



A Social Psychology of Leisure

SECOND EDITION

**Douglas A. Kleiber
Gordon J. Walker
Roger C. Mannell**

A Social Psychology of Leisure

Second Edition

A Social Psychology of Leisure

Second Edition

Douglas A. Kleiber
University of Georgia

Gordon J. Walker
University of Alberta

Roger C. Mannell
University of Waterloo



Venture Publishing, Inc.

Copyright © 2011



Venture Publishing, Inc.
1807 N. Federal Dr.
Urbana, IL 61801
1-800-359-5940

No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner.

Trademarks: All brand names and product names used in this book are trademarks, registered trademarks, or trade names of their respective holders.

Production: Richard Yocum and George Lauer

Cover by StepUp Communications, Inc.

Manuscript Editing: Richard Yocum, Dan Threet

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 2011929715

ISBN-10: 1-892132-92-3

ISBN-13: 978-1-892132-92-5

ISBN ebook: 978-1-37167-850-0
<http://www.sagamorepub.com/products/social-psychology-leisure?src=lipdf>

Dedication

This book is dedicated to our wives, Pam, Janet, and Marg.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	xv
Acknowledgments.....	xix

Section One—The Nature of Social Psychology1

Chapter 1: Understanding Leisure with Social Psychology3

Preview	4
Social Science and the Quest for Happiness, Health, and the Good Life.....	4
A Question of Lifestyle: Juggling and Balancing the Demands of Daily Life	4
People-Watching as a Science	5
Why Study Leisure with Social Science?	6
Is Leisure a “Problem” to Be Studied with Social Science?	8
Reaching the Potential of Leisure through Leisure Services	9
Leisure and Social Psychology	11
Social Psychology in Action: Old and New Scenarios.....	13
But Can We Call These Leisure “Problems”?	15
How Would You Approach These Problems?	16
The Social Psychological Approach	17
Can the Problems Be Studied with Social Psychology?	17
Theory and Cause-and-Effect Relationships.....	19
Social Psychological Ways of Looking at Problems	20
The Situation: Stimulus-Response Approach.....	20
The Person: Organism-Response Approach.....	21
The Situation by the Person: Stimulus-Organism-Response Approach.....	23
Pinning Down the Social Psychology of Leisure	26

Chapter 2: The Social Psychology of Leisure: Story of a Growing

Field of Study	29
Preview	30
Social Psychology’s Heritage	30

Beginnings	30
Psychological Approaches	31
Early Theory and Research	32
Expansion and Enthusiasm.....	32
Overcoming a Crisis of Confidence	33
Sociological Approaches	35
Treatment of Leisure in Mainstream Psychology	36
Social Influence on Cycling and Football Spectators	36
Social Perception and Group Behavior at Camp.....	37
Rewards in the Playroom and Altruism at the Beach	38
Emergence of Personality during Leisure	39
Treatment of Leisure in Mainstream Sociology	40
Social Psychological Approaches in Leisure Studies	42
Early Efforts	42
Maturation of the Field	43
Ongoing Developments	45
Social Psychology of Leisure as an International Field of Study	47
Conclusion	48

Section Two—Social Psychology of Leisure Essentials....51

Chapter 3: Social Psychological Approaches for Studying Leisure	53
Preview	54
Social Psychological Ways of Studying People.....	54
The Challenge of Defining, Observing, and Measuring Leisure	56
Typology of Approaches for Defining, Observing, and Measuring	
People's Leisure	59
Type of Leisure Phenomena: Objective and Subjective	59
Definitional Vantage Point: External and Internal	60
Definitions and Research Methods Used in the Social Psychological	
Study of Leisure	63
Experimenting on Leisure	63
Inventories and Surveys: Remembering and Reporting Leisure	
Behavior and Activity	73
Time Budgets and Diaries: Only So Much Free Time in a Week	76
Experience Sampling Method: Leisure Experience in	
Everyday Life	83
Naturalistic Observation: Leisure in Its Natural Habitat	89
Interviews: Dialogues on Leisure Behavior and Experience	92
Conclusion	94

Chapter 4: Leisure Experience	99
Preview	100
Properties of <i>All</i> Leisure Experiences	101
Good and Optimal Leisure Experiences	102
Common Leisure Experiences	106
Interest and Excitement	107
Flow	108
Relaxation.....	113
Fun, Sociability, and “Casual Leisure”	116
Taking Leisure Seriously	116
Serious Leisure	117
Specialization	118
Situational and Enduring Involvement.....	119
Must Leisure Experience Always Be Pleasant?.....	120
Experience Changes during Leisure Engagements	122
Extending the Range of Leisure Experience: From Anticipation to Recollection.....	125
Savoring	126
Summary and Conclusion	127
 Chapter 5: Leisure Needs	 129
Preview	130
Neulinger’s Paradigm	130
Needs	132
Origins of Needs.....	132
Leisure Needs.....	136
How Many <i>Leisure</i> Needs Are There?	136
A Leisure Needs Model	137
Are Some Needs Satisfied Only during Leisure?	138
Leisure Needs, Activities, and Settings	140
Perceived Freedom and Control in Life and Leisure	142
Perceived Freedom	142
Control.....	144
Theories of Freedom and Control and Their Implications for Leisure	146
Summary	151
Limits to Freedom and the Politics of Control.....	152
 Chapter 6: Leisure Motivations	 155
Preview	156
Motivation.....	156
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.....	157

Variations of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation	158
Self-Determination Theory.....	160
Social Learning, Social Cognition, and the Self	164
Integrated Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation	167
Integrated Extrinsic Motivation.....	167
Intrinsic Motivation.....	170
Motivation and Its Relationship to Other Factors Affecting Participation	176

Section Three—Leisure and the Person.....181

Chapter 7: Personality, Attitudes, and Identity as Personal Influences

on Leisure	183
Preview	184
The Nature of Personality	184
Personality and Identity	185
Trait, Temperament, and Need Constructs	186
Where Do Personality Traits Come From?	187
Why Should Personality Characteristics Affect Leisure Behavior in Particular?	190
Personality Factors and Their Apparent Influence on Leisure Activity and Experience	191
General Approaches to Research on Leisure and Personality	194
The “Big 5” and Leisure	196
Other Personality Traits Associated with Leisure	200
Leisure-Specific Personality Dispositions	211
Attitudes toward Leisure and Specific Leisure Activities	214
Identity and Leisure	219
Personal Versus Social Identity	219
Identity Characteristics	219
Dialectics of Identity Formation.....	222
Interactionism and Other Issues of Personality and Leisure.....	225
Conclusion	226

