
Kraus, R. (1997). *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* (5th ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Reviewed by

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Biographical Information

Jennifer Wesely is presently completing her Master's degree in the Department of Recreation Management and Tourism at Arizona State University. Her interests lie in social activism and positive change for both women and the environment. Her thesis addresses issues of women, nature and violence, which incorporates interviews with survivors of domestic violence.

In Richard Kraus's fifth edition of *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society*, the author produces a text which is both topically and aesthetically compelling for modern recreation and leisure students. *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* is fulfilling in terms of foundational aspects of recreation and leisure. The text devotes equal attention to recreation and leisure concepts as both an agent of social change and as a professional and commercialized entity.

The book is divided into four main sections. The first two sections focus on a conceptual framework. Key elements include identifying and defining leisure, recreation, and play, characterizing influential social and psychological factors, and tracing the history of leisure and recreation. The final two sections concentrate on leisure, recreation, and tourism service systems while addressing professional opportunities within the recreation field. Also, Kraus modernizes his text format, interspersing it with boxed quotes and other recreation-oriented anecdotes; this occasional distraction is not unwelcome, and Kraus makes the deviation an educational experience.

Kraus successfully presents a text that comprehensively covers the breadth of modern issues related to leisure and recreation and is up-to-date with its reorganized approaches. Additionally, he discusses recreation more holistically than he has done in the past. In the fourth edition, for instance, Kraus combines gender and age factors in one chapter, and race and ethnic aspects were barely addressed. In the fifth edition, I was gratified to see gender and ethnicity afforded more attention in relation to the field; Kraus devotes Chapter 5 to the examination of gender, race, and ethnic issues. Also, Kraus identifies holistic values of recreation in Chapter 3. The holistic approach to recreation and leisure may be beneficial in expanding interest in the field as college enrollment decreases, since students are more likely to be attracted to a multidimensional field that encompasses several interests.

The chapter organization in *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* seems rather disparate at times, lacking smooth segues that could suggest how aspects of recreation and leisure might connect. Kraus repeats his pattern, evident in previous editions, of addressing the history of recreation and leisure in the middle of the text. Although he may be trying to attract the ambivalent reader with his overview of the “current scene” in Chapter 1, a historical background seems more appropriate for a systematic introduction to the field. Chapter 1 appears to have more in common with Chapter 9, “Recreation and Leisure in the Modern Era.” In addition, beginning with a history of recreation and leisure recognizes the fluidity of the recreation discipline by noting the changing patterns and definitions that emerged over time. Further, subsequent chapters, such as those extrapolating upon different meanings of recreation, leisure, and play, might be clearer with a historical foundation.

Kraus makes noticeable changes in other aspects of the text organization as well. In his effort to address psychosocial concerns which impact the recreation field, he groups Chapter 6, regarding social functions of community recreation, with other socially and psychologically oriented chapters earlier in the text. This seems a marked improvement from the fourth edition, in which social functions of community recreation stood alone and unsupported. In the new arrangement, Kraus recognizes a distinct category of contemporary social issues which impact the recreation field. Ironically, even as the fifth edition of the text seems increasingly conscious of social issues, therapeutic recreation is given less attention than in the fourth edition. In the fifth edition, therapeutic recreation is merely a section of a chapter entitled “Specialized Agencies: Armed Forces, Employee, Campus, and Therapeutic Recreation Service,” rather than an entire chapter. It seems vital to distinguish therapeutic recreation and its importance, rather than lumping this aspect of the recreation field in with “specialized agencies.”

A recreation and leisure text must be relevant to the current social state, lest foundational concepts become purely esoteric and lack practical application. Kraus accomplishes the social relevance and practicality of the text. He provides an excellent overview of leisure-service systems and the tourist economy, accurately indicating the depth and breadth of opportunities and how they function in society. However, Kraus excludes the importance of research and academic study in the area, which seems to reveal a supposition that all recreation students will, upon graduation, get positions in the field. Yet the field is a growing changeling, and in order to accommodate and foster this growth, we must acknowledge the importance of continued scholarly research in the area and encourage our students to be knowledge seekers. To his credit, he does delve into what might constitute a graduate recreation curricula, touching on the controversy concerning the existence of a specialized body of recreation knowledge. Yet he only devotes two pages, at most, to this topic in the entire text. The academic and practical value of recreation and leisure could better complement and balance each other in the book.

Overall, Kraus’s *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society*, fifth edition, is a worthy contribution to undergraduate recreation studies. The text presents the recreation and leisure field in its entirety, and keeps pace with influential factors which impact the

recreation profession holistically. Not only does it emphasize foundational concepts, it expands into current awareness of societal issues, identifying recreation as both a mirror of the social environment and a powerful tool for instituting positive difference and change. Therefore, this text is highly recommended for the new student of recreation and leisure.

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