A person wearing a bright red puffy jacket and a dark beanie is sitting on a rocky, snow-dusted ledge. They are holding a silver thermos and a small cup, looking out over a vast, snow-covered mountain range under a clear blue sky. The scene is peaceful and scenic, with evergreen trees in the foreground and distant peaks in the background.

Leisure Activities in Context

*A Micro-Macro/Agency-Structure
Interpretation of Leisure*

Robert A. Stebbins

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Interpretation of Leisure***

Robert A. Stebbins

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To Chris Rojek

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Chris Rojek and I have been seen by many of our colleagues in leisure studies as representing, respectively, the macro/structural and micro/agency poles of theory in that field. In fact, both of us have occasionally strayed into the other's presumed theoretic territory, as when Chris discusses "intentionality" and I write about the organizational and historical bases of various leisure activities. As for me, it was in reading over the years a number his books and articles that I began to consistently see leisure in macro structural terms as well as continuing to see it at the micro and meso levels, in harmony with my initial formation in symbolic interactionism. This book is, among things, an attempt to bring us together intellectually, which I believe Chris will appreciate, even if he, guided by the same goal, would probably execute this link differently.

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Introduction

I have been arguing in recent years—since Stebbins (2009a) to be precise—that serious, casual, and project-based leisure, while they can be partly explained as activities that offer their participants either enjoyable or fulfilling experiences, can also be substantially explained by the social, historical, cultural, temporal, and geographical contexts in which they are pursued. This is, of course, a leisure studies version of the time worn, social science concern about the explanatory dominance of micro *vis-à-vis* macro level theory and related research, known in theoretical circles as the micro–macro/agency–structure debate. The word *context*—my preferred summary term for the micro–macro/agency–structure levels of phenomena—includes a variety of collective formations, many of which unfortunately are commonly given short shrift in the diverse abstract arguments about context. These formations are the social worlds, formal organizations, social institutions, spatial arrangements, social movements, and global postmodern tribes that characterize modern social life. By contrast, certain other meso and macro level phenomena have been much more fully examined. In leisure studies they include statements about leisure trends (e.g., Rojek and Blackshaw), historical changes in leisure (e.g., Spracklen, Cross, and Gelber), cultural practices as leisure (e.g., Chick, Rojek, and Roberts), and some of the social problems generated from time to time by the search for leisure (e.g., inequality of leisure opportunity, deviant leisure, unhealthy leisure practices, and annoying leisure activities).

Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural leisure constraints fit in this contextual analysis in distinctive ways¹. As discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 1, leisure constraints inhibit choice of or participation in particular leisure activities. Structural constraints are associated with, for example, race, gender, religion, social class, and the availability of financial resources. Interpersonal constraints spring up in, for instance, dyadic, interactive, and small-group situations. The intrapersonal variety is evident in, among others, belief, attitude,

and psychological conflict. Nevertheless, this distinction can be fuzzy, especially when constraint and context refer to the same condition or situation. And speaking of conceptual fuzziness here we also find leisure facilitators, where it can happen that one person's facilitator is another's constraint.

In other words, my intention is to present the big picture of leisure, with *big picture* being defined in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.) as the "entire perspective on a situation or issue." Big pictures do not, at least should not, ignore the component elements of which they are comprised, which in the present volume, means I must also devote sufficient attention to the micro/agency part of the portrait to show how it fits there. Nonetheless, this book is dominantly about the meso- and macro-structural parts of the big picture that frame leisure activity and experience. These two parts are thinly and unevenly discussed in the leisure studies literature.