Chapter 8: Age and Gender as Determinants of Leisure Behavior

and Experience	229
Preview	230
Leisure Activity and Experience over the Lifespan	231
Lifespan Changes	234
Childhood: The Emergence of Leisure.....	240
Adolescence: Finding a Self to be Enjoyed.....	244

Adulthood: Is Leisure Only Role Determined?.....	247
Summary	256
Gender as a Source of Leisure Differences.....	257
Summary	262
Conclusion	263

Section Four—The Social Context of Leisure265

Chapter 9: Social Influence in the Creation of Leisure	267
Preview	268
Some Basic Social Processes Influencing Leisure	269
Imitation and Modeling	269
Persuasion.....	271
Conformity	272
Social Comparison	274
Discrimination and Exclusion	275
Conclusion	277
Critical Influences on Leisure Orientations in Childhood	277
The Influence of the Family on Leisure	283
The Influence of Peers on Leisure	289
Leisure Education	292
Other Opportunity Structures for Leisure	294
Influences of Media and Technology	295
Social Influences on Leisure in Adulthood	297
The Influence of Work on Leisure	298
The Influence of Family on Leisure	300
Other Constraints and Facilitators of Leisure in Adulthood.....	303
Resistance to Social Influence	307
Chapter 10: Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Leisure.....	309
Preview	310
Introduction.....	310
Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Other Related Terms.....	310
Relevance for the Social Psychology of Leisure	312
Overview of Research on Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Leisure.....	316
The Effect of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture on Leisure as an	
Objective Phenomenon.....	317
Marginality and Subcultural Hypotheses	318
Perceived Discrimination	319
Acculturation	320

Ideal and Actual Affect	321
Ethnicity and Public Recreation Participation Model.....	322
The Effect of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture on Leisure as a	
Subjective Phenomenon	322
General Psychosocial Needs and Leisure Needs	323
Motivations for Leisure	325
Constraints to Leisure	327
Self-Construal and Leisure Needs, Motivations, and Constraints	330
Optimal Experiences and the Meaning of Leisure.....	336
Implications for the Social Psychology of Leisure	338

Section Five—Identifying and Cultivating the Best of Leisure343

Chapter 11: Impacts of Leisure Experience on Childhood and	
Adolescence	345
Preview	346
Two Players	346
Play as Formative and Therapeutic	346
The Formative Capacity of Play, Games, and Sport	346
The Impact of Play on Social Adjustment.....	350
Specific Impacts of Leisure Activities and Experiences in Childhood	
and Adolescence	351
Pleasure, Relaxation, and Coping	352
Distraction.....	354
Personal Growth	355
Identity Formation	362
Formation of Primary Relationships	367
Conformity and Exclusion	369
The Influence of Television and Internet Experience	370
TV, Video Game, and Internet Violence as Causes of Aggression.....	371
Other Effects of Television and Internet Involvement	372
Conclusion	373

Chapter 12: Impacts of Leisure Experience on Adulthood and	
Later Life	375
Preview	376
Leisure as a Life Force and a Life Resource.....	376
The Contribution of Leisure Activity to Subjective Well-Being	378
<i>How</i> is Leisure Influential in Adulthood?	379
Leisure Activity Can Enhance Mood and Happiness	380

Leisure Can Be a Resource for Balance and Compensation	381
Leisure Can Be a Source of Self-Preservation and Continuity	384
Self-Protection and Coping Can Be Facilitated with Leisure Activity	386
Leisure Experiences Influence Relationship Formation and Stability	392
Leisure Activities May Promote Self-Expansion and Personal Growth	396
Where and When is Leisure Influential in Adulthood?	398
At Work	399
In the Family	402
In the Community	406
In Coping with Illness and Loss	410
In Aging Successfully	415
When the Effects of Leisure are <i>Not</i> So Positive	417
Scenarios for Social Change	418
Summary	419
Chapter 13: Optimizing Leisure Outcomes	421
Preview	422
Recognizing Leisure Opportunities	423
Affordance	423
Leisure Affordance in Outdoor Environments	424
Leisure Affordance in Social Contexts	426
Attunement through Leisure Education	427
Interpreting and Managing Leisure Constraints	428
Negotiating Constraint	429
Recreation Substitutability	432
Selective Optimization with Compensation	434
Cultivating Leisure Experience	436
Learning to Optimize Leisure Personally	436
Fostering Leisure Experience in Others	440
Setting and Activity Management for Participation and Leisure Satisfaction	447
Building Community Leisure	450
Conclusion	452
A Final Note	452
References	453
Index	539
About the Authors	551

Preface

In recent decades the social psychology of leisure has emerged as a prominent perspective for understanding the role and impact of leisure in people's lives. It is a dynamic field of study influenced by researchers in leisure studies and theories and research in the fields of psychology and sociology. There is a real interest in the practical applications of social psychology for understanding urgent social issues, and social psychological principles have been applied to improving arrangements for health, work, home life, and, of course, leisure.

An early systematic effort to examine the potential of social psychology for understanding leisure was provided by John Neulinger in the 1974 book, *The Psychology of Leisure: Research Approaches to the Study of Leisure*. In 1980, Seppo Iso-Ahola published *The Social Psychology of Leisure and Recreation*, the first textbook to map out the boundaries of the field and review the social psychological theory and research available at the time. Though a number of books and journal articles have been published since that time dealing with selected topics on the social psychology of leisure, there had not been a current and up-to-date textbook available until the first edition of *A Social Psychology of Leisure* was published in 1997. The first edition has been well received and used in many parts of the world. It has been translated into Japanese and Chinese and is widely cited.

This new edition builds on all of these earlier efforts and incorporates major new topics of research, innovative studies, and contemporary examples. It also advances from the first edition in several important ways. First, it makes more use of traditional social psychological topics such as conformity and persuasion, particularly in Chapter 9. Second, we have devoted the entirety of Chapter 10 to the subject of race, ethnicity, and culture, given the growing evidence for the influence of each on leisure behavior. And third, we have changed the focus of later chapters from benefits to outcomes, recognizing that leisure behavior may be both beneficial and harmful at times.

