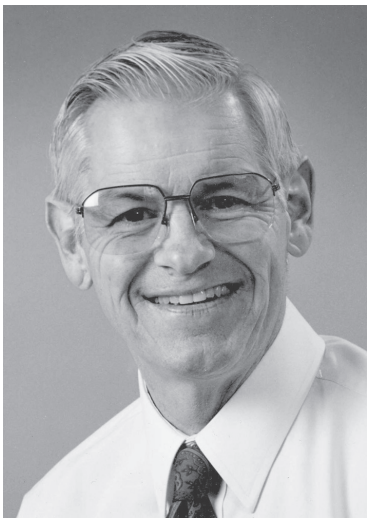
Leisure Reflections

Leisure Reflections … No. 1

Choice and Experiential Definitions of Leisure

Robert A. Stebbins



Professor Robert A. Stebbins pioneered the ideas of "serious leisure," "casual leisure," and "optimal leisure lifestyle" and has spent 30 years studying all three. He is currently Faculty Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. Author of 26 books and monographs in several areas of social science, his most important works bearing on these three ideas include: *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); *After Work: The Search for an Optimal Leisure Lifestyle* (Detselig, 1998); *The Urban Francophone Volunteer: Searching for Personal Meaning and Community Growth in a Linguistic Minority* (University of Washington, Canadian Studies Centre, 1998); and *New Directions in the Theory and Research of Serious Leisure* (Edwin Mellen, 2001). He is presently conducting a study of leisure activities: *Rocky Mountain hobbyists in kayaking, snowboarding, and mountain climbing* (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada), and working on a grant proposal for research on grassroots associations in the lives of their amateur, hobbyist, and volunteer members and participants. Stebbins is currently awaiting release of a book in the latter area entitled *The Organizational Basis of Leisure Participation: A Motivational Exploration* (Venture, 2002). He was elected Fellow of the Academy of Leisure Sciences in 1996 and, in 1999, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; and has been a member of LSA since 1995.

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'Choice' and 'freely chosen,' those once sacrosanct, *de rigueur* elements in standard definitions of leisure as experience (Kelly, 1990: p. 21), have lately come in for some bad press. Juniu and Henderson (2001: p. 8), for instance, say that such terms cannot be empirically supported, since people lack significant choice because 'leisure activities are socially structured and shaped by the inequalities of society.' True, experiential definitions of leisure published in recent decades, when they do contain reference to choice, tend to refer to perceived, rather than objective, freedom to choose. The definers recognize thus that various conditions, many of them unperceived by leisure participants and unspecified by definers, nevertheless constrain choice of leisure activities for the first. Juniu and Henderson argue that these conditions are highly influential, however, and that defining leisure even as perceived choice tends to underplay, if not overlook, their true effect.

One logical outcome of their position would be to toss the idea of perceived choice onto the scrap heap of outmoded scientific ideas, thereby sparing ourselves its indirect dismissal of inequality (Juniu and Henderson do not carry their argument this far). But as Rojek (2000: p. 169) observes: to throw out all considerations of choice is tantamount to throwing out human agency. Without the capacity and the right to choose leisure activities, people acting in this realm of life would be reduced to mere structural and cultural automatons.

It is clear, however, that beyond its definitions of experiential leisure, the field of leisure studies recognizes in several ways that individual choice is anything but unfettered. For instance an ever-growing literature describes a great range of leisure constraints, one effect of which is to dampen all enthusiasm for the assumption that leisure entails unqualified free choice. Further, culturally rooted preferences for certain leisure activities, acquired through primary and secondary socialization, steer so-called choice in subtle directions, often unbeknownst to the individual. Then there is boredom in leisure (subject of the LSA Newsletter March 2003 edition of 'Leisure Reflections'). It springs from having nothing

interesting to do, from having woefully little choice among leisure activities.

So the time has come, I believe, to declare that words like 'choice' and 'freely chosen' have indeed outlived their utility as quintessential definers of leisure. They are hedged about with too many qualifications to serve in that capacity. Here is a sample of such qualifications:
When, as scientists, we speak of leisure choice, we must

- further explain that what participants find appealing stems from socialization, from what they learned through friends, family, culture, and the like;
- expand on the question of who has what rights to what kind of leisure, doing this along such lines as gender, tradition, ethnicity, social class, and social inequality;
- expand on the question of ability and aptitude along such lines as age, disability, and mental capacity;
- expand on the question of known alternatives and the role of leisure education in broadening and describing lists of them; and
- expand on the question of accessibility of alternatives along such lines as temporal, spatial, and socioeconomic constraints affecting it.

When "choice" appears in a definition of leisure, there is now an intellectual obligation to qualify the idea with such statements. Too much has been written about them for us to plead ignorance. Yet, what an inelegant, complicated, confusing definition it would be were we to try to honor this obligation. Furthermore, stating, as some writers do, that leisure is based on perceived choice, tends to steer attention away from the considerations just mentioned — an invitation to misperceive the true nature of leisure.

But there is a way out of this impasse: carrying on without mentioning in definitions of leisure the likes of 'choice' and 'freely chosen, while still preserving human agency in the pursuit of leisure. For it appears, to paraphrase Marx's observation on history, that "men make their own . . . [leisure], but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1977: p. 300). So would it not be more valid to define experiential leisure by describing it as uncoerced behavior, rather than chosen activity?

Behavior is uncoerced when people make their own leisure. Uncoerced, they feel they are doing something they are not pushed to do, something they are not disagreeably obliged to do. Emphasis is on the acting individual, which retains in the formula human agency. This is in no way denies that there may be things people want to do but cannot do because of numerous limitations on choice such as those just mentioned (people do not make leisure just as they please or under circumstances chosen themselves). And having now buried free choice as a defining property of leisure, it is the time to note that what is left — limited choice — is not a distinctive quality of leisure. Limited choice is also a condition of work and of the many obligations encountered outside it. Marx argued that it applied to all of history. For this reason it has no place in a definition of leisure. In other words, after having presented our experiential definition of leisure, we must be sure to frame it in structural, cultural, and historical context. Here is the appropriate place for discussing choice and its limitations.

Lack of coercion to engage in an activity is a quintessential property of leisure. No other sphere of human activity can be exclusively characterized by this property. Having said this, I should nevertheless point out that some forms of work (e.g., some of the professions) are so profoundly satisfying that they approach this ideal.

But what about the idea of 'voluntary action?' Could it not serve in the experiential definitions in lieu of choice? Bosserman and Gagan (1972: p. 115) and David Horton Smith (1975: p. 148), for example, argued that, at the level of the individual, all leisure activity is voluntary action. My preference is still for 'uncoerced,' however, since it underscores that leisure participants are not somehow forced to do what they do, whereas "voluntary" flirts with freedom to choose in that action to do something springs unchained from individual will. Rojek (2000: p. 169) observes that "a … problem with voluntaristic approaches to leisure remains. That is, they have a tendency to overstate individual freedom."

Where does obligation fit in all this? I mentioned earlier that uncoerced participants in leisure do something they want to do, something they are not disagreeably obliged to do. People are obligated when they do or refrain from doing something because they feel bound in this regard by promise, convention, or circumstances (Stebbins, 2000). But is this not coercion by another name? No, for obligation is not necessarily unpleasant. For example, the leading lady is obligated to go to the theater during the weekend to perform in an amateur play, but does so with great enthusiasm rooted in her passion for drama as leisure activity. By contrast, her obligation to turn up at work the following Monday morning after the high satisfaction of the leisure weekend comes as a letdown. Indeed,

though she could refuse to honor both obligations, for no one would likely to force her to do so, such refusal is inconceivable, since it would very probably result in some unpleasant costs (e.g., a fine for missing work, a rebuke by the director for being absent). Another example might center on people, among them a fair range of professionals, for whom their occupation is as much a passion as acting is for the actress and for whom going to work each Monday, however obligatory, is viewed as highly desirable.

We are dealing here with *agreeable obligation*, an attitude and form of behavior that is very much part of leisure. It is part of leisure because such obligation accompanies positive attachment to an activity and because it is associated with pleasant memories and expectations. It might be argued that agreeable obligation in leisure is not really felt as obligation, since the participant wants to do the activity anyway. Still, my research in serious leisure suggests a far more complicated picture. My respondents knew they were supposed to be at a certain place or do a certain thing, and they had to make this a priority in their daily lives. They not only wanted to do this, they were also required to do it; other demands and activities could wait. At times, the participant's intimates objected to the way this person prioritized everyday commitments, leading thus to friction and creating costs that somewhat attenuated the rewards of the leisure in question.

Despite this dark side of agreeable obligation, it nevertheless figures in a number of leisure activities, sometimes sporadically, sometimes routinely. The particular nature and pattern of routine agreeable obligation will, of course, vary from activity to activity. Thus ethnographic examination of particular leisure activities should include examination of the nature and scope of agreeable obligation found there, considering its disagreeable counterpart only when trying to explain why some people abandon activities no longer experienced as leisure.

If choice and allied terms have no further place in experiential definitions of leisure, they are not, for all that, obsolete as leisure studies concepts. People do choose what leisure to engage in, doing so from accessible alternatives as they see them, pitifully few though they may be at times for some. This suggests that choice should be used, not as a definer, but as a sensitizing concept in scientific inquiry (Blumer, 1969, pp. 146–152). It alerts researchers to the fact that people do choose free-time activities and encourages those same researchers first to learn what these choices are and then to describe how people are constrained in making them.

Choice should also be a main tool in the work kit of leisure educators. Although no one has universal choice of leisure activities, many people have a greater range to choose from than they realize. One of the principle goals of leisure education is to inform students (adult, adolescent, and child) of the range of activities available to them as well as, of course, the nature of those activities and the costs and rewards participants can expect to find in pursuing them.

To the extent the ideas just presented win acceptance in leisure studies, terms like choice and freely-chosen will disappear from the experiential definitions of leisure. But as sensitizing concepts for research and directives for leisure education, they are anything but passé. People do make leisure choices, and it is for leisure studies to both study this choice making and provide information on realistically available options.

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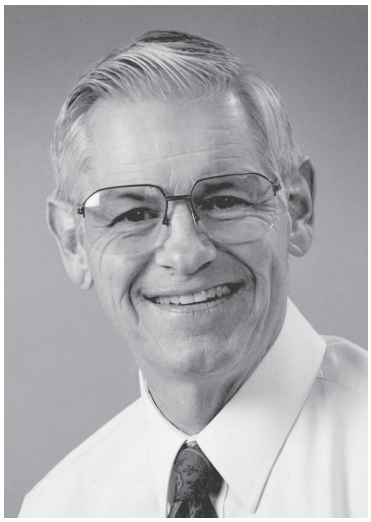
Forthcoming in LSA Newsletter No. 64 (March 2003): Robert Stebbins's 'Leisure Reflections No. 2', on 'boredom in leisure'

Leisure Reflections

Robert A. Stebbins



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Leisure Reflections … No. 2

Boredom in Free Time

Barbalet (1999) observes that boredom springs from a person's perception of the meaninglessness of a situation or activity. Boredom, he says, 'is a restless, irritable feeling that the subject's current activity or situation holds no appeal, and that there is a need to get on with something interesting' (p. 631). It is an emotional state of mind rooted in acute lack of significance for the bored individual of objects, activities, or the situation itself, as understood within his system of values and the larger culture. Looking at it from a somewhat different angle, Brissett and Snow (1993) argue that boredom is born of lack of momentum or lack of psychological involvement in the events at hand. In any case, meaninglessness and absence of momentum experienced as boredom are, for many people, strong motivators to find meaning, even if, in some instances, the meaning found involves risk, deviance, conflict, and the like.

Clearly, boredom does not spring exclusively from inactivity ('nothing to do'); it can also arise from activity which, alas, is uninteresting, unstimulating. And, as might be expected, such activity may be obligatory, whether it is work or required activity outside work, as found in many unskilled jobs and certain domestic necessities such as, for many people, washing dishes and preparing routine meals. Boredom, then, is hardly a feature of life unique to its free time side.

Still, boredom has not gone unnoticed in leisure studies, youth studies, or research on mental health problems, particularly those of adolescents (for a review of this literature see Patterson, Pegg, and Dobson-Patterson, 2000, pp. 54-59). Nor should it, given Schopenhauer's observation that 'the most general survey shows us that the two foes of human happiness are pain and boredom'. As Tess Kay (1990, p. 415) notes, boredom, lethargy, and depression are commonly the lot of the unemployed, whatever their age. Concern in the present article is not with this research, however, but rather with the broader conceptual issue of the nature of free time and the place of boredom within it.

For one, since boredom is a decidedly negative state of mind, it can be argued that, logically, it is not leisure at all. For leisure is typically conceived of as a positive mind set, including among other elements, pleasant expectations and recollections of activities and situations. Of course, it happens at times that

expectations turn out to be unrealistic, and we get bored (or perhaps angry, frightened, or embarrassed) with the activity in question, transforming it in our view into something quite other than leisure.

Still, boredom (anger, fright, embarrassment) may occur in free time, indicating that free time occupies a broader area of life than leisure, which is nested within. Moreover, it follows that careful usage of the terms 'free time' and 'leisure' should reflect this relationship between the two. After all, few recreational specialists would want to spread the gospel that it is important to have free time, when such time includes the possibility of becoming bored. Better we should be arguing, more precisely, for finding time for leisure.

This is not to argue, however, that the study of boredom in free time has no place in leisure studies. Quite the contrary. Leisure studies must also pay attention to its boundaries, to activities that approach being leisure even though they are not. By doing so we come to understand better the essence of leisure itself as well as the conditions for its emergence and change. For instance, as we shall see shortly, leisure studies research shows boredom is related to deviant leisure, as when bored youth (the group most commonly examined) seek stimulation in drugs and alcohol or criminal thrills like gang fighting, illegal gambling, and joy riding in stolen cars. Concern here has been with the antecedents of such deviance, where some of them, it turns out, lie well beyond the sphere of leisure itself in the broader domain of free time. Indeed, some of those antecedents even operate outside free time in the world of obligations, exemplified by the lamentable situation of being bored at school.

Nevertheless what is considered boring is a matter of personal interpretation. For instance, Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1987) hypothesized that, for some youth, leisure can become tedious, in part because they lack both personal leisure skills and sufficient leisure opportunities. In response to this predicament, these youth seek excitement in delinquency or illicit drugs, if not both. In a subsequent study designed to test this hypothesis, Iso-Ahola and Crowley (1991) found that leisure boredom is associated with drug abuse, although the causal relationship between these two variables still remains to be established.

Surprisingly, however, the bored adolescent drug abusers they examined turned out to be more active than the control group of non-abusers, since the former were involved in such sports as football, baseball, gymnastics, skateboarding, and roller-skating. That the drug abusers were still bored, even while participating in active serious leisure lifestyles, led the authors to suggest ways for therapists to discourage further recreational drug use. They could accomplish this by providing abusers 'with copious opportunities to experience [non-deviant] leisure activities that potentially meet the same needs that were formerly met through substance abuse' (Iso-Ahola and Crowley, 1991, p. 269). The authors neglected to identify these leisure activities, though they did cite research indicating that substance abusers are more likely than non-abusers to seek thrilling and adventurous pursuits, while showing little taste for repetitious and constant experiences. In other words, these youth were looking for leisure that could give them optimal arousal, that was at the same time a regular activity — not a sporadic one like bungee jumping or roller coaster riding — but that did not, however, require long periods of monotonous preparation. Such preparation is necessary to become a good football player or skateboarder.

To the extent that wayward youth have little or no interest in repetitious and constant experiences, we must ask, then, what kind of leisure will alleviate their boredom? Some forms of casual leisure, if accessible for them, can accomplish this, but only momentarily. Such leisure is by definition fleeting. As for serious leisure activities all do require a significant level of perseverance, but not all require repetitious preparation of the kind needed to learn a musical instrument or train for a sport (Stebbins, in press). For example, none of the volunteer activities and liberal arts hobbies calls for this. The same can be said for amateur science, hobbyist collecting, various games, and many activity participation fields. Spelunking, orienteering, and some kinds of sports volunteering exemplify non-repetitive serious leisure that is both exciting and, with the first two, adventurous.

Boredom, as noted earlier, results in part from the subject's view that there little of interest to do, little to choose from. This situation certainly squares with the argument made in the previous edition of 'Leisure Reflections' (Stebbins, 2002) that choice cannot serve as a defining condition of leisure. But at the same time being bored during free time is not, it seems to me, a product of coercion. The problem is rather more one of lack of known and accessible activities that constitute true leisure, than one of being forced into inactivity or to do something boring. Being coerced suggests to the coerced person that no palatable escape from his condition exists; he must work since money for necessities can come from nowhere else, he must give the thief his money or risk getting shot. With boring activities, however, palatable alternatives do exist, some of which are deviant, as we have just seen, some of which are not.

Those that are not must nevertheless be brought to light, which is a central goal of leisure education. But

what would leisure educators (including leisure counselors and leisure volunteers) teach to the chronically bored? In general they should focus not on casual leisure but on serious leisure, giving attention to two programs. The first aims to educate or train the chronically bored to find satisfaction in an amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteer activity. This kind of education involves informing them in detail, first, about one or more of the activities which appeal to them and, then, about ways to get started in those activities.

The second program of serious leisure education consists of instruction of a more general nature: informing the chronically bored about serious leisure as a kind of activity distinct from casual leisure. Since those who suffer from too much ennui and the general public are both largely unaware of the concept of serious leisure, the first educational goal here must be to inform everyone about its nature and value. Both programs could be incorporated in high school curricula, for example, thus targeting youth a substantial proportion of which is these days chronically bored.

For all the meaninglessness and superficiality of free time boredom, it is not, when widely shared, an insignificant feature of community life. Thus we just noted that boredom among youth was related to certain forms of deviance, such as juvenile delinquency and drug and alcohol use, and to thrill-seeking activities like bungee jumping and high-risk sport (see also Caldwell and Smith, 1995). And it has been said occasionally that leisure might be a fruitful way to divert non-deviant youth from deviant interests and persuade wayward youth to abandon such interests. In nearly every instance, however, the leisure in question is a sport of some kind. In this regard, Schafer (1969) hypothesized that involvement in sport tends to deter involvement in juvenile delinquency. Later, more controlled research by Segrave and Hastad (1984), for example, suggested that, in general, athletes were indeed less likely than non-athletes to engage in delinquent behavior.