By and large this book reports no new (heretofore unpublished) research data. Rather, it is primarily a theoretic undertaking, wherein I aim to show how both leisure as free-time activity and a sample of the existing leisure studies literature can be fruitfully understood in a new light, namely, that of context. Using this big-picture approach, I want to explain leisure in a broad, holistic manner, something never attempted on this scale. That is, there have been any number of micro, meso, and macro analyses of leisure, but never to my knowledge has anyone tried to show how these three levels of context fit together in that domain. To this end, some special concepts appear in this new picture: context, embeddedness (Jonathan Turner's concept), constraints and facilitators, and incorporation and linking (for the latter two, see especially Chapters 3 and 10). My hope is that every reader of this book will come to see each instance of leisure behavior or activity in the big contextual picture painted here rather than viewing it only on one level (e.g., micro context).²

In all this, I make no claim to solving the micro-macro question. Yet the following pages do show that the past 40 some years of research and theory on leisure have shed considerable light on its context at all levels and on the ways that participants are embedded within them. This, however, constitutes a micro-to-macro analysis of only one part of society. However, perhaps this is the road to travel; to examine in much greater detail one segment of a society rather than attempting to examine all its segments at once. The latter approach seems to have

become in the present a formidable stumbling block for such thinking. In short, the approach set out in this book shows how a rich micro–macro/agency-structure analysis can be carried out using the leisure studies literature as a model (discussion continued in Chapter 10).

A set of basic concepts will guide this examination of the context of leisure. They are introduced in Chapter 1: leisure, leisure as activity, self-efficacy and personal agency, agency *vis-à-vis* structure, satisfaction *vis-à-vis* fulfillment, the macro-micro/agency-structure debate, constraints and facilitators, and the serious leisure perspective. A main goal in this undertaking is, when talking about structure, not to lose sight of the importance of agency.

Each chapter after Chapter 1 presents a distinctive contextual point of view. Some of these points of view are common fare in the agency-structure debate, namely, institutions (Chapter 2), large-scale organizations (Chapter 3), and history (Chapter 8). They have also been explored in leisure studies, though unevenly so. The points of view considered in Chapters 4 through 7 and Chapter 9 are more weakly represented, if represented at all, in the agency-structure literature, while social world (Chapter 4), temporal context (Chapter 6), and geographic context (Chapter 7) are lively contextual interests in leisure studies. Social movements (Chapter 5) and deviance and social issues (Chapter 9) have been only sporadically addressed in both fields. The aforementioned basic concepts organize discussion throughout this part of the book.

The present study of context has turned out to be an exceedingly complex matter, even if limited to only one part of society, namely, the one of leisure. To help obviate getting lost among the trees in this forest of ideas and data, I will identify from time to time different theoretic waypoints called “key points.” Their object is to link the discussion of the moment with the leisure contexts, constituting thereby a kind of summary statement of that discussion and its original import. Each chapter’s key statements will also be listed in its conclusions.

These statements, regarded as a unit, constitute some of the conceptual glue that joins the micro and macro poles. We will see that this is often accomplished at the *meso* level. It is at this level that the embeddedness that Jonathan Turner (2005) finds lacking in the agency-structure discourse (see Chapter 1) is especially critical in getting from micro to macro and from macro to micro. However, first, let us look at the basic concepts on which this book is based.

Notes

1. The field of leisure constraints has a long history (Jackson, 2005, Chapter 1).
2. I am not proposing that every empirical study of or theoretic treatise on leisure fully address the big picture. The proposal is simply that specialists in this field become aware of it as it bears on their object of research or analysis, to the point of noting however briefly in reports of it where their smaller-picture efforts fit in the bigger canvas. Admittedly, I have in the past been guilty in failing to do this.

Studying the Contexts of Leisure: Basic Concepts

The main goal of this book is to place the personal experience of leisure participation in the broader frame of the micro-, meso-, and macro-contexts in which leisure is pursued. I want to show how that experience is shaped by those contexts and how the contexts are shaped by the leisure experiences and the parallel agency of participants in leisure activities. In the present chapter, we look at the basic concepts needed for an effective study of the contexts of leisure. These include a definition of leisure, which is followed by a discussion of the centrality of activity, personal agency, and self-efficacy. The rewards of satisfaction and fulfillment are considered next, with this leading to the macro- or micro/structure-agency debate and on to leisure constraints and facilitators. The chapter closes with a précis of the serious leisure perspective (SLP). Culture is also a basic concept, but one so broad that it is best discussed in conjunction with the various contextual points of view of which it is an important part.