Those differences notwithstanding, we have continued with the general orientation that the social psychology of leisure is concerned with how people come to perceive time or behavior as free or discretionary, how they choose to fill and structure this discretionary time with behavior and experience,

why they make these choices, and the implications of these choices for their happiness and personal growth. Finally, the social psychology of leisure is concerned with how leisure activity and experience is influenced by other people and by experiences in the other domains of life such as work, family, and community. The purpose of this book, then, is to provide the student with the opportunity to examine current social psychological theory and research about leisure behavior and experience. In other words, how do people's personalities and the social situations that they encounter during their daily lives shape their perceptions, experiences, and responses to leisure? In this book, we attempt to present the "basics" of the field—the core theories and findings that contribute to an understanding of leisure as it affects individuals' daily lives, as well as their use of leisure services.

A Social Psychology of Leisure is written to serve as a textbook for undergraduate students taking a course in the psychological and social aspects of leisure and recreation. It also provides for students in graduate courses a comprehensive introduction that should be supplemented by books and journal articles focusing on specific topics. Finally, especially as it has incorporated reference to newer literature, this volume is intended to serve as a sourcebook for leisure researchers in providing context and even direction when conducting studies that employ a social psychological approach. In Section One, *The Nature of Social Psychology*, two chapters deal with the social psychological approach and the evolution of an interest in leisure in social psychological research. In Section Two, *Social Psychology of Leisure Essentials*, four chapters explore the various meanings of leisure and how they are measured, the range of leisure experiences, and the role of freedom, motivation, needs, and self-determination in shaping leisure activity. In Section Three, *Leisure and the Person*, two chapters address personality, attitudes, and leisure identity, as well as age and gender as individual difference factors influencing leisure behavior and experience. In Section Four, *The Social Context of Leisure*, Chapter 9 approaches social influences in general and socialization in particular while Chapter 10 considers how race, ethnicity, and culture act as situational influences on leisure activity and experience. Finally, in Section Five, *Identifying and Cultivating the Best of Leisure*, Chapter 11 addresses the social psychological impacts of leisure in childhood and adolescence, Chapter 12 considers leisure impacts in adulthood, and Chapter 13 examines the theory and research that has been applied in practice to bringing out the more positive impacts of leisure across the lifespan.

The success of any text depends ultimately on its ability to communicate clearly to student readers and to spark interest in the field of study. We have attempted to present the material simply, without oversimplifying. Special attention has been given to selecting examples that illustrate basic principles and convey our enthusiasm for the field. This book will provide the reader

with the necessary social psychological background material drawn from the fields of psychology and sociology. A previous course in social psychology is not required.

We have tried to maximize the clarity and interest level of the text. Many years of teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in this area have provided a testing ground for much of the material and the methods of presentation that appear in this book. In addition, many students and professors who used the first edition of *A Social Psychology of Leisure* have provided suggestions and comments about the book that we have attempted to take into consideration. We have attempted to avoid unnecessary technical terms. Many concrete examples are used, and where appropriate, topics are introduced through the use of scenarios highlighting various types of leisure behavior for students to analyze. These illustrations are used to raise questions about issues such as:

- How do individuals know when they are having a leisure experience?
- What is so special about leisure from a psychological perspective?
- Does leisure affect people's happiness and life satisfaction?
- Why do people sometimes seek danger and thrills during free time?
- Are some personality types better able to deal with leisure than others?
- Do certain child-rearing methods lead to greater leisure competency?
- How is leisure behavior similar and different across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups?
- Is there a positive side to "addiction" to activities such as online gaming?
- How do leisure attitudes develop and how can they be changed?
- Is leisure important for the development of intimate relationships?
- Are there gender differences in leisure perceptions and needs?
- Can leisure help people deal with stress?
- Are there effective ways to overcome social psychological barriers to leisure participation and satisfaction?

The bibliography at the end of the book is extensive. The discussion of each topic reflects attention to research and thinking found in the literature. We also have identified important studies that illustrate each issue, and these are examined in some detail. These studies also were selected to illustrate the various social psychological methods that can be used to answer questions that

researchers, practitioners, participants, and students may have about leisure. By posing interesting leisure questions often found in the reader's own daily life and then demonstrating how researchers have attempted to answer these same questions, it is hoped that we can demonstrate the relevance, excitement, and methods of social psychological leisure research.

Finally, in this book we discuss the potential applications of the research reviewed. In some cases, these applications will have immediate implications for the provision of public and private leisure services in communities, tourism, park management, and private recreation businesses. However, there is another sense in which the book is applied. Not only can the information provided by a social psychology of leisure be used to more effectively plan leisure services, but also individuals, through an awareness of the social psychological dimensions of leisure, may be able to extend more control over their lives and better enjoy their own leisure. To this end, readers will constantly be asked to reflect on their own experiences and their personal observations of other people at leisure.

D. A. K.

G. J. W.

R. C. M.

Acknowledgments

There are a number of people who deserve our thanks and whose interest and support have been greatly appreciated during the course of writing this edition.

For their comments on portions of the manuscript, we would like to thank University of Georgia graduate students Lisbeth Berbary, Rudy Dunlap, Nic Holt, Sunhwan Hwang, Mandy Jarriel, John Paul MacNeal, Joseph Pate, Heather Reel, Joe Wassif, and Clemson University graduate students Begum Aybar-Damali, Gena Bell, Dorinda Christian, Brian Krohn, Kirby Player, Preetha Sundareswaran, and Teresa Tucker.

Finally, on a personal note, our work on this book has occupied many nights and weekends and substituted for much of our own family leisure time. We are very grateful to our families, and in particular, Pam, Janet, and Marg, for their support and for enduring our mental and physical absences during this time. And as we said with the first edition, we promise not to do it again, at least not for a while.

Section One

The Nature of Social Psychology

Understanding Leisure with Social Psychology

Chapter 1 Outline

Preview

Social Science and the Quest for Happiness, Health, and the Good Life

A Question of Lifestyle: Juggling and Balancing the Demands of Daily Life
People-Watching as a Science

Why Study Leisure with Social Science?

Is Leisure a “Problem” to Be Studied with Social Science?
Reaching the Potential of Leisure through Leisure Services

Leisure and Social Psychology

Social Psychology in Action: Old and New Scenarios
But Can We Call These Leisure “Problems”?
How Would You Approach These Problems?

