

Play as the Main Event in International and UK Culture

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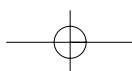
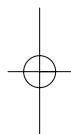
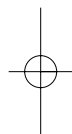
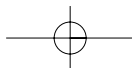
Abstract

Play has become a dominant trend in the culture of Western adults. This chapter of *Cultural Trends* looks at its prevalence and growth. The first section briefly discusses what play is. The second provides an overview of playful varieties of leisure in the US and worldwide, and sums up some of the main trends that have emerged. The third follows the same method in relation to the UK. The fourth section looks at the increasing incidence of play at work, while the final section draws conclusions from the evidence presented. Throughout, special attention is played to the role of information technology in play. Five industries are covered extensively – computer games; gambling; sport; performing arts; and fairs, theme parks and adventure holidays.

Attendance at, participation in and paid employment in play constitute three levels of engagement in it. This chapter tries to measure these levels of engagement by bringing together just some of the vast but disparate literature and statistics on play. The range of sources drawn upon is varied. Inspired by the perspectives of writers in economics, politics, sociology and technology, this chapter uses official government data, and data taken from the business press, to illustrate its ideas.

The chapter asks and answers the following three questions:

- Does play provide spaces and moments of freedom that, fortunately enough, lie beyond the grasp of market forces?
- Is the entertainment provided by play genuinely educational, or does absorption in play instead represent a degraded notion of the Self?
- By favouring mass attendance at, mass participation in and mass employment in playful activities, have UK government policies advanced the cause of culture – or have they set it back?



4. Play as the Main Event in International and UK Culture

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Introduction

In recent decades, the influence of play on Western culture has risen. Sport has undergone significant economic expansion. In 1992, when BSkyB first bought the right to televise Premier League football live, it paid £180 million; for the contract due to expire at the end of the 2003–04 season, it paid no less than £1.1 billion. Sport has also increased in popularity. Today nearly one British man in four – 24 per cent – regularly watches sport on TV in pubs, and 8 per cent of British women do the same (Key Note, 2002a: 57).

Many other social activities now incorporate notions of play. In 2001, 31 per cent of British adults said they enjoyed pub quizzes, and 19 per cent felt the same about pub karaoke sessions (Key Note, 2002a: 57). In America, a Harris poll has found that 8 per cent of the population – no fewer than 17 million people – had tried to impersonate Elvis Presley (Liu, 2002: 6). From the interactive, ‘fun’ office of the knowledge economy to the carnival atmosphere of the anti-capitalist demo, participation in playful performances is something that shapes more and more of our world (Brick, 2002).

Take, as just one aspect of Western culture, the media. In 2000, the publishing sensation of the year was magic, in the shape of *Harry Potter*; the top box office film in the UK was *Toy Story 2*, followed by *Gladiator* (ONS, 2002a). In 2002 the winner of four Academy Awards, including that for best picture, was *A Beautiful Mind*, a biography of John Nash, an early developer of the post-war mathematical account of games known as ‘game theory’. In 2003, 800 million fans of American football watched the Super Bowl, while advertisers paid a record \$70,000 a second for slots in 61 commercial breaks (Doran, 2003: 52).

In UK ‘reality’ television, quizzes and games such as ‘Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?’, ‘The Weakest Link’, ‘Big Brother’ and ‘Survivor’ have gained record audiences, won exports abroad and pioneered unprecedented levels of audience participation. In fact, the intellectual property bound up merely in a particular format for a new reality show or game show can be worth tens of millions of pounds (Kinane, quoted in Sanghera, 2002: 3).

The big growth areas in UK digital television are also all to do with play. Of the £186 million of revenue BSkyB gained from interactive television in 2002, from virtually nothing three years before, up to a half came from gambling (Horsman, 2003: 4–5). At one point in 2001, PlayJam, a games channel on SkyDigital, was its eighth most popular commercial channel (*The Economist*, 2002a: 5).

To take another aspect of Western culture, business: in 1993, when the US Federal Communications Commission sold off \$7.7 billion of rights to wireless communications, its ‘spectrum auction’ was organised through the application of game theory. Game theory has plenty of critics (Hargreaves and Varoufakis, 1995). Nonetheless, in 2000, when UK Chancellor Gordon Brown earned more than £20 billion in his sale of wireless rights, the bidding war was again organised with its help.

Play has also been the key to Virgin’s competitive stance. Virgin Airlines pioneered the building of computer games into every airline seat. It gives each passenger a free bag of childish, toy-like accessories with which to while away the hours. But the impact of play on business goes further than the yachting and ballooning adventures of Richard Branson.

Play has a big impact on work. In 2002, it was seriously discussed whether mass participation in

the Queen's Jubilee festivities, along with mass spectatorship during the World Cup, had impeded UK economic growth (Wheatcroft, 2002). When China, Japan and South Korea played their opening matches at the 2002 World Cup during work hours, 'much of north-east Asia', the *Financial Times* observed, 'ground to a halt' (Ward et al, 2002). On the other hand, the past few years have seen the emergence of a veritable liberation theology of play at work. Both management theorists and social commentators have adopted thespian, sporty and playful models for the future of work, whether their perspective has come from America (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Rifkin, 2000; Blanchard and Shula, 2001) or Britain (Firth and Leigh, 1998; Kane, 2000: 20–30).

As a lawyer who is also a mother, Cherie Blair has helped popularise the image of a harassed 'juggler' of different aspects of what is now termed 'work-life balance'. Nevertheless, the general reception given to play today remains positive. Architects and designers, for instance, have adopted play. Norman Foster's 40-storey City of London headquarters for the Zurich insurers Swiss Re, a gherkin-shaped monument to the importance business and society now attach to risk, is described by one design critic as 'ludic' (Bayley, 2002). Meanwhile, Jonathan Ive's design of the Apple iMac computer is widely celebrated as a joyful elision between the realities of IT at work, and the possibilities that IT contains for play.

As society has become more interested in children, so it has devoted more attention to gender differences in play, to its pedagogical merits, to every child's alleged 'right to play', and to safety in playgrounds (NCB, 2003). More generally, indoor children's play areas have, in the UK, become a £106 million market (Intel, 2002: 4). While

recognising the significance to children of play, however, this chapter concentrates on a field that is comparatively neglected (Terr, 1999) – play among adults.

The first section briefly discusses what play is. The second provides an overview of playful varieties of leisure in the US and worldwide, and sums up some of the main trends that have emerged. The third follows the same method in relation to the UK. The fourth section looks at the increasing incidence of play at work, while the final section draws conclusions from the evidence presented.

This chapter brings together, under the category 'play', just some of the vast but disparate international and British literature and statistics on the subject. Such an endeavour has not been tried before and, inevitably, there are omissions that will need to be made up by further research. Statistical comparisons between different countries are also difficult.

The range of sources drawn upon is varied. Inspired by the perspectives of economics, politics, sociology and technology, this chapter uses official government data, and data taken from the business press, to illustrate its ideas. The aim here is not to construct a comprehensive and consistent statistical account of play. What the Pennsylvania educationalist Brian Sutton-Smith has called the 'ambiguity' of play ensures that play will always elude such a treatment (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Instead, this chapter aims to give a flavour of the little-noticed prevalence of play. Where possible, it also quantifies the growth of play. Finally, the chapter debates whether the prevalence and growth of play deserve unequivocal celebration or a different, more suspicious attitude.

It should be noted that the quixotic character of play, especially when mingled with the 'play' of

market forces, ensures that its particular forms can, at any moment, fall into decline. In play, as elsewhere, there are losers as well as winners. There is no dispute about the travails of Britain's National Lottery, the retrenchment of British dance clubs, or the collapse into administration of the Old Monk chain of pubs after hopes in its 'Springbok' sport-themed outlets proved unfounded. Such developments, though worth tracking, are inevitable and do not detract from this chapter's thesis about the general growth of play.

The Olympic Games, begun in 794 BC, inspired the sixth-century Greek philosopher-mathematician, Pythagoras, to distinguish between three kinds of human lives: the life of those who came to the Games only to buy or sell, and who aimed at material satisfaction; the higher life of the participating athletes, who sought honour through action; and the highest, most contemplative life of all: that of those watching the festivities and seeking after truth (DeBurgh, 1923: 131). Inverting and updating Pythagoras to today's world of play, while retaining his sensitivity to commercial transactions, it is possible to discern three levels of adult engagement in play in its familiar context of leisure.

First, millions of people attend playful events. Here they watch and are captivated by, say, a football match or a drama. They can be roused from their seats by what they see; nevertheless, their involvement in the playful production is only at this relatively modest level. As every footballer or theatre actor knows, audiences can influence the competitive and artistic outcomes of playful events, but only within certain limitations.

Second, more fundamentally, a much smaller number of people directly participate in play. Here, more directly than through the roar of the crowd, the individual actions of players – their perfor-

mances – influence the outcomes of play. Still, it is important not to overdo the distinction between spectatorship and participation: the former, after all, is rarely passive (Lasch, 1979: 104, 107).

While participants can be taken as unpaid amateurs, there remains an even smaller group whose members are employed as players – even if some are, in effect, self-employed. Here once again performances influence the outcomes of play, but one of the principal outcomes is the playful event's commercial success. By contrast with the second group, this third consists of paid professionals. Members of this group show the highest engagement in play, for without play they might find it difficult to live.

Those who attend playful events may or may not pay to see them, although nowadays they usually find themselves paying. Those participating as amateurs may or may not pay so to do. They too usually find themselves paying. But if those employed to play do not part with money, they clearly find themselves enmeshed in labour markets. All three levels of engagement in play are bounded by market forces, but those employed to play find their conduct more determined by market forces than most.

Looking at different playful activities, this chapter tries to measure these levels of engagement in play. In terms of analysis, it also seeks to answer three questions:

- Does play provide spaces and moments of freedom that, fortunately enough, lie beyond the grasp of market forces?
- Is the entertainment provided by play genuinely educational, or does absorption in play instead represent a degraded notion of the Self?
- By favouring mass attendance at, mass participation in and mass employment in playful

activities, have UK government policies advanced the cause of culture – or have they set it back?

The nature of play

At first sight, play in the West today is merely a part of leisure. Moreover, much of contemporary leisure is, of course, not playful. People are not really playing when – to adopt the main categories for ‘home-based leisure’ recognised by Britain’s General Household Survey – they watch TV, visit or entertain friends or relations, listen to the radio or to recorded music, read books, or do gardening, DIY, dressmaking, needlework and knitting. Nor are people playing when, outside the home, they visit libraries, see a film or go for a walk. Nevertheless, there is a lot more to play than meets the eye.

The seminal author on play was the rector of the pre-war university of Leiden, the Netherlands – Johan Huizinga (Huizinga, 1938). As the French philosopher Roger Caillois showed after the war, it is not necessary to agree with Huizinga, in every particular (Caillois, 1958). But on the following points

Huizinga can be taken as being substantially right. Huizinga argues that play transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something – after all, language, myth and ritual are all permeated by it. Play does not immanently mean laughter, even if it often prompts mirth; for play would not be fun if it were not deeply serious, tense, intense and absorbing.

Play, Huizinga contends, goes beyond wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood, good and evil. Though the attribute of beauty does not attach to play as such, play has a profoundly aesthetic quality about it, and assumes marked elements of beauty.

Play, Huizinga reminds us, is a voluntary activity. It is a disinterested accompaniment to ordinary real life. It builds social cohesion around rules, order, and finite boundaries of time and space. In play one dis-plays to win admiration and, after a defeat, holds one’s head high so as to show character. In play we deliberately and enjoyably suspend rationality. To this important and vital judgement of Huizinga, it is only necessary to add that play is by no means always just escape, but can also be a dramatic commentary on reality and a heightened re-enactment of communal traditions (Lasch, 1979: 123).

Here are five broad, commonsense attributes of play, whether it is done alone or in groups. The list overlaps with some of Sutton-Smith’s ‘Seven Rhetorics’ of play (Sutton-Smith, 1997), and also differs from it. The list is not comprehensive, nor can it be. Inherent in the concept of play is that it can be a slithery thing to define: it is not only allusive, but necessarily elusive. Even the rules of a particular game, after all, allow a certain slitheriness in practice, including the chance to break them. As a result, this list is necessarily open-ended. Each attribute of play slips into another.

- 1 *Winning and losing* over a definite period of time, within certain constraints of space, and according to agreed rules. In group play there is often an attempt to assert power through competition between individuals, within teams and between teams. Equally, collaboration is often a feature of group play.
- 2 *Chance*. The throw of the dice, the luck of the draw, the spin of the roulette wheel, the state of the pitch: only chance and the fickleness of fate, not human skill, are at work here. Chance thus forms a big element of play. In ancient Greek

mythology, the creation of the universe itself involved chance in the form of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades playing dice, respectively winning the heavens, the seas and Hell.

- 3 *New tricks*. From the cardsharp to the professional musician, progress – learning to be a better player – is vital to the business of play. Once play moves beyond games of pure chance alone, it involves exploration, improvisation, repetition, mastery, self-development and, often, the use of memory skills. Thus, even when they are not pursued competitively, activities such as swimming, running, cycling, keeping fit, doing yoga and weight training can be playful in character.
- 4 *Illusion, pretence and the suspension of disbelief*. Included here are acting, ‘Show and Tell’, role play, fantasy, magic and the assumption of false identities. Aristotle observed that the habit of imitation and delight in its products were rooted in human nature. More recently, the theatre critic Kenneth Tynan wrote in his diaries:

Mistaken identity is not only what the craft of acting is all about; it is what much of drama is all about. An actor is a man who pretends to be someone who is usually pretending to be someone else.

(Tynan, 1975, in Lahr, 2001: 287)

- 5 *Miniaturisation*. Children’s toys and dolls are relatively small, and give their young owners a feeling of power, identity and control. Among adults, the collection, display and repeated rearrangement of a series of miniaturised objects – particularly miniaturised faces – often pleases, and is often based on the objects’ evocation of childhood memories. It is notable, too, that

English outdoor pub games have been miniaturised over the centuries (Finn, 1981: 16).

The role of IT in play

Two key founders of what is now known as information technology were much exercised by play. On the one hand, between 1926 and 1928, the Hungarian physicist and mathematician John von Neumann (1903–1957) gave detailed consideration to games of strategy, to poker and to bluffing in poker. By the time of the Second World War, he helped build the Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer (ENIAC) for the Manhattan Project and co-wrote the book that founded the theory of games (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1943: 186). On the other hand, the pioneer of computers in Britain, Alan Turing, devised his famous conceptual test of artificial intelligence, published in 1950, as a duel of wits between a human being and a hidden machine. Significantly, the object of this game was for the former to guess the identity of the latter – man or machine. In this, the Turing Test itself imitated a parlour game known as the ‘imitation game’, in which a ‘blind’ interrogator, communicating only through the written word with two people claiming to be female, has to guess which of the two is in fact a man (Brate, 2002: 71, 72).

The association between play and the founding fathers of IT is not hard to understand. The actions conducted in and the outcomes generated by play, like those of computers, depend on a series of decisions made within both ‘real time’ and a clear framework of rules. ‘Games’, remarks John David Bolter, one of the most perceptive writers about IT, are ‘the form of intellectual activity that computers imitate most effectively’ (Bolter, 1984: 192). In the creation of computer software, too, there is a playful

element of disinterested aesthetics. Every dedicated programmer 'spends hours at the console refining programs that have no real purpose ... every programmer knows the fascination of playing the electronic game for its own sake, of searching for a solution that is both correct and elegant' (Bolter, 1984: 174). Those who 'hack' into computer systems often do so for the art and beauty, creativity, playful intellectual exercise and fun of the exercise (Levy, 1984; Himanen, 2001; Thomas, 2002). No analysis of play today would be complete, then, without a discussion of the role played in it by IT.

IT never originated but certainly now reinforces the five attributes of play listed above:

- 1 *Winning and losing*: IT can help record and score playful performances and contests with precision.
- 2 *Chance*: through the random permutation of numbers, IT can introduce chance occurrences into playful activities in a way that is, paradoxically, systematic.
- 3 *New tricks*: through the sophistication of its measurement of performance, IT encourages players to improve their play.
- 4 *Illusion*: IT now has the ability to project 2D and 3D simulations, and allows the construction of different 'virtual' personal identities.
- 5 *Miniaturisation*: IT helps people manipulate miniaturised graphic objects ('icons') and pieces of music.