Defining Leisure

The definition of leisure presented below is intended to bridge the *individual* and *contextual* approaches, with both being equally important in defining leisure. From these two angles, leisure is both seen and experienced by the individual participant and seen as embedded in the wider social, cultural, historical, and geographical world. Earlier I tackled the problem of defining leisure from these two angles (Stebbins, 2012). A condensed, dictionary-style definition of leisure emerged from that undertaking: *uncoerced, 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 (or both) (modified from Stebbins, 2005a, and subsequent publications).¹ “Free time” in this book (it is further defined in Chapter 6 and in Stebbins, 2012, Chapter. 2) is time away from unpleasant, or disagreeable, obligation, with pleasant obligation being treated of here as essentially leisure. In other words *Homo otiosus*, leisure man (Stebbins, 2013a), feels no significant coercion to enact the activity in question. Some kinds of work—described later as “devotee work”—can be conceived of as pleasant obligation, in that such workers though they must make a living performing their work, do this in a highly intrinsically appealing pursuit. Work of this sort is also essentially leisure, and will be treated of as such in this book. This definition is compatible with the SLP, particularly since the latter stresses human agency, or “intentionality” (Rojek, 2010, p. 6)—what “people want to do”—and distinguishes the satisfaction gained from casual leisure *vis-à-vis* the fulfilment flowing from the serious form.

Note that reference to “free choice”—a long-standing component of standard definitions of leisure—is for reasons discussed more fully elsewhere (Stebbins, 2005a), deliberately omitted from this definition. Generally put, choice is never wholly free, but rather hedged about with all sorts of contextual conditions. This situation renders this concept and allied ones, such as freedom and state of mind useless as essential elements of a basic definition (Juniu & Henderson, 2001). Note, too, that there is no reference in this definition to the moral basis of leisure as being one of its distinguishing features. In other words, contrary to some claims made in the past (e.g., Kaplan, 1960, pp. 22–25), leisure according to the SLP may be either deviant or nondeviant (see Chapter 9 of the present volume).

Uncoerced, people in leisure believe they are doing something they are not pushed to do, something they are not disagreeably obliged to do. In this definition, emphasis is *ipso facto* on the positive side of life, the acting individual, and the play of human agency. This in no way denies that there may be things people want to do but cannot do because of any number of constraints on choice, because of 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 this definition of leisure, whose central ingredient is lack of coercion, we must be sure to understand leisure activities in relation to their larger personal, structural, cultural, and historical background, their context. In addition, it follows

that leisure is not really freely chosen, as some observers have argued (e.g., Parker, 1983, pp. 8–9; Kelly, 1990, p. 7), since choice of activity is significantly shaped by this context.

Nor may free time, as conventionally defined, be treated of here as synonymous with leisure. We can be bored in our free time, which can result from inactivity (“nothing to do”) or from activity, which alas, is uninteresting, unstimulating. The same can, of course, happen at work and in obligated non-work settings. Since boredom is decidedly a 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 mindset, composed of, among other sentiments, 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. In addition, all this may happen in free time, which exemplifies well how such time can occupy a broader area of life than leisure, which is nested within it (Stebbins, 2003).

Leisure as Activity

Our condensed definition refers to “uncoerced activity.” An *activity* is 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. Life is filled with activities, both pleasant and unpleasant: sleeping, mowing the lawn, taking the train to work, having a tooth filled, eating lunch, playing tennis matches, running a meeting, and on and on. Activities, as this list illustrates, may be categorized as work, leisure, or non-work obligation. They are, furthermore, general. In some instances, they refer to the behavioral side of recognizable roles, for example commuter, tennis player, and chair of a meeting. In others we may recognize the activity, but not conceive of it so formally as a role, exemplified in someone sleeping, mowing a lawn, or eating lunch (not as patron in a restaurant).

The concept of activity is an abstraction, and as such, one broader than that of role. In other words, roles are associated with particular statuses, or positions, in society, whereas with activities, some are status based, while others are not. For instance, sleeper is not a status, even if sleeping is an activity. It is likewise with lawn mower (person). Sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists tend to see social relations in terms of roles, and as a result, overlook activities whether

aligned with a role or not. Meanwhile certain important parts of life consist of engaging in activities not recognized as roles. Where would many of us be could we not routinely sleep or eat lunch?