The Social Psychological Approach

Can the Problems be Studied with Social Psychology?
Theory and Cause-and-Effect Relationships
Social Psychological Ways of Looking at Problems
The Situation: Stimulus-Response Approach
The Person: Organism-Response Approach
The Situation by the Person: Stimulus-Organism-Response Approach

Pinning Down the Social Psychology of Leisure

Preview

This chapter introduces the reader to thinking about leisure from a social psychological perspective. We begin by looking at the need to study leisure and how social psychological thinking has influenced the provision of leisure services. Then we consider how the social sciences in general, through the scientific study of people's everyday behavior and experience, differ from other ways of understanding the lifestyles people lead and what makes their lives meaningful and happy. Next, several scenarios are presented that demonstrate how a social psychological approach can be used to better understand leisure issues. The social psychological approach used as a framework for this book is then described.

Social Science and the Quest for Happiness, Health, and the Good Life

People have always sought the formula for health and happiness. This search for the good life is as common today as at any time in the past—perhaps more so. Throughout history, people have looked to the values of the social groups of which they are members, the folk wisdom passed down to them from their elders, religion, and philosophy as sources for the answers to these questions. Beginning fairly early in the twentieth century, social scientists jumped into the fray in an attempt to provide answers as well.

A Question of Lifestyle: Juggling and Balancing the Demands of Daily Life

Whatever the source of ideas about health and happiness, the answers have often taken the form of a prescription for a particular way of living. Today these prescriptions are packaged as “lifestyle,” and individuals are bombarded from all sides with suggestions for the best way to juggle and balance the various aspects of their lives. Daily newspapers feature lifestyle sections, weekly television series spotlight different and unique ways of living, and numerous self-help books on lifestyle appear on bookstore shelves. Lifestyle is typically described as a “total way of living” (Thirlaway & Upton, 2009; Veal 1993). Though not a new invention, people in previous generations, like fish in water, were immersed in their daily lives and for the most part oblivious to it; lifestyle alternatives were few for most people. While this lack of alternatives is still true for many people in different parts of the world, access to instantaneous electronic communication has created widespread awareness of lifestyle alternatives, even if these choices are not available to everyone.

Commercials urge people to create their own lifestyle—with the “right” products, of course. Television and magazines depict a whole range of ways to live. The food we eat, the manner in which we prepare and consume it, our clothes, our homes, the entertainment and leisure we enjoy, the work we do, and how we raise our children all define our lifestyle. If the number of newspaper articles and popular books written recently are any indication (e.g., Sandholtz, et al., 2002; Loflin & Musig, 2005), most people have come to believe that their lifestyles determine their health and happiness, and just as importantly, that they can *create* their own lifestyles through how they juggle and balance the work, family, and leisure aspects of their lives. Social scientists are studying the battle that people seem to be waging today to bring hectic lifestyles under control (e.g., Christiansen & Matuska, 2006; Gleich, 1999; Honore, 2004; McKenna & Thew, 2008), as well the impact various lifestyle choices may have on individuals and the larger society.

People-Watching as a Science

Science is responsible for many of the lifestyle choices that modern life allows. For many people, “science” suggests the *physical sciences*, such as physics, chemistry, and biology, and they can easily name a variety of inventions emerging from research in these sciences that have made modern life easier—for example, toasters, plastic bags, heart transplants, more resistant strains of plants, personal computers, and cellular telephones. Of course, some of these inventions have created difficulties as well. Current problems being addressed by physical and biomedical scientists are also well known, for example, global warming, bio-terrorism, nuclear waste disposal, AIDS, pandemics, and fossil fuel dependence. These changes and problems command the attention of scientists in a variety of fields, including those that study people per se.

The social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, have taken the popular pastime of “people-watching” and made a science of it. When asked to identify the kinds of inventions developed by social scientists, people often find it more difficult to come up with such a list. Yet social science has provided humanity with a number of inventions, such as psychotherapy, behavior modification, political polling, time management strategies, educational planning principles, and brainstorming. However, social science is probably better known for the types of problems it attempts to address, such as child abuse, poverty, neurosis, alienation in large cities, the pain and dysfunction of substance abuse, and unemployment. It also aims at the elimination of lifestyle diseases, such as heart disease, stress, obesity, and Type II diabetes, which can result from poor eating habits, smoking, an excess of sedentary activity (particularly media-based), and lack of exercise.

As people-watchers, everyone is an armchair social scientist, making predictions about the behavior of other people based on their own experiences. Everyone has theories about the best way to get a date, discipline children, organize a great party, keep New Year's resolutions, and approach the boss for a raise or a professor for a better grade—and we as individuals act on these theories. Social scientists, on the other hand, by carefully and systematically observing people in their homes, at work, at leisure, and even in psychological laboratories, attempt to provide a clearer and more objective picture of human behavior than we, as individuals, can hope to acquire on our own using our casual observations.

The social sciences have long been associated with the study of the types of human problems just mentioned. But during the latter part of this century, a shift has taken place. Social scientists are spending a great deal of time studying normal daily activities and the positive aspects of life as well. Altruism, creativity, humor, and quality of life are only a few of the subjects that have been addressed in the name of “positive psychology” (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). More will be said about this shift in Chapter 2.

Much of this research by social scientists is being carried out in colleges and universities. Newer departments of health promotion, leisure studies, gerontology, consumer sciences, and family studies have emerged to provide answers to specific lifestyle issues and educate people to work in human service fields related to these. Like other sources of information and values in Western society, the solutions provided by social scientists are often controversial. However, the work of these social scientists is alerting society to important problems, sometimes confirming common sense understanding, sometimes severely challenging cherished ideas and beliefs. Hopefully, this research will contribute answers and raise social awareness about specific lifestyle issues so that people will be better able to manage their lives and more effectively support others as well. Accordingly, this book is intended to bring students of leisure and recreation, as well as parks and tourism, into that discussion with an enhanced understanding that will enable them to be more effective service providers, instructors, and researchers.

Why Study Leisure with Social Science?