Comments so far have centered primarily on individuals and their feelings of boredom. Still, this emotional state can also have far-reaching social consequences. Cohen-Gewerc (in press) argues that boredom can become a gateway for creative leisure. Individually, it can stimulate people to discover their inner selves, and thereby emancipate themselves from boring tasks and roles. Collectively, widespread boredom in a given group or population can spawn significant social change. William Ralph Inge, twentieth century British churchman, wrote that 'the effect of boredom on a large scale in history is underestimated. It is a main cause of revolutions, and would soon bring to an end all the static Utopias and the farmyard civilization of the Fabians'. It is not just that people dislike being bored, but also that they sometimes get angry with their condition and seek to shape the world such that they can escape it (and perhaps punish those felt to have caused it). In this regard we might ask how many of today's rebels, terrorists, and religious zealots have found everyday life excruciatingly boring and now seek stimulation in extreme causes. Even if their cause fails, the actions taken in trying to promote it leave lasting changes, evident in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 suicide assault on the World Trade Center in New York.

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Leisure Reflections

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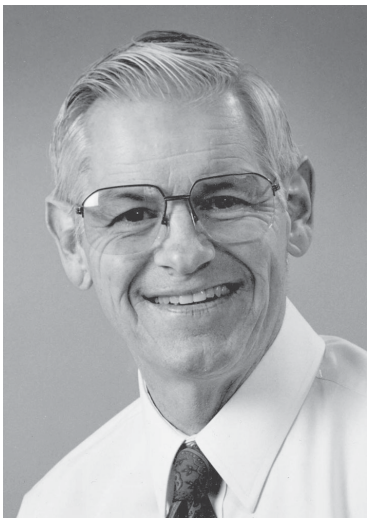

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Leisure Reflections … No. 3

Leisure and Citizen Participation: A Salutary Reciprocity

"Citizen participation," an old idea that seemed at one point in time to have had its day, has sprung to life again in the past 40 years or so, and is now enjoying renewed popularity, possibly in even greater intensity than in the past. Today, it has become one of a handful of warm and fuzzy concepts that, because they share several qualities, are commonly treated of together, among them community, volunteering, and democracy. Historically, in the eyes of such thinkers as John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Thomas Jefferson, citizen participation was a key process by which participatory democracy was created and sustained. Engaged citizens, typically at the local community level, were (and still are) seen as an essential element for an effectively functioning democratic society.

I think that we in leisure studies tend to overlook the fact that many kinds of leisure are, among other things, instances of citizen participation and, especially in the twenty-first century, that they, as such, make a singular and important contribution to community life. My goal in this edition of "Leisure Reflections" is to show how these two go together and why it is important that our political representatives and we, as leisure studies specialists, not lose sight of their salutary reciprocity. My argument is two-fold: first that, in satisfying their desire for leisure, many people are drawn to citizen participation; and, second, that the fulfillment and enjoyment they find there in mingling with other members of the community motivates (Stebbins, 2002) many of those same people to continue with their participatory activities.

In the foregoing conception citizen participation has a decidedly political hue to it. It is conceived of as a mechanism for enhancing the democratic workings of the state. This conception, which is much in vogue today, is not, however, the only one. For citizen participation can also mean, in a larger sense of the word, individual participation by any member (i.e., citizen) of the community in any local, collective, uncoerced action. The implication in this broader sense is that such participation helps in some significant way sustain the community of which the participant is a member. This way may be political (e.g., working for a political party, working to change a local bylaw), or it may be nonpolitical (e.g., volunteering for a local charity, coaching a youth sports team). The fact is that both *political* citizen participation and *community* citizen participation help sustain the local community, primarily by getting its members, or citizens, as friends, neighbors, relatives, and workmates to associate with one another along the lines of all manner of shared interests. A community is, among other things, a large social group in which members interact with one another (even if all

members lack contact with all other members), such that this group develops a distinctive identity, and by dint of such participation, continues to flourish as a collectivity.

Furthermore, the tendency among those who write about citizen participation is to think of it as volunteerism or an equivalent (e.g., Locke, Sampson, and Shepherd, 2001), and certainly the latter is a main expression of the former. Moreover, many of these writers take the view that volunteering is unpaid labor. This commonly-held perspective nevertheless ignores the leisure basis of volunteering and citizen participation, whether political or community. Thus Putnam (2000) argues that successful democracy rests substantially on the presence in local communities of *social capital*. Social capital is created from ties among individuals based on inter-human connections through mutual trustworthiness, social networks, and norms of reciprocity. Community members can create social capital in various ways, by no means all of which are volunteerism or have direct political implications, but which nevertheless help ensure the functioning of democracy, in particular, and community life, in general. "Social capital, the evidence increasingly suggests, strengthens our better, more expansive selves. The performance of our democratic institutions depends in measurable ways upon social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 349).

Even though Putnam devotes much more space to discussing forms of social capital directly related to the political, be they informal networks or formal associations, he notes, almost in passing, the role played in this sphere by leisure groups organized around interests that are anything but political:

> Where people know one another, interact with one another each week at choir practice or sports matches and trust one another to behave honorably, they have a model and a moral foundation upon which to base further cooperative enterprises. Light-touch government works more efficiently in the presence of social capital. (Putnam, 2000, p. 346)

In other words, the goal of bringing people together to create and enhance democracy, government legitimacy, and general community functioning can be accomplished through many forms of social leisure, of which political volunteering is but one kind. Leisure, when it brings us in contact with other people, can be conceived of as community citizen participation or more specifically, if it has a political tone, as political citizen participation.

What leisure constitutes citizen participation?

Clearly, to be citizen participation, leisure must be collective in some fashion; the reclusive hobbies, for example, do not qualify. Furthermore, I do not believe a case exists for privileging either serious or casual leisure as the main way of creating social capital for community citizen participation. What is important is that people come together long enough to learn about one another, learn to trust one another (where experience warrants), and become willing to continue their association. True, many forms of serious leisure encourage sustained contact that fosters such learning, as seen in routine participation in many volunteer roles, hobbyist clubs, and arts and sports groups. Yet, casual leisure in the form of regular sessions of sociable conversation among friends or relatives (e.g., in the *kaffeeklatsch*, the gang at the pub, the weekly family gathering) perhaps joined with other casual leisure activities can certainly generate significant social capital as well.

Note, too, that project leisure can also be a source of social capital, though social capital here is of more limited scope than that found in casual or serious leisure. *Project leisure* is a short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time (Stebbins, 2003). It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes, skill or knowledge, but is for all that neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such. Examples include mounting a surprise birthday party, undertaking elaborate preparations for a major holiday, and volunteering for a major sports event. Though only a rudimentary social world springs up around the project, significant social capital is still generated. Thus the project in its own particular way brings together friends, neighbors, or relatives (e.g., through a genealogical project or Christmas celebrations), or draws the individual participant into an organizational milieu (e.g., through volunteering for a sports event).

This further suggests that project leisure often has, in at least two ways, great potential for building community. One, it can bring into contact people who otherwise have no reason to meet, or at least meet frequently. Two, by way of event volunteering and other collective altruistic activity, it can contribute to successful execution of community events and projects. Project leisure is not, however, civil labor, which is more enduring and must for this reason, among others, be classified exclusively as serious leisure (Rojek, 2002).

Speaking of civil labor it, too, is evidently a kind of citizen participation, even if current writing on the matter tends to picture it as a strictly volunteer activity. And just how does civil labor articulate with leisure and citizen participation? Applebaum (1992, p. 587) writes that "with increases in the standard of living, consumerism, and leisure activities, the work ethic must compete with the ethic of the quality of life based on the release from work." And as the work ethic in the twenty-first century withers further, hammered unceasingly by widespread decline in both quality and quantity of work opportunities (e.g., Rifkin, 1992; Aronowitz and DiFazio, 1994), leisure is slowly, but inexorably it appears, coming to the fore. In other words leisure has, since the middle nineteenth century, been evolving into a substantial institution in its own right. At first leisure was but a poor and underdeveloped part of Western society, standing in pitiful contrast next to its robust counterpart of work.

But now the twin ideas that work is inherently good and that, when it can be found, people should do it (instead of leisure) are being increasingly challenged. Beck (2000, p. 125) glimpses the near future as a time when there will still be work to be done, but with a significant portion of it being done for no pay:

> The counter-model to the work society is based not upon leisure but upon political freedom; it is a multi-activity society in which housework, family work, club work and voluntary work are prized alongside paid work and returned to the center of public and academic attention. For in the end, these other forms remained trapped inside a value imperialism of work, which must be shaken off.

Beck calls this work without pay "civil labor." Some of it, however, especially club work and voluntary work, is also leisure. Indeed it is serious leisure, since such "work" is often precisely what the amateur, hobbyist, or skilled and knowledgeable volunteer does.

Using as backdrop predictions about the future of work sketched out in the preceding paragraph, Reid (1995) argues that leisure can no longer be viewed solely as idle, casual, frivolous, and self-indulgent. Rather, some of it must be viewed quite differently, as purposeful, or more precisely, as activity leading to both individual and community development. These two together, he says, compose the foundation of "participative" citizenship, wherein citizens contribute in positive ways to the functioning of their community. Reid sees serious leisure as the kind of activity that will form the central part of this foundation:

Much of work today is only useful in that it provides a means to a livelihood. New forms of individual and community contribution will become possible once the market is no longer the only mechanism for judging contribution. Many activities which are now done a voluntary basis could be enhanced so that the community and those in need benefit. To do so requires new forms of social organization which place greater worth on those services. This is the essence of Stebbins's notion of serious leisure (Reid, 1995, pp. 112-113).

Indeed, contributing to the success of a collective project and to the maintenance and development of the group (in this instance the community) are two possible rewards of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2001, p. 13). Reid goes on to note that the need for new social organization is an especially important legacy of the Post-Materialist society in which we presently live.

The central role of serious leisure in participative citizenship has been recognized, not only in principle by Reid, and somewhat earlier by Parker (1994), but also, in more detail, by me (Stebbins, 2000, pp. 24-28) and by Mason-Mullet (1996). The latter discusses a number of career volunteer projects, which over the years, have led to community development, projects that she regards as leisure. Additionally, Arai and Pedlar (1997) found in their study of citizen participation in planning for healthy communities that such activity produces several profound benefits for the volunteers. For this reason they must be seen as pursuing serious leisure.

In sum, collectively based serious, casual, and project leisure can all generate social capital and, as such, constitute citizen participation. They do so in different ways, however, as attests Rojek's observation that only serious leisure qualifies as civil labor.

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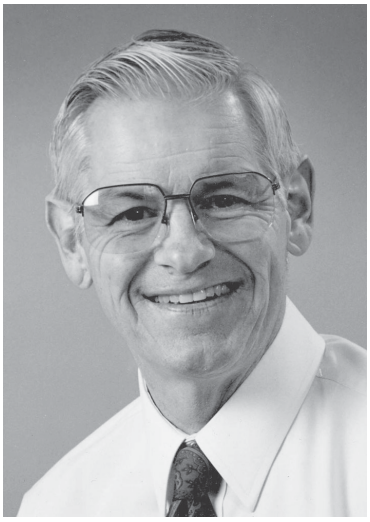
Leisure Reflections

Robert A. Stebbins



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THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCEPTS IN LEISURE STUDIES

In the social sciences the word 'concept' refers to a class of acts, thoughts, activities, processes, or structures that we scholars have learned have enough in common to warrant treating under a single name. That is, a concept is, at bottom, a generalized idea about an aspect of the empirical world, and as Kaplan (1964, p. 78) observed, one subject to continual revision until perfected, usually late in the development of the field in question. In other words concepts are essentially hypotheses that will become invalid, should they fail to fit in some critical way the empirical reality it is claimed they represent.

Early in the development of a science, when largely in its descriptive phase, most of its concepts are low-order labels for fundamental classes of the phenomena on which the science is centered. Later, as the science matures, more abstract ideas about those phenomena emerge, often achieved by tying lower-order classes to one another. In either form, concepts constitute the very heart of the science and of any theory constructed in its name. Thus, as Matthew Arnold said of ideas (concepts), they 'cannot be too much prized in and for themselves, cannot be too much lived with'. In a science its concepts drive research, steering inquiry according to the meaning of each.

There is a certain amount of evidence in leisure studies and other social science disciplines that we who work there respect Arnold's evaluation. For example, a number of books designed for classroom use have recently come on the market purporting to treat of the key, or core, concepts of a particular field of study. Further the practice of listing the 'key words' contained in journal articles has become a valuable indicator of what is written there, while being easily disseminated over the Internet for word-search purposes. And concepts figure conspicuously in scholarly publications, often as centres for analysis or means for organizing the work as by chapter or section.

Raymond Williams (1976, p. 13) wrote that 'key words' — our term for concepts — cluster in sets to become a 'vocabulary'. This body of words is shared among colleagues, constituting an in-group language for general discussion there. But it is the point made by

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'**Non-Western Leisure: How to Study It**'

Barney Glaser that most stimulated me to write this article. He said, in discussing what to put into expositions of grounded theory, 'The most important thing to remember is to *write about concepts not people* [italics in original]. . . . The power of theory resides in concepts, not description' (Glaser, 1978, p. 134).

Glaser advised thus because he saw too many exploratory researchers losing sight of the chief mission of science — to generate theory, which is built from concepts — instead spending valuable time and space quoting interviewees. Too much quoted material of this sort, which is highly idiographic, occludes the nomothetic generalizations and component concepts that from time to time are supposed to emerge from it. This likely happens, as well, in exploratory research on leisure, though my concern for leisure studies is broader than this. It is that leisure studies might be an under-conceptualized discipline. After all, especially in North America, it began as a practically-oriented, problem-centred discipline, where direct action was more prized than abstract ideas. A field bereft of concepts would also be short on theory uniquely bearing its stamp.

One way to conceptually portray a scholarly field is to work from the old research formula of the five Ws: who, what, whom, when, and where. I dredged up this formula (acquired somewhere during my 40-year scholarly career) to indicate in a general way what exploratory researchers in the social sciences should be looking for as they go about their discovery work. (I consider, as data generating devices, the five in Stebbins, 2001, p. 23. See also Denzin, 1970, pp. 269-284.) In exploration the researcher wants to learn *who* is doing (thinking, feeling) *what* to (with, for, about), *whom* and *when* and *where*. Open-ended procedures generate data on these five questions, data that, in turn, become the basis for generalizations in the form of concepts and their interrelationship in propositions. What the old formula neglected and, consequently, I neglected in the little book on exploration, and will now correct, is that there is also a most important additional question: *how*? How do the people being observed do *what* they do? This is not so much a conceptual interest, however, as a descriptive one. The answer to this question gives the descriptive, ethnographic, underlay on which the explorer constructs more abstract grounded theory revolving around the five Ws and I now add a sixth. That is there is also the theoretical question of *why*. Answering it does not steer data collection, but it does greatly aid data interpretation. Accordingly this article revolves around six Ws.

Concepts in Leisure Studies

It seems to me that the sum of the concepts generated from answering the six Ws actually forms the conceptual foundation of any social science field, once of course, the question of how has been answered. Let us try out this claim on leisure studies in an effort to determine its conceptual base. I will, in doing this, limit discussion to concepts primarily oriented to leisure.

First, which of our concepts speak to the question of who? The most obvious answer is the person who is taking leisure: leisure man, *homo otiosus*. From the standpoint of all of humankind and its social sciences, leisure studies is unique for its broadest focus, which is on this type of person. But, more narrowly, there are many other 'whos', including the leisure service provider, the manager of leisure services, and the leisure educator (counselor). There are also the amateurs, hobbyists, and volunteers. These types add further to the distinctiveness of the field, while being more precise about who is found there. There is also a burgeoning literature on, for example, gays and lesbians and people with handicaps as they act as particular types of leisure individuals, though these concepts are shared with several other disciplines. It is likewise for leisure deviants.

How have we conceptualized what do these people do? *Homo otiosus* pursues leisure activities and leisure experiences, two widely-discussed concepts in leisure studies. But most fundamentally *homo otiosus* pursues leisure or recreation, if not both, two concepts whose definitions have, over the years, engaged many a scholar. Concern with leisure meaning, a closely related concept, has also occupied for at least as many years no small amount of attention. Both the activities and the experiences can be further conceptually analyzed as serious, casual, or project-based leisure, with several subtypes flowing from each of these three. Play, and to a lesser extent relaxation, two subtypes of casual leisure, have themselves been the subject of discussion. Recreational specialization, which refers to a narrowing of focus of certain free-time activities, is properly placed under this rubric. Deviant leisure is also part of this conceptual cluster, as is 'purposive leisure' (Shaw and Dawson, 2001).

The concepts clustering around the question of 'whom' organize much of leisure studies thought.

Although variously identified, the leisure client is a main type in the fields of leisure service and leisure education. From another angle, people seek leisure either for their own benefit or, in the case of volunteering, for the benefit of self *and* others. The relevant concepts here are 'self-interested leisure participant' and 'altruistic leisure participant', which are not, however, widely discussed as such in the literature. By contrast, *with* whom people pursue their leisure is rich in concepts that are widely treated of, although these concepts are shared with many other disciplines. Thus we study family leisure, gay-lesbian leisure, adolescent leisure, leisure among the elderly, all-male and all-female leisure, and so on. The concept of leisure social network also helps answer the question dealing with whom people spend their free time.

The question of whom also encompasses the broad idea of leisure group, which is not, alas, part of the leisure studies vocabulary. True, some types of leisure groups have nonetheless been systematically considered, most notably the family and the adolescent friendship group. But a huge range of grassroots associations (Smith, 2000) has been, as such, largely overlooked conceptually in leisure studies (though not in nonprofit sector studies). So has dyadic, triadic and other informal small group leisure been neglected as such. Collective phenomena such as the 'tribe' (Maffesoli, 1993), and the social movement, both of which help explain who pursues certain kinds of leisure with whom have likewise been largely overlooked (Stebbins, 2002). Some working in leisure studies do recognize nevertheless the concept of 'social world', another collective phenomenon that is, however, by no means an exclusively leisure studies term (see Unruh, 1979; 1980).