Moreover, another dimension separates role and activity, namely, that of statics and dynamics. Roles are static whereas activities are dynamic.² Roles, classically conceived of, are relatively inactive expectations for behavior, whereas in activities, people are actually behaving, mentally or physically thinking or doing things to achieve certain ends. This dynamic quality provides a powerful explanatory link between an activity and a person's motivation to participate in it. Nevertheless, the idea of role *is* useful, since participants do encounter role expectations in certain activities (e.g., those in sport, work, and volunteering). Although the concept of activity does not include these expectations, in its dynamism, it can, much more effectively than role, account for invention and human agency.

Both concepts are critical in this book, which leads to our first key point: *roles and activities link the individual with certain structural aspects of the meso (more fully explained in Chapter 3) and macro contexts in which the roles and activities are carried out.* In fact, roles and activities, as will become evident in later chapters, are often central points of operation for groups, organizations, social movements, and the like. Furthermore, both concepts are linchpins linking the social individual with his internal psychology, with his personality, motivation, attitudes, emotions, and so on. This book moves more deeply into the social and away from the psychological, but the importance of the latter in explaining human behavior cannot be overestimated. Moreover, it is a vital part of the SLP (see Stebbins, 2007/2015; 2009a).

This definition of activity gets further refined in the concept of *core activity*: a distinctive set of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve the outcome or product that a participant seeks. As with general activities, core activities are pursued in work, leisure, and non-work obligation. Consider some examples in serious leisure: a core activity of alpine skiing is descending snow-covered slopes, in cabinet making it is shaping and finishing wood, and in volunteer fire-fighting is putting out blazes and rescuing people from them. In each case, the participant takes several interrelated steps to successfully ski downhill, 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, savor beautiful scenery, and offer simple volunteer services (e.g., handing out

leaflets, directing traffic in a theater parking lot, or clearing snow off the neighborhood hockey rink). Work-related core activities are seen in, for instance, the actions of a surgeon during an operation or the improvisations on a melody by a jazz clarinetist. The core activity in mowing a lawn (non-work obligation) is pushing or riding the mower. Executing an attractive core activity and its component steps and actions is a main feature drawing participants to the general activity encompassing it, because this core directly enables them to reach a cherished goal. It is the opposite for disagreeable core activities. In short, the core activity has motivational value of its own, even if more strongly held for some activities than others and even if some activities are disagreeable, but still have to be done.

Core activities can be classified as simple or complex, the two concepts finding their place at opposite poles of a continuum. The location of a core activity on this continuum partially explains its appeal or lack thereof. Most casual leisure is comprised of a set of simple core activities. Here *Homo otiosus* need only turn on the television set, observe the scenery, drink the glass of wine (no oenophile is he), or gossip about someone. Complexity in casual leisure increases slightly when playing a board game using dice, participating in a Hash House Harrier treasure hunt, or serving as a casual volunteer by, say, collecting bottles for the Scouts or making tea and coffee after a religious service. In addition, Harrison's (2001) study of upper-middle-class Canadian mass tourists revealed a certain level of complexity in their sensual experience of the touristic sites they visited. For people craving the simple things in life, this is the kind of leisure to head for. The other two domains abound with equivalent simple core activities, as in the work of a parking lot attendant (receiving cash/making change) or the efforts of a householder whose non-work obligation of the day is raking leaves.

So, if complexity is what people want, they must look elsewhere. Leisure projects are necessarily more complex than casual leisure activities. The types of projects listed later in this chapter provide, I believe, ample proof of that. Nonetheless, they are not nearly as complex as the core activities around which serious leisure revolves. The accumulated knowledge, skill, training, and experience of, for instance, the amateur trumpet player, hobbyist stamp collector, and volunteer emergency medical worker are vast, and defy full description of how they are applied during conduct of the core activity. Of course, neophytes in the serious leisure activities lack these acquisitions, though it is unquestionably their intention to acquire them to a level where they

will feel fulfilled. As with simple core activities, complex equivalents also exist in the other two domains. Examples in work include the two earlier examples of the surgeon and the jazz clarinettist. In the non-work domain, two common examples demonstrate a noticeable level of complexity: driving in city traffic and for some people, preparing the annual income tax return.

