

Riding the Winds of Change

Doris L. Berryman
Professor Emerita,
New York University

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Winds of change from the four directions, in response to the rhythm of the times, are moving us with considerable speed into the 21st century. As they move us along they remind us that the rapid societal and cultural changes we experienced in the last half of the 20th century will continue to evolve even more radically and more rapidly. Virtually every society and culture in the world will experience the effects of immense political, economic, scientific, technological and social shifts; and changes in communications, business and industry, environmental protection, education (at all levels, including life-long education), migration and immigration, medical and health delivery, and delivery of other human services including those related to play, recreation and leisure. With reference to research in play, leisure, recreation, and therapeutic recreation, these radical changes will affect which issues and aspects of leisure/recreation/therapeutic recreation resources and services, and which play behaviors, aspects and patterns of recreation participation, and leisure beliefs, attitudes, and dilemmas we will determine are important to study and how we will go about studying them. There are a number of professional philosophical and research issues, dilemmas, concerns, and knowledge gaps which are of particular concern to me. I will comment, briefly on only a few of them.

First, and perhaps foremost, I am concerned that we have still not been able to arrive at differentiating definitions of "leisure," "recreation," and "play" which we can all agree upon and use to guide us in our research, curriculum design and teaching. Hopefully, during the early years of this 21st Century we will resolve this nagging problem. Lefebvre (1999) recently presented a proposed "foundational theoretical model for the study of play, recreation, and leisure which offers a beginning working taxonomy, definitions of significant component elements and concepts, and descriptions of the relationships among components within the broad context of human adaptation" (p. 1) which provides us with a solid foundation for discussion and argument. I am also concerned that so little effort has been directed toward the study of ethnic and cultural differences surrounding beliefs, attitudes and practices related to play, recreation, leisure, health and wellness, illness, disability and treatment. Also, cross cultural perspectives about all of

these topics should be incorporated in our curricula, at all levels, more than they are today.

Secondly, I hope that researchers in our fields will devote much more time and effort to the study of play and playfulness. Nearly all of the research reported in the literature has been conducted by anthropologists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, sociologists, early childhood educators and, more recently, occupational therapists. There is considerable evidence that playfulness in both children and adults is a personality characteristic essential for mental health, imagination and creativity (Lieberman, 1977; Plaut, 1979 among others). Solnit (1998) recently wrote that "The evolution of play to playfulness over time establishes developmental foundations that are of central importance throughout life" (p. 102). In contrast to Freud's view that play has its place mainly in childhood and is given up in adulthood, Plaut believed that "play and playfulness throughout the life cycle is an abiding human activity that also can illuminate a major pathway of adaptation for children and adults" (p. 230). One question we might ask is what effect(s) do(es) specific educational strategies/interventions have on the development of playfulness in children, adolescents, and adults? Are there differences among various ethnic and cultural groups?

Closely related to the concepts of play, playfulness and recreation is Carse's (1986) philosophical treatise, *Finite and Infinite Games*. He suggested that "There are at least two kinds of games," finite games played for the purpose of winning [recreation?], and infinite games for the purpose of continuing the play [play/playfulness?] (p. 3). Finite players play within boundaries, are serious, play to be powerful, and consume time. Infinite players play with boundaries, are playful, play with strength, and generate time. A society, he explains, is "defined by its *boundaries*, a culture is defined by its *horizon* . . . the point beyond which we cannot see and [which] opens onto all that lies beyond itself" (p. 57). Carse believes that though we can never reach the horizon, every move an infinite player makes is toward the horizon whereas every move made by a finite player is within a boundary. "Who lives horizontally is never somewhere, but always in passage" (p. 58). In order to be prepared for the surprises the 21st Century brings and be open to a broader vision of research, I would challenge us all to live more horizontally and to be infinite players even though we may sometimes need to play finite games.

A third concern is for how our professions will relate to what the historian Roszak (1998) calls the "longevity revolution" which is occurring on a world-wide basis. It is a well established fact that our nation, as well as many others, is becoming older and will continue to do so at an increasingly rapid rate. Roszak views the senior spectrum as ranging from 50 years to 100+ years and divides this population into three rough historical classifications—World War I Seniors (senior old), World War II Seniors (middle old), and Vietnam War Seniors (New People). The middle old and New People seniors are very different than their parents. They have considerably better health,