When people pursue their leisure has been an important question for leisure studies, largely considered under the concepts of time and time use. These two are closely identified with the field of leisure studies. The same may be said for the concept of lifestyle, so long as we qualify it as leisure lifestyle. Leisure lifestyle relates to patterns of leisure behavior enacted during the typical day, week, month, and year. Optimal leisure lifestyle refers to a personally defined agreeable balance of time in and quality of serious and casual leisure activities. The concepts of life-cycle and life-course relate to the question of when we pursue, over the years, which forms of leisure. The concept of leisure constraint falls, in part, under this heading, since people may be blocked by non-leisure time commitments from pursuing the leisure they desire. Still leisure constraint applies as well to whom people pursue their leisure with as well as where they do this and what leisure they engage in. The concept of constraint is evidently one of leisure studies' broadest ideas. Finally, the concept of obligation (Stebbins, 2000) bears on when people pursue their leisure. Leisure obligations (always agreeable) are part of this calculus. Work and non-work obligations (both possibly disagreeable) make up other parts of it.

Where do people engage in leisure? The concept of home leisure helps answer this question. Concern for leisure activities pursued in parks and recreational areas and centres also conceptualizes the *where* question. Theme park and amusement parks can also be added to this list, as can the various venues for viewing sport (stadia, arenas, stands) and staged artistic performances (halls, auditoria, theaters, cinemas, night clubs). Some people frequent zoos and museums in search of leisure. Tourism, as a leisure concept, addresses the where question, and this includes such sub-concepts as types of sites for volunteer tourism, cultural tourism, mass tourism, sex tourism, and the like. The question of where looms large in discussions of deviant leisure, since it must be clandestinely pursued. Yet, conceptual terminology here is borrowed from the sociology of deviance, as in brothel, gay bar, stripper stage, nudist resort, cult church, and Internet pornography website. Moreover some leisure is pursued, say, annually at fairs and festivals. Finally, there is a range of concepts for places of informal leisure, notably bars, pubs, casinos, restaurants, trendy shopping districts, games parlours, scenic areas, and drop-in and social centres.

Last but hardly least is the question of *why*. This is the home of leisure theory (bundled concepts linked by propositions), itself made up of many of the aforementioned concepts. Explanations of leisure motivation help answer the question of why, as do constraints theory and the serious/casual/project-based leisure perspective. Moreover theories about gender differences in leisure interests form part of the answer to this question and so do those about access and exclusion to leisure opportunities. The approach based on the concept of feminism looks at the woman's unique experience of leisure and the special problems she faces trying to engage in it. Recreational specialization, mentioned earlier, helps explain why people specialize in their pursuit of a certain kind of complex leisure. Discussions of the concept of leisure meaning can also be classified as part of the why question. Furthermore, the idea of leisure choice should be included here, in that it helps explain the questions of whom (with, for), what, when, and where.

Conclusion

This review has turned up a wide variety of concepts in leisure studies, and yet, by no means all were included in the sample examined in this article. By my reckoning, slightly over half are substantially or exclusively

associated with this discipline, with the rest being imports developed and applied one or more other fields as well. My conclusion, then, is that leisure studies does have a distinctive conceptual core. It has also borrowed from other disciplines, but with a hybrid discipline, that is as it should be. And, while such borrowing is likely to continue, the core of predominantly leisure concepts will also grow, signaling an admirable level of conceptual maturity in this field.

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News from ILAM

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Welcome to the eighth instalment of News from ILAM

This is certainly the shortest and possibly the last edition of this column – shortest because there is little to report and last because as the new professional body for leisure emerges it seems probable that ILAM will lose its identity as an autonomous organisation.

What can be reported is that talks are in progress to determine how the new organisation will be constituted and how the metamorphosis of ILAM, the ISRM and the NASD into this body is to be brought about.

A joint statement issued in late April confirmed that the new body would have a cross-sectoral interest and a primary focus on sport, physical activity, leisure, play, parks and open space and fitness. After months of talks about talks the three organisations are also beginning to come together at a regional level; here in the North West the spring ILAM Regional Council meeting has been re-scheduled to include members of the other organisations.

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Leisure Reflections

Robert A. Stebbins

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NON-WESTERN LEISURE: HOW TO STUDY IT

A former graduate student of mine, who was soon to start fieldwork on sport and leisure among youth in one of the African states, suddenly began to question whether leisure, as we know it and write about it in the West, existed in the Third World. He had been reading the leisure studies literature, including some of my own writings, and was aware, from his coursework in anthropology, that Western social scientists far too frequently assume, quite naively, that their findings in the West are also valid outside it. Hoping to avoid getting tarred with the brush of scientific ethnocentrism, he asked me how he could determine whether the youth he was about to study had free time and leisure and, if so, how he might describe these two conditions.

My answer was that, first, it is reasonable to assume that in every society most members enjoy a certain amount of free time and that they pursue some sort of leisure within this period of life. This is the dominant pattern, for in some societies, there are those who lack this kind of time (e.g., the harried, all-work-and-no-play drudge found in some Western societies). This assumption holds, even though opportunities for sport, leisure and tourism are, compared with the West, substantially less prevalent in developing countries (Sheykhi, 2003). Second, the sort of leisure pursued will often differ substantially from that pursued in the West, though in this regard, globalization may now be generating a certain level of international uniformity. Consequently someone intending to study leisure in a Third World country would do well to try to find out, first-hand, what the locals define as free time and leisure, as opposed to arriving with a list of leisure activities known to be pursued in the West. Matejko (1984) discusses some of the problems that come with following the latter approach.

But how does a researcher go about discovering what leisure is in local terms, when it is likely local people have no concept of free time or of the leisure nature of activities undertaken within it? My advice to my student was the following:

First look for three types of activities:

1. those people like to do and do not have to do;
2. those people like to do and also have to do; and
3. those people do not like to do, but must do them anyway.

A combination of participant observation and informal question asking should, in most instances, provide answers to these three questions. Answers to 1 and 2 would qualify as leisure in Western terms (see my definition of leisure as

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'Leisure Reflections No. 11', on

Contemplation as Leisure and Nonleisure

uncoerced activity that people want to do, Stebbins, 2005b). Free time could be inferred from time left over after people met the obligations implied in 3. Although it might be difficult to determine whether those disagreeable obligations were fulfilled as part of work or as part of something outside work, this would matter little for the leisure researcher. For this person the third type of activity is of peripheral concern relative to the first two.

But, you might argue, why not also regard type 2 as peripheral? After all it, too, is obligatory. To do this would leave a clean division between type 1, for some scholars their proper focus of leisure studies, and types 2 and 3. This conceptual maneuver would, however, expose the researcher to the charge of Western bias, for as I have observed elsewhere (Stebbins, 2004), finding work in the West that is so attractive that it is essentially experienced as leisure is not a commonly achieved goal. Moreover, most Westerners do not expect to find such 'devotee' work. And so it is in the West. Meanwhile we cannot assume that the rest of the world experiences some or all of its work in the same terms.

Then there is the matter of obligation. I have argued (Stebbins, 2000, and later in Stebbins, 2005b) that a person can find pleasant, agreeable obligations in certain activities, in this way further validating type 2 as a concern for leisure researchers working in the Third World. An example from the West might be the leading lady who is obligated to go to the theatre during the weekend to perform in an amateur play, but does so with great enthusiasm rooted in her passion for drama as leisure activity. By contrast, her obligation to turn up at work the following Monday morning after the deep satisfaction of the preceding leisure weekend comes as a letdown. An example from an African country might be the sense of fulfillment gained from skilfully, knowledgeably, and creatively decorating a clay pot. The pot is needed for water, whereas its decoration, rather than being utilitarian, becomes an occasion for hobbyist artistic expression.

Both foregoing examples are serious leisure, even though it is possible to incur pleasant obligations with respect to casual leisure and project-based leisure, the latter being defined as the leisure experienced in carrying out as a short-term, moderately complicated, one-off or occasional though infrequent, creative undertaking (Stebbins, 2005a). As an illustration of casual leisure, John, having promised to do so, now feels obligated to give Jane a ride to the company picnic, an extension of that casual leisure event he will enjoy since he likes her company. Cross (1990, p. 14) describes the *viellées* held in 18th century France, during which local women would gather together to knit or crochet (in those times this was obligatory economic activity), but turn the occasion into a session of casual leisure consisting also of talk and, possibly, song. But will researchers find casual and serious leisure in Third World countries?

The issue of serious leisure outside the First World has, to my knowledge, never been raised in the literature, that is, it has not yet emerged as a matter of debate among researchers. Still it has stirred comment among students, notably those in the international masters program on leisure and the environment jointly sponsored by the World Leisure and Recreation Centre of Excellence (WICE) and Wageningen University, where I have taught from time to time since its inception in 1992. Their views on the role, frequency, and dispersion of serious leisure in their countries have been most illuminating.

The greatest contrasts were provided by the First and Third Worlds. Students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, for example, believed that vis-à-vis the First World serious leisure is much rarer in their countries, and some forms of it hardly seem to exist at all. They did acknowledge the pursuit there of amateur sport, but not of amateur science. Amateur art and entertainment were vague ideas for them, since both fields merge almost seamlessly with their folkloristic counterparts. Collecting as serious leisure was largely a foreign idea to them, as were the liberal arts hobbies and nearly all the activities classified as activity participation (hunting, fishing, and the folk arts being exceptions). More familiar was the hobby of making things, particularly making baskets, clothing, and pottery as well as raising animals. But with the making and participation activities that they did know, there was, in a way similar to the arts and entertainment fields, a blurring of the line separating what is obligatory from what is leisure. The concept of competitive sports, games, and contests was familiar, but the activities themselves, which are so common in the First World, are much less so. Some students spoke of amateur and hobbyist serious leisure as being available only to their country's elite, whose leisure tastes, they felt, had been influenced by the West.

Students from the Third world recognized the practice of volunteering, but held that it is differently enacted there. Formal organizational volunteering is much less common than the less formal grassroots type, while informal volunteering — helping — appears to be considerably more widespread than either of these two formal kinds. Even here the line separating obligation and voluntary action is fuzzy, in ways largely unknown in the First World. For example, in some countries, the expectation of helping is institutionalized, as seen in the practice found in parts of Columbia where every man in the village is obliged to help with the construction when one of them builds a house.

If we qualify as 'Third World' American Indian tribes (Rigsby, 1987, classifies as 'Fourth World' any dispossessed or disenfranchised minority within larger states), then some

research does exist on serious leisure in this socioeconomic context. Blanchard (1981) studied the 'serious side of leisure' among the Mississippi Choctaws, as seen in their pursuit of American baseball, basketball and softball as well as earlier in history in playing their own sport of stickball. Though Blanchard makes no use of the serious leisure framework (it was first published in the same year as his book), his description of the Choctaw orientation toward these games leaves no doubt that, for these native Americans, such sport was pursued in earnest, wherein participants found a special personal identity, main central life interest, distinctive leisure lifestyle, vibrant social world, and the like. Blanchard (1981, p. 65) also cites other instances where native peoples in colonial countries have embraced on a serious leisure level certain Western sports, notably cricket. All this harmonizes with the observation of Third-world WICE students mentioned earlier, namely, that in their countries, sport is one of the few recognizable forms of serious leisure.

In this article I have intentionally avoided treating of leisure in former Communist block countries, the so-called Second World. Discussion of serious and casual leisure with WICE students from this part of the globe reveals still another understanding of these two forms, an understanding too different and complicated to include in the present article. Consider Jung's (1996) comments on leisure in Poland. The tendency there, at the time, was to participate less in the collective and socialized forms of leisure and more in those based at home or in privatized facilities. Furthermore, this trend was said to be nurturing the growth of individualized leisure, hinting thereby at a possible upswing in the pursuit of the predominantly self-interested forms of serious leisure, namely, the hobbyist and amateur activities.

As for my student, who is now in the field under the aegis of a graduate program at another university, he has yet to report on how useful to him my advice has been. Assuming that he will eventually write to me on the matter, I will present in a future instalment of 'Leisure Reflections' his thoughts on it.

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Leisure Reflections

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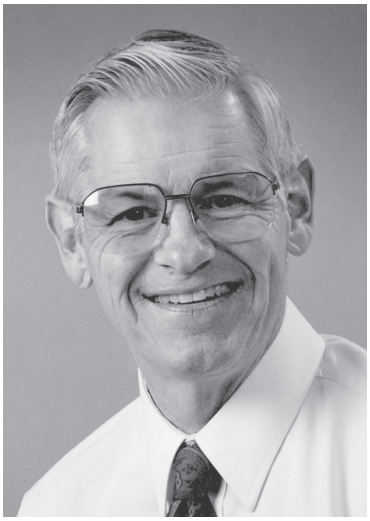

Professor Robert A. Stebbins, with over 30 years in leisure studies, has pioneered the ideas of 'serious leisure', 'casual leisure', 'project-based leisure' and 'optimal leisure'. He is currently Faculty Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. Author of 30 books and monographs in several areas of social science, his most important recent works bearing on these ideas include: *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); *After Work The Search for an Optimal* Leisure *Lifestyle* (Detselig, 1998); *New Directions in the Theory and Research of Serious Leisure* (Edwin Mellen, 2001); *The Organizational Basis of Leisure Participation: A Motivational Exploration* (Venture, 2002); V*olunteering as Leisure/Leisure as Volunteering* (CABI, 2004, edited with M. Graham); and *Between Work and Leisure* (Transaction, 2004). Forthcoming books include C*hallenging Mountain Nature* (Detselig) and *A Dictionary of Nonprofit Terms and Concepts* (Indiana University Press, with D.H. Smith and M. Dover). He was elected Fellow of the Academy of Leisure Sciences in 1996 and, in 1999, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; and has been a member of LSA since 1995.

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CONTEMPLATION AS LEISURE AND NON-LEISURE[1]

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For the purposes of this article, contemplation and reflection are treated as synonyms; both terms referring to the act of intensely thinking about something. When contemplating (reflecting) we make thought on a particular subject the center of our attention, the dominant activity of the moment. As an activity that endures over time, running in length from a few seconds to possibly an hour or more, it is however largely mental, even though the contemplator may manipulate related objects during this period. Contemplation may be intense and relatively impermeable, as expressed in the phrase 'lost in thought', or it may be relatively permeable, where a person's thoughts are easily interrupted by environmental stimuli.

My informal observations suggest that contemplation comes in at least four types. One is *obligatory contemplation*, a process forced on us from time to time, as we try in certain areas of life to solve problems from which we cannot escape. This type commonly occurs in conjunction with either a work or a non-work obligation, and on these two occasions, the problems reflected on are legion: how to approach the boss for a raise, smooth over soured relations with a spouse, most effectively fill in the annual tax return, to mention a few. Two, *casual leisure contemplation* is, by contrast, not coerced, but is rather taken up as a form of casual leisure of the play variety. This is reflection, or speculation, for the fun of it, as exemplified in the lyrics of the song 'If I were a Rich Man' from the Broadway show *Fiddler on the Roof*. How many of us have speculated about what we might do with the money gained from winning the lottery? Playing with ideas, as sometimes happens even in intellectual circles, is another instance of casual leisure contemplation.

Three, there is also *serious leisure as contemplation*, or reflection devoted to solving a problem arising with regard to a serious leisure activity. Though this is not play, it is nevertheless uncoerced, in that the activity itself is uncoerced. This kind of reflection occurs when, for example, a participant considers the best training approach for an upcoming

marathon, ponders which of two musical instruments to buy or reflects on the pros and cons of a prospective volunteer role. Four, *contemplation as serious leisure* is the classificatory home of complex reflective activity engaged in for its own sake. The activity is complex, for if a participant is to learn how to execute it, he or she must acquire special skills and a body of knowledge to go with them. This type — sometimes called 'meditation' — is exemplified by such systems as Yoga, Tai Chi and Transcendental Meditation. Meditation, or contemplation, in search of spirituality as guided by the Christian religion is a further example (Doohan, 1990, examines the link between leisure and spirituality, cited in Ouelette, 2003). Some forms of specifically religious meditation, to be effective, require, in addition to knowledge of technique, knowledge of the religious system from which the first receives its inspiration.

Contemplation as serious leisure would seem to be most accurately classified as a hobby of the activity participant variety. Activity participation is the classificatory home of noncompetitive, rule-based, pursuits, and there are certainly many rules and procedures incorporated in the meditative systems mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Further, in every such system, rules abound on how to behave with reference to other people and objects in the settings in which meditation occurs. Serious leisure contemplation is similar to what Tanquerey (1924) called 'acquired contemplation', in contradistinction to 'infused contemplation', or that instilled in a person by God.

The social and physical situations in which contemplation takes place are many and varied. Thus, we are capable of reflecting, to some extent, in a crowded, noisy room, providing that we can nevertheless keep our attention focused on our line of thought. It is likely, however, that most contemplation in this situation is of the casual type. Otherwise, most serious reflection (types 1, 3, and 4) seems most effectively carried out while alone, as in one's own study or bedroom, out in nature, or at an institutional retreat. I have argued that one of the main benefits of aloneness, or solitude, is to place the individual in this optimal social state where intense, uninterrupted thought can occur (Stebbins, 1993, chap. 9). And it follows from what has been said so far that repairing to one's room, to nature or to an institutionalized retreat for contemplative reasons is not necessarily a leisure activity. When not leisure, the retreater may have been coerced into trying to solve, through reflection, a nagging, unpleasant problem. However obligatory and unpleasant the problem to be solved (if that is why solitude is sought), monastic retreats can be still be pleasant places, given the quiet found there, the beauty of the architecture, chanting of the monks, agreeableness of the natural setting and the like.

How does contemplation relate to spirituality? Whatever else it might be, spirituality is, evidently, a mental state, specifically one of profound regard for the spiritual, for the nonmaterial. This is one sense of the concept. For spirituality is also an important product, or outcome, of some, though not all, contemplation. It appears to be, most clearly, a product of certain sessions of casual leisure contemplation as well as all sessions of serious leisure as contemplation, whereas the other two types are too problem oriented to be qualified as spiritual. Thus, we might casually think about the vastness, beauty, or purpose of breathtaking scenery, finding in the process, a kind of spirituality. And the spirituality reached though serious leisure meditation, for example, is part of the intended result of such activity.

Contemplation in Leisure Studies

Today, in leisure studies, contemplation, as a distinct, free-time activity, seems to have become largely forgotten. Yet, in the philosophic backdrop to the field, contemplation had been an important player. Aristotle (1915) is widely recognized for his observation that finding time for leisurely contemplation is a main goal of work; that the reason for working is to sustain life thus giving us an opportunity to contemplate. Much more recently Pieper (1963), a Catholic philosopher who followed Aristotle's line of reasoning, viewed contemplation as a special form of leisure, during which the individual is enabled to think about and communicate with God. And all leisure was undertaken for intrinsic reasons. About the same time de Grazia (1962, p. 18) held that 'the man in contemplation is a free man. He needs nothing. Therefore nothing determines or distorts his thought. He does whatever he loves to do, and what he does is done for its own sake'. Neulinger (1974, p. 5) observed that, gradually in philosophic thought, the ideal of contemplation gave way to a search for understanding using nature's laws, at first through astrology, but later by way of medicine.

