation access and service provision in increasing or maintaining physical activity among individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses?
- Does physical activity in parks vary significantly across racial and ethnic groups?

# Social Psychological Questions

- Do externalized forms of motivation work at all? If they do, for whom and under what conditions?
  - For example, how effective are incentive based community physical activity campaigns in facilitating long-term changes in physical activity?
- How can we encourage physical activity among travelers on business and holiday trips?
- Rates of pet ownership are soaring.
  - What is the role of companion animals in increasing physical activity?

# **Suggestions for Building Transdisciplinary Research**

- Increase training of recreation, park and leisure studies researchers in methods used by active living researchers.
- Research sponsors should allocate points for proposals from transdisciplinary teams.
- Publish in “each other’s” journals. Cross-disciplinary articles ideal.
- Increase publications outlets, conferences and symposia for transdisciplinary research.

# **More Suggestions for Building Transdisciplinary Research**

- Universities should facilitate cross-disciplinary research (awarding all units and researchers involved).
- LWCF should include active living concerns in requests for proposals.
- Special journal issues could be considered.



# **More Suggestions for Building Transdisciplinary Research**

- Researchers could collaborate with policymakers to develop health policy guidelines that would be reflected in new park standards to promote active living.
- Researchers could work with developers to incorporate design features in parks and commons areas in residential and commercial properties to support active living.

A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape, likely Monument Valley, viewed through a natural rock archway. The archway is made of dark red sandstone and frames the scene. The landscape beyond is a vast, open plain with scattered green shrubs and small trees. In the distance, several prominent, rounded rock formations (buttes) rise against a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day. The text "THE END" is centered in the upper half of the image.

*THE END*