The reversibility of electronic processes, like the endless ability of electronic originals to be copied, certainly stands in contrast to the physical world of materials, and lends itself to play (McCullough, 1996). It has also been argued that computer

networks provide a flat, horizontal connectivity akin to that which makes board games attractive (Zimmerman, 1999: 117). More convincingly, a number of American commentators on IT see its role in the office as being about play more than work (Woudhuysen, 1999a).

None of this means that the much-hyped 'information society' has ushered in a 'play society': that would be technological determinism. But dogmas about information society (Woudhuysen, 1997) have certainly emboldened playful visions of society. Moreover if IT is only a mediator of humanity's playful instincts, its spread through and impact on the real world has proved it to be quite a powerful mediator. A survey of the worldwide growth of play might, then, properly begin with computer games – for their expansion has truly been enormous.

The growth of playful leisure in America and worldwide

Computer games

As traditional toys and board games have lost their appeal, so computer games have gained more and more adherents. With computer games, there is some attendance – computer games know their own Olympics, in which professional contestants play for lucrative prizes. But computer games are much more about participation; and here the most striking thing is that most participants are adults, not children.

In America, people over 18 buy more than 90 per cent of the computer games available. The average age of a player is 28, and 56 per cent of frequent players have been playing for six years or more. No fewer than 60 per cent of US adults, or about 145 million Americans, play computer games

– and 43 per cent of players are women (Interactive Digital Software Association, 2003).

In 2002, a world of largely adult players poured about \$8.7 billion into 45 million dedicated games consoles made by Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony. In addition, games software publishers made sales of about \$17.5 billion. Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan now earnestly discuss the merits and demerits of new computer games. Indeed, international online computer games are now so established that cheating in them has become the subject of learned research papers (*The Economist*, 2000).

Yet computer games took time to grow. It was back in 1958 that Willy Higginbotham, head of instrumentation design at America's Brookhaven National Laboratories, lashed up an analogue computer, an oscilloscope and two handheld boxes with a knob and a button on each. His *Tennis for Two*, complete with wind resistance for the electronic 'ball', was the first electronic game. People queued to play it. In 1961 a full-scale rockets and torpedoes game, *Spacewar*, was installed on a PDP-1 computer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. By the early 1970s, computer games proved a marginal commercial success for one of America's largest TV manufacturers, Magnavox (Demaria and Wilson, 2002: 10–15).

It is, however, only since Japanese manufacturers developed the games console in the 1980s and 1990s that international fascination with computer games has really taken off. In 1996 Nintendo, the maker of the N64 and Game Boy, launched *Pokémon* in Japan. Since then Nintendo has made \$14 billion from that game (Hammersley, 2002: 6). By 1997, a leading US critic of electronic culture could argue that 50 million American 'manipulators', representing two generations of

children, had developed a new 'mental grammar' over five generations of videogames (Herz, 1997). By 1999, the US computer game hardware and software industries took \$8.8 billion in revenues, compared with Hollywood box office receipts of \$7.3 billion (Takahashi, 2000).

In 2000 Sony launched its PlayStation 2 console and *EverQuest*, a fantasy role-playing piece of software. Within 30 months, 40 million consoles were sold; at times, 3 million a month were built. Meanwhile, used on networked PCs and played online with several participants, *EverQuest*'s kind of 'network gaming' quickly built up a base of 425,000 subscribers, ready to pay \$13 each month to play it.

The future growth of computer games promises to be still more explosive. Microsoft will spend \$2 billion over the next five years building a special network, Xbox Live, to back network gaming for owners of its \$199 Xbox console. Some time in 2004 or 2005, worldwide sales of games software are poised to exceed those of CDs (*The Economist*, 2002b: 57). European take-up of consoles will rise, as Table 4.1 shows.

That most of the world's game players are men may also change. Over the next decade, digital TV and mobile phones will supplement the PC and the console in games. Because use of TV and mobiles is not as skewed toward male audiences as is use of PCs and consoles, these two platforms promise to offer computer games to millions of adult women.

US employment in computer games is modest. Electronic Arts, a games software publisher founded in 1982, has a turnover of \$1.7 billion, but employs only 3,200 people worldwide (Electronic Arts, 2002). As Table 4.2 indicates, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics records stagnant employment growth in general 'toys and sporting goods' for the

Table 4.1 Computer games consoles: estimates of past and future penetration of European households, by percentage, 2000 and 2005

	Consoles with 32/64-bit chips (2000)	Next generation of consoles (2005)
France	23	30
Germany	15	19
UK	30	40

Note: Excludes handheld consoles and does not account for ownership of more than one console
Source: Nick Parker/The IP Counsel, quoted in Wheatling, 2002: 30

period 1990 to 2000, and anticipates the same stagnation for the period 2000 to 2010. However, the Bureau also foresees a very rapid growth in output in toys and sporting goods over the next decade, some of which will undoubtedly come from employment in computer games.

Gambling

In America, playing for money was historically associated with card games. There has been a massive drop in participation in card games since the 1980s, but the average American still plays a hand eight times a year – while he or she visits the movies just six times a year. Even now, Americans

play no fewer than 400 million card games annually (Putnam, 2000).

Today most of the world's stakes are bet by people participating in national lotteries. Table 4.3 shows that until 2001, the latest date for which world figures are available, the growth in spending on lotteries was fairly continuous.

The table reveals that the largest part of world lottery sales is made in Europe. Europe raised its share of world lottery sales as it liberalised national lottery markets during the 1990s.

Lotteries are an obsession in America and Canada, where national expenditures divided by national populations suggest spends of \$100–200 a

Table 4.2 Toys and sporting goods, US: trends in thousands of jobs and billions of dollars output, 1990–2010, and comparison with all US industry

Industry, SIC code	Jobs, 000s			Change in jobs, 000s		AAGR, jobs, per cent		Output, \$ billion			AAGR, output, per cent	
	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010
Toys and sporting goods, 394	104	104	109	0	5	0	0.5	11	16	36	3.6	8.4
TOTAL All US industry	124,324	145,594	167,754	21,269	22,160	1.6	1.4	11,472	16,180	22,286	3.5	3.3

Note: AAGR = Annual Average Growth Rate

Source: Employment and output by industry, 1990, 2000 and projected 2010, available as a pdf from www.bls.gov/emp, 2003

Table 4.3 World lottery sales by geographical area, \$ billion and per cent of world total, 1996–2001

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001
Africa	0.29	0.28	0.27	0.19	0.62
% of total	0.02	0.2	0.22	0.1	0.5
Australia & NZ	2.89	2.6	2.33	2.47	2.04
% of total	2.4	2.2	1.88	1.9	1.7
Asia & Middle East	14.9	14.3	13.9	14.56	16.65
% of total	12.3	12.0	10.78	11.4	13.5
Europe	56.27	55.0	61.24	63.5	54.82
% of total	46.6	46.2	49.32	49.6	44.4
Central, South America	3.95	4.2	4.11	3.74	2.89
% of total	3.3	3.5	3.31	2.9	2.3
North America	42.39	42.6	42.82	43.6	46.5
% of total	35.1	35.8	34.49	34.1	37.6
TOTAL	118.87	118.98	124.19	128.05	123.52
% Change	4.9	0.01	4.4	3.1	–3.5

Source: www.lotteryinsider.com.au/stats/world.htm, 2003

year per head on this kind of gambling. Sales growth is also appreciable, as Table 4.4 shows.

In the course of the 1990s, the average American increased attendance at casinos from once to twice a year (Putnam, 2000). Before that decade, casinos were legal only in Nevada and New

Jersey, although even then ‘riverboat’ casinos bent the rules and were meant playfully to regenerate a number of depressed waterfronts. Now casinos are legal in a majority of states.

Perhaps the strongest growth of gambling has taken place in Australia. There, participation in

Table 4.4 North American lotteries: population, sales, profits and sales per head, in local dollars, 2000/01–2001/02

Pop (2000)	FY2001 Sales	FY2001 Profit	FY2002 Sales	FY2002 Profit	Sales Annual Change, %	Sales/head
US 252.25m	\$38.87bn	\$12.42bn	\$42.42bn	\$13.75bn	9.1	\$168
CANADA 30.68m	\$C7.69bn	\$C2.77bn	\$C7.73bn	\$C2.79bn	0.6	\$C252

Sources: FY01 & FY02 Sales and Profits; www.naspl.org/sales&profits.html, 2003

Table 4.5 Australian gaming machines: turnover, spending and spending per head, 1996/97–2000/01

Billions of Australian \$			
Year	Turnover	Expenditure	Expenditure per head
1996/97	49,809.935	4,952.420	363.30
1997/98	57,676.190	5,866.966	424.13
1998/99	66,036.004	6,852.337	488.91
1999/00	74,139.491	7,654.131	534.49
2000/01	77,730.497	8,319.589	572.19

Source: www.lotteryinsider.com.au/stats/slots.htm, 2003

gambling through gaming machines is so intense, expenditure on it is now worth about 2 per cent of household disposable income – an astonishing figure. Table 4.5 records the increases.

In the financial years 1998/99 through to 2000/01, Australian households diverted between 3.4 and 3.5 per cent of their disposable income to gambling in all its forms. In 2000/01, the average Australian household laid bets worth no less than \$A988.90.

While statistics on employment in the world gambling industry are not as easy to calculate as those on spending, the latter suggest just how far popular participation in play has gone.

Sport

Much of gambling has to do with football, horse racing and sport in general. In the US, attendance at major sporting events has nearly doubled since the 1960s. Women's soccer games, for instance, pull in average crowds of 30,000 and, when America won the last Women's World Cup, 40 million watched the game on television.

American participation in outdoor team ballgames runs at much lower levels than it did 10 years ago. But Table 4.6 shows that there has been an appreciable increase in participation in 'extreme' sports. These are not always performed competitively; yet they certainly suggest a less casual, more committed attitude to sport as play.

Table 4.6 The growth of 'extreme' sports in the US: millions of Americans aged seven or older participating 'more than once', 1991–2001

	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
Rollerskating (in-line)	7.3	12.4	23.9	26.6	24.1	19.2
Skateboarding	8.0	5.6	4.5	6.3	7.0	9.6
Snowboarding	1.6	1.8	2.8	2.8	3.3	5.3
Martial Arts	3.2	3.6	4.5	4.9	5.1	5.1

Source: National Sporting Goods Association, 2003

Table 4.7 Bowling and commercial sports, US: trends in thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of output, 1990–2010, and comparison with all US industry

Industry, SIC code	Jobs, 000s			Change in jobs, 000s		AAGR, jobs, per cent		Output, \$ billion			AAGR, output, per cent	
	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010
Bowling centres, 793	91	81	70	–10	–11	–1.2	–1.5	4	3	3	–2.4	–2.0
Commercial sports, 794	101	153	180	52	28	4.2	1.7	13	15	19	1.4	1.9
TOTAL US All industry	124,324	145,594	167,754	21,269	22,160	1.6	1.4	11,472	16,180	22,286	3.5	3.3

Note: AAGR = Annual Average Growth Rate

Source: <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/ind.employment/empinddetail.txt>, 2002

In 2000, Tony Hawk, alias ‘The Birdman’, earned nearly \$1 million from professional skateboarding competitions (Hamilton, 2001). American sales of skateboards and the clothing to go with them have risen from \$500 million in 1996 to a staggering \$1.4 billion in 2001 (TransWorld SKATEboarding, quoted in Ruibal, 2002: 2). There are an estimated 20 million skateboarders worldwide (Mellor, 2002: 45).

Ten-pin bowling remains a draw for Americans. In 1996, for instance, 91 million went bowling – a quarter more than voted in the 1998 congressional elections (Putnam, 2000). As Table 4.7 shows, US employment has declined in this sport; but in ‘commercial sports’ in general, it has risen nearly three times faster than overall US employment.

Altogether, America has turned sport into a major business in its own right. But Europe is not far behind. In soccer, following on the heels of Amsterdam’s Ajax and Turin’s Juventus, the marketing director of Real Madrid, Angel Sánchez, has helped sell the rights for Coca-Cola to receive the endorsement of his club’s Portuguese star Luís Figo. The deal is worth €2 million a year, probably

split 50:50 to the club and Figo. Eight Real employee footballers may each get in on perhaps seven deals like these at any time, so earning €3–4 million each. Summing up, Sanchez observes:

Football is a content business. We are like [Louis B] Meyer is cinema; we create content. If you make a movie, it makes a difference if Tom Cruise is in the lead role. Figo and Co. are our Tom Cruises.

(Sanchez, quoted in Owen, 2002: 14)

The impact of World Cup football and of the Olympic Games has been greater even than this. Research by HSBC Securities suggests that, since 1966, developed countries hosting the World Cup have seen their stock markets outperform global indices by an average of 9 per cent in the six months preceding each tournament (Pilling and Ward, 2002: VI). The World Cup of 2002, Goldman Sachs estimated, increased Japan’s expenditure on consumption by ¥1.5 trillion (£7.8 billion), and boosted construction by the same amount (*Financial*

Times, 2002: VII). In early 2002 the auditor-general of New South Wales determined that the real cost of the 2000 Sydney Olympics had spiralled to \$AUS 6.6 billion (£2.2 billion). Later in 2002, it emerged that the Greek government's budget for the Athens Olympics of 2004 had nearly doubled from €2.5 billion to €4.4 billion (Hope, 2002: 8).

Not just corporations such as Coca-Cola, but also economists and politicians are now very interested in sport.

Performing arts

During the commercial expansion of ancient Greece in the 8th and 7th century BC, epic and elegiac poetry were joined by lyric poetry, which was

written to be sung to music. The choric ode of the same era was accompanied by music and dancing.

In the early 5th century BC, the odes of Pindar celebrated victories in athletics. What characterised drama in fifth-century Athens was its religious quality – festivals were held in honour of Dionysus – and its fusion of epic plots and action, unaccompanied dialogues in iambic metre, and lyric metre in the accompanied choric songs that interrupted the action. The open-air theatre on the slope of Acropolis had space for 30,000 people, a stage and an orchestra, or dancing place. Like athletes at the Games, too, dramatic poets competed against each other for prizes (DeBurgh, 1923: 149–50).

Table 4.8 Admission receipts to and spending per head of population on performing arts events, motion pictures, and spectator sports, US, 1989–2000

Year	Performing arts		Motion pictures		Spectator sports	
	Receipts, \$ billion	Spending per head, \$	Receipts, \$ billion	Spending per head, \$	Receipts, \$ billion	Spending per head, \$
1989	5.7	23.1	5.9	23.9	5.5	22.3
1990	6.3	25.3	6.2	24.9	5.5	22.0
1991	6.2	24.6	6.0	23.8	5.6	22.2
1992	6.9	27.1	5.6	22.0	5.8	22.7
1993	7.7	29.9	5.6	21.7	6.3	24.4
1994	7.8	30.0	5.7	21.9	6.3	24.2
1995	8.0	30.4	5.8	22.1	6.4	24.4
1996	8.0	30.2	5.8	21.9	6.9	26.0
1997	8.4	31.4	6.1	22.8	6.9	25.8
1998	8.3	30.7	6.6	24.4	7.4	27.4
1999	8.5	31.2	6.9	25.3	8.0	29.3
2000	8.4	30.5	6.8	24.7	8.0	29.1

Note: At constant 1996 \$

Source: National Endowment for the Arts, 2002

Performing arts, then, grew up as play. They have an ancient history of winners and losers. They concerned themselves, if not with chance, then certainly with fate. The Greeks made continuous attempts to improve their skills in dramatic composition, and sometimes created illusions with masks and other devices. Attendance at performing arts events was by no means a passive business; for participating actors, singers, musicians and dancers, 'plays' were all-consuming affairs.

So in twenty-first century America, the land of 'show business', where have the performing arts now got to? The National Endowment for the Arts has published figures from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, a division of the US Department of

Commerce, on the performing arts, comparing it with cinema-going and sport. Adjusted for inflation, receipts for performing arts events in the US rose from \$5.7 billion in 1989 to \$8.4 billion in 2000 – an increase of 47 per cent.

The figures show that, like sport, performing arts have enjoyed a major increase in US consumer expenditure – especially when compared with movie-going (Table 4.8).

Some of the increase relates to the massive popularity of live rock music, and in particular to attendance at tours by top rock bands. Table 4.9 gives an indication of the spending involved.