We will explore the various meanings of leisure in Chapter 3 especially; but it should be recognized at the outset here that leisure is inherently associated with *lifestyle* and that people seem to have difficulty achieving lifestyle *balance*. As will be seen, some researchers have even suggested that an individual's leisure may have more impact on the quality of life than any other area of behavior and experience (see Kelly, 1996). Leisure has been described

<http://www.sagamorepub.com/products/social-psychology-leisure?src=lipdf>

in a variety of ways. In fact, one of the longest-standing problems researchers have had is agreeing on how to define and measure it. Leisure has been characterized as specific types of *activity* (e.g., attending a movie); as *time* free from obligations (e.g., the amount of time not spent in paid employment and taking care of home, family, and oneself); as meaningful and satisfying *experience* (e.g., feelings of enjoyment, fun, excitement, relaxation, awe, belonging); or as some combination of activity, time, and experience. Any of these approaches to defining and measuring leisure can be useful, and the approach used often depends on what questions about leisure the researcher is trying to answer. Chapter 3 will examine the issues of leisure definition and measurement in some detail and provide some interesting examples.

As to why one should study leisure, many researchers do so simply because they are curious and would like to know more about why people choose to engage in the activities and pursue the experiences with which they fill their free time. Why do some people jump out of airplanes while others prefer quiet walks in the park? How is it that some friends never have enough time for the activities they constantly pack into their available free time, while others find their leisure empty and boring? What effects do these orientations have on other aspects of life? These and many other questions are fascinating. Since leisure is based on free time or choice, most individuals have more personal control over what they do during their free time than at any other time during their daily lives. Consequently, for those researchers who make a profession out of people-watching, what people do for leisure may tell more about them—their innermost feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and personality characteristics—than what they do in any other context. Leisure is fertile ground for learning more about other people as well as ourselves (Leckey & Mannell, 2000). It is the authors' hope that by reading this book and studying leisure behavior and experience, readers will become more aware of the factors that affect their own leisure, and consequently will be able to extend more control over this realm of their lives and better enjoy and benefit from it while developing ideas for positively influencing the leisure and lives of others.

Many who read this book will be studying in recreation and leisure studies programs. Not only are you likely to be curious about leisure (both your own and others'), but you will be planning to enter the leisure services field, where you will be involved in developing and providing services and opportunities that will enable others to make more of their leisure time. While leisure can be rewarding, it seems to be a problem for many people as well. To work with people and help them in developing meaningful and satisfying leisure, researchers and practitioners need to constantly study and examine people's leisure behavior and experience and the factors that influence them.

The resulting knowledge will hopefully sensitize leisure providers to such changing needs and better enable the provision of valued services and assistance.

Is Leisure a “Problem” to Be Studied with Social Science?

The use of non-work time and leisure in our society continues to raise highly significant questions both for the individual and for society. Society is facing major social transformations with the globalization of the economy and advancing technology that are creating radical changes in the way we as individuals work, the use of our non-work time, and the role of leisure in our lives. To make things even more exciting and perhaps complicated, there are many different views about how these changes in technology and economics are affecting the type of work individuals do, where they work, when they work, how much they work, and even if they work at all (see Haworth, 2004; Mannell & Reid, 1999).

What individuals do off the job, as leisure, and the lifestyles they lead are caught up in these same forces of change. Analysts who spend their time peering into the future are no more in agreement about what will happen with leisure than they are with work or the relationship between work and leisure (e.g., Hilbrecht, 2007; Lewis, 2003; McDaniels, 1990). There are even major differences of opinion about how much leisure and free time people actually have today, whether it is increasing or decreasing, and if it can play a positive or negative role in people’s lives as the opportunities for work change (e.g., Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991, 1998). For many people, there is a distinct possibility of further growth in non-work time, though it may be unevenly distributed—with some actually working longer hours and others becoming underemployed or chronically unemployed. During the past few years, there have been policy discussions by governments, employers, and employee groups about the value and feasibility of job sharing and shorter work weeks in an attempt to distribute the work that is available to more people (e.g., Schor, 2005). These policies would result in more free time and possibly more leisure for many people.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a 2009 report examining the average amount of leisure time available in the eighteen of its member countries, including Canada and the U.S., for whom relatively recent time-use information was available (OECD, 2009). Leisure included hobbies, games, television viewing, computer use, recreational gardening, sports, socialising with friends and family, attending events, and so on (we will discuss the challenges of measuring leisure in Chapter 3). Leisure was found to occupy roughly one fourth of the time of the average working adult, or 5.76 hours out of the 24-hour day. If only waking hours are considered, leisure time is approximately one third of people’s waking time. However, there are tremendous differences among people in their work and

leisure lifestyle arrangements within and across countries. On the one hand, unemployment and part-time work have grown at the same time that the number of people working well beyond a forty-hour week has increased (Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1998). Some of these latter individuals are doing so unwillingly; to keep their jobs, they have little choice as employers downsize and streamline their operations. Other people appear to be thriving on more work, though for some of these people work overwhelms life to the point of “workaholism” (e.g., Taris et al., 2008). On the other hand, for children, retirees, the underemployed, and the unemployed, leisure may account for much larger portions of their time and activity, though the quality of experience in all of that “free” time may give us pause about referring to it as leisure. These differences and problems make the study of leisure and how people deal with it a timely and important topic. Whether this time is idle, avoided, filled with pleasure, devoted to personal growth, used in the service of others, a source of frustration and anxiety, or used in ways that are personally or socially harmful is a matter of great academic, political, and social interest. Thus, although leisure may not be a problem per se, its wide variety of manifestations suggests the full range of human experience.

Reaching the Potential of Leisure through Leisure Services

What individuals choose to do during their leisure may require few goods and services, involve no one but themselves and a few friends, and cost them nothing. However, there is an ever-increasing demand for public and private leisure services. These services are provided and influenced by numerous agencies at all levels of government, by professional and advocacy groups, and by private businesses. Leisure is big business as people spend money on travel, attending sport and cultural events, collectibles from stamps to paintings, and recreational goods from water bottles to sailboats. It is cultivated by governments for its contribution to economic growth. For example, many countries have developed strategies to promote tourism. The travel industry is the largest single industry in the world, and in 2008, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimated worldwide revenues to be about 944 billion U.S. dollars, or 30% of the world’s exports of services (UNWTO, 2009). In recent years, people have shown greater concern and interest in leading healthier lifestyles. Governments have also been promoting healthier lifestyles in an attempt to reduce medical and healthcare costs, which have continued to grow beyond society’s ability to pay. More and more, leisure has been singled out as an important vehicle for promoting healthy lifestyles (Mannell, 2007). Consequently, local communities continue to build and manage recreational and cultural facilities. They provide programs for their citizens with the support of all levels of government. Public lands and forests continue to

be acquired, protected as parks, and managed for recreational use and to promote healthy living (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2008). Reductions to recess and physical education in public schools have made public leisure services all the more important resources for physical activity.