control more wealth, exert much more political influence and for the first time their tastes and interests matter. He appeals to the “New People” to use their increase in extra years of life as a resource . . . “the chance to join with others in building a compassionate society where people can think deep thoughts, create beauty, study nature, teach the young, worship what they hold sacred and care for one another” (p. 8). It will be imperative for the recreation and leisure services and programs we offer to be sensitive to the characteristics, desires and needs of all three senior cohort groups. Our research efforts will need to go beyond the usual surveys, correlation and multivariate analysis designs. Roszak believes that, as longevity embraces a larger and larger population, “we will need a *cultural demographics* that draws upon aspects of mind and value even more than on physical conditions. Age needs to be surrounded by history. We will want to know what people have lived through and what vision of life they carry with them into an ever extending seniority” (p. 14). This view will, of necessity, have to include attention paid to the various ethnic and cultural influences on people’s life experiences (including leisure and recreation) and their visions of life. Thus, it seems to me that we will want to design more field-based and action research studies as well as continuing to use the various qualitative methods which have been appearing with increasing frequency in our research journals.

Fourth concern: If we really believe that the benefits of leisure [recreation and play] are endless and that we are about enhancing the quality of life for all, then the 21st Century must see all of us—educators, practitioners, researchers—providing leadership in the environmental movement to save our planet. We must remain ever cognizant that what happens to the natural world happens to us. Leisure education must go beyond helping the individual to find flow, peak experiences or at least satisfaction in chosen activities or experiences. It must also persuade individuals and groups that there is an emotional bond between human beings and the natural environment out of which we evolve. The emerging field of “ecopsychology” brings together leading edge psychologists and ecologists to “redefine sanity within an environmental context. It contends that seeking to heal the soul without reference to the ecological system of which we are an integral part is a form of self-destructive blindness” (Brown, p. *xvii*). Ecopsychology can give us a new conceptual base for our research as well as new hypotheses to be tested and it provides a model for our scholars and researchers for joining with scholars and researchers from other disciplines in meaningful collaboration.

A last concern is wondering where the significant societal trends related to spirituality, wellness, and holistic service concepts will lead us. In the last few years many practitioners in therapeutic and community based recreation services have greatly expanded their conceptual base for service delivery from a traditional medical/community service one to a holistic service concept, emphasizing the mind, body, spirit interrelationships, which is gathering momentum in medical and health care services. It is also in tune with another national trend which shows many Americans seeking to find and

enhance the spiritual aspects of their lives. Needless to say, such a major shift in delivery of services will have considerable impact on the direction of research in therapeutic recreation as well as in recreation and leisure research.

For many Americans, the search for enhancing the spiritual aspects of their lives goes beyond religiosity. Zukov (1999) believes that each of us is being drawn to a vision which he states is "more than a vision. It is an emerging force. It is the next step in our evolutionary journey" (p. 13). He has used the terms five-sensory and multi-sensory to describe what we are and what we are becoming. He explains that we are evolving from a species that pursues power based upon the perceptions of the five senses and belief in "survival of the fittest," which he calls *external power*, into a multisensory species that pursues *authentic power* that is based upon the perceptions and values of the spirit. Our current model of evolution is a result of having evolved until now by exploring the universe with our five senses which has allowed us to see the basic principles of the universe in concrete ways. It has led to the pursuit of external power to control the environment and everything in it and has produced a type of competition that affects every aspect of our lives. Zukov shows that it has generated conflict between lovers, siblings, races, sexes, classes, communities, and nations and brought us to the edge of destruction. This is how we have evolved until now, but, he tells us, we are leaving behind this exploration of the physical world as our sole means of evolution. "We are on a journey toward authentic power, and that authentic empowerment is the goal of our evolutionary process and the purpose of our being" (p. 27). The perceptions of multisensory humans extend beyond physical reality to a realm which is invisible to the five-sensory human and it is in this invisible realm that our deepest values are found. Zukov shows how infusing the activities of life with reverence, compassion, and trust makes them come alive with meaning and purpose. If in our journey in the 21st century we choose to seek and attain authentic power, we will have a profoundly different view of life in general and our profession in particular and, needless to say, the ways in which we teach, study and conduct research in our fields will be radically different. It is exciting to think about the possibilities. I believe our many talented and creative researchers, educators, and practitioners, riding the winds of change, will be more playful, live more horizontally, be infinite players, help build a more compassionate society, collaborate with other disciplines to save our planet and give new depth and breadth to our research, and strive to attain authentic power.

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,
 going far ahead of the road I have begun.
 So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;
 it has its inner light, even from a distance—
 and changes us, even if we do not reach it,
 into something else, which, hardly sensing it, we already are;
 a gesture waves us on, answering our own wave. . .
 but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

Rainer Maria Rilke, Muzot, March 1924

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