The top 15 tours highlighted in the table alone earned well over \$1 billion. As with the footballers

Table 4.9 Rock tours in North America with the highest gross earnings, \$ million, of all time

Rank	Gross earnings	Band	Tour and date
1	121.2	The Rolling Stones	<i>Voodoo Lounge</i> , 1994
2	109.7	U2	<i>Elevation</i> , 2001
3	103.5	Pink Floyd	<i>The Division Bell</i> , 1994
4	98.0	The Rolling Stones	<i>Steel Wheels</i> , 1989
5	89.3	The Rolling Stones	<i>Bridges to Babylon</i> , 1997
6	86.8	'N Sync	<i>Popodyssey</i> , 2001
7	82.1	The Backstreet Boys	<i>Black and Blue</i> , 2001
8	80.2	Tina Turner	<i>Twenty-Four Seven</i> , 2000
9	79.9	U2	<i>Popmart</i> , 1997
10	79.4	The Eagles	<i>Hell Freezes Over</i> , 1994
11	76.4	'N Sync	<i>No Strings Attached</i> , 2000
12	74.1	New Kids on the Block	<i>Magic Summer</i> , 1990
13	68.2	Dave Matthews Band	<i>Dave Matthews Band</i> , 2001
14	67.0	U2	<i>Zoo TV Tour</i> , 1992
15	64.7	The Rolling Stones	<i>No Security</i> , 1999

Source: Serwer, 2002: 33

of Real Madrid, the income of top self-employed rock musicians is considerable. Giving 'The Rolling Stones Inc' a cover story in September 2002, the US business magazine *Fortune* calculated that, just since 1989 – a long time, but one that clearly excludes the era of *Aftermath* or *Sticky Fingers* – the Stones have collected \$865.3 million in ticket sales (Serwer, 2002). Tour merchandise and sponsorship take this figure above \$1 billion; album sales and royalties since 1989 take the total money earned by the band from that date on to a colossal \$1.5 billion (Serwer, 2002).

For single years, detailed figures for American and Canadian attendance at plays, opera, ballet and live music (all genres), as well as for American participation in dance, music and drama, have been given in a previous issue of *Cultural Trends* (Bridgewood and Skelton, 2000: 67, 70). In terms of trends, the decline of mass participation in drama and musicianship in America has been well documented (Putnam, 2000). So, too, has been the

decline in thirty-something attendees at concerts of classical music – from a quarter of the whole US audience for classical concerts in the early 1990s, to less than 14 per cent today.

The average US classical concertgoer, at 46, is older than the lover of jazz, ballet, theatre or opera (Kolb, 2002). On the other hand, US employment among professional 'producers, orchestras and entertainers' has been above the growth in general employment. In Table 4.10, figures for broadcasting and cinema are included for comparison.

According to Eurobarometer research conducted in September 2001, Europeans attended an average of 1.38 concerts in the previous year. Of those Europeans going to concerts in that year, half chose rock. The figure rose to 64.3 per cent for Spanish music audiences and 68.7 per cent for Danish ones. Nearly a quarter of Europeans – 23.9 per cent – attended classical concerts (UK: 30.1 per cent), and 14.1 per cent went to concerts of folk and traditional music; among concertgoers, the

Table 4.10 Live entertainment, US: trends in thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of output, 1990–2010, and comparison with broadcasting, motion pictures and all US industry

Industry, SIC code	Jobs, 000s			Change in jobs, 000s		AAGR, jobs, per cent		Output, \$ billion			AAGR, output, per cent	
	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990–2000	2000–2010	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010
Radio and tv broadcasting, 483	234	255	280	22	25	0.9	0.9	35	45	59	2.6	2.7
Motion pictures, 781–3	274	426	499	152	73	4.5	1.6	40	69	77	5.6	1.1
Producers, orchestras and entertainers, 792	136	181	225	45	44	2.9	2.2	18	28	35	4.6	2.3
TOTAL all US industry	124,324	145,594	167,754	21,269	22,160	1.6	1.4	11,472	16,180	22,286	3.5	3.3

Note: AAGR = Annual Average Growth Rate

Source: <http://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/ind.employment/empinddetail.txt>, 2002

popularity of these latter, idiosyncratic musical genres ran to 25.3 per cent for Austria, 36.1 per cent for Portugal and 37 per cent for Greece (Eurobarometer, 2002: 10).

Participation in drama and musicianship is roughly as weak in Europe as it has become in America. In the EU, only 3.8 per cent of those sampled by Eurobarometer said that they had acted in the previous 12 months, and only 12.5 per cent claimed to have played an instrument. Still, nearly 20 per cent of Europeans had sung in the previous 12 months, and more than one in five Europeans – 22 per cent – said that they had danced, with Finns (28.1 per cent), Austrians (29.9 per cent), Greeks (30.7 per cent) and Swedes (35.4 per cent) being especially keen (Eurobarometer, 2002: 11).

For some years now dance organisers such as Ministry of Sound and the dance venues in Ibiza have been international brands, with millions flocking to them each year (Woudhuysen, 1999b: 40). It is quite difficult to compare the scale of dancing today with that in earlier decades. The suspicion must be, however, that – regardless of its aesthetic merits – dance has now become so self-conscious an activity that participants in ‘club culture’ aspire for it to gain the status of mass performance art.

Finally, both employment in and attendance at the circus have grown. The French-Canadian Cirque du Soleil has 500 performers, thousands of support staff, seven ensembles and offices in Las Vegas, where it plays to 1,800 people twice a night, and in Amsterdam and Singapore. With the help of Disney and Sony, it makes films and CDs, and has played to 23 million people. Its rivals include Circus Oz from Australia, De La Guarda from Argentina and Archaos from France (Morrison, 2000). Significantly, too, Archaos and the Spanish

troupe La Fura dels Baus attract adult audiences, the latter’s *XXX* show carrying an 18 certificate (Lister, 2003).

In October 2002, Cirque du Soleil announced that it was looking to build a new, themed entertainment complex in the heart of Montreal, before taking the concept to major cities around the world. In a sense, then, this kind of circus has become a global corporation whose business is akin to that of theme parks.

Fairs, theme parks and adventure holidays

Fairs and theme parks appeal to children, and are chiefly visited by families concerned to entertain children. Nevertheless, adults find their own moments in fairs and theme parks. Theme parks themselves are the subject of a popular computer game – *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, available from www.rollercoastertycoon.com. They are also the subject of the ‘professional attendee’ website, www.themeparkinsider.com. Last year, theme parks give tens of thousands of people employment.

Like the fairs of old, today’s giant theme parks feature performing arts: there are actors in costume, and musical extravaganzas. Both the fairs that still survive and the modern theme park blur attendance with participation: they offer attendees the chance to participate in games and contests and therefore become winners – as well as losers. In both milieux, contestants are often selected by chance, and engage in games of chance. From the simple, electromechanical delights of the fairground Ghost Train to the broader, IT-assisted simulations of Disney and others, fairs and theme parks take attendees and put them into a three-dimensional, more or less participative world of risk, illusion and fantasy. The 2003 opening of the Top Thrill Dragster rollercoaster at Cedar Point amusement park,

Sandusky, Ohio confirms the point. The world's tallest and fastest rollercoaster, it offers 3 million visitors a year the chance to drop 400 feet facing the ground, at 120 mph (Wapshott, 2003: 22).

The French post-modernist Jean Baudrillard once famously declared, of America, that 'it is Disneyland that is authentic here' (Baudrillard, 1988: 104). However, for most European intellectuals, the whole idea of simulations around a theme has long represented the contemptible opposite of authenticity. It could be argued that popular disdain toward theme parks has now caught up with the intellectual sort. In America, the home of the theme park, analysts expected attendance in 2002 to be down by about 15 per cent on 2001 (Harris: 2002).

Or take Disney's California Adventure Park, a 55-acre space that is part of the company's \$1.4

billion expansion of property around Disneyland, Anaheim, Los Angeles. Opened in February 2001, Adventure originally had a target of 30,000 guests a day. In practice, it has won little more than 17,000 – and then only on Saturdays.

If US theme parks face difficulties in terms of visitor numbers, however, they have not done badly in commercial terms. Although Table 4.11 is based on trade association analysis and is therefore open to charges of bias, it does suggest that, even more than figures for attendance, those for revenues at America's approximately 450 parks have been pretty buoyant.

An immediate success on opening in 1955, Disneyland can still win attendances of more than 50,000 people on a Saturday. Perhaps more importantly, Disneyland, unlike other theme parks,

Table 4.11 US theme parks: estimates of millions of admissions and billions of dollars of revenues, 1990–2002

	Attendance, millions	Revenues, \$ billion
1990	253	5.7
1991	260	6.1
1992	267	6.5
1993	275	6.8
1994	267	7.0
1995	280	7.4
1996	290	7.9
1997	300	8.4
1998	300	8.7
1999	309	9.1
2000	317	9.6
2001	319	9.6
2002	324	9.9

Source: www.iaapa.org/modules/MediaNews/index.cfm?fvseactionDetails&iid1051, 2003

has never been forced to discount admission tickets.

Theme parks in the US today face a rather saturated market. One desperate symptom of this has recently emerged in the news that the so-called Free Church of Satan plans a 15-acre park, provisionally named Perdition, as a riposte to the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida – a theme park organised by Christians (Harlow, 2002). But theme parks are not just located in America any more: one opened in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2002. The theme park industry has made its own contribution to the globalisation of business over the past 20 years.

Founded in 1992, EuroDisney gained 12 million visitors in 2001. According to the (largely American) users of www.themeparkinsider.com, other good theme parks are to be found outside America, as Table 4.12 shows.

Universal Studios Japan, which opened in Osaka in the late spring of 2001, became Japan's most popular theme park, bringing in 11 million visitors in its first year and charging an adult admission fee of ¥5500, or £30 (Nakamoto, 2002). The theme park has revitalised parts of Japan's second city, and is held to have 'potential to provide a new business model for Japan, and to act as a nucleus for new industries that can drive future economic growth' (Nakamoto, 2002).

The mayor of Osaka, which has a 25 per cent share in the park, is especially hopeful. He believes that if Japanese companies can learn from it and so substitute, in future, for the high value-added skills and technologies that America and Europe contribute to theme parks, Osaka will be able to build a whole new entertainment industry. At the Daiwa Research Institute, research officer Tadayuki Minagawa says, of Universal Japan:

It brings together a lot of expertise and is supported by small and medium enterprises with specific skills, rather than large companies that mass produce products...

Unless we adopt that model, Japan cannot compete...

Japan has been good at making high-quality products at low cost, but that is a role that has been passed to China.... The next step is to think about bringing skills and technology from all over the world to please people.

(Minagawa, quoted in Nakamoto, 2002)

A theme park may or may not turn out to be a possible or necessary model for Japanese economic development and employment in the early part of the twenty-first century. Yet clearly the hopes that surround Universal Studios Japan are now as high as the audiences it has generated.

From the Indiana Jones rides of an artificial theme park, it is but a short step to adventure holidays – ones that offer real jungles and other kinds of natural rides. Of course, if theme parks are family 'play' destinations that are usually located in local, developed economies, adventure holidays are mostly about grown-up play destinations in distant parts of the Third World. But that has not stopped them from becoming more popular in terms of participation, as well as larger in terms of the scale of employment they offer. More than 30 million Americans have engaged in what the Travel Industry Association of America describes as 'hard' adventure travel – activities such as white-water rafting, scuba diving, and mountain biking.

According to one American travel writer, the 'deep' play of something like mountaineering is far superior to the pursuit of fitness through 'working out'. Apparently, too, different forms of adventure travel show that play is about ecstasy, rapture,

Table 4.12: Six of the world's top theme park operators: the average scores, out of 10, given them by readers of www.themeparkinsider.com, 2003

Rank	Busch	Disney	Legoland	Paramount	Six Flags	Universal
1	Sea World Orlando, 7.81	Disney-MGM Studios at Walt Disney World (WDW), Lake Buena Vista, Orlando, Florida, 7.83	California, San Diego, 7.00	Kings Island, Cincinnati, Ohio, 7.20	St Louis, 7.09	Islands of Adventure at Universal Orlando (UO), 7.96
2	Sea World San Diego, 7.68	Disneyland Park Anaheim, LA, California, 7.38		Carowinds, Charlotte, North/South Carolina, 7.14	Great America Gurnee, Chicago, Illinois, 7.00	Port Aventura in Costa Dorada, Spain, 7.79
3	Busch Gardens Williamsburg, 7.62	Disneyland Paris, 7.29		Great America, Santa Clara, 7.00	Magic Mountain, Valencia, Los Angeles, California, 6.94	Universal Studios Florida at UO, 7.27
4	Busch Gardens Tampa, 7.22	WDW Magic Kingdom, 7.28			New England, Agawam, Springfield, Massachusetts, 6.87	Universal Studios Hollywood, 7.00
5		Epcot at WDW, 7.23			Over Georgia, Austell, Atlanta, 6.85	
6		Tokyo DisneySea at Tokyo Disney Resort, 7.23			Great Adventure, Jackson, New Jersey, 6.84	
7		Disney's Animal Kingdom at WDW, 7.18			Worlds of Adventure, Aurora, Cleveland, Ohio, 6.75	
8		Walt Disney Studios Park at Disneyland Paris, 7.00			Astroworld, Houston, 6.73	
9		California Adventure at Disneyland, 6.89			Over Texas, Arlington, Dallas, 6.69	

Source: www.themeparkinsider.com/parks/allparks_rating.cfm, 2003

fascination in the other, oneness, purification, cleansing and asceticism (Ackerman, 1999). Along with the increasingly ecological fervour of its advocates, adventure travel has become a kind of playful New Age nirvana. The point is borne out by the playful costumes and equipment that are collected for this sporty interpretation of holidays. As David Brooks wittily concluded of America's 'bourgeois Bohemians', or Bobos, after he had inspected their hiking shops and their 'performance underwear': "Serious" is the highest compliment Bobos use to describe their leisure activities' (Brooks, 2000).

What's new about play around the world?

Apart from computer games, the latest 'extreme' sports and theme parks, most of the forms of play described above have been around a long time. Neolithic human beings made children's toys from stone. The ancient Egyptians had dice and board games; the Romans, circuses. The Greeks not only had theatre and athletics, but invited parasites, or professional buffoons, to eat with them, as well as clowns, comics, conjurors, jugglers and acrobats (Welsford, 1935: 4). Early Christian fathers condemned ventriloquism as a tool of the devil; Muslims invented backgammon; for centuries the Chinese, and since 1907 the Japanese, have played Mah Jong with 136 *Pai*, or tiles made of bamboo and bone or ivory (Kanai and Farrell, 1952: 1–2).

But if the traditions of play are important, the technological and social contexts that surround it today are special. The broad principles of post-war American pinball do not differ much from those which inspired Britain's Montague Redgrave to build the world's first bagatelle game back in 1871. But while bagatelle shares spring-loaded plungers with modern pinball machines, its boards were

portable, made of wood, and intended for family parlours, not coffee bars.

It is the same with feats of endurance or escape. Renowned for his record-beating stays inside a block of ice and atop a 109 foot flagpole in Manhattan's Bryant Park, the magician and illusionist David Blaine is a world away from the Harry Houdini who, in 1900, escaped from handcuffs and a cell at Scotland Yard. Blaine, after all, has been broadcast live by ABC, and has earned millions as a consultant to American corporations. Houdini never had these privileges.

The Athens Olympics of 2004 will be barely the same animal as the movement that was reborn in 1896. So what, then, is special about play today? There are five issues: play's greatly pervasive character, its strong facilitation by IT, its failure to provide real freedom, the growing prominence it gives to communitarian concerns, and, finally, its capacity to generate fear.

Play is everywhere

Play has penetrated the worlds of narcotics and romance: both experimentation with 'recreational' drugs and internet dating services on-screen contain elements of winning and losing, of chance and of miniaturisation. Play has also moved into pet care: in the US in early 2001, Hasbro launched Paws 'n More, a range of baby toys – activity quilts, baby gyms – adapted for pets to play with. At a higher level, play has also become integrated into the fabric of American museum design. Ralph Appelbaum, the designer of the Holocaust Museum, is the most distinguished advocate of museums that mix traditional values with performing arts, giant plasma screens for immersive group play, and awe that audiences feel physiologically (Woudhuysen, 2002a).