Activity as just defined is, by and large, a foreign idea in psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Sure, scholars there sometimes talk about, for instance, criminal, political, or economic activity, but in so doing, they are referring, in general terms, to a broad category of behavior, not a particular set of actions comprising a pursuit. Instead, our positive concept of activity knows its greatest currency in the interdisciplinary fields of leisure studies and physical education and, more recently, kinesiology. In addition, I suspect that the first adopted the idea from the second. There has always been, in physical education, discussion of and research on activities promoting conditioning, exercise, outdoor interests, human movement, and so on.

Self-Efficacy and Personal Agency

Self-efficacy and personal agency are two main avenues leading to fulfillment. Psychologist Albert Bandura pioneered the concept of *self-efficacy*, defining it as “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions” (Bandura, 1997, p. vii). He argued that people develop “efficacy expectations” bearing on particular goals they hope to realize and on what they must do to achieve this. These expectations are based on the capabilities individuals believe they have to accomplish the goals they are pursuing in a particular setting. Bandura says that efficacy expectations constitute the cognitive state immediately preceding goal-directed actions. Additionally efficacy is enhanced to the extent that people’s *locus of control* is high; in other words they sense that their activities result from their own efforts rather than from such impersonal forces as fate, luck, and chance (Rotter, 1990).

A principal interest in this book can be expressed as the second key point: *belief in one’s own micro-contextual self-efficacy is necessary to pursue in a fulfilling way at the meso and macro levels particular activities in serious leisure or devotee work*. This belief in oneself is born of the numerous routine successes that accumulate with the enduring, systematic pursuit of an activity. Encouragement from others who also partake of it or who are otherwise close associates of the participant is another source of such efficacy.

In leisure studies, personal agency is both a social arrangement for enabling and a personal capacity for putting into effect what an individual intends to do. The individual thus enabled (not constrained) by society can become his own agent in producing the intended outcome. Here agency refers to seizing the initiative to reach a goal, short or long term. It includes figuring out how to reach the goal, which includes organizing to this end oneself and such relevant other entities as individuals, organizations, groups, and social networks. Agency rests on the participant's sense of self-efficacy and control in planning, organizing, working with others, and so on. Thus, a concert violinist can only perform her concerto when accompanied by an orchestra guided by its conductor, a quarterback in American football cannot express his agency as a passer unless there is a teammate downfield trying to catch the ball that person is passing. Agency is also at work when a participant arranges for necessary resources.

It is through particular activities that people, propelled by their own agency and belief in their own efficacy, find positive things in life, which they blend and balance with the negative, or disagreeably obligatory, things they must also deal with. Un-coerced, people in leisure believe they are doing something they are not pushed to do, something they are not disagreeably obliged to do. In this definition, emphasis is *ipso facto* on acting individuals and on their self-direction through personal agency.

Agency and Structure

Given the scope of this book, a few words on personal agency and its relationship to social structure are in order. Martin Hewson (2010, p. 13) says of agency: "it is the condition of activity rather than passivity. It refers to the experience of acting, doing things, making things happen, exerting power, being a subject of events, or controlling things. This is one aspect of human experience." His conceptualization of agency is designed to set it within sociology's long-standing debate on the freedom of human behavior as agency *vis-à-vis* the limits imposed on it by social structure (e.g., Giddens, 1986). Hewson's definition is of necessity quite general; agency is viewed broadly as a condition of activity as opposed to passivity.

Agency conceived of in leisure studies revolves around a different and more specific theoretic interest, namely, explaining how people fired by their own initiative pursue, or fail to pursue, particular free-time activities (Stebbins, 2009, pp. 4–6).³ They are not only active but also

intent on doing something, in this book pursuing leisure. The definition of activity used throughout this book therefore diverges from Hewson's as he relates it to passivity, where this state is forced on a society's members by its social structure. Chris Rojek (2010, pp. 6–9), by the way, explores this relationship under the heading of “intentionality,” doing so from the unconventional angle of leisure studies. Intentionality is basically the same as agency, and taking leisure is a main expression of it, albeit as we will see later, within certain structural confines.