This change in intellectual orientation seems still in effect in that the idea of contemplation is not often discussed. Still, a few exceptions exist, among them the ideas of Doohan mentioned earlier. Moreover Paddick (1982) lamented the paltry amount of time that modern humankind commonly sets aside for 'contemplation of ends'. He blamed 'education for leisure' for this sad situation, since such education tends to stress popular activities, of which contemplation is certainly no example. Ouellette and Carette (2004) studied a sample of 521 men who spent up to seven days in contemplation, among other activities, during a personal retreat at a Canadian monastery, the Abbaye Saint-Benoît, in Québec (see also Ouellette, Kaplan and Kaplan, 2005). Their findings show that, for most of those who answered the questionnaire, the contemplation engaged in at the monastery (the authors used the term 'reflection') may be classified, using the scheme developed in the present article, as obligatory. As such it is questionable whether it is leisure. Nonetheless the pressing need to reflect on a difficult problem sometimes emerged in the pleasant monastic environment, only after the

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'Discretionary Time Commitment: Effects on Leisure Choice and Lifestyle'

retreater had developed a relaxed frame of mind. Here leisure may be transformed into an activity driven by a felt obligation to try to solve a problem. Interest in this paper, and another issuing from the same project (Ouellette, Heintzman and Carette, 2005), centers primarily on 'psychological restoration', a central concept in Attention Restoration Theory (e.g., Kaplan, 1995). And unlike the leisure aspect of contemplation, its restorative benefits have generated a noticeable amount of thought and research (see Ouellette, Heintzman and Carette, 2005, for a partial review of this literature).

Conclusion

The leisure nature of contemplation deserves closer consideration than we have given it in leisure studies. We need to balance the problem-centered, instrumental orientation of attention restoration theory with theory and research on the intrinsic, leisure-like nature of contemplation as set out in types 2, 3 and 4. Here contemplation is both a process and a product endowed with immense inherent value. Ouellette (2003) underscores its importance for the elderly, arguing that contemplation is as important for them as physical, civic, and cultural activities.

In this respect Ouellette and Carette (2004) make a crucial point, namely, that it is important to find time for reflection that leads to personal revitalization achieved by getting to know oneself better. For them the monastery offers an ideal opportunity for pursuing this goal. By the same token, however practical this quest may sometimes be, it is also likely to be experienced as leisure. For personal revitalization is very much akin to what we refer to in leisure studies as 'recreation'. Through either process we get recharged to carry out life's obligatory activities. Meanwhile 'getting to know oneself' relates closely to self-fulfillment, to learning what, as individuals, we are capable of, have an aptitude for and hold a background preparation to do. To be sure such learning is practical, but more importantly, it is also, in the end, the ultimate payoff of the various serious leisure pursuits, in general, and the contemplation types 3 and 4, in particular.

The challenge for the individual, assuming he or she seeks contemplation as a leisure pursuit of the sort just described, is to find time and place to do it. For many people finding the time may well be the more difficult of these two. In such time there is escape from disturbance, from jarring noise, distracting music, shouting people, blaring television sets, and other annoyances. For a multitude of city people these situations are all too present in their everyday existence. For them, finding the quiet and solitude needed for effective, fulfilling contemplation, will therefore require some substantial restructuring of that existence. Furthermore, to find such quiet and solitude, could well require the cooperation of particular others (e.g., friends, spouses, other family members). It could turn out be more difficult to make these sorts of arrangements for contemplation for the purposes of leisure than for solving a difficult problem. After all, these others might reason that, whereas problems may be pressing matters demanding solutions, contemplation done as leisure is simply and merely 'fun'. No need in case of the second, they could argue, to bend or inconvenience oneself.

I should imagine that eighteenth century poet John Gay had in mind taking leisure in a quiet place when he wrote:

> 'Give me, kind Heaven, a private station,
> A mind serene for contemplation!
> Title and profit I resign;
> The post of honor shall be mine.
>
> *Fables*, pt. II 1738), *The vulture, the sparrow, and other birds.*

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Note

[1] I wish to thank Pierre Ouellette for his several insightful comments on this article.

Leisure Reflections

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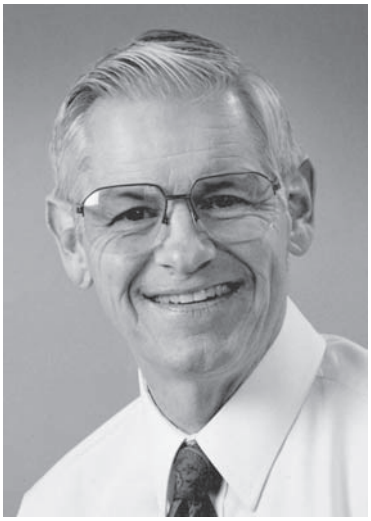

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Leisure Reflections … No. 13

The Serious Leisure Perspective

The *serious leisure perspective* is a theoretic framework that synthesizes three main forms of leisure, showing, at once, their distinctive features, similarities, and interrelationships. Those forms are serious, casual, and project-based leisure (short definitions of these are available on www.soci.ucalgary.ca/seriousleisure, 'basic concepts' page). Research began early in 1974 on the first of these, and has continued since that time, while work on casual leisure and then on project-based leisure came subsequently. Within each form a variety of types and subtypes has also emerged over the years. That the Perspective (wherever Perspective appears as shorthand for serious leisure perspective, to avoid confusion, the first letter will be capitalized) takes its name from the first of these should, in no way, suggest that I regard it, in some abstract sense, as the most important or superior of the three. A book that defines and describes in detail the Perspective (Stebbins, 2006) demonstrates the folly of that sort of thinking. Still, Cohen-Gewerc and I (Cohen-Gewerc & Stebbins, in press) do argue that, on the specialized plane of leisure education, serious leisure, compared with the other two, does occupy a special place. Rather the Perspective is so titled, simply because it got its start in the study of serious leisure; such leisure is, strictly from the standpoint of intellectual invention, the godfather of the other two.

Furthermore serious leisure has become the bench mark from which analyses of casual and project-based leisure have often been undertaken. So naming the Perspective after the first facilitates intellectual recognition; it keeps the idea in familiar territory for all concerned. Be that as it may, I might have titled it 'core activity perspective'. A *core activity* is the distinctive set of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve an outcome or product attractive to the participant. For instance, in serious leisure, a core activity of alpine skiing is descending snow-covered slopes, that of cabinet making is shaping and finishing wood, and that of volunteer fire fighting is putting out blazes and rescuing people from them. In each case the participant takes several interrelated steps to successfully ski down hill, make a cabinet, or rescue someone. In casual leisure core activities, which are much less complex than in serious leisure, are exemplified in the actions required to hold sociable conversations with friends, savour beautiful scenery, and offer simple volunteer services (e.g., handing out leaflets, directing traffic in a parking lot, clearing snow off the neighborhood hockey rink). In leisure projects core activities are intense, though limited in time and moderate in complexity, and seen in the actions of serving as scorekeeper during an amateur sports tournament or serving as museum guide during a special exhibition of artifacts. Engaging in the core activity (and its component steps and actions) is a main feature that attracts participants to the leisure in question and encourages them to return for more. In short the core activity is a value in its own right, even if more strongly held for some leisure activities than others.

Although the core activity motivates people to participate in the larger leisure activity, the intensity, meaning, and contexts of appeal of this core vary across the three forms. For instance, in serious leisure, participants gain a sense of deep fulfillment from the core activity, whereas this is impossible in casual leisure. More broadly, the chief import of the serious leisure perspective is that serious, casual, and project-based leisure often generate different positive psychological states, with the serious form being by far the most productive of such states.

Similarly, I might have dubbed this framework the 'leisure experience perspective'. After all each of the three forms refers to an identifiable kind of experience had during free time. Indeed, it fits all three of Mannell's (1999) conceptualizations of this experience, as subjectively defined leisure, as immediate conscious experience, and as post hoc satisfaction. Still this label would be too limiting, for the Perspective is broader than what people experience in their leisure. It also provides a way of looking on the social, cultural, and historical context of that experience. A similar problem undermines the suggestion made by Tomlinson (1993) that serious leisure be called 'committed leisure'. Though commitment is certainly an important attitude in serious leisure, it is, nevertheless, too narrow to serve as a descriptor of the entire Perspective, even if the other two forms also generate commitment on occasion.

Because the serious and casual forms have sometimes stirred discussion about the relative merit of one or the other, let us be clear from the outset that the serious leisure perspective looks on each as important in its own way. That is, it is much less a question of which is best, than a question of how well combinations of two or three of the forms serve individuals, categories of individuals (e.g., sex, age, social class, religion, nationality), and their larger communities and societies. This, in turn, leads to such considerations as leisure lifestyle, optimal leisure lifestyle, and social capital, all of which are, themselves, important concepts in this framework.

The idea of perspective communicates at least three important points. One, any perspective is a way of theoretically viewing leisure phenomena. So, this one, too, provides a unique prism through which to look at what people do in their free time. Two, as a theoretic framework, the serious leisure perspective synthesizes the three forms, showing at once their distinctive features, their similarities, and their interrelationships. Three, although it was never my intention as I moved from one study of free-time activity to the next, my findings and theoretic musings have nevertheless evolved into a typological map of the world of leisure. That is, so far as known at present, all leisure (at least in Western society) can be classified according to one of the three forms and their several types and subtypes. More precisely the serious leisure perspective offers a classification and explanation of all leisure activities and experiences, as these two are framed in the social psychological, social, cultural, and historical contexts in which each activity and accompanying experience take place. But, consistent with the exploratory approach that has guided much of basic research in this field, open-ended inquiry and observation could, some day, suggest one or more additional forms. Briefly put the construction of scientific typologies, in principle, never results in completed intellectual edifices.

Given the scope of this paper, it is unnecessary to review the many definitions of leisure. Rather what is called for here is a working definition of the concept that respects past conceptual insights into such activity, but that also logically fits the serious leisure perspective, while demarcating clearly the sphere of human life to which it applies. To this end, leisure is defined here as: uncoerced activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both), use their abilities and resources to succeed at this. 'Free time' is time away from unpleasant obligation, with pleasant obligation being treated here as essentially leisure, since *homo otiosus,* leisure man, in fact feels no significant coercion to enact the activity in question (Stebbins, 2000b).

Note that reference to 'free choice' – a long-standing component of standard definitions of leisure – is for reasons discussed in detail elsewhere (Stebbins, 2005b), intentionally omitted from this definition. Generally put choice is never completely free, but rather hedged, is about with all sorts of conditions. This situation renders this concept and allied ones such as freedom and state of mind useless essential elements in a basic definition (Juniu & Henderson, 2001). Note, too, there is no reference in this definition to the moral basis of leisure. That is, contrary to some stances taken in the past (e.g., Kaplan, 1960: pp. 22-25), leisure in the serious leisure perspective, and by implication associated positive states, can be either deviant or non-deviant (Rojek, 1997; Stebbins, 1997).

Synthesizing and Extending the Perspective

A number of social scientific concepts have emerged over the years that, each in its own way, helps synthesize the three forms, thereby making for a truly integrated, theoretic perspective. In the main this integration, which I refer to as a synthesis, is accomplished by situating the forms, which, at bottom, are experiential (each of the three forms refers to a distinctive kind of experience found in the core activity), in broader social scientific context. That is each concept has its own place in the larger social scientific literature, while also finding a special place

in one or more of serious, casual, and project-based leisure. In other words they synthesize the Perspective as much by being differentially manifested within it as they do by occupying certain common ground across two or three of the forms.

Let there be no mistake: these synthesizing concepts are as much a part of the serious leisure perspective as the basic concepts of serious, casual, and project-based leisure as well as their types, subtypes, and related processes. For both the synthesizing and the basic concepts help explain the three forms, including their similarities, differences, and interrelationships, in addition to serving as guides for research. The following synthesizing concepts and bundles of concepts are considered in Stebbins (2006: chap. 4), with relevant research noted where it exists: 1) organization (groups, associations, social worlds, etc.), 2) community (family; work; gender; social class; contributions, including civil society, citizen involvement, and social capital; deviance), 3) history, 4) lifestyle (including discretionary time commitment, optimal leisure lifestyle), and 5) culture (commitment, obligation, values, selfishness).

Turning to extension of the Perspective, I report a set of studies that have steered aspects of the serious leisure perspective in dramatically new directions, namely, into another field of research. As with past research on the Perspective, many of these studies are exploratory, but in them, the choice of research subject springs from a desire to link the Perspective with another scholarly domain rather than to continue extending it within the ambit of one or more of the three forms, considered for purposes of this discussion as constituting a distinctive field of research. In a full statement on the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 2006: chap. 5), extensions are made to the following areas: tourism, ethnicity, quality of life and well-being, leisure education, gender, retirement and unemployment, adult learning and self-directed learning, disabilities, library and information science, entertainment and popular culture, work and leisure, shopping, contemplation, and arts administration.

Conclusions

Most people who go in for serious leisure avoid filling their free time with it, to the exclusion of one or both of the other two forms. Serious leisure can be intense, exhausting, and its enthusiasts may become temporarily saturated with it. My study of the mountain hobbies of kayaking, snowboarding, and mountain climbing demonstrated that, as attractive and fulfilling as these activities are for participants, they also valued their casual leisure, for it gave them respite, both physical and mental (Stebbins, 2005c: chap. 7). Although these hobbyists engaged in very little project-based leisure, note that it, too, can be rather intense and exhausting, requiring some time away from it to engage in casual leisure. In other words, perhaps aided by leisure education, participants in serious leisure will want to search for an optimal leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2000a), consisting of, for them, a pleasing balance with casual leisure, possibly augmented on occasion with a leisure project.

Yet, there are people, perhaps most of them living in the West, who either care little for serious leisure or have no time to pursue it. These people, once finished with everyday work and non-work obligations, carve out a leisure lifestyle filled with casual and, possibly, some project-based leisure. And I have argued over the years that a number of benefits and rewards flow from these two, whether alone or in combination (see Stebbins, 2006: chap. 3). These benefits and rewards should never be minimized, even if they constitute a blander offering than serious leisure. That is, what gives the latter its special appeal is its potential for self-fulfillment, something missing altogether, or substantially diluted, in the other two forms. This omission is critical, for in leisure, work, indeed, all of life, I believe that this fulfillment stands out as a singular, highly positive, personal state.

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Leisure Reflections

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Leisure Reflections … No. 20

Social Networks in Leisure: From Meso- to Macro-structure

Although scattered research on social networks and leisure dates at least to my own study of those of amateur classical musicians (Stebbins, 1976), widespread interest in this area took flight with the appearance of Patricia Stokowski's doctoral dissertation (1988) and subsequent book (1994). She argued, from exploratory data on social networks and recreation in a rural town in Washington State, that people construct a sense of their leisure within the social milieu of their daily lives. Her principal interest was to propose a new sociology of leisure, one based more centrally in 'structure' than the psychological and social psychological models of leisure as experience dominant in the United States at the time she wrote.

Elizabeth Bott's (1957, p. 59) definition of social network fits best the small amount of work done on this form of organisation within the domain of leisure. She defines social network simply, as 'a set of social relationships for which there is no common boundary'. Bott's approach is ego-centric; networks are calculated from the reference point of individuals. In her definition, a network is not a structure, as Stokowski puts it, since it has no shared boundaries (boundaries recognized by everyone in the social network) and no commonly recognized hierarchy or central coordinating agency. Nevertheless, interconnections exist between others in the network, in that some members are directly in touch with each other while others are not. Thus a social network is a form of social organisation (Stebbins, 2002, chap. 2).

As individuals pursue their leisure interests, they develop networks of contacts (friends, relatives and acquaintances) related in one way or another to these interests. As a person develops more such interests, the number of networks grows accordingly, bearing in mind that members of some of these will nevertheless sometimes overlap. For instance, a few members of John's dog breeding network — they might be suppliers, veterinarians, or other breeders — are also members of his golf network — who might be suppliers, course personnel, or other golfers. Taken from the opposite angle network contacts may stimulate an individual's interest in a particular leisure activity. Whichever direction the line of influence, knowing people's leisure networks helps explain how they socially organize their leisure time. In this manner, as Blackshaw and Long (1998, p. 246) observe, we learn something new about leisure lifestyle.

Lifestyle and social network are two important components of 'meso-structure'. David Maines (1982) coined the term over 25 years ago to identify the intermediate field of interaction lying between the sphere of immediate social interaction and the sphere of such all-encompassing abstractions as community, society, social-class, and large-scale organisation, or broadly put, social structure. On the meso-structural level, human interaction continues to be discernible in research and theory carried out and constructed under the disciplinary banners of sociology, anthropology, and social psychology. My elaboration (Stebbins, 1992) based on a number of studies showing that amateurs, hobbyists, and career volunteers operate within some sort of meso-structural context as well as, to be

sure, within four other contexts, to which I have given the labels of personal, interactional, structural, and sociocultural (see Stebbins, 2001, chap. 1). That same year (Stebbins, 1993) I wrote that notwithstanding this conclusion, the theoretic statements on serious leisure, including my own, still lack a systematic treatment of its meso-structural features. This was, I said, a most unfortunate omission, for it might give rise to the impression that research in this area is little more than the idiographic study of small, isolated groups of enthusiasts organized around some 'quaint' pastime.

Stokowski thought of her work on social networks and leisure in the rural town as bearing on macro-sociological social structure, rather than on mid-level meso-structure. But in fact, her study and its interpretation fit best in the second. Van der Poel, in a review of the 1994 book, explained the problem:

> Firstly, if we want to have a real sociology of leisure and link developments in leisure to developments in the context of people's daily lives in modernity, we cannot stop talking about the social networks of people in terms of their 'interactional'(such as 'frequency of communication' and 'reciprocity') and 'structural' criteria (such as network 'size' and 'density') (p. 61). As people will always be engaged in a variety of social networks, we will want to know how these networks are influenced and have an influence upon broader societal developments such as unemployment and the restructuring of industries, changing households, the marginalizing of the welfare state in most Western countries, ethnic, age and sexual divisions in society, and so on. (van der Poel, 1995, p. 69)

This is, at bottom, the same criticism of Stokowski's work made by Blackshaw and Long (1998).