IT has facilitated play

A glance at most major internet websites aimed at consumers shows that advertisements for games are very often some of the first 'banner ads' that appear. But the trend goes further than this:

- within four months of launching its £1,000 Aibo robot pet dog, Sony sold more than 46,000 units (Gold, 2001: 3);
- competitive international games between robots are the subject of increasing interest, mediated by the internet (Robofesta, 2002);
- chess has renewed some of its historic international appeal through IT. Spencer Stuart, experts in executive recruitment, recommend internet versions of the game for couples parted by work, time zones and lonely hotel rooms (Kellaway, 2002). More broadly, Gary Kasparov's famous 1996 defeat at the hands of the IBM computer Deep Blue has helped re-create an intellectual climate that would gratify Alan Turing, if he were still alive today. That climate is one in which the ability of a computer to win a game according to pre-set algorithms is equated with human intelligence itself (Woudhuysen, 2002b).

In addition, IT facilitates the restructuring of play. In America, the National Endowment for the Arts has shown that, as a proportion of 'recreation expenditures', most traditional forms of play 'could not keep pace with the high growth in spending on computers and software and video and audio goods'. Although far from all of the personal use of IT is even recreational, let alone playful, the figures quoted by the National Endowment for the Arts and shown in Table 4.13 are suggestive.

In America, at least, spending on IT has 'crowded out' other spending on leisure, even if the broad aggregate of leisure spending has ascended

faster than GDP and personal consumption. Table 4.13 is also notable in revealing how 'commercial participant amusements', which include not just sightseeing, private flying, bowling and billiards but also the strongly IT-assisted genres of gambling and amusement parks, have retained a relatively buoyant share of US recreational expenditure over recent years.

Play rarely provides spaces and moments of freedom

There was never a golden age of play. Yet today more than at any time in the past few hundred years, the grip that market forces have on play is conspicuous by its presence, not its absence. The disinterested board game, amateur soccer match or improvised playing of music are enjoyable exceptions, not the social rule. Play is a disparate collection of industries, but the industries are global, interconnected and worth enormous sums.

Far from giving free rein to the personal imagination, then, much of play today is regimented by the cash nexus. One can lose oneself in a computer game, of course. But one can also spend a fair bit of money on attending or participating in play, lose a lot of money in gambling, and lose thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in a failed computer game, failed pay-TV sports channel, or unpopular theme park.

It might be thought that the marketisation of play would merely result in a world of single-person households playing in their homes. But just as the marketplace is public, so all games, save single-player ones, put private individuals on public display. While in-home play is important, it is often a multiplayer activity; and it is always complemented by out-of-home play, which is nearly always public. The kind of seat at the theatre one buys, the kit-bag one brings to an amateur sports contest, the

Table 4.13 GDP and consumer expenditure, and select recreation expenditures as a percentage of all real recreation expenditures; US, 1995 and 2000

	1995	2000
Real GDP	7543.8	9224.0
Real personal consumption expenditures	5075.6	6257.8
Real recreation expenditures	398.7	614.9
<i>Select expenditures as a percentage of all real recreation expenditures</i>		
Admissions to performing arts events	2.0	1.4
Admissions to motion picture theatres	1.5	1.1
Admissions to spectator sports events	1.6	1.3
Books and maps	6.0	5.4
Magazines, newspapers and sheet music	6.8	5.6
Flowers, seeds and potted plants	3.4	2.8
Video and audio goods and musical instruments	13.4	14.9
Computers, peripherals and software	3.7	19.7
Commercial participant amusements	11.3	10.1

Notes: 'Commercial participant amusements' include sightseeing, private flying, bowling, billiards, casino gambling, and amusement parks. Spend at constant 1996 \$ billion

Source: NEA, 2002

pay one gets to put on a show – these market facts confirm that play is a public activity.

All play, as this chapter has noted, is about obedience to certain rules. What is new about play is how much those rules begin with the market, and how much being seen to play tends to elide private life with public life. In play today there is not just thoughtful experiment, but a relentless trend toward public exposure and disclosure. If play only rarely lives up even to its promise of real mastery and self-development, perhaps that is because it hardly ever embraces sustained contemplation or reading. Nearly 40 years ago, the best-selling transactional psychotherapist Eric Berne felt that 'significant social intercourse most commonly took the form of

games in the sense of relationship games'. But he also saw that normal pastimes and games were regulated 'substitutes' for what he called 'the real living of real intimacy' (Berne, 1964: 17, 18).

The argument that playful, interactive forms of leisure are a basic good is misleading. It begins in 1975 with the influential psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and his significantly titled *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The argument values these forms of leisure not in their own right but, as Fox and Walker have pointed out, instrumentally. Leisure is really only celebrated insofar as it generates

- a sensation-based, 'optimal experience' of 'flow', the means to happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992); and
- positive effects on self-esteem, the economy and 'the normalized values of productivity, achievement, challenge, action and worthiness to dominant societal standards' (Fox and Walker, 2002: 18, 23).

As Fox and Walker point out, Csikszentmihalyi excoriates as 'passive leisure': watching TV, reading 'romances or mysteries', and engaging in what he attacks as 'obsessive' gambling (Fox and Walker, 2002: 16).

Active, public, open and marketised, play and the 'flow' it is based on are a kind of politically correct form of leisure. They lead not to the liberation of the Self, but to its diminution. Csikszentmihalyi argues that flow is 'autotelic', in that the autonomous Self makes its own teleology, or goal-directed activity, into something with which 'the doing itself is its own reward' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992: 67). In the flow of Csikszentmihalyi's dancer, rock climber and chess player, all the 'psychic energy' of each is, in a 'spontaneous, almost automatic' manner, focused on the task in hand. Significantly, then, flow stops people being aware of themselves as separate from the actions performed. Indeed, 'in flow there is no need to reflect, because the action carries us forward as if by magic' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992: 53, 54).

In this conception and in many practical ways, too, play becomes not the antithesis of work, but the antithesis of consciousness. In that respect, it can never be liberation.

Play as an instrument for communitarianism more than commercialism

The grip of market forces on play is unmistakable and, often, individuating. However, in an anxious new century the instrumental purpose of play has become more communitarian than commercial. It is worth dwelling briefly on three accounts of the popularity of play before explaining this point.

In the past, the growth of play was, firstly, often ascribed to the general growth of consumption, and in particular to a shift, on the part of the West, from physiological and safety needs to self-actualisation needs, and from material scarcity to plenitude. In this strongly American framework, which was a vulgarisation of that of the psychologist Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1943), the drive for play followed from the contemporary need for orchestrated events, experiences and personal transformations (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), as well as from the need for culture (Rifkin, 2000).

A second account of modern society's interest in play came from Denmark. Doffing his hat to Hans Christian Andersen and Karen Blixen, Rolf Jensen, the director of the Copenhagen Institute of Future Studies, suggested that play grew out of the contemporary desire for narrative. For Jensen, information society had been superseded by dream society, in which firms were tribes that had to win support by telling stories about their products and appealing to irrational emotions. In this framework, the narratives of sport, like those of theme parks, were felt likely to gain a strong audience (Jensen, 1999).

A third group of explanations of the rise of play touched on it only tangentially, and put it down to a broad range of causes. New York's Michael Wolf, a consultant to the US entertainment industry, spoke of what he called America's 'entertainment economy' – a product, he said, of the decline of

defence spending, the need for an alternative to conventional shopping malls and urban decay, the spread of cable television, and of the examples set by Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and the 'new conquistadores' running America's entertainment companies: CNN's Ted Turner, Disney's Michael Eisner (Wolf, 1999: 5–29). Naomi Klein, by contrast, drew attention to the eagerness of branded multinational corporations to sell consumer goods to increasing numbers of young Americans and young Chinese (Klein, 2000: 68, 119).

Many authors in the field of marketing saw play in a different context again. In the West, the value of 'pester power' had grown, as children had come to influence more and more parental purchasing decisions. At the same time, analysts argued, young adults had begun to enjoy long periods of consumption before they got their first job. In this account, play followed from the leisure industry's commercial tilt toward youth. From 1970s Hollywood blockbusters (Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters*, George Lucas's *Star Wars*) to the Millennium Dome, the leisure industry had tended to aim the same entertainments at both adult and teenage or pre-teenage markets.

Even before the events of 11 September 2001, however, the pervasiveness of play could be explained rather more convincingly than by all these efforts. Play has insinuated itself into the pores of everyday life as the direct outcome of the need people have for community, safety and security in a world that is seen as fragmented, stressful and dangerous. Even the risks taken in gambling can function, in this perspective, as a playful metaphor for the risks that are now felt to saturate the real world.

Play is not just escape, even if the marketing director of Manchester United believes that the

soccer club is 'in the "escapology" business' for fans, whether they are 'billionaires or dustbin men' (quoted in Milligan and Smith, 2002). Nor is play simply an exercise in personal autonomy. There is nothing wrong, but little that is enlightening, in computer games, gambling, clubbing and theme parks.

The diffusion of play deserves not celebration, but a carefully balanced critique. Play deserves criticism not because self-actualisation is a bad thing, dream narratives have no place, or children are a lucrative market that is easily exploited. It deserves criticism because it speaks of the spread of adult anxieties about today's risks, and of the temptation to seek a kind of puerile group reassurance in the face of those risks.

More than 20 years ago, in a discussion of sport contained within his polemical best-seller *The Culture of Narcissism*, the American critic Christopher Lasch anticipated those whose critique of play amounts only to a critique of commercialism. Now, participation in sport provides great 'value for time'. At the same moment, one can socialise, indulge in a little escapism, and engage in self-development, as well as pursue the less playful goal of keeping fit. As the history of athletics demonstrates, sport also invites a sense of progress. Yet if sport is no longer a deliberate and life-representing illusion, but is rather a trivialised, endlessly measured and degraded activity – complete with heroes and heroines as branded individual entertainers rather than team players – that is not just because it, along with play in general, has been commercialised, or turned into attendance at the expense of participation. It is also because society now tries so hard to remove risk, daring and uncertainty from work, it has made sport a surrogate religion – only for sport too to be demystified and

stripped of its capacity to provide transcendence (Lasch, 1979: 102, 109, 118, 123, 124).

Corporate logos now disfigure the very grass pitches upon which cricket and rugby are played. But sport has not just become big business, despite its increasing integration with television programming, brands à la Beckham, and computer games. The real change is that wide swathes of humanity hope that sports fixtures can re-create a sense of community and togetherness. Such hopes have never been greater; yet never have they been more likely to be dashed (Hume, 2002). In this sense, the failed transcendence offered by sport can by no means be termed educational, or a triumph for the sovereign Self. It represents, rather, an attempt to lose that Self in a kind of collective and childlike unconscious. In the big emotional outpourings that accompany sport today, there is more than a hint of Leni Riefenstahl.

Sport is not alone in its communitarian aspirations. Firms now open their own theme parks to convey their playful corporate values and establish communities of interest around them. Germany's ZDF television channel runs a theme park next to its headquarters, while France's Accor hotel chain is associated with Parc Asterix. Volkswagen and General Motors organise, respectively, the Autostadt theme park and a fast-track ride at Disney's Epcot Centre. As for other car manufacturers, Ford, DaimlerChrysler and others have appointed Goldman Sachs to acquire a controlling stake in the company that controls Formula One motor racing, and so set their own rules for how races should be conducted (Allen, 2002: 16, and Hotten, 2003: 25).

For commercial but also for psychological reasons, then, play now has deep roots in society. Those deep roots ensure a final novelty about play today: that it cannot elude society's broader culture of fear (Furedi, 2002).

The very pervasiveness of play has made fears about it pervasive

In the wake of the massacre at Columbine High School, the US Surgeon General held that the impact of video games on violent behaviour 'remains to be determined' (Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001). But as the Brooklyn technology writer Clive Thompson has cogently argued, 'violence is the issue by which the mainstream [public] knows games' (Thompson, 2002: 24). The mere presence of computer games in a youthful murderer's home is now enough to ensure a media outcry. There are also concerns that too many toys, not just too many computer games, will have a bad effect on children (Leake and Colicutt, 2001: 9).

Gambling has been made a medical 'addiction': in Australia, consumer losses on one-armed bandits have become the subject of a mass panic (Barkham, 2000). In Greece, on 31 July 2002, the government published a law banning all computer games everywhere – homes, internet cafes and ships included. It was worried that computer games could lead to illegal gambling (Keene, 2002).

The case of Britain tends to confirm the novel features of play pointed out above. Here, as elsewhere, play is a pervasive, computerised affair. Far from being an exercise in liberation, it is narrowly communitarian in scope and, in the end, turns out to be an exercise in angst.

The growth of playful leisure in the UK

In 2002 the England cricket team hung its head in memory of two children murdered at Soham. *Blueprint*, a magazine of architecture, design and contemporary culture, ran a cover story on the floral tributes left by Britons in the case of well-publicised bereavements, celebrating them as decorative, almost playful pieces of culture and design in their own right (Baker, 2002: 88–95). Britain's peculiar fusion of play with tragedy and melodrama is also evident in the historic and seemingly staid example of chess, as well as the much more modern domain of sex toys.

There are 50,000 competitive chess players in the UK, which is regarded as second only to Russia in the sport. The British Chess Federation has lobbied for chess to receive funds from the National Lottery (Chaudhary, 1999). Yet British chess has been riven by political infighting and highly personal disputes. Cheating through the use of handheld computers has brought the chess world alarm (Smith and Horsnell, 2002).

After Christmas 2001, the retailer Ann Summers, purveyors of sex toys and clothes for dressing up in, reported what the *Guardian* described as a 'record surge' in sales (Perrone, 2002). But in 2002, a prurient Department of Work and Pensions insisted that Jobcentres across the country stop displaying advertisements for jobs at the chain's 67 stores. Angered, in turn, by this slur on the 8,000 jobs her firm offers local communities, Ann Summers' chief executive, Jacqueline Gold, threatened legal action.

Altogether, British adults are enormously exercised by play. This is very evident from the overall scale of UK spending on play-related goods and services.

Historic traditions, contemporary boom

Jim Goudie, a lecturer in consumer psychology at the University of Northumbria, said this after buying two new die-cast toy cars for £65 and £85:

I do it for pleasure; I get a buzz from buying and holding these things. I don't think they will lose value. Anyway, I'm not going to sell them. I buy Dinky toys as a reward for working instead of putting my money into a building society.

(Goudie, quoted in Burgess, 2002: 1)

The 'buzz' the British get from play is a strong one. From Dinky toys and Meccano through to Hornby trains, Scalextric model racing cars and Hamleys, the toyshop, play speaks to British nostalgia. It reminds us of the Victorian era, when Britain pioneered many of the world's most popular sports – soccer, rugby, cricket, golf – and introduced them to the Empire and elsewhere (Mangan, 1998). More ancient games like tennis and bowls figure, too, as a symbol of British ingenuity in play. Since Edmund Hoyle first published his *Short Treatise on Whist* in 1742, and Joseph Strutt his *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* in 1801, Britain has been fascinated by its historic traditions in play. No wonder that when Subbuteo tabletop football was discontinued, ending annual sales of 50,000 sets, the news made it into *The Sun* (Blackstock, 2000).

In the early 1990s, Hasbro and its Californian rival Mattel showed that they, too, valued those traditions. Hasbro acquired John Waddington to gain access to Monopoly, Cluedo and Risk!, while Mattel bought JW Spears so that it could add Scrabble to its list of products. Then, in 1994, Games Workshop, designers and manufacturers of the tabletop fantasy war game Warhammer, listed on the London Stock Exchange: today the Nottingham-based company is worth £100 million,

Table 4.14 Spending on play-related goods and services, UK: trends in constant 1995 £billion, seasonally adjusted, 1991–2001

Year	Games, toys and hobbies ATSL	Major durables for outdoor recreation TMNB	Equipment for sport, camping and open-air recreation XYJU	Musical instruments and major durables for indoor recreation XYJT	Recreational and cultural services ZAXI	Games of chance CCVA	Recreational and sporting services ZAXK	Recreation and culture ZAXA	Cultural services ZAXM	Total household expenditure, national concept ABJR
1991	3453	1844	1109	156	14,684	3539	3202	40,705	7984	408,865
1996	5635	2213	1719	171	18,706	6256	3298	57,925	99,152	460,760
2001	11,529	3199	2767	321	20,657	6186	3412	83,151	11,059	567,897

Note: the four-letter codes are 'series identifiers' unique to each particular time series

Source: Consumer Trends 09.KS and 0GS.KS, www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/TSDtimezone.asp

and sells its products through 80 UK shops and more than 100 overseas ones. Finally, while small firms lead UK manufacturing in toys and games, and much work in this industry is outsourced to the Far East, 30 UK toys and games makers had a turnover, in 2002, of more than £5 million (ONS, 2002b: 58).