As a consequence of the extensive resources being invested in leisure-service delivery systems by all levels of government and by the private and commercial sectors, there has emerged a need for skilled professionals and practitioners to plan, develop, and manage the various service systems. To help in this enterprise, scholars and researchers in leisure studies have been concerned with how individuals, groups, and society as a whole plan, organize, and use resources for leisure. The role of leisure in meeting the health and lifestyle needs of people in various types of employment, those working at home, families, retired adults, disadvantaged groups, persons with disabilities, and the unemployed is of continuing and growing interest. Researchers and practitioners are concerned about policies affecting public and private sector involvement in leisure-related matters such as sport, fitness, tourism, park and heritage development, and the arts.

Leisure services have also become “psychologized” to a great extent (Mannell, 1991). Many recreation providers are as concerned with the quality of the experiences provided by their recreational services as they are with the activities and settings they manage. This focus on the experience is evident in many consumer areas today. Research on consumer behavior in general has increasingly focused on the experience of buying in its own right, since consumers do more than simply attend to information to make purchasing choices (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). They also engage in imaginative and emotional consumption experiences. Pine and Gilmore note that businesses are increasingly inclined to orchestrate memorable experiences for their clients. The experience is the “value added” in marketing a product for companies such as Starbucks and IBM and, of course, with Disney, where the experience *is* the product. Parents have always sought enjoyable experiences for birthday parties, for example, and now companies such as “Pump It Up” specialize in creating such events. This growing focus on the nature of experience (Norman, 2004) is reminiscent of Toffler’s prediction in his book *Future Shock* (1970) that no service will be offered to the consumer until it has been analyzed by teams of behavioral engineers to improve the quality of the experience it creates.

Of course, this notion of experience “engineering” smacks of manipulation, and is viewed by some critics as the antithesis of the freedom of choice, personal control, and spontaneity usually associated with leisure (e.g., Goodale, 1990). In the tourism and travel industry, for example, there are those who are very concerned with the lack of authenticity of many of the travel and tourism experiences available (e.g., Cohen, 1988; Franklin, 2006; MacCannell, <http://www.sagamorepub.com/products/social-psychology-leisure?src=lipdf>

1973, 2001; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Urry, 2002). But many leisure service providers, particularly those in the private sector, have already developed theories or rules of thumb through trial and error to enhance the experiences of their customers and ensure a clientele willing to return again and again. For example, the formula for the success of theme parks is known and applied in designing and operating this type of leisure business, as noted by Cameron and Bordessa (1981). Success is based on structuring the leisure environment in such a way as to create or encourage predictably satisfying experiences (e.g., Sharpe, 2005). Regardless of how researchers and service providers feel about these issues, it has become apparent that an understanding of the psychological or experiential nature of leisure is important.

Leisure studies scholars draw on the knowledge and approaches of the social and management sciences, and the results of their research and thinking is disseminated in a wide array of national and international journals and conferences specializing in leisure studies. Most college and university recreation and leisure studies programs encourage their students to integrate and understand the interplay between “people,” “resource,” and “policy” issues. In other words, leisure studies courses require students to study individual and group leisure behavior as a function of social and cultural factors, the planning and management of natural and built resources for free time use, and policy/management issues associated with the provision of public and private leisure services. Social science can help formalize scientific planning and design principles that can provide the tools for those practitioners in the public and private service sectors who are involved with human behavior and experience during free time.

Social science research is devoted to understanding not only the antecedents and consequences of leisure choices, but also the factors that affect the quality and meaning of these choices. Hopefully, this knowledge will allow a better understanding of the problems people encounter in attempting to choose meaningful and enjoyable leisure; and while this knowledge may be applied in enhancing the management of human services, it may also be used to enable individuals to gain more control over their lives and better manage their own leisure.

Leisure and Social Psychology

Leisure has been studied from the perspectives of a variety of social science disciplines including sociology, anthropology, and economics (see Barnett, 1988, 1995; Chick, 1987, 1995; Peterson, Driver, & Gregory, 1988). Starting in the late 1960s, there has been a steady growth in the use of psychological, particularly *social* psychological, theory and research methods for developing

an understanding of leisure (Argyle, 1996; Iso-Ahola, 1995; Mannell, Kleiber, & Staempfli, 2006).

From a psychological perspective, social psychologists attempt to understand how the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others influences the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals (Allport, 1968; Aronson, 2008) and this approach has been called “psychological social psychology” (Stryker, 1997) to distinguish it from sociological social psychology, which focuses more on group processes, ideological and political influences, and the social construction of meaning (see Mannell, Kleiber, & Staempfli, 2006). Mainstream psychological social psychology has been and continues to be primarily concerned with individuals’ perceptions or construal of their social environment, recognizing that individuals can misperceive social and physical realities and that it is these perceptions, mistaken or not, that influence behavior and experience (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Experimental research designs are widely used by psychological researchers, though field research methods have grown in popularity during the past twenty-five years.

Leisure researchers have only rarely used the experimental research methods of psychology. However, consistent with the social psychological approach in the field of psychology, there has been a focus on the leisure experience and behavior of the individual—in other words what she or he does and feels—and the factors that influence those actions and feelings. Also consistent with this perspective, researchers have been interested in the influence of *others* on leisure behavior and experience, based on the idea that the influences of others work through and interact with individual differences and psychological dispositions. Leisure also affords much in the way of privacy and solitude and thus relative freedom from the *direct* influence of others, but even there the thoughts, perceptions, and histories one brings to such situations—as well as the motivation for seeking out freedom and enjoyment—are products of social influence as well. Thus, as with other forms of human behavior, leisure behavior and experience are seen to be a function of the interplay of internal psychological dispositions (e.g., perceptions, feelings, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, needs, personality characteristics) and situational influences that are part of an individual’s social environment (e.g., other people, group norms, human artifacts, and media). And, although the framework for this book has a strong psychological orientation, the increasing amount of research on leisure that is being done using sociological social psychological perspectives will also be considered in examining those processes.