Still it seems that the study of leisure networks is, for the most part, stuck at the meso-structural level, yet to be effectively linked with any number of the macro-sociological perspectives that would give it social, cultural, and historical context. I foreshadowed this meso-structural trend in the aforementioned analysis of the networks of amateur classical musicians. Thus, one analytic feature of social networks is their 'reachability'. It refers to the number of intermediaries in a person's network who must be contacted to reach certain other members of it. Reachability is relatively great when few or no intermediaries are needed for this purpose, as opposed to when many are needed. I observed that in a community orchestra, the concertmaster usually has greater reachability than any other instrumentalist in the ensemble, mainly because of responsibilities requiring direct contact with the majority of its members. For example, this person may be simultaneously assistant conductor, chief recruiter, and disciplinarian, all in addition to being the orchestra's subleader.

In a review of research on leisure and social networks from 1980 to the present I found much the same focus: an interest mainly in their meso-structural manifestations. Most of this work appears as masters and doctoral theses (there were about a dozen with a substantial focus on networks and leisure). Consider, briefly, three examples. Varshney (2007) examined the social support networks of older adults, concluding that larger formations resulted in greater life satisfaction and subjective health. Foose (2004) found that the leisure activity patterns of older adults were positively correlated with the size of social support networks. Hibbler's (2000) study of interracial couples revealed greater social isolation among those which lacked social networks in their daily lives, including their leisure activities. Marsden (1990, p. 435), in a review of the general literature on social networks also stresses this meso-structural tendency. She defines them as constellations of identifiable relationships that join individual units, be they persons or collectivities.

Breaking with this pattern Lawrence Bendle (2008), in his doctoral thesis, shows us an avenue along which we may move from the meso-structural analysis of social networks to the macro-sociological plane in which they are found and which helps explain them. For him this macro-entity is community. He studied the network links of 49 grassroots associations and allied organisations representing a wide range of fine and popular amateur arts. He conducted his research in a regional city in Australia. Data on the networks were gathered by way of semi-directed interviews with spokes people holding administrative and managerial positions in these groups. He found that these associations and allied organisations actively coordinated their memberships, activities and assets, such that they were able to provide slates of events and accomplish this by working effectively with agencies and companies offering supporting goods and services. Bendle described a community-wide network of arts organisations, using the qualitative data he gathered to conduct a quantitative social network analysis, which produce a set of maps and diagrams showing graphically how this community of the arts is structured.

Bendle also places meso-structure within the larger context of community in another way, namely, by examining the social worlds of the arts associations and organisations. Social world is a concept that, by its very nature, bridges the meso- and macro-planes of society. Unruh defines it as:

> a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous. … Generally larger than groups or organizations, social

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> worlds are not necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership lists, or spatial territory. … A social world must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralized authority structure and is delimited by … effective communication and not territory nor formal group membership. (Unruh, 1979, p. 115)

Individuals develop a sense of the social worlds in which they embedded, that is, a sense of a moderately abstract constellation, or community, of participants in the central activity. The participants there may be local, regional, national and sometimes international. The idea of social network, based as it is on an ego-centric view of an individual's links to other people, has at bottom a social psychological orientation. Person X interacts from time to time with persons Y, Z and so on who constitute his network. Both social networks and social worlds are units of social organisation, but the first rests on direct interaction whereas the second rests, much more abstractly, on a personally identifiable constellation of diverse events, practices, organisations, categories of people and the like.

One way Bendle mapped the arts worlds he studied was to ask its spokes people to estimate the numbers of their association's members whom they regarded as strangers, tourists, regulars, and insiders. According to Unruh (1979; 1980) every social world is populated with these four types. Strangers are intermediaries who normally participate little in the leisure activity itself, but who nonetheless do something important to make it possible by, for example, repairing musical instruments, selling artists' supplies and producing publicity for amateur artistic events. Tourists are temporary participants in a social world; they have come on the scene momentarily for entertainment, diversion, or profit. Most amateur activities generate publics of some kind (e.g., audiences, viewers, readers), which are in this conceptualization, conceived of as tourists. Regulars routinely participate in the social world; in Bendle's study they are the amateurs themselves. Insiders are those among them who show exceptional devotion to the social world they share, to maintaining it, to advancing it, and to displaying artistic excellence there. These personal typological images of a particular social world, which are shared with other participants there, coalesced into a macro-sociological understanding of the arts community in the city that Bendle studied.

To be sure, this is not the sort of macro-sociology van der Poel and Blackshaw and Long had in mind when they criticized Stokowski's work. Nevertheless their key point is important: we need also to know the social-cultural-historical context in which social networks operate if we want to explain them fully. Bendle's work shows us one route by which we may move from meso- to macro-structure, starting from social network and social world. The meso-structural concept of lifestyle (Stebbins, 1993, also mentioned above by Blackshaw and Long), linked as it is to life course, life cycle and the institutions of work, family and leisure, offers another route.

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Leisure Reflections

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Leisure Reflections No. 24

Addiction to Leisure Activities: Is It Possible?

Let it be clear from the outset that I have no intention in this article of trying to contribute to the vast scholarly and lay literature on addiction any thoughts about its causes. Addiction is presently an intellectual minefield, strewn with contradictory scientific definitions, wide-ranging lay opinion, numerous causal models, and an ample dose of emotional involvement in the entire question. Instead my concern will be with whether it is valid to describe a powerful interest in a particular leisure or work activity as addictive, a common explanation today in some scientific and lay circles.

A Definition of Addiction for Leisure Studies

Aviel Goodman, a psychiatrist, developed a definition he believed fit both psychoactive substance abuse and pathological gambling. His definition, which is broad enough to apply to leisure activities, holds that:

> essentially, addiction designates a process whereby a behaviour, that can function both to produce pleasure and to provide escape from internal discomfort, is employed in a pattern characterized by (1) recurrent failure to control the behaviour (powerlessness) and (2) continuation of the behaviour despite significant negative consequences (unmanageability). (Goodman, 1990)

This statement refers to physical dependence on something, a condition where the addict suffers acute physiological symptoms when administration of it is stopped (e.g., psychoactive substance abuse). It also refers to psychological dependence. Here the addict feels that life is horribly dull when the effects of the drug or activity wear off; satisfaction and well-being are noticeably absent (e.g., pathological gambling; irresistible flow-based activities).

Addiction, Substances and Casual Leisure

Addiction as leisure is, on one level, clearly an oxymoron. This is the world of physical addiction. In it addicts lose control over use of a drug on which they have become dependent (e.g., alcohol, nicotine, heroin, cocaine, hallucinogens). Although they initially take the drug frequently as leisure, later these people — now as addicts — have, in Goodman's terminology, grown powerless to control their addiction-generating activities as well as manage the consequences flowing from them. The unpleasant physical reactions resulting from any refusal to use the drug repeatedly drive these addicts back to active consumption. Such a scenario hardly sounds like leisure when defined as essentially un-coerced, freely chosen activity. Physically addicted people, when they feed their addiction, are not engaging in leisure.

Psychological dependence occupies a different world. Here there is no physical dependence — though some scholars still call it addiction — but rather an absence of a desired positive psychological state, such as tranquility, satiation, well-being, relaxation, or happiness. Thus, regular marijuana use is commonly believed to create psychological dependence in some people, as can such use of prescription drugs like the barbiturates, amphetamines and tranquillizers. It is likewise for food addictions and addictions to sex and possibly exercise. A crucial difference between the psychologically addictive drugs, foods and activities, on the one hand, and the drugs leading to a physical addiction, on the other, is that the

first create a temporary *positive* mental state. By contrast the second mainly avoid or temporarily eliminate a *negative* physical or psychological state (e.g., pain, fear, tremors, nausea). In both worlds a passing sense of well-being normally follows from consuming or engaging in the supposedly addictive substance or activity.

Dependence on a drug to produce a positive state of mind (as opposed to alleviating a negative state) has the same goal that many people seek in ordinary, non-drug-based leisure. But may we then say that positive dependence is leisure? The answer to this question depends on how coercive this drug dependency. For example, do these users lack attractive alternative non-addictive activities, as in consuming drugs to counteract boredom? Is there a genetic tendency toward using a particular drug? Does a person's lifestyle or certain past or present situations within it drive him or her, as it were, to one or more drugs? Are close associates of the user consuming the same drug or a similar one, creating thereby social pressure to conform to group interests? Affirmative answers to questions like these make it logically difficult to describe this kind of drug use as leisure. By the way this relationship cries out for research and, ultimately, for a scale by which we can measure degrees of psychological dependence as it increasingly undermines the sense of leisure.

But, when the answers to questions like these are 'no', when such use is un-coerced, it would appear to be a leisure activity. More precisely it is, being hedonic, casual leisure, sought as relaxation or sensory stimulation or a combination of both.

Addiction, Activity and Leisure

The label of addiction has also come to be applied by some professionals and many lay people to the psychological dependency thought to develop around such activities as work (workaholics), *gambling* (problem gamblers), shopping (shopaholics), television (TV addicts), religious practice (ritualists), mobile phone use (Leung, 2008) and surfing and gaming on the Internet (Li & Chung, 2006). People deeply attached to such activities may feel that, when denied an opportunity to engage in them, their psychological well-being is substantially threatened. Is not this feeling of threat a kind of withdrawal symptom?

To answer this question let us return to our definition: are these participants, these 'addicts', powerless to control their 'addiction', therefore continuing with the activity despite negative consequences? This could be true for the casual leisure activities mentioned in the preceding paragraph. But only if they are indeed uncontrollable, even in face of substantial negative consequences like threat of divorce, financial ruin, jail or a heavy fine, public ridicule, or heart failure and even death caused by certain eating disorders (e.g. bulimia, anorexia). If the so-called addict abandons his or her self-defeating ways because the costs for continuing them are perceived as too great, this person has shown that, with sufficient motivation, the dependency can be controlled and managed. The habit has been broken (or never established) and any claim that it is an addiction shown to be invalid (see Johnson, 2009, for how this process works in so-called Internet addiction).

Serious Leisure

Taking Goodman's definition as our yardstick, is it possible that serious leisure may become addictive? Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centered

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on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience. First, note that serious leisure is not hedonic. Instead it is motivated by ten substantial rewards (Stebbins, 2007: pp. 13–15):

Personal rewards

1. Personal enrichment (cherished experiences)
2. Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge)
3. Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed)
4. Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant)
5. Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep satisfaction — fun, flow)
6. Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work
7. Financial return (from a serious leisure activity)

Social rewards

8. Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity)
9. Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic)
10. Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution)

Second, serious leisure is further defined by six distinguishing qualities (Stebbins,2007). One is the occasional need to persevere, such as in learning how to be a capable museum guide. Yet, it is clear that positive feelings about the activity come, to some extent, from sticking with it through thick and thin, from conquering adversity. A second quality is that of finding a career in the serious leisure role, shaped as it is by its own special contingencies, turning points and stages of achievement or involvement. Careers in serious leisure commonly rest on a third quality: significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, experience, or skill, and, indeed, all four at times. Fourth, several durable benefits, or broad outcomes, of serious leisure have so far been identified, mostly from research on amateurs. They are self-development, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity (e.g. a painting, scientific paper, piece of furniture). A further benefit is that of self-gratification, or the combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfilment. Of these benefits, self-fulfillment — realizing, or

the fact of having realized, to the fullest one's gifts and character, one's potential — is the most powerful of all.

A fifth quality of serious leisure is the unique ethos that grows up around each instance of it. A central component of this ethos is its special social world in which participants pursue their free-time interests. Unruh developed the following definition:

> A social world must be seen as a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous in character. Generally larger than groups or organizations, social worlds are not necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership lists, or spatial territory. … A social world must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralized authority structure and is delimited by . . . effective communication and not territory nor formal group membership. (Unruh, 1980, p. 277)

The sixth quality rests around the preceding five: participants in serious leisure tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits. These six qualities have commonly been used to separate serious from casual leisure.

Participants who experience the foregoing rewards and whose serious leisure activities meet the distinguishing qualities realize deep personal fulfilment. Self-fulfillment is either the act or the process of developing to the full one's capacity, more particularly, developing one's gifts and character. Given these rewards and distinguishing qualities, can serious leisure participants become addicted to their amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity, activity that generates such a powerful personal return?

The answer is, in general, 'no'. This conclusion can be explained by the condition that participation in any serious leisure activity is subject to a number of constraints. Six are mentioned here. One is mental or physical fatigue, and sometimes both, felt after a lengthy session in the activity. The participant needs a rest. Another is institutional: work and non-work obligations, including for some people familial obligations, force the enthusiast to spend time at non-leisure activities. A third is related to lifestyle: some people, even while holding a full-time job, are able to pursue more than one serious leisure activity during the same part of the year (e.g., tennis and playing in an orchestra; volunteering, collecting stamps and skiing on weekends). Each activity constrains pursuit of the other(s). Moreover some of these people may also get involved from time to time in a leisure project. (Project-based leisure is a short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot [one-off] or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, Stebbins, 2005.) Fourth, participation in some serious leisure is constrained by availability of co-participants. For instance, SCUBA divers must descend with at least one other person, who may however, be free for this activity only on a certain day of the week. Fifth, climatic conditions can constrain a person's leisure. Some these conditions are temporary, a snow or rain storm could force cancelation of a planned afternoon of snowmobiling or golfing, for example, as drought might dry up fishing opportunities or strong winds discourage sailing. But some climatic conditions are seasonal, such that snowmobiling can only be done in winter while sailing (on fresh water) is limited to times of the year when lakes are not frozen.

A sixth constraint is based on manageability. Serious leisure enthusiasts are highly enamoured of what they do, such that they want to be able to return again and again to the activity. To the extent that engaging in it excessively risks injury, burnout, family or relational conflict, and other unpleasant repercussions that can constrain their involvement, many serious leisure participants are (often reluctantly) inclined to rein themselves in.

The controllability of serious leisure

Nevertheless I have argued over the years (e.g., Stebbins, 2007: pp. 17–18) that the desire to participate in the core amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity can become for some participants some of the time significantly *uncontrollable*. This is because it engenders in its practitioners the desire to engage in the activity beyond the time or the money (if not both) available for it. I wish to underscore in the present article, however, that uncontrollability is a *tendency* not an inescapable compulsion or obsession. Furthermore this tendency is often felt in ways having little to do directly with addiction, as in a desire to upgrade equipment or clothing or acquire more and more training or education.

Searching for Flow

Considering the foregoing constraints to participation in serious leisure, it is difficult to see how it can, for the typical participant, be qualified as addiction. And that despite the passion serious participants commonly express for their activities and the enthusiasm (as measured, for instance, in time, energy, monetary costs) with which they go about them.

Nonetheless there are exceptions; some people defy these constraints suggesting thereby that they are addicted to, or dependent on, their serious leisure. Consider Régine Cavagnoud, French world champion in alpine skiing, who died in a collision with a ski coach while hurtling down a slope in the Alps:

> Many times previously Miss Cavagnoud had been badly injured on the slopes while pushing herself to her natural constraints, and probably beyond, in her drive to become a world champion.… Miss Cavagnoud did feel fear. Considering the risks involved, there have been relatively few deaths on the slopes. … But many skiers are badly injured. Miss Cavagnoud dreaded ending up in a wheelchair. But even more, she said, she dreaded doing badly. (*The Economist*, 2001)

Giddens (1992: pp. 70–74) wrote about similar 'characteristics of addiction' leading to high-risk leisure, when discussing ecstatic experience, the fix gained from having it and, thereby, being 'transported to another world' beyond everyday life. The vast majority of high-risk leisure participants (e.g., alpine skiers, bicycle racers and paragliders) are content with the level of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) experienced from doing their activity and avoid situations where they lack full control of and competence in the activity. Not so with a minority of them who seem hooked on the strong, positive, emotional and physiological feelings that come with going over the top edge of their control and competence. Some say they are motivated by an 'adrenalin rush'. While this would be abhorrent to the majority, it becomes for this minority as it did for Ms Cavagnoud an addictive magnetism, accompanying fear notwithstanding.

According to Goodman's definition, addiction results from searching for pleasure as a remedy for internal discomfort. This combined interest in finding pleasure while alleviating discomfort, the concept of addiction suggests, is frequent and recurring. Thus, once rested addicted skiers and bicycle racers would be irresistibly and recurrently drawn to the slopes and roads, free of the constraints mentioned earlier. And, presumably, if their activity is seasonal, they

would be driven to find an equally exciting counterpart during the off-season. The same may be said for actors, jazz musicians, ballet dancers, and some others in the performing arts who simply cannot get enough of expressing their talent and feeling the flow it generates and who, as addicts, have abandoned all allegiance to these constraints. Still such hyper-enthusiasts are comparatively uncommon.

Searching for Success

The drive for success in any field of work or leisure can be heavily time-consuming, suggesting to some people that addiction is the cause of activity this intense. Where success is achieved through strongly felt flow experiences and the constraints of participation are ignored, as can happen in playing jazz or engaging in alpine skiing, for example, addiction could conceivably be an outcome. But, when success is reached in activities offering only weak flow, or none at all, the label of addiction seems far-fetched, implausible. Meanwhile more empirically valid and profound explanations for such behaviour exist. They include the list of rewards presented earlier and the qualities of serious leisure and devotee work (devotee work has these same qualities and set of rewards, Stebbins, 2004b). These observations call into question whether the supposed workaholic is really an addict, as some writers have claimed (for a discussion of workaholism as addiction, see Stebbins, 2004b: pp. 28–29).

The drive for success does not mean that the behaviour leading to it is uncontrollable, as true addictions are. Rather the successful person in leisure or work knows full well what it takes to succeed and, with a strong sense of control and personal competence, has set out to reach this goal. He or she *is* in reasonable control of an unfolding career personally designed to achieve identifiable rewards. In other words the drive for success is carried out by way of a variety of positive activities. By contrast addiction itself, as defined in this article, is negative — an unpleasant state — to which the addiction-related behaviour brings only temporary relief. This hardly sounds like an antecedent to success in the multitude of activities in which people aspire to achieve this goal.

Conclusions

Identifying leisure as addictive when it is not has at least two very important consequences. One is the creation of deviance. Labelling someone as an addict to a leisure activity is, at the least, stigmatizing. Calling someone an addict is insulting. Even more serious is formally labelling that person as an addict, an act that officialises his deviance (Becker, 1963). This is now the practice in China, where a recently enacted law makes illegal 'addictive' use of the Internet, with fines, incarceration, and compulsory therapy numbering among the possible correctional responses (McCabe, 2009). Meanwhile a private hospital in Britain has chosen instead to medicalize the problem, by offering a technology addiction service to 'screenagers'(mostly 15- to 17-year-olds) supposedly hooked on computer games or their mobile phones (*Calgary Herald*, 2010). The service consists of intensive inpatient, day care, or group therapy.