On top of its historic traditions, then, Britain has seen a decade-long boom in spending on play-related goods and services. Some of this growth may be put down to increased 'pester power' on the part of children – although it is notable that birth rates have been in decline for decades, so that there are relatively fewer children pestering adults today than there were even 10 years ago. In Table 4.14, by no means all the increases recorded are to do with the growth of adult play. Nevertheless, they are substantial.

Table 4.15 compares spending on play with that on leisure in general. Spending on play-related goods appears to be about a fifth of that on leisure goods; that on play-related services is about a fifth of that on leisure services.

In sum, 20p in every pound that Britons pay for leisure is now devoted to play.

There has been a contemporary boom in spending on play. British employment in play-related services, however, looks fairly stagnant. Once more, the figures in Table 4.16 give only a guide, since many of the jobs recorded have little to do with play. Nevertheless, the broad trend is unmistakable.

There can be no doubt that the mix of spending growth and employment stagnation is partly explained by the way in which IT has facilitated play. By substituting for live performances, IT makes play a capital-intensive, not a labour-intensive affair. The unseemly fate of one marriage between IT and play – the collapse of ITV Digital – has spelt financial disaster for many minor football clubs. At the same time, however, Britain's mobile phone industry has won a mass audience for the electronic tracking of sports scores, players and teams; and it has also helped give a further boost to the popularity of computer games.

Table 4.15 Spending on play-related goods and services, UK: comparison with that on all leisure goods and services, and with that over all expenditure groups, 2000–01

	Average weekly spend, all households, £	National spend, £m
Computer games, cartridges and software	0.70	18
Musical instruments and hire of instruments	0.10	3
Sports and camping equipment	0.90	22
Toys and hobbies	2.10	52
<i>Total 'play' goods</i>	<i>3.80</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>All leisure goods</i>	<i>9.70</i>	<i>494</i>
<i>Play goods as % of leisure goods</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>19.2</i>
Theatres, concerts, circuses, amateur shows	0.70	19
Sports admissions and subscriptions	3.30	82
Admission to dance & miscellaneous entertainment eg admissions to stately homes, museums, nightclubs etc	1.20	29
Leisure classes – fees	1.30	33
Gambling payments	3.90	97
<i>Total 'play' services</i>	<i>10.40</i>	<i>260</i>
<i>All leisure services</i>	<i>50.60</i>	<i>1,267</i>
<i>Play services as % of leisure services</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>20.5</i>
<i>All expenditure groups</i>	<i>385.70</i>	<i>9,654</i>

Source: ONS, 2002c: 128–9

Computer games

The market for games software in Britain has been worth about £1 billion since late 1999. Britain's Game Group has become the largest specialist retailer of computer games in Europe; it planned to open 26 stores on the continent by Christmas 2002 (Hopkins, 2002). Accompanied by a lavishly illustrated compendium of essays (King, 2002), Game On, the first exhibition on the subject to be held in a UK art gallery, moved from the Barbican Art Galleries in London to the Museum of Scotland

in Edinburgh in 2002. Computer games have become central to UK culture.

New kinds of IT platforms will make for a big expansion in UK online gaming: on games based on digital TV, UK consumer spending will, it is predicted, more than double from £50.7m in 2002 to £132m in 2006. Already the cable companies ntl and Telewest offer games. For its part, SkyDigital claims that 56 per cent of its subscribers have used its Gamestar service, 25 per cent play regularly each week and more than 40 per cent of them are

Table 4.16 Jobs in play-related services, Great Britain: trends in thousands of jobs, and comparison with all jobs in Great Britain

Sector and SIC number	June 2000R	June 2001R	June 2002
Recreational, cultural and sporting services, 92	640.9	658.1	656.6
Motion picture and video production, 92.11	18.0	15.3	16.4
Radio, TV and news agency activities, 92.2/92.4	83.8	76.3	76.7
Other entertainment activities, 92.3	100.6	97.0	95.9
Library, museum and cultural services, 92.5	84.5	78.5	79.2
Sporting and recreational activities, 92.6–92.7	342.1	371.9	368.3

Note: R indicates 'revised'

Source: ONS, 2002d

women; Gamestar is, according to *Screen Digest*, 'almost certainly the world's most popular iTV games service' (*Screen Digest*, 2002: 10). In text-messaging phone games, Celador, creator of 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?', offers a version – complete with cash prizes – in collaboration with Vodafone and Motorola, while Scotland's Digital Bridges makes two games linked to 'Star Trek' and another to 'Scooby Doo'.

In mobile games based on humble Wireless Application Protocol, O2 Mobile offers the following:

- 'arcade' games that are traditional electronic games, such as *Breakout* and *Asteroid*;
- action games – *Zoys Rescue Mission Part 1*;
- sport-based games – *Pong*, *Racing Fever*;
- puzzles – *Santa's Challenge*, *Stagger*, *Amoebas*, *Gem Jam*;
- *Summer Games 2004* includes 100 Metre Dash, Long Jump, Javelin, 110 Metre Hurdles and Discus. When one throws the javelin on-screen, one can choose the angle of departure and go on to watch as the javelin and its shadow appear to fly, say, 70 metres.

Moreover,

- in mobile games based on Java software, which supports colour animation, iPhone has agreed a deal with Motorola to offer more than 20 games; and
- in consoles, streaming video games and downloadable games, the UK's belated move into broadband telecommunications promises to increase sales (*Screen Digest*, 2002: 12–17). Online games played alone or with others, together with downloadable games, make up three of the top 10 uses to which Britain's 1.5 million owners of broadband put their technology (Dorman, 2003: 9).

Today's boom in participation in computer games is also, however, paralleled by a surge of US interest in British properties similar to that which became evident in traditional games 10 years ago. In September 2002, Microsoft paid nearly \$400 million in cash for the Leicestershire computer games software developers Rare, creators of titles such as *Donkey Kong* and *GoldenEye 007*. The

purchase was only the latest in a series of overseas acquisitions of British games programmers, a trend that upset the *Guardian* enough for it to complain that the UK faced the loss not just of its film industry, but also of its expertise in computer and mobile games (Keegan, 2002).

Drawing a comparison between the interactivity of computer games and that of poetry, two of this country's leading poets have argued that computer games have reached a level of complexity 'where the condition of art cannot be resisted for much longer'. But as they acutely observe, 'Gaming is just beginning to emerge from its primitive phase, its juvenilia: there are no gold standards' (Paterson and Shapcott, 2001). The more mainstream view of computer games in Britain, however, remains thoroughly juvenile. It holds computer games as both an employment-generating creative industry, and a dangerous influence on the nation's youth.

Anxious to talk up what it describes as 'interactive leisure software' into a full-scale creative career, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) suggests that 21,500 jobs are to be found there. On close inspection of its statistics, though, fewer than 6,000 people are directly employed in the development of computer games: all the rest are in jobs that are indirectly dependent on computer games, like those in their retailing, publishing, distribution and packaging (DCMS, 2001a: 8/04).

In a familiar pattern, officialdom fears the consequences of computer-assisted play as much as it overestimates its contribution to employment. In 1997, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) denied certification, for the first time under the 1984 Video Recordings Act, of a computer game – SCI's *Carmageddon*. In this racing game for people 18 and over, cars win points by running over different kinds of pedestrians and animals. By 1998

the BBFC's Video Appeals Committee allowed the game to be formally classified '18' and to be certificated on condition that it be issued with a 'parental lock' (BBFC, 1998). In fact, SCI also agreed voluntarily to classify its games according to criteria set by the Video Standards Council (VSC) since 1993, when the Council extended its Code of Practice to 'promote high standards' within the computer games industry (VSC, 2002).

In the 3000 games seen by the Video Standards Council between 1994 and 1998, 15 were classified 18, and 202 were referred to the BBFC (Amis, 1998). Another regulatory body, the European Leisure Software Publishers' Association, ensures that the computer games industry does not bypass certification processes set up by the BBFC and the Video Standards Council. Finally, retailers who supply an '18' rated computer game to a 17-year-old risk six months' imprisonment, a £5,000 fine, or both.

In the future the government's super-regulator for media, OFCOM, is likely to add its concerns about computer games to the fears that already surround them. In the White Paper that announced the creation of OFCOM, it was told to consider the place of the ratings system for computer games 'within the regulatory structure' (DTI/DCMS, 2000: 6.0).

After the New Year's Eve 2002 killing of Charlene Ellis and Latisha Shakespeare at a nightclub in Birmingham, newspapers were quick to link computer games to this kind of murderous behaviour. The news also emerged that Scotland Yard's elite firearms unit, SO19, had given a talk on tactics and weapons training at the London HQ of Sony, publishers of *The Getaway* game (Fletcher and Allen, 2003: 6). These developments can only invite more government regulation of computer games.

Table 4.17 Average weekly expenditure on gambling, by household, Great Britain, 1990 to 1999–00, £

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–9	1999–00
Football pools	0.48	0.52	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.37	0.28	0.2	0.1	0.1
Bingo					0.39	0.42	0.48	0.5	0.4	0.4
National Lottery and scratchcards					0.82	2.28	2.29	2.7	2.2	2.2
Other lotteries and scratchcards						0.05	0.08	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other betting	0.97	0.92	0.87	1.34						
Betting					0.74	0.69	0.72	0.8	0.7	0.7
Total	1.45	1.44	1.45	1.92	2.51	3.81	3.82	4.3	3.5	3.5

Note: Figures for 'Other betting' and 'betting' reflect a change in counting methods

Source: ONS, *Family Spending*, quoted in DCMS, 2001c:19

Gambling

Gambling in Britain is worth an astounding £42 billion. The DCMS was given responsibility for it after the re-election of Labour in 2001. Table 4.17 shows that gambling enjoyed a large increase in consumer expenditure after the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994.

Table 4.18 shows that, by the end of the 1990s, the Lottery and scratchcards had a wide impact on British society.

The pervasiveness of play in Britain is revealed in the 11,000 retailers selling National Lottery

Instant only and the further 25,000 selling both online games and Instant tickets (Camelot, 2002). More recently, the Lottery has experienced a fall in revenues and, to help try to compensate, has moved toward offering prizes on a daily basis. Meanwhile, other forms of gambling have come into their own. There are now an estimated 250,000 gaming machines in Britain; many are to be found in pubs, and those that are boast IT that is more and more sophisticated (Albert et al, 2001: 17–18). On the other hand, spread betting, in which the gambler guesses the final results of contests and compares

Table 4.18 Those aged 16 or over saying they had gambled in 1999, Great Britain, per cent

National Lottery Draw	65	Football pools	9
Scratchcards	22	Another lottery	8
Fruit machines	14	Bingo	7
Horse races	13	Dog races	4
Private bets	11	Table games in a casino	3

Source: National Centre for Social Research, *British Gambling Prevalence Survey*, quoted in ONS, 2002a: 217

them with a quoted spread of outcomes, has enjoyed increasing popularity. In the period leading up to the general election of 7 June 2001, it won thousands of punters. Spread betting now encompasses the fate of films, actors and music CDs (Goodway, 2001).

Impressed by developments such as these, the DCMS announced, in 2002, the most extensive reform of the industry in 34 years (DCMS, 2002b). Significantly, the liberalisation proposed includes opening up gambling establishments to live performances. The DCMS would like legislation to be presented as a Bill to the 2003–04 session of Parliament. Gambling reform may increase revenue to the Exchequer by £2.5 billion (Ford, 2002: 15).

Leisure Parks, run by the entrepreneur Trevor Hemmings, hopes to take advantage of the new laws. It wants to make gambling the means toward a £1 billion overhaul of Blackpool's seafront Golden Mile, as well as the transformation of the Blackpool's old 10-acre Central Station site. It plans a giant casino with 2,500 slot machines, a Pharaoh's Palace, five more new hotel casinos, and the creation of 25,000 jobs. It intends to attract 30 million people to spend £2 billion a year (Sherman, 2001: 8).

Rank Group, which runs 123 Mecca bingo clubs and 32 Grosvenor casinos, has similar ideas. It will open Hard Rock Casinos in London and

Manchester, and may build multi-game gambling 'sheds' in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. Harrogate, Telford, Morecombe and Folkestone are also interested (Walsh, 2002: 15 and Reid, 2002: 15).

With all these initiatives in progress, it has not escaped the attention of some commentators that, whatever the tax revenues, an explosion of gambling will not endear itself to a puritanically minded Labour government. After all, the National Centre for Social Research estimated in 2000 that there are 360,000 'problem' gamblers in Britain, or 0.8 per cent of the population, while Gamblers Anonymous believes the figure to be closer to 3 per cent (Frean, 2001: 8). Fastening on what it calls the 'downside' of gambling, the DCMS therefore wants socially responsible gambling, more research into gambling, and 'controls and protections' for those who 'may be or already have been damaged'. Gaming machines, it argues, 'potentially involve high risks of excessive and compulsive play for children, and indeed for adults too'; indeed NHS mental health services should be prepared to offer 'appropriate support and treatment' to those with 'severe problems' around gambling (DCMS, 2002b: 29–32).

Nevertheless, the DCMS has kind words for the 'many thousands of jobs' provided by the industry, even if it does not specify how many thousands it is talking about (DCMS, 2002b: 29). Table 4.19

Table 4.19 Employment in selected gambling-related industries in Great Britain, 2000/01

Camelot Group plc	1,000	Bingo clubs	21,000
Gaming machines	23,000	Casinos	11,700
Horse racing totes	1,300	Football pools	1,140
		Total	59,140

Source: Personal communication, press office, Camelot Group PLC; Ford, 2002: 15

suggests, however, that from the standpoint of employment creation, further growth in UK gambling would indeed be worthwhile – especially as much of the increase in jobs is expected to result from tourism.

Sport

At the England vs India test match of September 2002, different spectators dressed up as singing pirates, as Tyroleans clad in *lederhosen*, and as versions of the disc jockey Jimmy Saville. During his speech to the Labour Party conference that same month, Tony Blair tried to make his policies more persuasive by playing to the gallery. Always one to protest his love of sport, the Prime Minister jokily invoked Europe's victory against America in golf's Ryder Cup.

More than ever, British spectators attach a sense of ceremony to sport, while British government leaders lard their rhetoric with plebeian references to it. Tony Blair is, he says, 'passionate' about sport 'both as a player and as a fan'; culture secretary Tessa Jowell begins her remarks on sport with the self-serving statement that it 'defines us as a nation' (DCMS, 2002c: 5, 6).

The impact of soccer on British marketing and branding practice is equally impressive. Soccer used to be a relative newcomer to marketing in Britain. It only began to take marketing seriously with the rise of sports advertising in the early 1980s, the stock market flotation of Tottenham Hotspur in 1983 and the celebrity coverage given international footballers such as Maradona, Cantona and Ginola in magazines like *Family Circle* and *Cosmopolitan*.

Today, though, soccer is not a young recruit to British marketing, but instead leads marketing practice worldwide. In February 2001 Manchester United announced that it would market its world-

famous brand in collaboration with the New York Yankees. In May 2002, the same club arranged a four-year deal with the internet portal Terra Lycos to build e-commerce for its brand in Asia. A new law strengthening the registration of designs at the Patent Office has ensured that football clubs have given out a series of contracts to graphic and brand designers to revamp their marques and so assert control over merchandise such as club shirts (Booth and Newark, 2002: 18–20, 22).

Sport has given British spectators, politicians and designers new hopes of solidarity. However, the most striking trend is that sport in Britain exceeds even American sport in making play not just the pervasive content of mass digital media, but also the pervasive organiser of both digital and conventional media.

On the one hand, of course, soccer has benefited from the media. Fynn and Shields do point out that, although the Premier League's first, 1992, deal with BSkyB gave its 22 clubs £1–2 million each, rising to £20 million each in 2002, the total turnover of an average League club is only that of a city-centre supermarket. But as they themselves note, Sky's vigorous presentation of the Premier League has also given clubs a vast growth in match day income (gate receipts, the sale of season tickets, corporate hospitality, catering, programmes), as well as in commercial income (sponsorship, stadium advertising, merchandise) (Fynn and Shields, 2001: 11–13). It is a similar story with Manchester United. At little more than £300 million in May 2002, Man U's market capitalisation on the London Stock Exchange is only half that of Capital Radio (Martin, 2002). But television has helped win the club a turnover of £130 million, together with 50 million fans on top of its home ground's 67,000 seats and 500 full-time staff (Draper, 2002).