The emergence of the social psychological study of leisure is not too surprising. Many researchers studying leisure have been committed to providing knowledge to practitioners who work with individuals to enhance their leisure participation and satisfaction. This “helping” orientation is a

legacy of the parks and recreation movement, which began at the turn of the last century largely in response to the problems of industrialization and urbanization. The leisure service field is descended from this early movement and still has a responsibility for working with individuals to solve problems that are a result of both personal constraints and constraints imposed by their social environments. Thus, there has been substantial interest in understanding individual leisure behavior and experience as a function of the differences in needs, attitudes, and personality that individuals carry around with them, and the social contexts and situations that they encounter during their daily lives. The knowledge gained from this perspective will not only enable providers to more effectively market and promote leisure services and resources, it also offers the possibility of actually designing those services and resources to provide certain experiences for participants. Behavioral engineering of this sort raises a fundamental problem, however, that is somewhat problematic for some of the assumptions about leisure that we will explore throughout this volume: to the extent that leisure can be characterized as an experience of freedom, having it managed by others may threaten its very existence! Similarly, if leisure behavior is presumed to be a reflection of individual self-expression, how then does it survive social influence? In looking at leisure through the lens of social psychology, we are suggesting that such freedom and self-expression are nevertheless conditioned by social influence in varying degrees and are thus amenable to the good—and bad—ministrations of others.

We invite you, as the reader, to at least temporarily adopt this social psychological perspective in thinking about leisure and the various issues and problems that will be examined. We have found it to be a useful framework for our own thinking and understanding. Social psychology is a lively, dynamic field of enquiry. People *do* social psychology. So, before starting to examine the research on the social psychology of leisure, let's examine a "leisure problem" and observe firsthand social psychological thinking in action.

Social Psychology in Action: Old and New Scenarios

In the first edition of this book, we introduced the following story about a "video arcade." It was based loosely on real events that took place over thirty years ago. The playing of video games these days—while at least as controversial in some respects as we will see later—is far more likely to be done in homes, with one's personal computers and consoles, or in more informal settings with other personal digital devices. But the problems identified and discussed at that time, related to private leisure consumption in public spaces, may still apply today. You be the judge.

Kids Steal To Feed Video Habit, School Board Told

Educators and school board trustees want to zap students out of electronic game arcades and back into classrooms. Arcades have led to increasing problems of truancy, larceny, and young students being subjected to a poor environment, the trustees of the board of education were told Monday. “There’s been a marked increase in the number of youthful offenders under the age of 16 who are pouring their ill-gotten gain into these machines,” the deputy police chief told the committee. His comments were echoed by the principal of a local high school, who said students are “stealing from each other and from their parents” to feed their pinball and electronic game addictions.

Arcade owners have a habit of locating near schools to attract student business and as a result some youngsters are often late returning to class after lunch or don’t come back at all, the principal said. He has discussed the problems with parents, police and other county principals, and called for a bylaw that would prohibit access to the arcades to children under 16 unless accompanied by a parent, restrict hours of business so they don’t coincide with school times, restrict arcade locations and license the machines to control their number.

“I think you’re all overreacting,” said the operator of a local arcade. “This type of business is being harassed and has been for some time.”

Did this scenario seem like something out of the past that would not be a problem today? Or can you think of similar issues that might concern school administrators and others today? How about when social networking is done by gang members in a local library in a way intended to provoke members of other gangs as happened recently in a southern U.S. city? “Expressing oneself” through Facebook or many other such websites would generally meet most definitions of leisure behavior, even though it may result in antisocial activity. Should the library find some way to ban social networking as a result? Is that reasonable? What are the risks if they fail to take such action?

A similar, and perhaps more obvious, example of such a use and misuse problem occurs where skateboarders practice inventive moves in spaces that were not intended for them. “Skaters”—skateboard aficionados—have been chased out of a lot of outdoor locations that might offer somewhat unconventional, challenging physical conditions to practice their boarding skills. There is some property damage that has been attributed to such activities, but at least as often it is the assumption that such “fugitive” activities bring with it criminal activities, particularly illegal drug use and trade, or even just the appearances of such that leads adults in charge to attempt to suppress this activity. Skaters often cultivate an unconventionality and have resisted being “co-opted” into skate parks that they consider too tame and mainstream and that often come with a cost to their freedom. Nevertheless, leisure services have often been asked to come up with solutions in “providing for” such individuals, or at least keeping them off the street.

Thus, problems of delinquency and antisocial behavior are sometimes associated with the leisure of adolescents and youth, whether or not such associations are justified. Questions about what prompts and influences such activities and what such activities lead to are among the many concerns of social psychologists. Another problem that has been connected with leisure is the sedentary behavior that leads to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. These are the “lifestyle illnesses” of early and middle adulthood, often associated with television watching, snacking, and the lack of exercise, and will become more common in the future of such individuals because the relevant habits are being formed earlier in life. In fact, obesity in childhood has reached “epidemic” proportions (Surgeon General, 2006). Again, we may ask what are the factors that influence such sedentary behavior, or its more active alternatives, and how might they be influenced? These are also concerns of social psychologists (cf. Epstein, et al. 2006).

But Can We Call These Leisure “Problems”?

Was the arcade issue raised in the earlier edition a leisure problem? Is playing video games at the arcade considered leisure? And what about the skateboarding example? . . . leisure? . . . a leisure “problem”? There are a number of ways of defining leisure. In fact, one of the longest-standing challenges leisure researchers have had is agreeing on just exactly how to define and measure leisure. Leisure has been described at various times as an activity, as time free from obligations, as a meaningful and satisfying experience, or as some combination of these (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1981). Leisure has also been defined both objectively and subjectively. In the case of objective definitions, the judgment is made based on what people are apparently doing whereas with subjective definitions, the question is, what are they feeling or experiencing? Most of us would probably agree that playing video games or skateboarding are leisure behaviors and recreational activities, and there probably would be consensus about this in many groups and societies. Also, the students in the newspaper stories participated in such activities during their free time (during lunch period and after school) and appear to find the activities meaningful and satisfying, even to the point of “addiction.” Taken at face value, it seems plausible that the behavior discussed in both cases is leisure. We will return to this issue of defining and measuring leisure in Chapter 3.

It also appears that these behaviors may be regarded as problems by some. They are all at least presumed in some cases to be associated with negative outcomes: truancy, larceny, gang hostility and violence, and obesity. As will be seen, leisure problems often take the form of activities that may result in negative outcomes for the individual or society, but they are also reflected in barriers or constraints that prevent people from engaging in or experiencing satisfying leisure.