Satisfaction, Fulfillment, Etc.

Both as researchers on leisure and as participants in everyday life, we hear it all the time: “I sure had fun last night at the football game”; “It will be a fun time at Joan's sleepover”; “it was a most enjoyable evening” (said to the host). Much less often do we hear leisure experiences being described as satisfying or fulfilling, even if, for their participants, some experiences have precisely that quality. Why these differences in choice of descriptors for positive leisure experience, and what do these four descriptors mean in science and common sense?

Common sense usage of the four, as typical of common sense everywhere, is rather loose and for the first two broadly applied. Thus, the adjective “fun” usually denotes finding pleasure or amusement in a particular activity, while the adjective “enjoyable” typically refers to an activity that can be enjoyed, that gives pleasure or delight. In other words, these two descriptors are basically synonyms. Turning to the third term, a satisfying experience, in one sense of the word, is itself synonymous with an experience that is fun or enjoyable (sometimes referred to as gratifying). However, another sense of this adjective is substantially different: it refers to meeting or satisfying a need or want. Put otherwise, a satisfying experience in this second sense leads to contentment with reference to a particular need or want, an additional meaning that sets it apart from the other three descriptors. By contrast, the fourth term, in one sense, points to a fulfilling experience, or more precisely, to a set of chronological experiences leading to development to the fullest of a person's gifts and character, to development of that person's full potential. A second sense of this adjective is, however, synonymous with the second sense of satisfying.

These four descriptors form a rough scale of depth of leisure experience, running from that which is superficial—fun—to that which is profound—fulfillment. In common sense usage we seem, in crude fashion, to recognize these differences, in that, for example, few people

would describe a sleepover as fulfilling or a grueling marathon as fun or enjoyable. The task of leisure science and this section is to recognize the existence of this implicit, common sense scale of leisure experience, while for scientific purposes, to try to iron out vagueness and inconsistency as these plague everyday usage of the four terms. We turn first to fun.

Because of the dual meaning of satisfaction, I have found it necessary, when striving to be as clear as possible about the rewards of serious leisure, to rely exclusively on the concept of fulfillment. It is substantially different from satisfaction, even in the second sense of the word. Serious leisure leads to satisfying achievement and accomplishment, of that there is no doubt, but it also leads to personal development and self-confidence, to maximizing one's gifts and character through the pursuit of particular leisure activities (see Stebbins, 2004). Meanwhile, satisfaction can also mean, as noted in this section, becoming content or being content through gratification or pleasure experienced in an activity, which may well be of the casual leisure variety.

To avoid this confusion when talking about the rewards of the serious pursuits, it has become necessary to frame discussion in the less ambiguous language of fulfillment rather than the more ambiguous language of satisfaction. The latter is a slippery concept, primarily because it is cursed with two quite different meanings. Moreover, experiencing achievement (the second meaning) is not really the same as experiencing fulfillment. For the latter rests on a clear sense of a "formative career" (Stebbins, 2009, pp. 68–69) in a complex role (found in work, leisure, a relationship, etc.), on the sense of realizing one's gifts and character over many years. Achievement, by contrast, results from a particular effort at a particular time in life. Thus fulfillment is, among several other things, a series of interrelated achievements across a span of time that the achiever sees as manifesting his or her potential.

Be that as it may, serious leisure enthusiasts do, at times, qualify their activities as fun. I have tried to deal with this seeming anomaly by invoking the idea of *gratification*. Over the years I have come to describe as gratifying an activity that the participant sees as fun, but that also generates fulfillment. For instance, some of the kayakers in the Canadian Rockies whom we interviewed and who possessed the appropriate skills and experience said it is "fun" to paddle Class-4 Rivers. By this, they meant that the activity is gratifying, because over time, they have acquired the technical qualifications to carry it off with relative ease (Stebbins, 2005b). This level of activity is fun, precisely because it

is technically difficult but nonetheless quite manageable (it is fulfilling), given the participant's high level of development in the hobby.