Table 4.20 UK participation in the top ten sports, games and physical activities, by per cent of all aged 16 or over and by socio-economic group, based on the person's current or most recent job, 1996–97

	Professional	Employers and managers	Intermediate and junior non-manual	Skilled manual and own account non-professional	Semi-skilled manual and personal service	Unskilled manual	All aged 16 and over
Walking	56	48	46	44	39	33	44
Swimming	23	19	17	11	11	6	15
Keep fit/Yoga	14	12	17	7	9	5	12
Cue sports	10	10	8	15	9	7	11
Cycling	19	12	9	11	10	7	11
Weight training	10	5	6	5	3	2	5
Football	5	4	3	6	3	3	5
Golf	11	9	4	5	3	1	5
Running	9	6	4	4	2	2	5
Tenpin bowls/skittles	4	3	4	3	2	1	3
At least one activity (includes those activities not separately listed)	63	52	48	45	37	24	46

Source: ONS, 2002a: chart 13.11

On the other hand, however, soccer and other sports have exerted a commanding influence on mass media. BSkyB used Premier League football matches to head off bankruptcy and go on to create a digital television business that is now valued at nearly £14 billion (Martin, 2002). Soccer is the most valuable rights property in British television. It and other sports cost BSkyB £663 million in 2002 (BSkyB, 2002).

Sport has done more than build television audiences, however. Marketing gurus now argue that sport could present the computer games industry with 'the single, greatest opportunity to broaden its appeal' (Wheating, 2002: 30). Sport is prominent in mobile phones: those based on

Wireless Application Protocols already offer millions of sports fans live scores and information on players, teams and club itineraries, covering soccer, golf, Formula One racing, tennis and cricket. Sport, and in particular the Premier League, built audiences for Radio 5 Live. The news sections of Britain's mass-circulation tabloids and magazines are also filled by the private lives of players and, most recently, of coaches – Manchester United's Sir Alex Ferguson and England's Sven-Göran Eriksson.

The pervasive nature of sport-based media might be thought simply to be consistent with the 42,000 football clubs that exist in Britain. But who is at those clubs watching and playing football?

Participation in sport differs from that in gambling, where manual workers are the most active social class. In sport, as in other cultural events, the middle classes are the biggest attenders and participants. Table 4.20 makes this clear.

In upholding 'sport for all' and its push to use sport as a way of furthering social inclusion (Policy Action Team 10, 1999), the government implicitly wants to see the working class shift from watching play on television to attending at and participating in it. The example of Wembley Stadium highlights the government's attempts to use play in the service of social cohesion.

Despite their broadly middle-class composition, the control of soccer crowds has been an important political issue since the Hillsborough Stadium disaster in Sheffield in 1989. By 1996 a new national stadium at Wembley was announced; but it took until 2002 for bulldozers to move in on the old site. The new Wembley, it is planned, will cost £757 million and will seat 90,000 people: it will be the most expensive sports arena of its kind anywhere. Significantly, the English Sports Council, the DCMS and the London Development Agency will contribute a total of £161 million to the project.

The government intends to create, in Wembley, a new national institution. The scale of its spending is one mark of this; so, too, is the attempt to encourage disciplined mass attendance through engineering and design. Setting the political tone for the project, the chief executive of the Football Association said that 'every fan in the new stadium would have more legroom than in the old Wembley's royal box' (Owen, 2002). At Wembley, it seems, design engineering will be put in the service of play – play as egalitarian social engineering.

There are fears, however, that building the new Wembley could prove to be the 'long and, at times, painful journey' that Tessa Jowell said had already preceded the September 2002 decision to go ahead. Yet such fears, like those which surround sports crowds, are only part of a wider phenomenon: Britain's dramatisation of the risks that surround sport.

Ever since 1990, when the footballer Paul Gascoigne publicly shed tears on-field, Britain has seen an outpouring of emotion about the kinds of risks sports professionals face. From racist abuse and drug tests through to fouls, career-ending injuries and a high incidence of divorce, soccer in particular is seen as a risky trade. As a result, more than 250 staff in and around the Professional Footballers' Association work to

- prepare players for an early end to their careers (75 per cent of professionals need a new job by the time they are 21);
- provide accident insurance, medical insurance and benevolent grants; and
- advise on finances and the management of pensions (typically, pensions are needed after the age of 35).

Do these services merely reflect the realities of professional football? Perhaps. But they also show that a precautionary and therapeutic approach to risks is just as closely bound up with soccer as the government's hopes that soccer can foster togetherness.

Those hopes are likely to be frustrated anyway. In terms of participation, sport is in decline. Table 4.21 shows that fewer people engage in eight different kinds of play, even if their enthusiasm for golf, climbing and tenpin bowling remains undimmed.

Table 4.21 Percentage of British adults participating in select personally equipped sports and indoor games, 1994 and 2000

	1994	2000
Personally equipped sports		
Golf	7.8	7.8
Badminton	6.8	4.9
Tennis	5.8	4.6
Bowls	3.3	2.7
Squash	3.9	2.7
Climbing/mountaineering	1.6	1.9
Indoor games		
Tenpin bowling	11.0	12.2
Snooker	8.0	6.8
Darts	5.8	4.5
Table tennis	3.3	2.6
Billiards	1.6	1.2

Source: Key Note, 2001a: 10

Table 4.22 confirms the Key Note hypothesis that, during the course of the 1990s, participation in sports 'gave way to keeping fit as the main physical activity, rather than as a benefit of playing a sport' (Key Note, 2002b: 14).

Performing arts

For music composition and publishing, instrument provision and live performance, figures covering 1997 and 2000 are available for UK royalties, value added, net overseas surpluses and employment (National Music Council 2002). For plays, opera, ballet, contemporary dance, classical music and music-theatre, figures covering 1998/99 are available for major income sources (tickets, support from the state and from business), numbers of performances, the percentage of adults in

attendance and, once again, for employment (DCMS, 2001a: 10/01–10).

The most obvious aspect of statistics for attendance at performing arts events is how little they appear to have altered. This has happened despite copious New Labour efforts to improve the figures through both social inclusion and the vast investment of Lottery funds – over £1,002 million between 1995/96 and 1998/99 alone (Selwood, 2001: Table 16.5). In Table 4.23, figures for 1996/97 are compared with those for 2000/01. The changes are slight.

As Table 4.24 shows, forecasts for admissions and box-office revenues for the UK's theatres likewise predict continued buoyancy, but no qualitative shift.

Table 4.22 Percentage of British adults belonging to clubs – gym, health and sport – and visiting them regularly, 2000 and 2001

	Belong to		Visit regularly	
	2000	2001	2000	2001
Gym	7.6	8.5	6.2	6.1
Health	3.6	4.0	2.2	2.6
Football or rugby	3.6	3.6	2.6	2.5
Golf	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.8
Angling	1.1	1.1	0.5	0.4
Tennis	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.6
Sailing	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3
Squash	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.8
Athletics	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4
Riding	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4
Other sports	6.7	5.7	4.5	3.5

Source: Key Note, 2002b: 38

Table 4.23 English adults saying they attend particular arts activities 'these days', 1996/97 and 2000/01

	Percentage		Millions	
	1996/7	2000/1	1996/7	2000/1
Plays	24.1	23.4	9.6	9.4
Opera	6.5	6.6	2.6	2.6
Ballet	6.5	6.4	2.6	2.6
Contemporary dance	4.3	4.4	1.7	1.8
Classical music	12.3	12.3	4.9	5.0
Jazz	6.2	6.1	2.5	2.5
Any performance in a theatre	36.0	36.0	14.5	14.5
Art galleries/exhibitions	21.4	21.4	8.7	8.7

Source: BMRB International Target Group Index, March 2002, quoted in Arts Council of England, 2002; Arts Council of England, 1998

Table 4.24 Forecasts for UK theatre admissions and box-office revenues in £ million; and percentage change; 2001–2005

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Percentage change, 2001–2005
Admissions	24	23	24	25	26	8.3
Revenues	380	393	405	415	427	12.4

Source: Key Note (2001b: 65)

Most recently, Skelton et al have presented an Office for National Statistics Omnibus Survey, based on in-home face-to-face interviews, of 6,042 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in England. Some figures for attendance are in Table 4.25.

In terms of participation, Table 4.26 confirms that Britons love to dance.

As Table 4.27 shows, the evidence is that those householders in England who do participate in the performing arts do so frequently.

Whatever the middle-class nature of attendance at performing arts events, working-class participation in them is relatively high. As Skelton et al observe,

Table 4.25 Percentage of adult householders in England attending various arts events in the last 12 months and four weeks

Event	Last 12 months	Last 4 weeks
Film at a cinema or other venue	55	19
Play or drama	27	5
Musical	24	4
Carnival, street arts or circus (not animals)	23	4
Art, photography or sculpture exhibition	19	6
Craft exhibition	17	4
Pantomime	13	..
Cultural festival	10	2
Event connected with books or writing	8	2
Event including video or electronic art	7	2

Source: Skelton et al, 2002

Table 4.26 Percentage of adult householders in England participating in performing arts in the last 12 months

Art form	Activity	Last 12 months
Dance	Clubbing	25
	Other dance (but not fitness class)	8
	Ballet	1
Music	Play a musical instrument for own pleasure	9
	Sing to an audience (or rehearse)	4
	Play to an audience (or rehearse)	3
	Write or compose a piece of music	2
Drama	Perform or rehearse in a play or drama	2

Source: Skelton et al, 2002

There were no noticeable class differences in participation in many activities, including writing stories and plays or poetry, doing 'other dance' or ballet, playing a musical instrument or singing for an audience and making films and videos.

(Skelton et al, 2002: 38).

Despite the absence of social exclusion in the performance of performing arts, DCMS supports the employment of 1,000 people at the Arts Council to try to get more attendees to them. Increases in attendance over recent years, however, remain relatively modest – certainly when compared with those enjoyed by gambling joints and sports clubs.

Fairs, theme parks and adventure holidays

We are the number one company in Europe's fast-growing leisure attractions industry. 15 million people visited our attractions last year, that's more than attended live Premiership

football in the UK!

(Peter Phillipson, Chief Executive, The Tussauds Group, 2002)

During the 1980s, when the loss of this country's industrial base became a subject of widespread discussion, critics of the Conservatives would refer derisively to 'theme park Britain'. These critics over-dramatised the real position. But today, though the phrase 'theme park Britain' would still be an exaggeration, it would be just as wrong to underestimate the country's love affair with theme parks. Fairs, after all, have long been deeply assimilated in the nation's cultural consciousness (Weedon and Ward, 1981).

The figures for theme parks tell their own story. Alton Towers, the UK's biggest paid-admission leisure park and, with Thorpe Park and Chessington World of Adventures, one of the Tussauds Group's UK £30 million trio of theme parks in Britain, attracts 2.5 million visitors a year. It has recently installed a £12 million roller coaster. Similarly, Drayton Manor Park, a family-run business also in

Table 4.27 Adult householders in England participating in performing arts in the last 12 months, by frequency of participation and percentage

	At least once a week	At least once a month	Every 2 or 3 months	2 or 3 times a year	Once a year
Play a musical instrument for pleasure	62	18	8	9	1
Read for pleasure	57	20	11	9	3
Textile, wood or other crafts	37	20	13	19	6
Paint, draw, make prints or sculpture	36	26	15	17	4
Create computer artwork or animations	31	24	14	19	7
Write or compose music	31	30	15	17	6
Sing, opera or play to an audience	30	17	12	20	16
Ballet or other dance	28	21	15	21	8
Read poetry	27	30	16	19	5
Take photos or make films as art	20	30	22	21	6
Write stories, plays or poetry	19	18	13	15	32
Help run arts event or organisation	15	13	12	28	30

Source: Skelton et al, 2002

Staffordshire, attracts a million visitors a year (Guthrie, 2002).

There are more theme parks to come, too. In September 2002 it was reported that the former film producer Kris Kliszewicz had raised £100 million on US bond markets to build a 200-acre theme park devoted to William Shakespeare. Two miles outside Stratford-upon-Avon, what has become dubbed as 'Bard's World' will, if it is built and made operational, come complete with Shakespearian players, tournaments, archery, swordfights, the pitching of horseshoes and a giant chessboard of life-size sculptures of Shakespearian characters (Nathan, 2002).

Many of Britain's major visitor attractions are stronger on environmental and heritage themes than

they are on thrills. But it is notable that even in these areas the general trend, as in UK museums, is toward play. Thus Center Parcs, a Dutch theme park concern, has three popular UK family destinations with a strong focus on nature and wildlife. But it still boasts of its 'unique mixture of sports, leisure and environmental facilities, using a blend of sophisticated technology' (Center Parcs, 2002). At Cornwall's high-ecology Eden Project, which achieved nearly two million visitors within a year of its opening, the owner Tim Smit wants to improve his Warm Temperate Biome with more 'theatre' (Hodges, 2002: 10). Similarly, the Tussauds Group's Warwick Castle attracts about 800,000 visitors a year – not just for its history or its 60 acres of grounds and gardens, but also for medieval

Table 4.28 Britons taking different types of package holiday by percentage, 2001

Summer sun/beach	71
Winter sun/beach	15
Activity (water sports, cycling, skiing etc)	8
Discovery (new/unusual/third world destination)	7
Cruising	6

Source: Worcester, 2002

jousting, archery and for rock concerts. In the summer of 2001, rock performances brought in 100,000 customers.

Following in the footsteps of the San Francisco Exploratorium and the Science Museum's Launch Pad, 'hands on' is the philosophy at science museums in Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Playful interactivity also characterises exhibits at many Lottery-funded museum developments. With commercial ventures it is a similar story. The Famous Grouse Visitor Experience at the Highland Distiller's Glenturret distillery in Crieff, Scotland, won an award for its designers, Land Design Studios, in 2002. Using IT, it simulates ice under the feet, play with a giant jigsaw and flights over the Scottish landscape.

At present, officialdom does not worry too much about safety in theme parks or hyper-activity in museums. But in adventure tourism, a rise in popularity is paralleled by a rise in fears.

Table 4.28 shows the results of a MORI survey carried out in December 2001. It gives the breakdown of British package holidays abroad – the dominant kind of holiday among Britons – over the previous 12 months, with adventure holidays in italics.

Although the popularity of adventure travel is, at 8 per cent, modest enough, it is increasing. As

Stephen Bath, president of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), puts it, 'whilst the relaxing summer beach holiday remains a firm favourite for most, more and more of our customers are looking for an exciting experience to broaden their horizons' (quoted in ABTA, 2002).

For New Labour puritans, this trend provides grounds for concern. The Foreign Policy Centre, a think-tank influential in government circles, highlights adventure tourism as one of the principal sources of what it believes are likely to be continued increases in the number of Britons 'imprisoned, hospitalised, dying or in need of an emergency passport'. It therefore believes that many of the hazards associated with Britons getting in trouble abroad can be avoided 'with sound advice' (Briggs, 2002). Even when holidaymakers pursue sporting activities abroad, it seems, the state should have a role in regulating play.

From pervasive to coercive play

In concluding this section on Britain at play, it is worth noting first of all that in this country, as elsewhere, consumer spending on play does not just confine itself to leisure. Quite prosaic consumer pursuits have now gained a detectably playful dimension. In health care, for example, the range of 'complementary medicines' on offer at the Boots

website includes aromatherapy, Bach flower remedies, homeopathy, and 'relaxation & spirituality' products – magnetic therapy, *feng shui*, crystal therapy and acupressure. What is noticeable about these 'medicines' is that they come in the shape of phials, bottles, potions, magnets and crystals – miniaturised objects. They invite collection, experimentation, display and rearrangement. They encourage play, perhaps, more than they cure ailments.

It could also be argued that in financial services, millions of Britons now make new bets on different kinds of financial investments – housing, pensions – in an anxious but also playful manner. In education, too, the notching up of state credentials in lifelong learning goes alongside the rise of playful forms of online learning, and the transformation of campuses and student unions into a clubber's paradise (Woudhuysen, 2002c).

The influence of play on British consumer behaviour is pervasive. It is also often covert, and often understood only unconsciously.

