



Leisure and recreation in Canadian society: an introduction (3rd ed.), by George Karlis

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Leisure and recreation in Canadian society: an introduction (3rd ed.), by George Karlis, Toronto, ON, Thompson Education Publishing, Inc., 2016, 311 pp., CND \$74,95/UK £40,45 (hardback), ISBN-978-1-55077-255-5

“Leisure is the mother of philosophy.”

– Thomas Hobbes (1651) *Leviathan*

This artefact is the third edition of Karlis’s textbook about leisure and recreation presently in progress as it appears in Canadian society. The author is mindful of the crucial importance of the inclusive social integration and self-knowledge dimensions of these human practices when he affirms that ‘[l]eisure and recreation play a significant role in the development of individuals and in the sustainability of healthy communities. ... Leisure is an avenue to help us feel positive ourselves, and the study of leisure helps us recognize not only but also why it plays such a key role in shaping positive self-identity’ (p. 3). As such, this momentous vision gives the heartbeat of this textbook where the *telos* is to provide geographically and spiritually a better overview about leisure and recreation in Canada as the text unfolds.

It is then possible to acknowledge the intent of the author where the mosaic reality of multiculturalism is ingrained. As we embrace this asset, it is significant to realize that multiculturalism stems from our belief that all Canadians are equal in dignity. It keeps our personalized faith, our individual identity, to feel intimately the presence of our ancestors and experience therefore a strong sense of belonging to shared values among Canadian citizens. As Karlis points out, ‘[m]ulticulturalism is a process that allows for the existence of a cultural mosaic. It encourages the maintenance of ethnic cultural identities while upholding common Canadian values. Multiculturalism is about choice, freedom to be, and identifying yourself with the culture of your choice while also being Canadian’ (p. 162). However, there is probably a fragility in that work

which might enhance the two solitudes effect in Canada. Even the book is thoroughly documented with relevant authors, we noticed that famous leisure scholars in Québec such as Michel Bellefleur (1997), Max D'Amours (1981, 1987), Gilles Pronovost (1983, 1997) and André Thibault (2008) are not fully considered in this author's reasoning. Their omission might in the long run have critical consequences for the leisure studies endeavour and Canadian identity development from coast to coast. Nevertheless, the reflections of Karlis are prudent about this and no doubt he will correct in a near future edition this deficiency.

These are the contents of this scholarly textbook, which includes a new chapter 13: Chapter 1, 'Introducing leisure and recreation/it's all about play'; Chapter 2, 'Conceptualizing leisure and recreation/taking play seriously'; Chapter 3, 'The history of leisure and recreation/our national heritage'; Chapter 4, 'Leisure and recreation in the public sector/a role for government'; Chapter 5, 'Leisure and recreation in the commercial sector/business and the media'; Chapter 6, 'Volunteerism and the voluntary sector/all for one and one for all'; Chapter 7, 'Community development, leisure, and recreation/it takes a village'; Chapter 8, 'Canadian culture, multiculturalism, and ethnicity/mosaic or melting pot?'; Chapter 9, 'Leisure, recreation, and Canada's Aboriginal peoples/learning from elders'; Chapter 10, 'Canadians, leisure, and recreation/what we do for fun'; Chapter 11, 'The tourism industry/creating jobs and stimulating growth'; Chapter 12, 'Parks in Canada/nature's bountiful gift'; Chapter 13, 'Events and festivals/bringing joy to people' and Chapter 14, 'The future of leisure and recreation/a work in progress'. The whole presentation of this renewed edition is more fluid than the first and second editions with some text additions, more beautiful pictures and, in an aside, figures which represent altogether the Canadian spirit of the author. Each chapter is well structured by learning objectives, key concepts, tables, review, study questions and proposed selected websites.

With a careful reading of this textbook, which has a political overtone, the author describes a Canadian society that is entering into an era with an ageing population due to a preponderance of the baby-boomer generation. Thus, Statistics Canada forecasts by using a low-growth scenario that by the year 2036, 24.6% of the population will be aged 65 years or older (Statistics Canada, 2010) with many senior citizens having slight chronic health conditions. More so than previous generations, they will be educated, many will have retired earlier, they will live longer and adopt a more relaxed behaviour about the Puritan work ethic. Karlis professes that 'recreation practitioners need to be aware that Canadians are retiring *to* recreation and active living, rather than *from* it. These practitioners should act as leaders in educating and instilling an active living philosophy in all seniors and aging Canadians, and encourage the development of programs and services oriented toward active living' (p. 275; emphasis in original). This social problematic is currently in motion. In fact, it highlights the requirement for swift and compendious political action in order to prevent social overflow because '[t]he uncertainty surrounding the provision of public sector leisure services would undoubtedly be reduced if the federal government took the initiative to construct a national policy on recreation' (p. 82).

From this perspective, this textbook is the first step for framing a national leisure/recreation policy. Obviously, it will take political courage and the author's thoughts are an excellent philosophical framework for such an enterprise. As Storey (1990) revealed at the beginning of the 1990s, '[t]here is a continuing movement toward the possibility of developing a national policy on recreation. With the provinces and

territories in policy agreement, it remains for the federal government to re-evaluate its role, purpose, goals, legislation and allocation of resources to support the fostering of values that strengthen the social fabric of Canadian society, and improve the quality of Canadian life' (p. 9). Consequently, in a society characterized by this possibility of an increase in free time and leisure, there will be a need again to discuss seriously in the public space the prospect of a 4-day work-week and a 3-day weekend for the greatest number of Canadians with a view to upgrade the quality of life. Therefore, the challenge is how to fulfil this additional time. For these reasons, the relevance of a common definition of leisure/recreation is more than necessary (Burton, 1977). Thus, the coming years should be occupied for leisure/recreation professionals.

This last viewpoint suggests that '[c]itizens want to be aware of what is going on around them and increasingly, to participate in shaping it. Governments are listening; most carefully, perhaps, at the municipal level which is closest to them' (Ellis & Knott, 1975, p. 136). Leisure/recreation services are decentralized from the bureaucracy to the sphere of community development where citizens surely should have some virtual control for empowerment within their environment. This means that mutual interests motivate them to promote a coming together for leisure and recreation experiences through a 'process in which the grouping of people with common ideas helps increase the probability that common needs will be fulfilled' (Karlis, 1994, p. 10) and therefore are brought hopefully to the attention of decision-makers at the three levels of governments.

Teachers and students will find in this textbook a fine pedagogic tool about the scientific thematic of leisure and recreation studies. Karlis succeeds nicely by including and summarizing many of the Canadian researchers in academic fields at many colleges and universities. It is important to understand that leisure and recreation is a big business in the state of the economy and the author's thinking synthesizes and structures quite adequately the complexity of these two practical experiences and realities through human activities in Canadian society.


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