Two, there are unwanted consequences in describing leisure activities as addictive, in that some people may avoid them for fear of becoming obsessed with them, just as they are warned by the same logic against using certain drugs. How many youth have been told to eschew a certain sport on grounds that they will get hooked on it and want to do nothing else (such as go to university, get a steady job)? How many have been advised, for similar reasons, to stay away from computer games, even though these activities can be understood as serious leisure (e.g., Bryce & Rutter, 2003; Silverman, 2006) addiction to which, I have just argued, is substantially constrained? How many people fear their own potentially uncontrollable involvement in a leisure activity that they find enormously fulfilling? Might they become addicted to it, they ask, and in that state, spawn problems for themselves and their friends and family?

I have argued that leisure can sometimes be addictive, but I have also argued that outside the leisurely use of hard drugs, this is a relatively rare occurrence.

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Leisure Reflections

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Stebbins's main leisure interests lie in amateur music, where he is a jazz and classical double bassist, and in various outdoor hobbyist pursuits, notably cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking and mountain scrambling (hiking to mountain tops). He is also an active volunteer in the Calgary French community, primarily as President of the *Centre d'accueil pour les nouveaux arrivants francophones* (an organization that helps French-speaking immigrants settle in Calgary). And, to be sure, casual leisure counts as well. For Stebbins it consists mainly of evening conversations with friends and family and dining out in Calgary's restaurants.

Leisure Reflections No. 25

Flow in Serious Leisure: Nature and Prevalence

A fair number of scholars (noted below) have weighed in on the link between flow and serious leisure. All have concluded through empirical research or theoretic appraisal that the serious leisure activities under study do generate flow and that this experience is one important motive for participation there. The impression created in this literature is that, by implication, all serious leisure offers significant moments during which participants find flow. In this article I will examine the proposition that serious leisure is not necessarily a source of flow. My conclusion is that some serious leisure cannot generate this experience.

The Nature of Flow

The yardstick with which I will work to examine this proposition is Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, pp. 48–67) set of eight components of this experience:

1. sense of competence in executing the activity;
2. requirement of concentration;
3. clarity of goals of the activity;
4. immediate feedback from the activity;
5. sense of deep, focused involvement in the activity;
6. sense of control in completing the activity;
7. loss of self-consciousness during the activity;
8. sense of time is truncated during the activity.

These components are self-explanatory, except for the first and the sixth. With reference to the first flow fails to develop when the activity is either too easy or too difficult; to experience flow the participant must feel capable of performing at least a moderately challenging activity. The sixth component refers to the perceived degree of control the participant has over execution of the activity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 59) says this is, more precisely, a matter of 'lacking the sense of worry about losing control'. It is the sense of participants in flow that they can successfully handle any usual condition that comes along in their activity. On page 61 he further observes that 'what people enjoy is not the sense of *being* in control, but the sense of *exercising* control in difficult situations'.

Components 1 and 6 are intricately intertwined: feeling competent in doing an activity generates a sense of being able to exercise control, especially in difficult situations. It follows that an activity, to qualify as productive of flow, must be seen by its participants as allowing for situations where control may be a challenge. They are aware of these situations, even though they are uncommon. Indeed, most of the time the activity presents the usual challenges, though stiff enough to generate flow. In such conditions participants execute the activity, while feeling that they can handle whatever unusual comes along. Additionally Elkington (2006; 2008) found in his research that trust in the other participants in the activity being pursued at the time is often an important condition for feeling that one has control.

It follows logically that, if these eight components are necessary conditions of flow, they must all be present for the participant to experience this state. If one or more of them are absent, the leisure experience at the time cannot be qualified as flow-based. This is an important criterion. For example a person can be deeply involved (component 5) in a film or a roller coaster ride without having to be competent at something or feel a sense of control or both. If we adhere strictly to the eight components, these two activities cannot be described as flow-based. On the other hand, if we reject strict adherence, the two could then be regarded as flow-based. Indeed a loose adherence to the eight components would expand immensely the list of flow-based activities. But this approach would also force an unwanted imprecision on the concept, making it scientifically less useful. Therefore it is best to stay with the strict version, labelling as flow the activities to which

it applies and creating other terms for the activities that are characterised by some but not all eight of the components.

At the same time it is not sufficient simply to assume that a given leisure activity allows for the eight components or fails to. Instead this claim should be demonstrated by way of research. Furthermore empirical examination of an activity not only shows that flow is possible there but also describes its distinctive manifestations. Thus, the sense of competence is different for surf-boarding, as seen in balance on waves and charting a course through them, compared with that sense in theatre, as seen in artistically presenting lines in interaction with the other actors and props on stage at the moment. Both examples require concentration and focused involvement, but the goals sought are sharply different — remaining gracefully afloat in surfing, performing the role well in theatre.

Flow in Serious Leisure

Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (Stebbins, 2007a). Since there is rather little research linking flow and serious leisure in the detailed manner just described, we can only speculate about which activities in this form might be found to generate this experience. But first note that flow has been found in quilting (Stalp, 2007); barbershop singing (Stebbins, 1996); table tennis, amateur acting, coaching amateur sport (Elkington, 2006; 2008) and white-water kayaking, mountain climbing and snowboarding (Stebbins, 2005). Heo, Lee and Pedersen (2010) and Mannell (1993) have also studied flow in serious leisure pursued by older adults, although the activities themselves were not identified in the publications (both studies gathered data on serious leisure in general). These studies vary as to how rigourously their authors apply the eight components, with Elkington's being, among this list, the most thorough in this regard.

In pursuits qualified as flow-based we would expect to find flow in their core activities, either all the time (as in basketball, alpine skiing, hang gliding and ice hockey) or a significant part of it (as in acting, bird watching, fishing ['when they're biting'] and mountain biking).[1] Activities like these require physical skill commonly enacted with mental acuity and relevant knowledge. The twin components of competence and control are obvious here. More generally all the amateur activities and physically-active hobbies would seem to generate full or intermittent flow.

But what about leisure activities that are primarily mental such as playing chess or poker or reading something involved like a novel or an essay? The component of competence is evident in both kinds of pursuits, as experience and strategy are combined to influence each move on the chessboard or card table and background knowledge and developed vocabulary are combined to understand the written work. But where does control come in for the reading activities? Perhaps research specifically designed to explore this question will reveal that there is something to control but, at least for me, it is not obviously present. I will therefore hypothesize that the reading hobbies — the liberal arts hobbies — are not typically productive of flow (more about this proposition in the next section).

Do the making and tinkering hobbies produce flow? Making a quilt, chair, ceramic vase or origami figure or undertaking a typical do-it-yourself (DYI) project all require competence in particular skills and accumulated experience to execute them in a fulfilling way. Moreover control over external or unexpected forces can be an issue, as when the quilting fabric is found to be inferior or unexpectedly tears, the woodworker encounters an unexpected knot, the clay becomes too watery or the DYI plumber discovers a structural property in a wall that hinders successfully completing the project.

The collecting hobbies also combine competence and control, and so may be considered flow producing activities. Competence is observed in knowing what genuine collectibles look like, where to find them, what price is reasonable, how to spot blemishes, and the like. Control is sensed over procedures such as these when the collector has the confidence to engage in them without worrying about wasting time looking in the wrong place, being gypped by a seller, or failing to see the item's crucial faults. In these hobbies flow is experienced intermittently, say, during the moments when the collector is examining a set of possibly collectible items, when one is found and when a transaction to buy gets underway.

We turn finally to the career, or serious leisure, volunteer activities. The very definition of volunteers in this area includes the need for special knowledge, experience, and sometimes, skill. In short career volunteers must be competent at what they do. But do they sense a need for control over expressions of this competence?

To answer this question, consider a typology of volunteer activities (Stebbins, 2007b), one constructed in part from six interests in volunteering: popular (related to people), ideas, material (things), floral, faunal and environmental. Serious leisure activities in all six appear to carry with them a sense of possible need for control. This seems obvious in such popular volunteering as ski patrol, search and rescue and emergency medical work as well as in idea-based volunteering like pro-bono legal service and volunteer consulting. Less obviously environmental career volunteering, for example, includes the possible need for control while maintaining hiking trails and trout streams in difficult terrain as well as creating, organizing and conducting eco-friendly publicity campaigns in communities hostile to this stance toward nature.

The Liberal Arts Hobbies

This review of flow in the world of serious leisure brings to the fore the non-flow character of the liberal arts hobbies. Their goal is acquisition of a body of knowledge and understanding of, for example, one or more arts, sports, foods, beverages, languages, cultures, histories, sciences, philosophies or literary traditions. A similar goal motivates the inveterate albeit intellectually-oriented followers of current politics. These hobbyists look on the knowledge and understanding they have gained as ends in themselves rather than, as is common in the other serious leisure pursuits, as background, as a means to involvement in another hobby, amateur or volunteer activity. When compared with the other serious leisure activities, the knowledge acquired pursuing a liberal art is of primary rather than secondary importance. Of note is the fact that some of these hobbyists also gain knowledge through cultural tourism, video documentaries, public lectures, continuing-education courses and similar resources.

There is competence in pursuing this hobby, seen in having an adequate vocabulary for it, an intellect sufficient to follow the argument, a learned capacity to evaluate the validity of the material being consumed, and the like. But what sense do readers here have of any need for control in doing all this? Is there any sense of the possibility of something going wrong and then having to react to correct the problem so as to continue on the path to further learning? True the television could malfunction making it impossible to watch a video, a cultural tour of a museum might be abandoned because the place caught fire or a public lecturer could wind up with the flu forcing cancellation of the event. Yet it seems improbable that liberal arts hobbyists approach such eventualities with

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a sense of being competent enough to control them. As for the core activity of this hobby — actually reading something — what sense of control could emerge here such that, when combined with a sense of competence, a feeling of flow would result? I can think of none.

The liberal arts hobbies are woefully under-examined in leisure studies. Detailed exploratory work that includes some attention to the possibility of flow might produce evidence that negates my hypothesis. But at this point in time they do appear to stand as evidence that flow is not a universal feature of serious leisure. We have yet to survey a population for the proportion who goes in for this hobby, though casual observation suggests that it is substantial. Thus we are not speaking about some remote corner of the world of serious leisure. The hypothesized distinctiveness of the liberal arts hobbies — it rests in part on their lack of flow —should be noted by all scholars interested in the true extent of this kind of autotelic experience.

Casual and Project-Based Leisure

Casual leisure has been defined as the immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. Project-based leisure, the third form comprising the serious leisure perspective, is short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, or time free of disagreeable obligation (Stebbins, 2007a). We look first at casual leisure.

According to its definition, which revolves around activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it, casual leisure lacks the first component of flow. Consider its eight types, each of which shows that competence is not a prerequisite for carrying them out. The activities are *play* (including dabbling), relaxation (e.g., sitting, napping, strolling), *passive entertainment* (e.g., TV, books, recorded music), *active entertainment* (e.g., games of chance, party games), *sociable conversation*, *sensory stimulation* (e.g., sex, eating, drinking), *casual volunteering* (e.g., handing out leaflets, addressing envelops, taking tickets at concert) and *pleasurable aerobic activity*. The last and newest addition to this typology — pleasurable aerobic activity — refers to physical activities that require effort sufficient to cause marked increase in respiration and heart rate (Stebbins, 2004). Here reference is to 'aerobic activity' in the broad sense, to all activity that calls for such effort. Thus the concept includes the routines pursued collectively in (narrowly conceived of) aerobics classes and those pursued individually by way of televised or video-taped programs of aerobics. Yet, as with its passive and active cousins in entertainment, pleasurable aerobic activity is, at bottom, casual leisure. That is, to carry out such activity requires little more than minimal skill, knowledge, or experience.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 52) briefly discusses 'micro-flow activities', or private behaviours intended to relieve everyday boredom (e.g., doodling, chewing on things). They may be conceived of as instances of the play and sensory stimulation types of casual leisure. His accompanying comments on the micro-flow activities suggest, however, that he does not regard them as true flow. Why? At bottom they lack complexity and demanding challenge.

Project-based leisure requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but is for all that neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such. Examples include surprise birthday parties, elaborate preparations for a major holiday and volunteering for sports events. Flow is certainly possible where skill, knowledge or both are needed to complete a project, as in using knowledge of Powerpoint gained at work to mount a slide show of one's two-week tour of the Antarctic to be shown at an evening gathering of friends. An experienced and competent user of Powerpoint would be able to control, or solve, the problems that could possibly spring up during preparation and presentation of the show (e.g., how to present the slides on a full screen, implement the fly-in effect, insert photos).

Conclusions

The majority of serious leisure activities generate flow during all or a significant portion of the time spent engaging in their core activity. One might therefore be forgiven the inclination to paint all serious leisure with this brush, since the non-flow liberal arts hobbies are in the minority, often overlooked (hobbyist readers commonly attract little attention) and seldom studied scientifically. So this article urges us to be more discriminating about how we understand the place of flow in serious leisure. Furthermore some of the casual leisure activities, especially the sensory stimulation type, look as though they offer flow-based experiences. But application of the eight components fails to support this impression. Elsewhere by no means every leisure project is capable of producing flow for its participants. In other words here, too, each project studied requires close scrutiny to determine its potential for flow.

The desire to experience flow in leisure is a powerful motive, and the concept is clearly a major theoretic breakthrough for the study of leisure activities. That said we cannot explain the appeal of all leisure using this idea.

Note

[1] A core activity is the distinctive set of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve the outcome or product the participant finds attractive (e.g., enjoyable, satisfying, fulfilling) (Stebbins, 2007a).

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Leisure Reflections

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Leisure Reflections No. 26

Personal Memoirs, Project-Based Leisure and Therapeutic Recreation for Seniors

Seniors, even comparatively young ones at around age 55, have had a wealth of experiences, which some of them would like to describe and evaluate in some public way. Moreover, in our fast-paced, ever changing modern world, as people live into their 80s and 90s, their past increasingly contrasts with the present in which they and their much younger friends and relatives now live. Some seniors are inclined to talk about this disjuncture using such terminology as 'in the (good) old days, when I was your age', 'I can remember when we didn't have . . . ', and similar lead-ins to a desire to reminisce. Some younger listeners find these observations interesting, if not edifying, whereas others care little about the past thus revealed.

Seniors face a dilemma when they want to converse this way, while sensing that their observations on a by-gone era may be unwelcome. On the one hand, they can remain silent on such matters, stifling their impulse to contextualize the conversation in what they consider an enlightening way that simultaneously enables them to briefly enjoy the center of attention. On the other hand, they can introduce a comparison such as just described, while risking its rejection by the other interlocutors. One way around this dilemma for seniors is to suppress all or most of the time their spontaneous reminiscences. Alternatively they could write out as a personal memoir in the form of prose or poetry those aspects of their past they want to share with whomever might read what they have written.

The Personal Memoir

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (5th ed.) defines a *memoir* as: 'a record of events or history from personal knowledge or from special sources of information; an autobiographical account or (occas.) biographical record'. In principle the record referred to here may be written, audio or visual, as in an essay, piece of poetry, recorded oral statement or video-taped account. In practice it is probable that most memoirs are of the essay variety, but with oral and visual types becoming ever more common given advances in and proliferation of facilitative recording equipment. Poetry would seem to be the least popular medium for memoirs, although as shown later, seniors can warm to this way of telling about their past.

Creating a memoir, as just defined and described, is most commonly a kind of project-based leisure.[1] Memoirs differ from impromptu, fleeting oral reminiscences, which in most instances, are best qualified as casual leisure of the sociable conversation type. Memoir-based projects, on the other hand, are free-time activity in which someone works up a record of a major event or, possibly more demanding, of his or her life, an activity that takes time and may require learning certain intellectual and physical skills (project-based leisure is discussed in the next section). The intellectual skills include knowing a language well enough to enable expression of what the person remembers (e.g., sufficient knowledge of vocabulary, sentence construction, paragraph development). The physical skills are evident in an ability to write by hand, use a computer (especially for people unable to write by hand) or operate an audio or video recorder. Nevertheless these kinds of skill and knowledge would be unnecessary to the extent that someone else does the recording and edits for style and readability what gets registered.

We have no idea how many people produce personal memoirs, be they prose or poetry presented in an article, book, or audio or video recording. Moreover only recently has it been recognized that such expression of one's past experiences can be therapeutic. To this end, Carol Adams (2007) organized for seniors a series of workshops during 2005 and 2006 in Ontario,

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Canada the goals of which were to engender a love for poetry, a capacity to write poetically and find 'a healing or therapeutic effect from recording and sharing memories' (Adams, 2007, p. ix). In fact some of the participants wrote prose instead of or in addition to poetry.

Adams describes the therapeutic outcome of the workshops where writing poetry was the principal focus:

> It was clear to me that by the middle of the series, the workshops had helped the participants to become more fully alive. Accomplishment was food for our students, indeed as it is for every one of us. Poetry not only makes people more aware of their feelings but also emphasizes their importance. It provides a way to talk about them that is a pleasure to hear. (p. 24)

The poems thus created were often shared with others in the workshops (read by Adams or their authors), leading to friendly exchanges among them, a sense of common interest and experience and an elevated enthusiasm for everyday life.

How does the project-based leisure framework explain the production of such personal memoirs and their therapeutic effect?

Project-Based Leisure

Project-based leisure, casual leisure and serious leisure constitute the three main forms of the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 2007). Project-based leisure is a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such (Stebbins, 2005).

Though not serious leisure, project-based leisure is enough like it to justify using the serious leisure framework (set out in Stebbins, 2007, pp. 5-15) to develop a parallel framework for exploring this neglected class of activities. A main difference is that project-based leisure fails to generate a sense of career. Otherwise, however, there is here a need to persevere, some skill or knowledge may be required and, invariably, effort is called for. Also present are recognizable benefits, a special identity, and often a social world of sorts, though it appears one usually less complicated than those surrounding many serious leisure activities. And perhaps it happens at times that, even if not intended at the moment as participation in a type of serious leisure, the skilled, artistic, or intellectual aspects of the project prove so attractive that the participant decides, after the fact, to make a leisure career of their pursuit as a hobby or an amateur activity.