In technical activities of this sort, fun has also been said to be a significant component of the flow experience, as seen in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, pp. 49, 72) linking of enjoyment with flow. But more recent thought on the matter by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 12) has led them to distinguish between the "pleasure" of what we have been calling fun (in casual leisure) from the "enjoyment" of activities referred to in this book as the serious pursuits. In this newer conceptualization, enjoyment and self-fulfillment amount to the same thing.

Mannell and Kleiber (1997, pp. 185–186) treat satisfaction in terms consistent with the second sense of the term described earlier: the activity in question is satisfying when it meets needs or motives, leading thus to contentment and, where appropriate, a sense of achievement. The authors then go on to link the pursuit of satisfaction in free time with leisure motivation. Note that some of the needs satisfied by leisure activity are ones related to achievement and accomplishment—even if, as Shaw (1985) found, such satisfaction is only a minor dimension of the popular meaning of leisure.

Mannell and Kleiber's observation that the pursuit of satisfaction in free time is, at bottom, a matter of leisure motivation brings us back to this book's leitmotif. It is while searching for fun, enjoyment, satisfaction, and fulfillment that *Homo otiosus* is drawn to particular leisure and work activities, which are however, always embedded in a larger sociocultural, historical, spatial context. In harmony with what was said earlier, to understand fully the appeal of these activities, we must also view them in this context. Chapters 2 through 9 show what this means in the daily life of the leisure participant.

The Macro–Micro/Agency–Structure Debate

One context that has only been alluded to so far in this chapter is the intellectual context underlying the preceding section on self-efficacy and agency, namely the macro–micro debate. Sociologists are particularly interested in this question, even though it is germane to all the social sciences. Jonathan Turner (2005, p. 405) describes it:

At the heart of the issue is how explanations of population-level or societal-level phenomena are to be reconciled with explanations about behavior and interpersonal processes. Once this

turn is taken, the problems of linking the macro and micro, or of filling the micro–macro “gap,” become ever more salient.

We have treated of this gap in this book as agency versus structure, which Turner points out is the preferred language for micro and macro among the European thinkers on the matter (e.g., Archer, 1988; Giddens, 1986).

Turner (2005) identifies the problem that has been troubling analysis in this area of thought, notably, the vagueness of its theories:

Those arguing for the primacy of human agency typically want to see humans as having some degree of free will, whereas those pushing the more structural side will tend to see human action as highly circumscribed by cultural and structural parameters. There is nothing inherently contradictory about these two positions, since human action can be constrained without being determined, while structures can be reconstituted by acts of individuals. But, simply saying this does not explain anything; and when the agency-structure question is conflated with the micro–macro issues, theories are typically rather vague (p. 406)

Most of Turner’s chapter consists of a review of the multiple attempts to solve this problem. All are very general, he maintains, leaving out of consideration important specifics that can explain how the micro, meso, and macro levels of society are interrelated.

Turner’s own answers to the micro–macro/agency–structure question come close to the aims of this book and the third key point: *To understand leisure we must recognize that the domain of leisure also consists of these three levels.* Over the years *Homo otiosus* has created a wide variety of arrangements (e.g., organizations, social worlds, and subcultures) to meet his leisure needs and interests. Furthermore, there is considerable “embeddedness” (Turner’s term) in these arrangements. For example, leisure participants fit into their surrounding social worlds, they form organizations some of which may spawn national or international federations, and they go in for activities that reflect certain values of the day (e.g., the modern interest in adventure, physical fitness, individuality). All this is real to these people—the three levels, the groups and organizations, the values, and more—though of course, they would usually use different terms to describe them and be rather vaguer than we are here about their conceptualization.

Let me be clear: I make no claim to solving or even trying to solve the micro–macro question. Yet, the following pages do show that the past 45 years of research and theory on leisure have shed considerable light on its context at all levels and on how participants are embedded within them. This, however, constitutes a micro–macro analysis of only one part of society. However, perhaps this is the route to follow; to examine in much greater detail one segment of a society rather than attempting to examine all its segments at once. The latter approach seems to have become in the present a formidable stumbling block for such thinking.

