

Bammel, G., & Burrus-Bammel, L.L. (1996). *Leisure & Human Behavior* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark.

Reviewed by

Roy Ramthun, Ph.D.
Radford University

Biographical Information

Roy Ramthun is an assistant professor in the Leisure Services department at Radford University in Virginia. His research interests include outdoor recreation management and wilderness education and he serves as an advisor for the university's interdisciplinary environmental education graduate program.

Leisure & Human Behavior (3rd ed.) by Gene Bammel and Lei Lane Burrus-Bammel is aimed at students in introductory level recreation, leisure services, or park management courses. The various chapters of the text are designed to guide students through those sticky issues that arise in our profession: What is leisure? What does leisure mean to people? Can somebody really make a living providing leisure related services?

Many textbooks for introductory courses err by placing too much emphasis on abstract discussion of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of leisure. While topics such as leisure in the Middle Ages or Karl Marx's perspective on leisure are fascinating to graduate students and to the authors of textbooks, they are likely to have a soporific effect on undergraduate students. In my experience, the majority of new students enter our field with a strong vocational and/or self-help orientation. They seek concrete information that applies directly to their careers and lives. They enjoy discussions about training and certification, the behavior of clients, job forecasts, and major trends in the profession. Bammel and Burrus-Bammel do a great service to teachers of introductory level courses by keeping most of this text grounded in everyday issues of the recreation and leisure field.

The text is composed of 13 chapters addressing topical areas ranging from the meaning of play to career opportunities in the leisure services industry. The authors achieve more breadth than depth of coverage. Each chapter introduces a dizzying array of topics and issues, but may only devote a paragraph or two to each. This approach trivializes some topics and leads the reader to wonder why others were included at all.

The authors are at their best in those sections of the book that emphasize human behavior in the context of leisure. The authors' style is clear and straightforward and each chapter includes a closing summary and review questions. The accessibility and structure of the book makes it valuable to instructors wishing to assign background readings not requiring extensive classroom interpretation.

As with many textbooks, some chapters are more useful than others. The chapters on leisure and the life cycle are especially strong, as is the chapter that examines other sociological factors that influence leisure behavior. The value of these chapters arises from the detailed, in-depth, well-researched descriptions of human behaviors that will almost certainly be encountered by anyone working with the public in the leisure services field. The section on the attitudes of adolescents and their behavior in recreation programs is a good example of concrete material. It is useful information about the kinds of professional realities in which students will soon be immersed. Students are also going to appreciate the chapters on the future of leisure services and career preparation because these sections emphasize topics that students perceive as practical.

In contrast, the chapters on leisure theories, play behavior, and current leisure practices seem directionless; included only because it is customary to include these topics in introductory texts. In these chapters the authors fail to make a clear connection between theory and real world behaviors that students are likely to encounter. These chapters are essentially descriptions of theories or recapitulations of statistical information. The information is presented without the background or context for new students to understand why it matters. The chapters on leisure theories and play also need more extensive revision from earlier editions, as many new or current theories pass largely unmentioned. Csikszentmihalyi's work on optimal experience, for example, receives only one paragraph.

On the whole, *Leisure & Human Behavior* achieves a satisfactory balance between theoretical and practitioner oriented introductory texts. Its readability and its excellent treatment of topics relating to human behavior in leisure should ensure that it will be well received by students.