Government promotion of play has also been covert and, for both governed and governing, somewhat unconscious. Whatever its intentions, however, government has done a lot to talk up the merits of play, and to fund it. At the same time, government tries to regulate play with almost the same zeal it has long shown toward the worlds of work and employment.

Government has, first, increased adult sentimentality about play by focusing on its role in the socialisation of children. More and more very young children are now given formal, supervised play sessions at primary school. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's chief executive during 2000–01, David Hargreaves, argued that physical education and school sport were 'a vital part of

pupils' learning experience, enhancing attainment in other subjects' (O'Leary, 2001).

Announcing a £450 million programme of investment in school sports in October 2002, Tony Blair committed the government to recruiting nearly 16,000 new school sports coordinators and teachers, as well as to a guarantee that all 5 to 16-year-olds in the UK would receive a minimum of two hours a week of physical education and sport by 2006 (DCMS, 2002a). Children's participation in play is now seen as 'educational'. The Prime Minister believes that sport is about healthier children, and about 'keeping young people engaged and out of trouble' (DCMS, 2002a).

It is a short step from here for government to see adult attendance and participation in play as a fitting arena for state intervention. Both junior and senior audiences, after all, were the target of the Millennium Dome (McGuigan and Gilmore, 2001), which might best be considered as a giant human resources project (Lewis et al, 1998). It is true that government is not just concerned about attendance at or participation in playful events and activities. As shown earlier, it also gives the employment generated by computer games and gambling a specially warm welcome. Yet what seems to count to the government is not whether or not a sector has lots of jobs or is 'creative', so much as that sector's mass social impact in terms of play. Thus, while the DCMS believes that mainstream computer software and services are creative, they are a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). By contrast, the DCMS is highly active not only in gambling, but also in another industry not deemed 'creative': sport.

Sport has been co-opted by government not for its intrinsic merits, but as a means of political mobilisation. Sport is about 'combatting (sic) social

exclusion and tackling the neighbourhood renewal agenda'. Sport, indeed, should 'challenge inequality' (DCMS, 2001b: 7). It can 'help us tackle serious health issues' and so save hundreds of millions of pounds a year; it can aid crime reduction and the development of young people in schools (DCMS 2002c: 6, 14). In the case of Britain's decision whether or not to bid to hold the Olympic Games in 2012, sport is also pressed into the service of reviving east London.

It is the same with performing arts. In March 2001, the Arts Council increased its budget to theatre from £40 million in 2000/01 to £70 million by 2003/04 (Arts Council, 2001: part 1, 5). The Council has commissioned a nationwide mapping exercise so as to develop regional action plans for carnivals, street art and circus arts (Arts Council, 2001: part 3, 11). But the purpose of all this effort in performing arts, as in the arts generally, is about

- 'improving the quality of life for patients and staff alike' in health care;
- 'challenging negative stereotypes' in relation to refugees;
- preventing young people from offending;
- the coordination of 'a cultural response' to foot and mouth disease, genetically modified foods and BSE – through the establishment of a National Arts and Agriculture Policy Forum (Arts Council, 2001: part 3, 12, 13).

Finally, because 'diversity and social inclusion is (sic) one of the priorities for Arts Council work', the Council has allocated £29 million of its £90 million Arts Capital Programme to 22 'Black, Asian and Chinese (sic) organisations' (Arts Council, 2001: part 3, 15). Much of this money will go on performing arts.

As the Arts Council's attempt to respond to three kinds of agricultural disaster makes clear, government views attendance at and participation in play histrionically. Culture Minister Dr Kim Howells, after all, accused the Musicians' Union of 'a pernicious lying campaign' when it dared to agree with *The Times* that his Licensing Bill would 'make it a criminal offence for even one musician to pick up a penny whistle in a pub' without a licence (Malvern, 2003: 6 and *The Times*, 2003: 21). But in hinting that one must play to be an active citizen and that if one does not play, one is irresponsible and anti-social, the government ensures that play is not only ubiquitous, but also coercive.

Play is not intrinsically coercive, even if it means playing by the rules (Brohm, 1978). But in Britain, as abroad, play is revealed as fundamentally unfree. The official instruction is: you will have fun, for the right kind of fun is good for you and good for society.

That government has an instrumental attitude to play is hardly surprising. Early in New Labour's first administration, it was reported that Cabinet ministers and policy advisers had 'adopted' Csikszentmihalyi as the 'high priest of our future wellbeing' (Chittenden, 1997). But has the government's instrumentalist advocacy of play also advanced the cause of culture in any serious manner? That millions of Britons still prefer attendance at theme parks to attendance at state-subsidised performing arts events suggests that instrumentalism has not worked.

Play at work

One of today's fondly held myths is that 'kids will show us the way'. Adults respond to kids' fearlessness. Kids are able to plunge in, and, in a rich enough environment, actually get fluent

at some level. But if adults had any sophistication, they would realize that no kid ever invented calculus, or a C-7th chord, or how to really finger a keyboard to get the maximum out of it.

(Kay, 1997: 204)

The pervasive nature of play is most sharply expressed by its penetration into the world of work. There, play's advocates believe that it helps mobilise the many different kinds of intelligence that are needed to unleash creativity, and thus innovation. The innovation consultancy ?What If! sees playful techniques as useful not just to conventional new product development, but to the development of services in which the 'product' is a mortgage (Allan et al, 1999). A rival to ?What If! performs 90-minute workouts for the mind; its clients include Barclays, Deutsche Bank, Guinness and Microsoft (Mind Gym, 2002).

In fact, play is not just seen as a key to innovation at work; it has also become the thing that managers do when selecting one of the many tools of strategy at their disposal. As the hard-headed international management consultancy Bain & Co puts it:

Over the past decade, executives have witnessed an explosion of management tools. Demands of increasing competition in the global marketplace are driving the explosion, while accelerated, lower-cost delivery systems for ideas and information have enabled it. Today, the sheer volume of ideas can overwhelm a management team. In the absence of data, groundless hype makes choosing and using management tools a dangerous game of chance.

(Bain & Co, 2002)

As if this game of chance were not enough, Bain itself offers rules, developed continuously since 1993, with which to play it less dangerously. Since 1993, it has tracked the use of no fewer than 25 management tools, from Activity-based Management to Total Quality Management. Juggling perhaps a dozen of those tools at any one time is much of the stuff of management today.

Juggling, however, is not a quality confined to chief executive officers playing with strategies. The Dutch troupe of jugglers More Balls Than Most trains EU companies in how to juggle. A decade back, it published *The Modern Manager's Guide to the Ancient Art of Juggling: A Short Course in Life Enhancement* (More Balls Than Most, 1992). And, back in Britain, 'Juggle don't struggle' is what the DTI enjoins everyone to do – to properly balance work with 'life' (DTI, 2001).

International developments

Led by America, management theory favours play. The fundamental image management has of itself has come to be more playful. Early on, the doyen of the world's management gurus suggested that the company team was really a symphony orchestra (Drucker, 1988). Since then, managers have been told the following:

- they should 'think win-win' (Covey, 1989);
- that, in business, the 'bottom line' is 'the sum total of conjured-up dramas created by our customers' (Peters, 1992);
- *Everyone's a Coach: you can inspire anyone to be a winner*, according to Ken Blanchard, co-author of the best-selling *One Minute Manager* and Don Shula, a 'legendary' coach in America's National Football League (Blanchard and Shula, 1995);

- workplace teams are very like jazz combos (Savage, 1996);
- business opportunities in the IT world suggest serious analogies with the different games going on within a casino (Arthur, 1996);
- the best model for the modern organisation is 'the contemporary football team', according to the architect of the 're-engineering' of the American corporation (Hammer, 1996: 109);
- the competitive struggles between makers of different internet browsers are analogous to judo (Cusumano and Yoffie, 1998);
- business has invented a whole new occupation – the corporate fool (Mackenzie, 1998);
- the proper philosophy with new, toy-like prototypes is 'demo or die': rehearse with them, perform with them, improvise around them – in the manner of the Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Schrage, 1999);
- businesses are in 'constant, unscripted, improvised theatre', in which success is 'the ultimate circus act' (Ridderstrale and Nordstrom, 2000: 41, 219); and
- whatever industry they are in, chief executives have much to learn from US golfing pro Tiger Woods, according to the house journal of the top management consultancy Booz-Allen (Hurst, 2000).

On both sides of the Atlantic the vocabulary of business is today suffused with metaphors that are as inane as they are playful. Managers 'draw up a game plan', 'get on the fast track', 'stay in the right ballpark' and 'play hard ball'. They 'touch base' with everyone and, as if in a gym, adopt 'stretch' goals. Yet the fad for play at work goes further than theory or terminology. Management practice also favours play.

At the Lubek headquarters of the German insurers LVA, a central hub and entrance is designed to look deliberately chaotic, so as to encourage informal reactions among staff and coax them into an adjoining restaurant. 'Sunspots' throughout the DM156 million, 37,000m² construction allow staff to prepare tea and coffee in elegant cafes. LVA's headquarters, say some English admirers, represents 'the integration of work and leisure' in the service of 'community' in the workplace (Myerson and Ross, 1999).

In America, and especially in Silicon Valley, firms in the computer, advertising, design and consumer goods industries have offices that boast golf courses, basketball courts and playgrounds of every sort. Providing play has come to be seen as an essential means by which to attract, motivate and retain people. Beyond the pay packet and promotion prospects, amusement value is an essential part of the contract that millions of prospective employees strike with their recruiters.

Organisations as diverse as 3M, Intel, Microsoft, NASA and the World Bank are also in the business of odes and recitals. They are some of the clients of David Snowden, who is European director of the Institute for Knowledge Management, IBM Global Services. After six years of research over five continents, Snowden upholds 'corporate storytelling', and says it has special relevance in workplace education as part of the 'fast track' induction of new employees (Linkage International, 2001: 7). Meanwhile the conductor Benjamin Zander, of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, has worked for 15 years as a 'corporate motivator' to tens of thousands of employees, including senior executives from Compaq, British Airways and GlaxoSmithKline (Marsh, 2003: 11).

UK developments

In 2002 it was reported that one UK bank segmented consumers by astrological sign (Steed, 2002). On the eve of the World Cup that same year, the *Financial Times* was inspired by sport to muse that sectors as varied as Hollywood, the record industry and investment banking were like the soccer business: all were 'zero sum games' in which 'talent and the opportunists make the real money and one company's profits are offset by its rivals' losses' (Martin, 2002). In British management publishing, too, titles such as the *Leadership the Sven-Göran Eriksson Way* (Augar and Palmer, 2002) and *The Rise of the Player Manager* (Birkinshaw and Crainer, 2002) underline the cultural influence of soccer on 'business books'.

Again the influence of play at work is not confined to theories, but is also reproduced in everyday practice. UK workplaces boast snooker, table football and hula-hoops. They are also equipped with wishing wells (Kellaway, 2000). More substantially, play provides much of the content for management training and employee learning. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, an 80,000-strong membership organisation for professionals in human resources, runs workshops that use music and other performing arts to develop 'the listening manager'. The Work Foundation, a long-standing group of UK companies in favour of fair, partnership-based management, sells a dozen separate 'video dramas' on workplace subjects as varied as AIDS, bullying and negotiating. It also touches on a key dimension of play when it highlights how companies, in their appraisal of employees, should place increasing emphasis on 'aesthetic values' (Warhurst and Nixon, 2001).

Former theatre director Richard Olivier, son of Sir Lawrence, gets the board of Lotus Cars to relive *Henry V*. Poets Peter Sansom and David Whyte, respectively, reside for Marks & Spencer and run management workshops for Arthur Andersen and American Express (Pollard, 2001). By contrast, Ann Lamont, head of learning, organisation and development in British Petroleum's downstream business, takes a narrative course. She believes that her organisation's staff are 'very good at corporate-speak', but asks: 'How does that help someone refuelling a plane in Mozambique? We're trying to appreciate diversity, and storytelling could help us do that' (cited in Pollock, 2000: 21).

As promulgated by government, play at work becomes a complete circus. In thespian mood, Plymouth City Council mounted a special play to convince employees of the need for 'best value' in local government contracts (Hurst, 2000: 38–40). When the Arts Council and the DCMS launched Arts and Business Week in the spring of 2001, they made a ballet dancer pose against laptops at the accounting firm Andersen. Later, it was announced that London's Metropolitan Police were to pay £3,000 to Michael Vincent for two five-hour courses aimed at chief superintendents (Nettleton, 2001: 1). Vincent, from Maida Vale, is a member of the Inner Magic Circle and has been voted Britain's Magician of the Year. His brief: do card tricks, mix oil with water, cut ropes in half and put them back together again, talk about gaining the confidence to handle an audience, and encourage top policemen to develop their ability to improve relationships and establish rapport.

How, though, has the vogue for play at work come to be so accepted in both private sector and public sector workplaces? The Work Foundation explains the link between work and 'fun' as follows:

The rise of many high-potential small and midsize companies, who offer a fun and flexible environment, is forcing larger organisations to reconsider the working environment they offer. The irrevocable decline of job security means that fun may be a more durable adhesive, tying talent to an organisation more than promises of promotion and advancement.

(Knell, 2000: 21)

Here fun at work is connected to the idea that jobs have become less secure in an 'irrevocable' manner. In fact the link is by no means so direct. Nevertheless, pessimistic perceptions of the risks of losing one's job, a sense that management has lost direction and long-standing trends toward risk avoidance outside the workplace do make for a resort to play at work.

As a result, the claims made for play at work are not, as their makers make out, voices in the wilderness, but rather inspire many of today's mainstream practices at work. In particular, corporate 'awaydays', outings and retreats have become an industry. UK event-organising firms such as Theme Traders and Emseven lead a crowded market, arranging Roman banquets and tombola raffles for British Airways, Smirnoff and the Bank of England, or themed parties and motivational games for American Express and Novartis (Gracie, 2000: 8 and 2001: 15). At awaydays, managers receive homilies on 'leadership' delivered by UK athletes (Sebastian Coe, Kriss Akabusi), UK polar explorers (Sir Ralph Fiennes) and UK mountaineers (Rebecca Stephens).

British businessmen, it seems, want to emulate the physical endurance of sportsmen. That is understandable – but is sport, or play, the right model for business?

From relaxation, dream imagery and meditation (West, 1997), through psychometric testing of employees (Donkin, 2002), to hypnotism in executive training (Flintoff, 2002), management tools more exotic even than those surveyed by Bain have become part of the mainstream. Advocates of play share with advocates of these tools a belief that characterises New Age philosophies today (Heelas, 1996: 25) – namely, that an elusive 'magical' energy in people can make a difference to life. Whether that is a trustworthy analytical foundation for management, however, must remain a rather debatable point.

Conclusion

Some collectors would rather have a toy than eat for a year.

(Daniel Agnew, toy specialist at international auctioneers, Christie's, quoted in Burgess, 2002)

For it must be said once and for all that man only plays when he is a man in the full meaning of the word, and he is fully human only when he plays.

(Schiller, On the aesthetic education of man, 15th letter, quoted in Lukács, 1923)

Play is not always the opium of the people. Much of play is entirely legitimate. Play, when voluntarily and consciously entered into, can be fun.

Play inspires Norio Ohga, chairman of Sony Corporation, who is also a professional opera singer, licensed jet pilot and orchestral conductor. Unlike the play of the Gods of ancient mythology, which was bound up with the tragic course of fate, play can still speak of human agency and can still be transformative. At its experimental speculative

best, adult play is different from that exhibited by children or animals, for play is in this case both imaginative and structured – and, no doubt, educational to a degree. After all, play continues to inspire conceptual breakthroughs in science.

In this connection there is nothing intrinsically wrong, either, with the incorporation of IT into play. As the museum and exhibition designer Peter Higgins has argued:

The time has come to reassess the methodology by which we may encourage people to engage with discovery learning. It is no longer appropriate to depend on unreliable and unimaginative electromechanical mechanisms, or dull and unengaging touch-screen interfaces, which serve only to deliver slabs of binary yes/no learning or enable guests to visit the museum's website. Such ubiquitous devices are derivative, and often better reserved for home use. If they are not subject to imaginative development, they will demean the important role that museums have come to play in the commercial marketplace.

(Higgins, 2001: 66)

Yet in today's cultural climate it needs saying again and again that while individual instances of play are usually harmless, the overall ideology of play can often be sinister. 'The politics of play', as the Australian writer Richard Neville termed them in *Play Power*, have come a long way since he wrote about the then Underground Movement's 'essential anti-work, pro-play ethic' (Neville, 1971: 207). Clinton used to flaunt his saxophone, and Blair still plays his guitar. Thirty years on from Neville, the politics of play have been revived by a generation of 1960s players, at just the time when really engaging political tournaments are a thing of the past.