Project-based leisure is also capable of generating many of the rewards experienced in serious leisure (these rewards are discussed in detail in Stebbins, 2007, pp. 13-15). And, as in serious leisure so in project-based leisure: these rewards constitute a main part of the motivational basis for pursuing such highly fulfilling activity:

Personal rewards

1. Personal enrichment (cherished experiences)
2. Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge)
3. Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed)
4. Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant)
5. Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfillment)
6. Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work
7. Financial return (from a serious leisure activity)

Social rewards

8. Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity)
9. Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic)
10. Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution)

It was noted in the definition presented earlier that project-based leisure is not all the same. Whereas systematic exploration may reveal others, two types of project-based leisure have so far been identified: one-time projects and occasional projects. The two types are presented next using the classificatory framework for amateur, hobbyist and volunteer activities (see Stebbins, 1998, chaps. 2-4). This typology shows where the free-time production of memoirs fits within this form

One-Off Projects

In all these projects adolescents generally use the talents and knowledge they have at hand, even though for some projects they may seek beforehand certain instructions. This may include reading a book or taking a short course. And some projects may require a modicum of preliminary conditioning. Always the goal is to undertake successfully the one-off project and nothing more, and sometimes a small amount of background preparation is necessary for this. It is possible that a survey would show that most project-based leisure is hobbyist in character, while its next most common type is a distinctive kind of volunteering. Consider the following hobbyist-like projects:

- Making and tinkering:
  - Interlacing, interlocking, and knot-making from kits
  - Other kit assembly projects (e.g., stereo tuner, craft store projects)
  - Do-it-yourself projects done primarily for fulfillment, some of which may even be undertaken with minimal skill and knowledge (e.g., finish a room in the basement, plant a special garden). This could turn into an irregular series of such projects, spread over many years. They might even transform the participant into a hobbyist.
- Liberal arts:
  - Genealogy (not as ongoing hobby)
  - Tourism: special trip, not as part of an extensive personal tour program, to visit different parts of a region, a continent, or much of the world
- Activity participation: long back-packing trip, canoe trip; one-off mountain ascent (e.g., Fuji, Kilimanjaro), *Guinness Book of Records* project

One-off volunteering projects are also common, though possibly somewhat less so than hobbyist-like projects. And less common than either are the amateur-like projects, which appear to concentrate in the sphere of theater.

- Volunteering
  - Volunteer at a convention or conference (local, national, or international).
  - Volunteer at a sporting competition.

– Volunteer at an arts festival or special exhibition mounted in a museum.
– Volunteer to help restore human life or wildlife after a natural or human-made disaster caused by, for instance, a hurricane, or industrial accident.

- Entertainment Theater: produce a skit or one-off community pageant; prepare a home film or a set of videos or photos; prepare a public talk.

Occasional Projects

Preliminary observation suggests that occasional projects are more likely than their one-off cousins to originate in or be motivated by agreeable obligation. Examples of occasional projects include the sum of the culinary, decorative, or other creative activities undertaken, for example, at home or at work for a religious occasion or someone's birthday. Likewise, national holidays and similar celebrations sometimes inspire individuals to mount occasional projects consisting of an ensemble of inventive elements.

Revision of the Project-Based Leisure Typology

The forgoing observations on personal memoirs suggest the need for some revisions to the project-based leisure typology, namely, the subtype subsuming the different entertainment theatre activities. To conceptualize better the range of leisure projects in this category, I would like to propose the following revision:

- Arts projects:
  – Entertainment theatre: produce a skit or one-off community pageant; prepare a home film, video or set of photos.
  – Public speaking: prepare a talk for a reunion, an after-dinner speech, an oral position statement on an issue to be discussed at a community meeting.
  – Memoirs: therapeutic audio, visual and written productions by the elderly; life histories and autobiographies (all ages); accounts of personal events (all ages).

As the subtype of writing memoirs indicates, therapeutic prose and poetry written by the elderly is not the only possible kind of project-based leisure in this area. Literate people of all ages, but especially those who have lived for many years, may want to set out publicly their life history (in leisure studies see Kaplan, 1998). Still even a paraplegic twenty-year old, for example, might want to write down what it was like to live as a child and adolescent in such a condition. Furthermore how many people across the age spectrum put pen to paper to express their participation in and understanding of a major event in life, such as death of a loved one (Palucci, 2008), climbing a mountain peak (e.g., Krakauer, 1999), role in a celebrated labor strike (e.g., Dobbs, 1972) or experiences in a famous military battle (e.g., Harpur, 1980)? All these examples are published books, whereas many authors of memoirs probably write more informally for very small readerships, primarily friends and relatives, or possibly only for themselves and the fulfillment that such activity brings to them.

Conclusions

Adams's observations on the effects of memoir writing on the seniors in the workshops suggest that they experience the first three rewards listed above: self-enrichment, self-actualization, and self-expression. Social attraction is also a reward for many of them. Moreover, because the seniors must acquire a certain amount of knowledge about writing and possibly some computer skills or those associated with audio recording, the need to persevere is also evident. Eventually, the memoir project comes to an end, however, for the past events and experiences worth memorializing (as the senior sees it) will have been exhausted. But, then, the writer might continue on as an amateur author of prose or poetry on other themes. In this scenario project-based leisure would foster serious leisure.

This article has concentrated on one kind of therapeutic project-based leisure for the elderly. But note that an interesting casual leisure form of therapy has been observed by Stan Parker who now lives in a care home in London. He writes about what is done there to maintain and improve the mental health of residents:

> Every week a quiz is held by a volunteer. Usually about 20 to 30 residents attend, seated at 3 to 4 tables. Each table appoints a scribe (if possible a resident, but occasionally a volunteer) to note that table's agreed answers and mark the score. The 25 questions are on sport, the arts, entertainment, politics and so on. Ten of the questions are on the events and personalities in a particular named year, usually between 1930 and 1960.
>
> Each table works as a team. If a team member offers an answer, the others have to agree or propose a different answer. The majority answer among the team prevails. On request the quiz leader may give a clue to everyone — usually the first letter of the correct answer.
>
> The table with the most correct answers gets a round of applause but no prize. We may conclude that the quiz promotes verbal interaction, adds new knowledge and corrects wrong answers. (Parker, personal note, November, 2010)

Keeping the mind active in old age is crucial to well-being in the senior years. Serious leisure is an obvious avenue along which to pursue this goal. But, in this area of life, never underestimate the salubrious effects of therapeutically-designed casual and project-based leisure.

Note

1 On relatively rare occasions someone writes a book-length memoir that makes the author so much money that it may be considered part of that person's livelihood (e.g., Krakauer, 1999).

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Leisure Reflections

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Leisure Reflections No. 27

LEISURE CHOICE, FACILITATION and CONSTRAINT

This trio of terms — choice, constraint and facilitation — has been around leisure studies for many years, with the third being the most recent arrival. The tendency, it appears, has been to treat of one of them with little or no discussion of one or both of the other two. Thus, I weighed in on the limitations of the idea of choice in defining leisure, without so much as a word about either facilitation or constraint (Stebbins, 2005), while Scott (2003), for example, in a review of the constraints literature, said nothing about choice or facilitation. Raymore (2002) glimpsed some of the undesirable effects of this tendency to consider these three ideas in isolation of the others when he pointed out that the dominant interest in constraints has occluded an interest in leisure's facilitators, and what is more, that "an absence of constraints does not necessarily lead to participation" (p. 37). Since choice of leisure activity is substantially affected by both constraints and facilitators faced by and available to the participant, we could understand leisure participation better were we to consider all three simultaneously.

Relating Choice, Constraint, and Facilitation

Because this article is, at bottom, about the nature of leisure, we need a definition of it on which to base the present argument. Since the precursor of Stebbins (2005) published in 2002 in the *LSA Newsletter*, I have been trying to develop such a definition. Its most recent version is as follows: leisure is un-coerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their abilities and resources, actually do in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way, if not both (more fully discussed in Stebbins, in press).

Note that reference to 'free choice' and 'freely chosen'— both long-standing components of standard definitions of leisure — are, for reasons set out elsewhere (Stebbins, 2005), intentionally omitted from this definition. Generally put, choice is never completely free, but rather is hedged about with all sorts of conditions, constraints and facilitators being prominent among them. This situation renders useless as an essential element in a basic definition the concept of free choice and allied ideas such as freedom and feeling free (c.f., Juniu & Henderson, 2001).

But abandoning, as we must, the idea of choice in definitions of leisure, this approach also risks abandoning the vital condition of personal agency in directing leisure participation. To escape this dilemma, I have begun to speak not about the capacity of choice but about the lack of coercion in pursuing leisure activities, about un-coerced participation. This language enables discussion of the things people want to do but in certain instances cannot do because of any number of constraints on choice. Because they encounter limiting social and personal conditions; for example, aptitude, ability, socialized leisure tastes, knowledge of available activities, and accessibility of activities. In other words, when using a definition of leisure that includes as a central ingredient the lack of coercion, we must be sure to understand leisure activities in relation to their larger personal, structural, cultural, and historical background (Stebbins, in press). And it follows that leisure is not really freely chosen, as theorized earlier by various observers (e.g., Parker, 1983, pp. 8-9; Kelly, 1990, p. 7), since choice of activity is significantly shaped by this background. How facilitation fits in all this will be considered shortly.

A critical problem with this line of reasoning about constraints and facilitators is that, as context, they fail to tell us what leisure is in the eyes of the participant. For this person leisure is not about what he is prevented, or constrained, from doing. It is not even about being facilitated to do an activity. Rather leisure *is* doing that activity (Stebbins, 2009a, p. 108), actually participating in it as something the participant wants to do and can do at a satisfying level. Now this is not to argue that it is therefore unimportant to study how the social, cultural, structural milieu shapes free-time choices of activities. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Rather, knowing this helps explain the leisure choices that people do make. A full theory of leisure must include propositions about context.

Yet, taking off from Raymore's observation, it seems that a disproportionate interest in constraints accentuates the negative in the sole domain in life devoted to finding positiveness — that is, the domain of leisure. The quest for positiveness should be a central theme in leisure studies, with research on the effects of

negativeness being organised with reference to it. Yet, if this observation is obvious in the case of constraints, it is perhaps less so in the case of facilitators.

Facilitating Leisure

According to Raymore facilitators to leisure are 'factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation' (p. 39). This definition is an adaptation of Jackson's (1997) definition of constraint, where facilitator is seen (by Raymore) as its antonym. Nevertheless the two are not polar opposites, since facilitation is not necessarily achieved by overcoming one or more constraints or even achieved because of their absence. Writing on the relationship of facilitators and constraints to leisure motivation, Raymore argued that "the facilitator is the condition itself, not the process through which that condition energizes or motivates behavior leading to (i.e., facilitating) or limiting (i.e., constraining) participation" (pp. 43-44). He follows up this observation by linking constraints and facilitators to the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. Raymore wrote on facilitation, because he believed that the popularity of constraints as an object of research was creating an imbalance relative to their importance in a full explanation of leisure motivation.

In this conceptualisation facilitators may be regarded as resources for leisure activities. Furthermore, as with constraints, facilitators may be intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural. Raymore theorizes that intrapersonal facilitators are individual characteristics, traits and beliefs that enable or promote the development of leisure preferences and that encourage or enhance leisure participation. The interpersonal facilitators, which originate in other people or groups of people, have these same effects. It is likewise with structural facilitators: they are found in social and physical institutions, organisations and belief systems.

Inherited characteristics constitute an important class of intrapersonal facilitators. For example being endowed with exceptional muscular strength, vocal clarity or facial beauty enhances success in rugby, operatic singing or fashion modeling, respectively. Knowing the coach, being a member of an outstanding musical group or working in an electronics shop may facilitate on an interpersonal basis, getting invited to join a football team, experiencing top honours in a chamber music context or having access at discounted prices to computer equipment. Structurally an individual's participation in a leisure activity may be facilitated by membership in an amateur science society or fishing club with exclusive use of a private pond or by adherence to a religion that allows the faithful access to a retreat.

The Limited Role of Choice

Constraints limit choice, as has just been noted. But, in their peculiar way, so do facilitators. To the extent that participants are aware of the positive effects of the second, they will want to take advantage of them. In other words choice of other leisure activities is thereby limited, in that the other activities lack these facilitators. Why, for instance, take up a musical instrument when the singer with an exceptionally clear voice has a natural advantage at succeeding in his or her passion for music as a vocalist? Why abandon fishing as a summer hobby in order to take up another, when the private pond frequently yields the unforgettable experiences of outstanding catches?

Conclusions

Both constraints and facilitators limit choice. But, otherwise, the two have remarkably different effects on the pursuit of leisure. First, constraints are negative; they hinder leisure choice. Second facilitators are, like leisure itself, positive; they enable people to pursue what they want to do. Yet, that facilitators limit choice is usually of rather little consequence for the participant. As the foregoing illustrations suggest there is much of the time little incentive to abandon an activity that is well facilitated for another which lacks in significant measure this resource. More precisely facilitators are conditions that help motivate people to take up an activity and stay with it. At this point the activity in question is in the process of being chosen or has been chosen and is now being actively pursued, however limited the antecedent range of choices shaped by a diversity of constraints. Some of these constraints are highly restrictive, for depending on the society, some members may be denied the right to pursue a fair assortment of leisure activities. For example Martin and Mason (2004) report that, among devout female Muslims, sport and physical recreation, though acceptable, may only be pursued according to precepts of Islamic modesty and dress. And in all societies knowledge of the full range activities to which the individual does have a right is rarely complete.

This discussion of constraints and facilitators leads to the broader observation that context can be either negative or positive. Moreover the foregoing ideas suggest that choice of activities, to the extent that people have choice, is guided not only by what is available to them but also by what the chooser can do well at, find resources for, and find encouragement in. This is why we need to consider this trio of ideas as an ensemble. If nothing else we need much more research on facilitation, which is so far very thin.[1] One danger in ignoring facilitation and failing to look at the three ideas together lies in over-stressing the role of constraints in the sole domain in life where positiveness reigns (for an examination of leisure as positiveness, see Stebbins, 2009b).

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Note

[1] A partial literature search revealed but one article (Woodside, Caldwell, and Spurr, 2006) and a brief mention of the idea (Samdahl, 2005, p. 346).

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Leisure Reflections

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Leisure Reflections No. 28

LEISURE AND HAPPINESS

Interlaced among all the dreary news of the day are persistent and mellifluous observations about happiness in our lives. Even though there is in this trendy interest a certain amount of phony and simplistic advice and thought, it is on the whole a good thing. At least it accents the positive and gets people thinking about their lives in such terms.

Richard Layard (2005, p. 12) defines happiness as the state of feeling good and enjoying life. It is a descriptive term. Moreover some thinkers see happiness as momentary: '[it] is considered to reflect a person's more temporary affective feelings of the present moment' (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 208). Examples include: 'I was happy with my performance on the test', 'I am happy that my party turned out so well', 'I was very happy to receive that award the other day'. Let us label this *short-term happiness*, so-called because the 'present moment' might last for a few minutes or even a few days.

By contrast, others see happiness as a description of a broad swath of life, as expressed in such observations as: 'I was happy as a child', 'My years in this community have been happy ones', 'I will be happy in retirement'. In this vein Diener (2000) holds that happiness and subjective well-being are the same. For him well-being is a combination of positive affect and general life satisfaction. In a similar vein Keyes (1998, p. 121) defines social well-being as 'the absence of negative conditions and feelings, the result of adjustment and adaptation to a hazardous world'. To put the matter positively, let us say that well-being comes with having good health, reasonable prosperity, and in general, being routinely happy and content. This is *long-term happiness*.

Short or long term, happiness is the result of a huge variety of personal and social conditions leading to this state in individuals. Thus, it is interesting to describe people's (usually long-term) happiness, to know how many of them are happy, think they will be happy, once were happy, and so on. In this regard it is now common to compile national happiness ratings (see Datablog in *guardian.co.uk*, 14 November 2010), while Britain's Prime Minister, David Cameron, has decided to create a national happiness index. These are major undertakings, which by the way appear to ignore the short/long-term distinction just set out.

Yet even more complicated is the project of explaining such tendencies as well as explaining the condition of happiness itself. A substantial part of the explanation of happiness has been driven by the question of whether money makes people happy. And, from what I will be saying about fulfillment in this article, it should be easy to conclude that, much of the time, no direct link exists between happiness and money. Layard (2005) determined from his review of comparative research on this issue that 'comparing countries confirms what history also shows'– that above $20,000 [USD] per head, higher average income is no guarantee of greater happiness' (p. 34). Once food, clothing, shelter, and the like are secure, having more money is not necessarily a source of increased well-being (Franklin, 2010, p. 5).

Subjective or social, the concept of well-being rests on the presupposition that, to achieve it, people must be proactive, must exercise personal agency to arrive at this state. Well being is therefore also a goal, which when reached will demonstrate a person's overall happiness. The same may be said for obtaining a decent quality of life. Both concepts speak to a process of personal betterment, as the individual defines this state. Happiness is therefore further explained by our willingness to work toward our well-being and agreeable quality of life.

Moreover psychological and sociological positiveness are sources of happiness. Happy people are positive about their lives, whether at the

moment or over a long period of time. This observation describes the result of positive living, of the pursuit of positiveness in a life seen as attractive and worth living. Be that as it may, positiveness is both a condition *and* a goal. As a condition it may be seen as an aspect of long-term happiness. As a goal, however, it stresses finding worthwhileness; it emphasizes getting something desirable out of life. Personal agency is also a prerequisite of positiveness (Stebbins, 2009, p. 7). It stresses actively finding a life that is, in combination, rewarding, satisfying, and fulfilling. Here people direct their own efforts to find worthwhile activities, even while those efforts are inevitably framed and sometimes constrained by broader social, cultural and structural conditions.

The Limits of the Idea of Happiness

Leisure can generate happiness, but is not itself happiness. Happiness is a state of mind; it is positive affect and a component of emotional well-being (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 71). By contrast leisure is activity; it is what we do in free time to make life attractive and worthwhile. We may describe ourselves as 'happy', but we may not say we are 'leisure' (however happy we may be).

In general to be happy with a leisure activity is, at least in part, to be satisfied with it. Mannell and Kleiber (1997, p. 208) observe following Campbell (1980) that satisfaction implies a judgment, a comparison of the outcome of, for example, a leisure activity in the present with what the participant expected. Thus low satisfaction with that activity would fail to generate happiness at that moment.