Constraints and Facilitators

Earlier, Turner mentioned that human action “can be constrained.” There exists in leisure studies a strong interest in leisure constraints. David Scott (2003, p. 75) defines them as “factors that limit people’s participation in leisure activities, use of services, and satisfaction or enjoyment of current activities.” Interest in this aspect of leisure dates to the 1980s, with sporadic work in the area having been conducted even earlier (see Jackson & Scott, 1999, pp. 300–302). Thus, thought and research about the “barriers” (as constraints were initially labelled) to personal agency are well entrenched in leisure studies. Constraint is the better term here, for a constraint can sometimes be overcome, whereas a barrier suggests that this is impossible (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991).

The first two categories of constraints—intrapersonal and interpersonal—would not commonly stir much interest among the scholars caught up in the micro–micro/agency–structure debate, whereas the third category—structural constraints—most certainly would. The intrapersonal constraints are bodily conditions and psychological states, such as attitudes and personality that discourage taking up particular leisure activities. At the interpersonal level, constraints emerge in social interaction, typically that occurring within family and friendship circles. Such processes as coach’s favoritism, scheduling of rehearsals, and screening of group members are included under this heading.

Scott observed that structural constraints are the most theoretically “integrated and documented” of the three types. They emanate from conditions beyond the control of the participant. One can be structurally constrained by family requirements, stage of life, availability and knowledge of opportunities, and the like. In general, the field of leisure

constraints has amassed over the years an admirable range and depth of research (see Jackson, 2005).

Facilitating Leisure

According to Raymore (2002) 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 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 participation.

In this conceptualization, 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 similar 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 honors 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.

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, like leisure itself, are 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 the precepts of Islamic modesty and dress. In addition, 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 our fourth key point: *context whatever its level includes negative and positive constraints and facilitators*. Moreover, the foregoing ideas suggest that choice of activities, to the extent that people have choices, is guided not only by what is available to them but also by what the chooser (1) can do acceptably well at, (2) find sufficient resources for, and (3) receive some encouragement in. This is why we must consider these two concepts together. If nothing else we need much more research on facilitation, which is so far very thin.⁴ One danger in ignoring facilitation and failing to look at the two ideas together lies in overstressing the role of constraints in the sole domain in life where positiveness reigns (for a discussion of leisure as positive, see Stebbins, 2009a).

Concerning the three types of leisure constraints, are they not on the structural and cultural levels merely free-time manifestations of restrictive macro-context? The answer is generally no. Leisure constraints are particular cultural and structural forces inhibiting leisure choice. In contrast, context as discussed in this book is much broader.

As stated in the Introduction, the concept includes social worlds, formal organizations, social institutions, spatial arrangements, and social movements. It also includes leisure trends and leisure history, cultural practices and the social problems engendered by the search for leisure. Nonetheless, the leisure contexts do contain some constraints, as well, which when appropriate, will be duly noted in the following pages.

The Serious Leisure Perspective

It has been my practice in earlier publications to present the SLP in as much detail as possible, based on the assumption that some readers would be unfamiliar with it. My colleagues have said in recent years, however, that such is no longer necessary; “we know all that, so let’s get on with what’s new.” Thus, since they are the principal audience of this book, I have in several places accepted their advice, and present only a summary of the ideas in question accompanied by references to sources offering more complete coverage. The following presentation of the SLP is the first of these abbreviated statements.

The 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, 2012; 2007/2015; 2001b; 1992). Additionally the Perspective considers how the three forms—serious pursuits (serious leisure/devotee work), casual leisure, and project-based leisure—are shaped by various psychological, social, cultural, and historical conditions. Each form serves as a conceptual umbrella for a range of types of related activities. For a brief history of the Perspective, see the history page at www.seriousleisure.net or for a longer version, see Stebbins, 2007/2015, Chapter 6).

My research findings and theoretic musings over the past 40 years have nevertheless evolved and coalesced 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. Figure 1.1 presents a map of the typological structure of the Perspective.

The Serious Pursuits

We start with the serious leisure component of these pursuits. *Amateurs* are found in art, science, sport, and entertainment, where they are invariably linked in a variety of ways with professional counterparts. The two can be distinguished descriptively in that the activity

Figure 1.1. The serious leisure perspective.

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