When he was MP for Rio de Janeiro, and an early supporter of Lula da Silva, the new President of Brazil, the radical theatre producer August Boal tried valiantly to turn spectators into what he called Spect-Actors. He wrote:

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.

(Boal, 1992: xxxi)

But theatre in Britain today is a form of knowledge all too rarely. The transformation of society that New Labour wants to achieve through theatre, as through performing arts and play in general, is not the transformation Boal had in mind.

The claims that are now made for play are dishonest. Play today is not about durable freedom, but about what James Heartfield has analysed as the death of the active, conscious Subject (Heartfield, 2002). It is a kind of therapeutic mental massage that is fundamentally restrictive and conservative. To give but one example, a lurid but a telling one: toys have been used, with no public outcry, to try to cut down on America's unrivalled world lead in teenage pregnancies. About 40,000 'infant simulators', in the shape of \$250 Baby Think It Over electronic dolls that come in five different ethnicities, have been delivered by Federal Express to US high schools since 1993, in the hopes of convincing young girls of the burdens of parenthood (Bax, 1999: 121).

Three decades ago, the paediatrician David Winnicott argued that psychotherapy pertained to the overlap of two play areas, 'that of the patient and that of the therapist' (Winnicott, 1971: 54). Within just a few years, and later, in many translations for

youth workers worldwide, Donna Brandes and Howard Philips elevated the status of play still more. Their *Gamesters Handbook* further popularised Csikszentmihalyi's instrumentalist approach to play by gathering together scores of games 'for developing self-awareness, confidence, decision-making skills, trust, assertiveness, and just for fun' – in that order (Brandes and Philips, 1977, 1982). The Brandes and Philips manifesto is worth quoting in full to bring out the therapeutic dimensions of play as it has come to be interpreted today:

I am a games freak, a life-long addict. Games are not just an enjoyment to me, more a way of life...

Games can be used constructively and not as pointless activities... can help sort out problems, the kinds of problems found in interpersonal relationships. They can help social inadequacy by developing co-operation within groups, develop sensitivity to the problems of others through games needing trust, and promote interdependency and a sense of personal identity...

By helping people to relax in groups, games can promote the flow of communication between complete strangers – particularly important with shy people who need additional encouragement.

The 'role playing' aspects of many games provide the security which enables group members to develop their ideas and express themselves. The enjoyment which can be generated by games does more than anything to develop a group identity...

Sitting in a circle ... gives the same status to everyone, including the leader, and allows a much greater degree of eye contact...

(Brandes and Philips, 1982: 7)

In a similar vein, Rice and Yaconelli wrote, about a decade later:

Winning should be either irrelevant or anticlimactic, never the focus of game playing.

Just as enjoyment is more important than competition, participation is more important than performance...

After a game is over, players should be better friends than when the game started.

(Rice and Yaconelli, 1993: 10–11)

The cultural and creative industries have been the strongest and most persuasive advocates of play. People in those industries enjoy their work, do things that they hope will please, and see their own experience as a model for others. Mediated through cultural industries and their ambassadors, play is much of what will detain Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Newcastle/Gateshead and Oxford in their race to become European Capital of Culture in 2008. In terms of urban regeneration, *Newsweek* believes that play has helped Austin in Texas, Tijuana in Mexico, Marseilles and Kabul take four places among the world's top eight most creative cities (*Newsweek*, 2002: 54–60).

But the top-down, lose-yourself ideology of play is patronising. It condescends to the masses by telling them how better to manage their leisure time – by telling them why and how they should avoid being couch potatoes. If piety was what was recommended to the masses in the 19th century, it is play that is recommended to them in the 21st.

This chapter has shown that the growth of play takes many forms, and is an international phenomenon. Naturally, as has been noted, some forms of play seem to have had their day; but that does not alter the overall tendency toward play, which must

always be in some kind of general social turmoil for it to remain dynamic and playful.

This chapter has highlighted the historic bias, in the literature on play, toward the benefits of play in terms of self-esteem and social cohesion. But it does not mean to suggest that best-selling books on games, any more than Csikszentmihalyi's books on flow, or Jean Piaget's on child development and child play, or John von Neumann's on game theory, are by themselves responsible for the growth of play. Play has come about through a variety of influences on the ground, not just in the stratospheric world of books.

This chapter has suggested that what Eugene Levitt described as *The Psychology of Anxiety* (Levitt, 1968) is one of the major roots of play today. Fear of risk, and the everygrowing sense that things are falling apart, are what summon the urge to play.

Corporate management's inchoate fear that innovation has slowed down explains much of the vogue for play at work. Rather than take real risks with genuine innovation (Hunt, 2003), management often prefers to organise play sessions around fake risks. That is much less expensive, and much less risky. It is a direction that makes a lot of sense in a period of declining capital investment.

At the same time, a broader infantilisation of society makes play a socially acceptable course to take. A man, it seems, must become a child again. When he calls for radical innovation, America's most perceptive management guru insists: 'Pretend you're a kid again – with a very big Lego set' (Hamel, 2000). Not content with this, the Lego company itself has formed a management training company, named The Imagination Lab, which conducts one-and-a-half day courses in which top executives build innovatory visions in Lego plastic bricks, demolish them and start again. The Institute

of Management Development in Switzerland, and Fontainebleau's prestigious Insead business school, also favour the use of Lego (Kellaway, 2001).

The mass psychology of anxiety, the corporate fear of innovation and society's general resort to childlike behaviour together confirm that, as a relatively cheap remedy for today's alienation, play is at best only a palliative measure.

It is time for Britain's cultural and creative industries to take a more critical attitude to the liberation theology of play.

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The Economy of Time

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James Woudhuysen's forecast of the coming colonisation of the world of work by the ethos of play ought to remind us that it was not always thus. Indeed, for many, many years it was rather the opposite: work was the exemplar for all other uses of time. Not old English 'play', then, but Latinate 'recreation', with all its overtones of worthy self-improvement, guiltily disguised our larking about as a kind of work. Hobbies were an imitation of craft-work undertaken at home, or else you could 'dig for victory' on the allotment. Some of the old work-ethic guilt still attaches to free time, so that we improve our homes and minds with something of a religious fervour, corresponding to those government ambitions noted by Woudhuysen.

The last time any government paid so deliberate an interest in culture was during the Second World War, with the founding of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. At that time, Lord De la Warr

had Venetian visions of a post-war Lord Mayor's show on the Thames in which the Board of Education left the arts in a triumph from Whitehall to Greenwich in magnificent barges and gorgeous gondolas; orchestras, madrigal singers, Shakespeare from the old Vic, ballet from Sadler's Wells, shining canvasses from the Royal Academy, folk dancers from village greens – in fact Merrie England.

(Arts Council of Great Britain, 1956: 5–6)

It sounds contemporary – yet the context was not an expansion of leisure time but rather the opposite: long hours at work. The arts were subsidised to protect them against the encroachment of a war effort that threatened to sweep them aside.

In the face of the remarkable contemporary data on the expansion of play, it is worth asking what, if anything, sustains the boundaries between work and leisure, or whether the old drudgery will simply be swept aside by the new fun. We can observe one determinant, the Maslow effect, where rising incomes and cheaper basic goods allow a greater proportion of household expenditure to be dedicated to leisure than food – at least for the richest two-fifths of the population (Heartfield, 2000: 20). At least as important as rising incomes is the greater efficiency in production of basic goods. Economists Cox and Alm have estimated how long on average an American would have to work to earn the money to pay for the selected commodities, in different decades (Table C1).

Technological innovation can transform leisure time, too. Cinema audiences were decimated by television. The same market was further subdivided by video, satellite and now digital channels. New means of communication, lighter cameras and digital editing have all expanded choice in the market by producing more entertainment more cheaply.

But while these revolutions in means of delivery take place on a relatively rapid timescale of five or ten years, a final determinant changes much more slowly: the distribution of leisure time in society.

To understand the distribution of leisure time, we need to understand the distribution of working time. The Labour Force Survey tells us that in 2002, 27.7 million people worked a sum total of 46,525 million hours, producing the goods and services that make up the national wealth. Without this activity, nothing else could happen. Working time dominates the distribution of leisure time, which is effectively slotted in once work has finished.

Table C1 How long on average an American had work to earn the money to pay for various commodities, 1920–1999

Year	Half gallon of milk	Three pound chicken	100 kilowatt hours electricity	3min coast-to-coast call
1920	37mins	2hrs 27mins	13hrs 36mins	30hrs 3mins
1930	31mins	2hrs 1mins	11hrs 3mins	16hrs 29mins
1940	21mins	1hrs 24mins	5hrs 52mins	6hrs 7mins
1950	16mins	1hrs 11mins	2hrs	1hrs 44mins
1960	13mins	33mins	1hrs 9mins	1hr
1970	10mins	22mins	39mins	24mins
1980	8.7mins	18mins	45mins	11mins
1990	8mins	14mins	43mins	4mins
1999	7mins	14mins	38mins	2mins

Source: Cox and Alm, 1999: 43

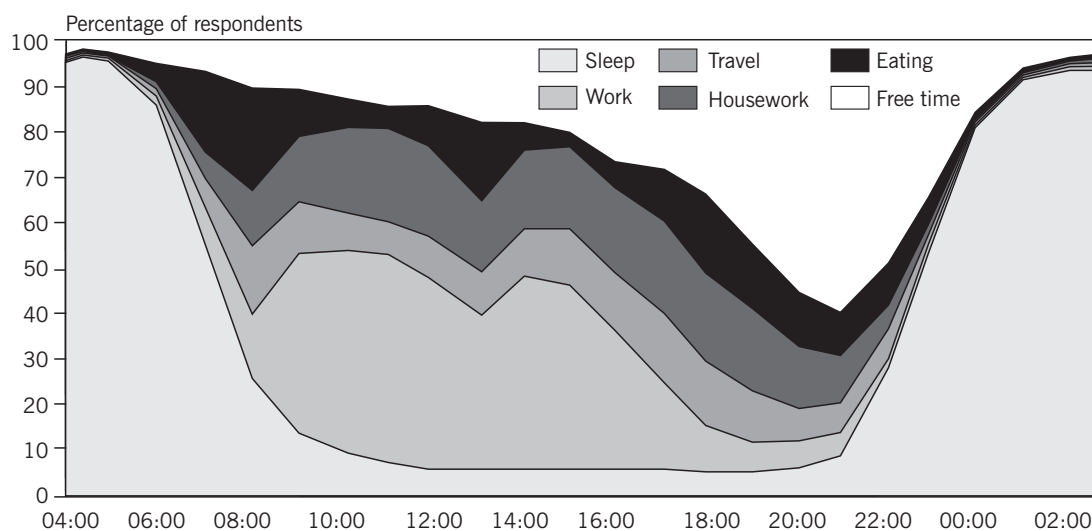
The BBC carried out time use studies in 1939, 1961, 1975, 1983 and 1988, published as *The People's Daily Activities* and latterly *Daily Life in the Eighties*. More recently the University of Essex and the Office of National Statistics have taken on the task, producing a map of the average weekday, for adults and children (Figure C1).

The rough shape of this average day is remarkably similar to average days over the past 30 or 40 years. One can sympathise with the schedulers and programmers fighting over that two-hour slot between coming home, eating and going to bed. Unlike innovations in the technology of play, available play-time changes quite slowly; but it does change. Despite the widespread perception that people are overworked, time spent in paid work shows a gradual, secular decline from 236 minutes a day in 1961 to 193 minutes a day in 1984 to 147 minutes a day in 2000 (Gershuny, 2000: 224; ONS, 2000).

Decreasing work-time points to an historic problem faced by market economies. As Cox and

Alm's table suggests, through intensive growth technology creates more from less labour. In providing an economic incentive to abbreviate labour time, market economies have exhibited a less than perfect mechanism for the re-absorption of surplus labourers into the economy (Ricardo, 1984: Chapter 31). In other times this surplus population has starved, emigrated, subsisted on welfare or been called up. The irony that industrial development plunged people into penury just as it released them from drudgery has been a perennial one for market-based economic systems.

With the return of unemployment after the long post war boom, it seemed to some that the solution was a planned expansion of leisure (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979; Gorz, 1982). But such proposals were deemed utopian, putting an unbearable strain upon public finances, as well as undermining the discipline of work. In the 1980s the trend appeared to be a return to the 1930s, with mass unemployment leading to a contrast between the work-rich,

Figure C1 The average weekday for adults and children in the UK, 2000

Note: 'Work' includes attendance at school, 'eating' includes personal grooming.

Source: Office of National Statistics (2000)

double-income families trading time for high living standards, and the impoverished work-poor. In the UK, working hours peaked in 1988 at about 44 a week, as employees maintained their incomes by working more overtime. At the same time, the numbers out of work rose above three million, making a cruel joke of the 'leisure society'.

In the 1990s, though, the picture changed, with a marked increase in the workforce. This was a process of extensive rather than intensive growth. More people were drawn into employment, including record numbers of women (now outnumbering men in the workforce), as well as immigrant populations that had previously been disproportionately unemployed. The cumulative effect of labour market liberalisation had begun to hold down wages, making it possible to employ more people.

Employment gains, concluded the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, reflect 'the effects of several years of wage moderation' (2000: 11). In the US the Federal Reserve concluded that the long period of growth was the consequence of wages being held down by 'worker insecurity' (Federal Open Market Committee minutes, 24 September 1996). And though wages were falling, so too were the prices of consumer goods, mitigating hardships even as more people were in work. The 'feel-good factor' was at last felt.

The weakness of a period of extensive growth, though, is that it lacks the trend towards technological innovation that characterises intensive growth. In Britain, France and Germany spending on Research and Development actually fell as a

proportion of GDP in the 1990s (below 2 per cent in Britain's case, below 2.5 in the others'). According to the British Department of Trade and Industry, productivity deteriorated as 'the economy has generated an additional 1.5 million jobs at a quicker rate than it has increased investment' (Department of Trade and Industry, 2001: 75). The workforce expanded with the growth of low-productivity jobs, mostly in the service sector.

These trends are pertinent to the changes in work- as well as play-time. First there was a much more even spread of work time across society, with working hours coming down again to under 40 a week in the 'overworked' UK, much lower unemployment and much more part-time working. Correspondingly, more time was freed up for leisure, and for domestic work, which increased marginally for women (by four minutes per day between 1961 and 1995), and much more so for men (46 minutes over the same period). It should be considered, though, that domestic work itself was less like drudgery, and more like recreation, as young couples sought out child-care responsibilities and home improvements as a welcome alternative to work.

Most compellingly, as Woudhuysen shows, time use at work itself has changed. Where employers in the 1980s were wringing more effort out of a diminished workforce, the work-life balance really did shift in the 1990s. A considerably expanded workforce has a highly productive core (Owen, 2000), but quite flabby periphery. Cox and Alm report an interesting comparison from the US: 'Time-diary surveys show that Americans today spend as many as six of their weekly on-the-job

hours on leisure pursuits compared with only one hour in 1965' (Cox and Alm, 1999: 67). Non-work activities at work include phoning friends, playing solitaire or browsing the internet, reading, raising funds for charities, picking up and dropping off kids at school, attending parents' evenings, and exercising, often at work-provided facilities. On top of all this goofing off, there are of course the many ways that employers keep the attention of workers who are not currently engaged in filling orders, such as training schemes, confidence building weekends, pro bono work, and an increasing number of paid, part-paid and unpaid sabbaticals. And then finally there are the society-wide diversions Woudhuysen notes of national celebration and mourning, the World Cup and other sports fixtures, increasing bank holidays and so on.

The contrast between the ethos of the Thatcher-Major governments and the Blair administration is quite pointed. In the 1980s, market discipline and profit maximisation were the dominant motifs, leading to efficiency at work, while public order was a subordinate goal. At the end of the 1990s the order of priorities appears to be reversed. Our current administration is much more concerned with public order, seeing 'social exclusion' as something to be avoided at all costs. Woudhuysen does well to alight on the remark from the prime minister that sport is about 'keeping young people engaged and out of trouble'. The growing importance of play indicates the contemporary form of the historic problem of market economies: how to engage the subjectivity of the population – this time, outside productive work.

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