

Stan Parker and Robert Paddick, *Leisure in Australia: Themes and Issues*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1990. Bibliog., index, pp. 123. \$14.95.

It has been a decade since the publication of David Mercer's *In Pursuit of Leisure* written as an introduction to the recreation field in Australia. Since 1980 there have been changes to the way in which leisure is provided and consumed and there has also been an increase in the number of University and College Leisure/Recreation Studies courses in all states of Australia. The year 1991 also saw the formation of an Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies for promotion of research and scholarship into the area of leisure in this region. Thus it is timely for another introductory book about Australian leisure to be placed on the market.

The authors, Stanley Parker and Robert Paddick, have backgrounds in sociology and physical education/philosophy and they indicate that the approach taken in the book is sociological, reaching towards social psychology. The aim of this concise book is to 'stimulate thought and discussion specifically about leisure but broadly about what it means to live a life of quality' (p. 1). The cover of the book announces

that it is a 'timely and useful resource' for students and lecturers in recreation and physical education courses and for students of Australian society generally.

In the introduction, the authors make a distinction between *providing* leisure for people and actively encouraging people to make their own leisure (p.2). They also point to an ethical theme which recurs throughout the book: 'to consider what is good for people leads to a consideration of what type of society is desirable'. They ask also about 'good' and 'bad' leisure and pay particular attention to ethical concerns in the later chapters.

The book begins with a focus on social changes and their consequences for leisure. Here the authors offer a brief history of leisure in Australia. In five pages there is a coverage of 40,000 years of history and after reading this, and the remaining sections of the first chapter on work changes and the pace and quality of life, it is possible to be left with a sense that all these years and events of history have marched on into a modern state of leisure where people are harried, engaged in anti-leisure, whose enjoyments, activities and desires are manipulated by a commodified leisure and whose leisure degrades the environment (p. 14). The view of history presented is of people and the nation as passive receivers of the onward march of historical processes. Such a view seems at odds with the authors' desire to encourage people to 'make their own leisure' (p.2). To add some historical meaning to the idea of 'making leisure' it would have been preferable to see further reference to the trade union movement 'making leisure' in its nineteenth century struggles for the eight-hour day, or more recently, in the early 1980s campaigns for the shorter working week. While there is no definitive history of Australian leisure (black or white), there is a growing body of historical research on leisure in areas such as sport, gambling, radio, television, film, parks and the arts. This research could form the basis of an expanded history of leisure.

The second chapter provides an overview of what Australians do in their leisure, based on various national and state surveys in conjunction with interviews conducted by the authors. Data is interpreted in a concise way and there is a move beyond the presentation of raw numbers to use interviews concerning unconventional leisure. While there is room for some more critical appraisal of national surveys (e.g. the limited range of activities inquired into; reliance upon recall in the surveys) this is a very helpful overview for someone new to the field of leisure studies. Parker and Paddick cut a readable and interesting pathway through the myriad of figures contained in the surveys referred to.

Satisfaction from leisure is considered next and some rationale for this shift of focus would help to smooth the path of reading, although a justification is offered at the end of Chapter 3 (p.39). This chapter suggests that there are a variety of satisfactions that arise from leisure activity, that these satisfactions might change and that there are differences between and within individuals. The question remains as to how these matters could be interpreted in an Australian context.

In Chapter 4 the focus shifts to the relationship between work and leisure and the early part of the chapter deals with the existing models of this relationship. The last part of the chapter is devoted to canvassing the need for revisions to existing models of the work-leisure relationships on the basis of the thirty interviews which have been presented. This theoretical revision exercise seems out of place in an introductory book such as this. Students entering the field could find the model re-building to be confusing and someone familiar with the field could ask for further rationale and data for the proposed revisions.

Having considered the relationship between work and leisure and the grey area of things which are neither work nor leisure, the authors proceed to consider meanings in Chapter 5 and note that these are not simple. Such a chapter may have been better placed before the considerations of the previous chapter however a useful statement on different academic and popular meanings of leisure, recreation, free time

and spare time is presented. Perhaps it would not have been in the interests of stimulating thought and discussion for the authors to state their informed preference for a definition of the terms they discuss. But in an earlier chapter they refer to leisure as 'freely chosen use of time' (p. 28).

The concepts presented in this chapter - Leisure, Recreation, Free-time, Spare-time - are dealt into the text so to speak, from the authors' empirical deck of concepts. The reader is ready to play further with these concepts but it is as if the authors/dealers forgot to shuffle them back into the deck after they were introduced in Chapter 5. The distinctions drawn between leisure and recreation, and between free-time and spare-time remain somewhat idle for the remainder of the book and the newly identified concept of spare time (p. 64) seems to have fallen from the text altogether.

From Chapter 6 onwards the text is taken smoothly into the difficult territory of 'the good use of leisure' and related ethical questions. A distinction is introduced between hedonic and aristic considerations (p. 67), the former concerned with merely providing satisfaction and the latter with the good of the wider society. The authors ask will it be more 'beer, billiards and bingo' or 'Beethoven, bridge and ballet' (p. 70) and propose that aristic considerations are often ignored in the provision of leisure.

On the provision of leisure, the vagueness of government policy is addressed in statements such as 'assisting people to enable them to have the opportunity to make satisfying choices'. Parker and Paddick I believe, rightly criticise the distance between this actual policy statement and the real substance of satisfying leisure (p.70). The text then moves to discuss 'soft social control' and four interesting case studies of satisfying leisure are used to raise a stimulating set of questions (pp. 72-3). The case studies and questions could be put to good use in introductory classes to stimulate debate about what is desirable and what is not, or whether such questions should be asked.