So, by no means all leisure activity results in a happy state. I am not speaking here of boredom, which I have argued elsewhere is not leisure (Stebbins, 2003). Whereas people try to avoid becoming bored, some of them find that certain leisure activities have minimal appeal such that they are only marginally better than boredom. Bruno Frey (2008) found in his studies of happiness conducted at the University of Zurich that results were mixed on whether watching television makes people happy. But it is clear from his group's research and the relevant literature that such activity, if it leads to happiness at all, generally leads to low satisfaction and hence a low order of this mood. Moreover they found indirect evidence to support the hypothesis that: 'television consumption significantly lowers the life satisfaction of individuals with high opportunity costs of time, whereas as it has no discernible effect on the life satisfaction of individuals with low opportunity costs of time'. In economics the concept of 'opportunity cost of time' refers to time lost in an activity that could have been used to pursue a more satisfying one such as self-employment or high-level salaried work (e.g., professional jobs, top bureaucratic positions). It takes good self-control to avoid the high opportunity costs of time attendant on the excessive consumption of television.

What has been referred to elsewhere as 'volitional abandonment' (Stebbins, 2008) constitutes another free-time situation where leisure fails to engender happiness. Volitional abandonment takes place when a person consciously decides to participate no further in an activity. I dealt with this antecedent in my comparison of devotee work and serious leisure (Stebbins, 2004, pp. 88-89). There it was observed that some people eventually come realize that their formerly highly appealing work or leisure is no longer nearly as enjoyable and fulfilling as it once was. It has become too humdrum, possibly no longer offering sufficient challenge, novelty, or social reward (e.g., social attraction, group accomplishment, contribution to development of a larger collectivity). Perhaps they have become discouraged with one or more of its core tasks, so discouraged that they believe they will never again find deep satisfaction in it.

Nevertheless some people hang on for a period of time, unhappily participating in the activity while finding it difficult to extricate themselves from it. This is a common fate among volunteers who have served well in responsible positions, often because they have established a standard of performance few others are willing or able to meet. Amateurs and hobbyists in team-based activities may reluctantly stay with them, when others in the group complain that, if the first leave, the orchestra, sports team, bridge club or barbershop quartet, for example, will deteriorate, if not cease to function. In this half-life it is questionable whether such participants are truly at their leisure; perhaps for them the activity has slid into disagreeable obligation.

Casual leisure, because it is evanescent hedonism, is subject to losing its appeal and drifting toward low levels of satisfaction and short-term unhappiness, if not completely out of the zone into boredom. Frey's data from his study of television fit here. In addition, it is certainly possible that some kinds of sociable conversation lose their appeal after a protracted period of it. And most of us like to eat and sleep, but can become satiated with either after too much. In serious and project-based leisure participants may be dissatisfied, or unhappy, with how their activities or projects have turned out. The relatives get into a vicious quarrel at a family picnic; the soloist in the community orchestra concert, gripped with stage fright, plays badly off key; the board member of a non-profit has at every meeting acrimonious exchanges with the organization's executive director. Some of these examples depict only short-term unhappiness, allowing thus for the possibility that long-term happiness in the activity remains unthreatened.

Happiness in Leisure: Authentic or Profound

Martin Seligman (2003) brings us to the jumping off point for relating leisure and long-term happiness, when he states that 'authentic happiness' comes from realizing our potential for enduring self-fulfillment. This observation opens the door to the central relationship that leisure has with happiness. Putting his thoughts into a leisure studies framework, we may say that enduring self-fulfillment springs primarily from serious leisure and devotee work activities, where it commonly takes several years to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to realize this personal expression. Leisure projects are often capable of producing some sense of self-fulfillment, but not at the level of the 'serious pursuits' (summary term for serious leisure and devotee work, Stebbins, 2011, chap. 1). Casual leisure, because it is based, at the most, on minimal skill and knowledge, is incapable of producing self-fulfillment and therefore long-term happiness by means of it.

But there is reason to quetion Seligman's use of the adjective 'authentic'. Is the happiness achieved through serious pursuits any more real or genuine than that achieved through casual leisure? Surely casual leisure happiness is real enough, as in the thrill of a roller coaster ride, an entertaining night at a comedy club, an enjoyable sociable conversation or a bus tour offering breath-taking natural scenery. Rather, the central issue is how long does such happiness endure and how profoundly related is it to our personal history, acquired skills and knowledge, and special gifts and talents? Most leisure leads to real, authentic, happiness but only some of that happiness is profound, whereas some of it is superficial, falling thus at an intermediate point on the happiness-unhappiness dimension.

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Seligman, by the way, does not mention leisure in his discussion. Instead it is I who extended his observation into free time and called into question the appropriateness of 'authentic' as applied to happiness in the activities there. This brings up a more general observation central to this discussion, namely, that outside the various descriptive indicators of happiness associated with leisure, leisure is far from being a prominent theme in the literature on the subject. Perhaps this is to be expected, for a growing proportion of that literature is written by economists and psychologists (for a partial review see Frey, 2008, pp. 13-14). On this account Nobel laureate Gary Becker (1965, p. 504) concluded that 'although the social philosopher might have to define precisely the concept of leisure, the economist can reach all his traditional results, as well as many more, without introducing it at all'! Nonetheless, economist Layard (2005, pp, 74-75), to his credit, does recognize leisure of the serious kind (he does not use the term) at which point he cites Csikszentmihalyi and flow.

Samuel S. Franklin (2010), a psychologist, approaches the relationship of happiness and fulfillment from the angle of his discipline. Starting with Aristotle's concept of happiness, he brings together theory and research from psychology, philosophy, and physiology in support of the second's views on this psychological state. Franklin's main premise is that happiness is the fulfillment of human potential and not a series of transient pleasures, accumulated wealth, or an outcome of religious belief. For him happiness is long-term, a way of living that characterizes such fulfillment. This said, there are few words in his book about leisure. As with economics this should come as no surprise. For what is known about leisure from the standpoint of psychology has been described as a 'social psychology of leisure' and 'a child of leisure studies' (Mannell, Kleiber, & Staempfli, 2006, p. 119). These authors hold that 'leisure has all but been ignored by social psychologists in the field of psychology during the past 100 years' (pp. 112-113).

Conclusion

Although leisure is not happiness it clearly plays a pivotal role in generating this state. We should never lose sight of this relationship with one of today's most vibrant spheres of life, for to do so would be to miss an opportunity to promote leisure's relevance to matters that count with science and the general public. Even if some (mostly casual) leisure leads only to short-term, superficial happiness, it is nonetheless a kind of happiness many people like. We in leisure studies should be showing them the many free-time avenues that may be taken to reach this goal and the nature of the benefits that may be found along the way. We should also plug serious and project-based leisure as additional routes to happiness, albeit of a more profound and enduring sort. In effect we are arguing, in doing this, that, whereas money is generally a poor currency for buying happiness, leisure offers a much more profitable route to this goal. Serious and project-based leisure are far more likely to lead to long-term happiness, especially when, with the casual form, all three are integrated in an optimal leisure lifestyle.

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Leisure Reflections

Robert A. Stebbins

Professor Robert A. Stebbins, with over 35 years in leisure studies, has pioneered the ideas of 'serious leisure', 'casual leisure', 'project-based leisure' and 'optimal leisure'. He is currently Faculty Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. Author of 37 books and monographs in several areas of social science, his most recent works bearing on these ideas include: *Between Work and Leisure* (Transaction, 2004); C*hallenging Mountain Nature* (Detselig, 2005); *A Dictionary of Nonprofit Terms and Concepts* (Indiana University Press, 2006, with D.H. Smith and M. Dover); *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (Transaction, 2007); *Personal Decisions in the Public Square: Beyond Problem Solving into a Positive Sociology* (Transaction, 2009); *Leisure and Consumption* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and *Social Entrepreneurship for Dummies* (Wiley, 2010, with M. Durieux). He was elected Fellow of the Academy of Leisure Sciences in 1996 and, in 1999, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; and has been a member of LSA since 1995.

Stebbins's main leisure interests lie in amateur music, where he is a jazz and classical double bassist, and in various outdoor hobbyist pursuits, notably cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking and mountain scrambling (hiking to mountain tops). He is also an active volunteer in the Calgary French community, primarily as President of the *Centre d'accueil pour les nouveaux arrivants francophones* (an organization that helps French-speaking immigrants settle in Calgary). And, to be sure, casual leisure counts as well. For Stebbins it consists mainly of evening conversations with friends and family and dining out in Calgary's restaurants.

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No. 29

Self-Directed Learning as a Foundation for Complex Leisure

Roberson (2005, p. 205) notes the crucial differences between adult education and self-directed learning and then links the second to serious leisure. Drawing on an earlier conceptualization by Lambdin (1997), he says that 'self-directed learning is intentional and self-planned learning where the individual is clearly in control of this process'. Such learning may be formal (here it would be synonymous with adult education), but most often, it is informal. An important condition is agency, that the learner controls the start, direction, and termination of the learning experience. Both adult education and self-directed learning are types of 'lifelong learning'. The latter is a broader idea than the first two, summarized by Selman and colleagues (1998, p. 21) as learning done throughout a person's lifetime, 'from the cradle to the grave'.

Roberson (2005) found that his sample of rural, elderly Americans (in the State of Georgia) took their learning seriously, as they pursued amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer roles. At the same time the respondents also said they 'enjoyed' or had 'fun' in these learning experiences. Roberson said they were "playful" when involved in them. In fact, his findings would seem to lend some empirical weight to the importance of the serious leisure reward of self-gratification, where participants find a combination of superficial enjoyment and deep self-fulfillment.

Jones and Symon (2001), in writing about governmental policy in Britain, indicate that adult education and self-directed learning offer serious learning-oriented resources for six special groups: the unemployed, unwaged (volunteers), elderly, women, 'portfolio workers' (hold many different jobs over a lifetime), and people with disabilities. Moreover, serious leisure offers an involving, fulfilling career to these groups that some members of them once had and other members of them never had in work. Contemporary governmental policy, the authors say, tends to overlook the existence of serious leisure and its implications for quality of life and well-being.

These authors have identified the pivotal place of serious leisure in self-directed learning (SDL). Still, there is more that must be said about this process, were we are to apply it to the many areas of human life where it might operate. One, how does SDL vary across the serious leisure perspective, including project-based leisure? Two, how does SDL vary across the life course and how does it relate to lifelong learning? Three, what role does SDL play in the wider society?

SDL in the Serious Leisure Perspective

The serious leisure perspective (SLP) can be described, in simplest terms, as the theoretic framework that synthesizes three main forms of leisure showing, at once, their distinctive features, similarities, and interrelationships (the SLP is discussed in detail in Stebbins, 2007). The three forms are the amateur, hobbyist, and career volunteer pursuits, which are briefly defined as follows (discussed in detail in Stebbins, 2007):

- **Serious leisure:** systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.
- **Casual leisure:** immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it.

- **Project-based leisure:** short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, or time free of disagreeable obligation.

Note that, recently, serious leisure and devotee work has been placed under the new heading of 'serious pursuits', as its two main types (Stebbins, 2012). 'Devotee work' may be conceived of as pleasant obligation, in that the people who perform it, though they must make a living from their work, do so by carrying out a highly, intrinsically appealing, set of activities. Work of this nature is, at bottom, essentially leisure.

Of the many types of hobbyists those going in for the liberal arts are particularly germane to this article. They are enamored of the systematic acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. Many of them accomplish this by reading voraciously in a field of art, sport, cuisine, language, culture, history, science, philosophy, politics, or literature (Stebbins, 1994). But some of them go beyond this to expand their knowledge still further through cultural tourism, documentary videos, television programs, and similar resources. Although the matter has yet to be studied through research, it is theoretically possible to separate buffs from consumers in the liberal arts hobbies of sport, cuisine, and the fine and entertainment arts. Some people — call them *consumers* — more or less uncritically consume restaurant fare, sports events, or displays of art (concerts, shows, exhibitions) as pure entertainment and sensory stimulation (casual leisure), whereas others — call them *buffs* — participate in these same situations as more or less knowledgeable experts, as serious leisure (for more on this distinction, see Stebbins 2002, chap. 5). The ever rarer Renaissance man of our day may also be classified here, even though such people avoid specializing in one field of learning to acquire, instead, a somewhat more superficial knowledge of a variety of fields. Being broadly well-read is a liberal arts hobby of its own.

For many participants in serious leisure, their SDL can be explained, in part, using Houle's (1961) distinction between learning-oriented and goal-oriented motives for pursuing adult education, in general. That is, the liberal arts hobbies are the only form of serious leisure where SDL is an end in itself. By contrast, amateurs, volunteers, and other hobbyists learn as a means to particular leisure ends, such as producing art, playing sport, collecting objects, or helping others. Sometimes both types of participant enroll in the adult-education same course, a pattern that appears to be especially common in science. Thus, some students in an adult education course in astronomy may be liberal arts hobbyists, while others are there to learn about the heavens as background for their amateur research. Or the liberal arts hobbyist in, say, French cuisine reads to improve his cultural understanding of this culinary practice, whereas the cooking (making and tinkering) hobbyist in this area reads to improve her capacity to prepare better gourmet meals.

There are times when people read as a means to accomplishing a leisure project. Examples abound, as in a leisure-oriented, do-it-self enthusiast who reads a book on remodeling kitchens, a genealogist who studies the historical literature about the parental old country, and a speaker at a school reunion who, unaccustomed to talking before an audience, examines an article on public speaking. These examples suggest that SDL in service of projects is largely, if not entirely, of the goal-oriented variety. Indeed, the limited temporal scope of the typical leisure project seems to preclude learning-oriented SDL, which is by dint of being a hobby a long-term undertaking.

More broadly, however, both types of motive, considered together, constitute an indispensable orientation toward complex leisure, especially the serious variety. Such leisure requires, among other things, that participants learn about the activity, in general, and its core activities, in particular. Thus, learning from one or more sources is unavoidable if a person wants to seriously play the cello, make a quilt or volunteer to mentor adolescents. All learning here is SDL, in that the participant decides when and where to seek the information and instruction needed to engage effectively in the activity.

SDL across the Life Course

Unlike career, linked as it is to particular roles and activities, life course is much broader, covering numerous roles and activities as they evolve, inter-weave, and are assumed or abandoned across the lifetime of a person (modified from Bush and Simmons, 1981, pp. 155-157). Furthermore, life course, when viewed sociologically, centers on age-graded roles and generational effects. Thus it has a historical dimension as well as links to social structure based on the status associated with each role and activity. For instance, Fisher, Day, and Collier (1998) observe that old age is uniquely characterized by 'generativity', which includes taking on the responsibility of caring for others as effected through such roles as parent, spouse, friend, and grandparent. When not perceived as personal unpleasant obligation, such care may lead to fulfillment in a leisure role. Of all the age periods composing the life course, the third age, or that period of life between age 50 and 75 (also known as the age of the 'young-old' or 'active retirement'), offers the richest opportunity for finding fulfillment (Laslett, 1994). Brooks (2007) and Wuthnow (2007), by contrast, discuss the still, little-understood "odyssey years," or that period after adolescence and before full adulthood (roughly ages 18-35) during which people in this category commonly exist in a state of uncertainty with respect to marriage, work, education, family, and quite possibly, even leisure.

The broadest observation to be made here is that especially goal-oriented SDL will vary across the life course, primarily because the pursuit of leisure interests tends to change over the years. Such conditions as variations in family composition, work demands, bodily strength and energy, and financial resources help account for this change. In fact, these conditions and others, including declining enthusiasm for an activity, may even lead some participants to abandon it altogether (Stebbins, 2008).

Nevertheless, the liberal arts hobbies, being learning-oriented, lasting passions, are generally more enduring activities over the life course than the goal-oriented activities. Yet, even here, an ardent reader of, say, the history of World War II might decide enough is enough and switch to an in-depth examination of the history of Germany. A strong point about SDL, brought out by studying its role in the life course, is the flexibility it gives leisure participants as they turn to their own agency in shaping their personal development. For in SDL we may, at least in principle, take a formal adult education course, pick up a book or magazine, attend a lecture, watch a video, travel somewhere, and on and on, all as part of an individualized plan for leisure-based learning.

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SDL in Society

Self-directed learning is a main vehicle by which personal agency is manifested in pursuing the various leisure activities. In engaging in SDL people have maximum freedom, albeit within the usual constraints thrown up by culture, history, and social structure, to inform themselves as they wish. By definition such learning obviates the necessity of reporting to someone, for it is the individual who decides where and how the desired information will be acquired.

As such, SDL helps open the door to the possibility of deviant leisure. It is by way of this process that people discover where their chosen form of deviance or its resources are available for their consumption and use. Examples include gaining information about where a city's strip clubs are located, where clandestine poker games are regularly held (assuming they are illegal), and where and how to buy marijuana on the street. People leaning toward anarchism or deviant fundamentalist religion wanting contact with kindred spirits must engage in some discrete inquiring to find them. This, too, is SDL.

In the past the resources for such learning were typically personal observation and word of mouth and, more formally for some deviance, books, magazines, pamphlets, and the like. Today, these sources are augmented if not supplanted by the Internet. Indeed, the Internet, because of its vast content and obvious convenience has become arguably the richest repository of all for the kinds of information sought in SDL.

From what has just been said it can be hypothesized that SDL is fundamental to much of ideational social change. Thus self-directed learning is occurring when people choose to read, listen, or watch a political, religious or other message designed to persuade its audience to think or act differently from the norm. To the extent that they accept what they have learned here, they become part of the proposed change. Of course, if the message consumed amounts to brain-washing, it cannot be qualified as SDL, since the self has failed in this instance to direct the learning process.

Social change in consumer habits often seems to rest on SDL, as buyers inform themselves of the strengths and weaknesses of particular products. Some of this kind of change roots in experience with a product, however; it is adopted because it works well or rejected for the opposite reason. Here there is learning, to be sure, but it is of the inductive variety. By contrast, SDL is fundamentally deductive; information is acquired from existing sources and, where necessary, applied to certain problems.

Conclusion

Self-directed learning is itself a leisure activity, defined as a type of pursuit, wherein participants in it mentally or physically (often both) think or do something, motivated by the hope of achieving a desired end (Stebbins, 2009). Except for the liberal arts hobbies, it is not however a core activity, or the distinctive set of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve the outcome or product that the participant seeks. That is, cross-country skiers are inclined to read about how to improve their performance on skis or how to wax them — two SDL activities — but their core activity is actually going skiing. Note, too, that participants will not find flow in their SDL bearing on complex leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 2012), which is true even of the liberal arts hobbyists, but they will find it fulfilling. It is also an indispensable activity in their drive to enhance their careers there.

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