On the debate about desirability, there is later reference (p.86) to a problem of quality associated with simply supplying a wide range of leisure opportunities. In assuming that “what is available is worthwhile, (t)he fact that people may like activities and pastimes which are banal, stultifying, perhaps even destructive, is ignored’. There is a judgement involved here which seems at odds with earlier modelling of the relationship between work and leisure (Ch.4). Some so called ‘trivial leisure could well be in opposition (p.41) to demanding and complex work, some so called ‘banal’ leisure could be an extension (p.41) of banal work and there are those whose work, paid or unpaid, is so demanding that they only want to find a quiet spot to lie down, or even get into the shower for a few minutes of escape and warm water. Given the focus on the relationship between work and leisure throughout the book, it seems to follow that the ethical questions being raised about leisure, need to be raised about leisure *in relation* to work.

You either tell people what to do or let them do whatever they like. It needs only a reflection however to realise that there are other possibilities, the most notable of which is education (p.78).

The argument developed in Chapter 7 might be summarised as follows: to avoid imposing leisure and values onto people, and to avoid undesirable leisure (destructive, not in the interests of the wider society), educate people for leisure. Administrators of leisure programmes, along with teachers are construed as leisure educators (p.89) which in turn necessitates a body of professionals who are skilled in the arts of community consultation. This argument has perhaps been implicit in the development of leisure studies courses in Australia. Here it is made explicit.

The concern with values - conceptions of the desirable (p.90) - is continued into the final two chapters. In reading this book it is possible to take away the impression that the authors do not consider some contemporary developments in leisure as desirable. For example, leisure

as commodity, commercially packaged sports, dating agencies, anonymous phone sex fantasies, or the proliferation of friendship and marriage bureaus (pp.96-97). A consistent line of argument is developed throughout the book for artistic considerations to be made (for the good of the wider society) and taken into account in providing and educating for leisure. However if the theoretical approach to the question of desirability is shifted out of sociology and ethical philosophy and into the realm of psychoanalysis for example, then the value of certain kinds of leisure which might be deemed undesirable needs to be reassessed. To elaborate, Freud in *his Civilisation and its Discontents* argued that social order rests upon the repression of certain aggressive instincts which, if expressed would lead to instability. Such repression means a certain amount of unhappiness - discontent - exists. In Freud's view civilisation requires instinctual repression in order to avoid or minimise such acts as rape, other sexual abuses or acts of violence. It is arguably the case that seemingly undesirable leisure forms like 'telephone fantasies' or pornography allow some expression of repressed instinct in ways which are not dramatically harmful to either individuals or the prevailing social order. If this is the case then the kinds of leisure which the authors appear to have designated as undesirable can be considered as desirable - 'artistic leisure'? The issue of worthwhile leisure has been well raised in this book and should it be pursued, there is arguably a need to broaden the theoretical bases. However as Parker and Paddick indicate, 'judgements of quality in the artistic sense are (not) easily decided' (p. 86).

As the book turns to policy issues in Chapter 8, there is listing of several areas (identified by discussion groups in Adelaide) which could be implemented by various groups. These include teaching, educating for retirement, meeting needs of underprivileged people and preventing damage to the natural environment. There is a sense of social concern in the policy issues raised by Parker and Paddick. It seems to me that leisure might also be used more radically as a means to the better society that the authors have in view. For example, leisure (festival, carnival) can

be used to promote and raise funds for environment conservation groups; to get across political messages which are palatable to the Australian middle class about French nuclear testing in the Pacific, or racism in Australia; to put a spirit of carnival into events such as Community Aid Abroad's Walk Against Want; or to carry political protest about issues related to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

The book concludes with an overview chapter on Australian leisure in the world context. Reference is made to special features of Australian leisure where some questions are raised and speculations made. In a section on the academic field of leisure studies, the authors note that there have been relatively few books on leisure studies published in Australia. Now that there are leisure/recreation studies degree courses at Griffith University, the University of Newcastle, University of Technology, Sydney, Phillip Institute of Technology (to become RMIT), University of South Australia and Edith Cowan University, there is growing need for more local books to be published in this area.

Leisure in Australia. Themes and Issues covers a lot of territory in 123 pages and there are bound to be oversights in such a concise book. Tourism's influence on leisure for example gets only a paragraph towards the end of the book (p. 104). It is however a clearly written book, unpretentious in its style and aims, and which contains a minimum of jargon. Where unfamiliar terms are used, they are explained and so the book is accessible to introductory level students.

Being a book on Australia, the authors have appropriately used a majority of Australian material and the bibliography offers an introduction to the local literature. However as already noted, there have been relatively few books on leisure studies and, 'while some individual papers have touched on leisure theory, education and philosophy, it is fair to say that more lengthy treatment of these matters is very limited in this country' (p.105). There is a void in the Australian literature, particularly that which is research based. One relevant area where there

is a great need for more research and literature is in the area of leisure history.

To return to the aims of the book, my view is that it should succeed in 'stimulating thought and discussion' for its intended audience and that the statement of ethical issues around what it means to live a life of quality should lead to constructive debate. The price of this well presented book is \$14.95 and this makes it more attractive than some highly priced overseas texts.

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