But we can also use the word “problem” more generally as a “research problem” and many of those in leisure research involve the study of the *benefits* of leisure as well. Can leisure be helpful in the coping process? If so, might it make a difference to one who is injured, ill, or who has lost a spouse? Do play and other activities in early childhood facilitate social development? How can we know? Might leisure activities be used to reduce inter-ethnic hostility or maybe even build a sense of community? The problems in this sense then are when and how leisure does contribute to adjustment, development, and well-being, a subject we will take up increasingly in the latter chapters of the book. But let us return to the questions that concerned us at the start and consider the ways we can approach them.

How Would You Approach These Problems?

Now, imagine that you are a leisure services practitioner working for the Department of Parks and Recreation in a community where one of the problem scenarios discussed above was occurring. Your department is approached by members of the city council seeking some assistance. Your director assigns you to look into the problem and asks you to provide her with some suggestions for recommendations that she can pass on to the city council. How would you approach this problem? What would you do first?

In the authors’ courses, when we ask our students such questions, their first responses usually are suggestions to develop new recreational programs or interventions to combat the problems, that is, to provide “constructive” alternatives that will keep the youth out of trouble, or, in the case of sedentary activity, to keep them physically active. Recreation and human service students tend to be action- and solution-oriented. However, while this is admirable, there are other things one should do before stepping in with solutions.

First, let’s be sure of the facts. Where exactly are the problems? Was there actually an increase in truancy and larceny in the school since the opening of the arcade in the earlier example? If so, was it due to the presence of the arcade and the fact that students play video games on its premises? Or was the problem that some people in the community felt that adolescents playing video games in a shopping mall is “bad,” that is, that engaging in this activity is morally wrong, much like some people may feel that gambling or abortion are wrong while others do not. The problem, then, could be primarily one of a conflict of values—the values of adolescents who like to do certain activities and the providers of the technology and settings that are utilized in such activities versus the values of adults who see them as bad. In the original case, the link between video game playing or skateboarding and the deviant behavior associated with such activities may be irrelevant to this problem. We will return to this issue of values.

However, even if we could somehow move beyond an association between the activities and the problems to a determination that the activities are actually *causing* these problems in some cases, there would still be other questions to be addressed. Do video game playing, skateboarding, social networking, and television watching affect all youth in the negative ways considered? If not, why not? Which students are more “at risk”? There may be different solutions required for different students. These questions make the problems identified much more complex. The issue involves not only what is actually going on, but what different stakeholders think or perceive is happening and their value systems, which may be in conflict. This complexity is consistent with what most people know about human life from their own experience, and this is where a *social psychological approach* comes in handy.

The Social Psychological Approach

Can the Problems Be Studied With Social Psychology?

The social psychological approach is a scientific approach. Science is the application of the scientific method to answerable questions. The *scientific method* is simply a way of making observations or gathering information in a systematic way; it involves the use of controlled, systematic inquiry, and a logical and rational approach to explanation. Answerable questions are questions that can be answered by the use of the scientific method. While this reasoning sounds a bit circular, it simply means that the questions should have answers that can be arrived at by observing what is going on under various circumstances. As will be seen, a number of ways of observing what is going on are available with the social psychological approach. Sometimes the researcher carefully observes and records what is happening, or interviews or surveys the people involved. Sometimes the researcher may intervene and actually manipulate aspects of the situation under study and then observe what happens experimentally, either in a laboratory type setting or in the “field,” that is, the actual social or natural environment. Sometimes the only way to gain some insight into the problem is for the researcher to re-create or simulate what goes on in the real world in a laboratory setting where the cause-and-effect relationships that may be at play can be more clearly examined.

If the problem cannot be answered through careful, systematic observation or the use of the scientific method, then approaches other than science may be necessary. An example of an unanswerable question for science is, “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” Many areas of human study and knowledge address questions for which science-based disciplines

have no answers. Philosophy, art, literature, and religious studies are devoted to exploring not only some of the same questions addressed by the scientific disciplines, but also many issues that cannot be dealt with by the scientific approach.

Many of these latter issues involve values. The facts may even be quite clear and agreed upon, but we as individuals have to decide whether we are in favor or against a particular practice or course of action, and no amount of research is going to help us decide (e.g., abortion, ordination of homosexuals in the church, legalized gambling, the sale of alcohol on Sundays, and the appropriateness of children and adolescents using library Internet access to engage in provocative social networking). Novels are written, pictures painted, philosophical analyses presented, and religious and cultural standards called upon to provide answers to these questions for many people.

If we decide as individuals, practitioners, or researchers that an issue or problem can be clarified by observing or gathering further information, then we are ready to engage in social psychological analysis and research. We need to determine if there is, in fact, a problem. In the earlier video arcade case, did the facts support the connection between video game playing, and the truancy and larceny occurring in the school suggested by the newspaper story? Several types of information can be gathered to determine the facts. First, descriptive information is needed. Did incidents of crime in the school increase from the time the arcade opened? Did students from the school use their available “leisure time” to hang out in the arcade? Second, we would need still more information to determine if there was actually a relationship between the events, and more specifically a *cause-and-effect* relationship. Third, if there is evidence of a link, it would be useful to collect information that would clarify the *underlying linking mechanism*. That is, what are the social and psychological explanations for the link between playing at the arcade and the deviant behavior at school that might help to understand what actually took place and ultimately deal with similar problems?

This video arcade problem would have been amenable to more rigorous social psychological study and analysis if done at the time, though clearly the issue of what are appropriate recreation activities for adolescents has a value judgment component as well. At this point, we would have to go back to original records and see if sufficient information was available to establish correlations among the relevant behavioral variables. Perhaps the skateboard case would provide us with a more contemporary problem that we could study proactively. We could begin the study with an identification of where skateboarding occurs in the community and then do some careful observation to document trends in actual activity. At the same time, we might be able to get police data as to complaints and arrests in the area in which the activity takes place. If we observed no relationship between increases in

skateboarding and registered complaints, it might be concluded that fears of such were unwarranted and that there was no “leisure problem” here. You might also speculate that the “problem” was really a conflict of values in the community over the appropriateness of children spending their leisure time skateboarding.

If an increase in skateboarding activity was indeed associated with an increase in criminal activity in the area, however, the problem would clearly warrant further study. As the researcher, you do not have enough information yet to conclude that skateboarding is causing or is in any way linked to the problems in the contiguous neighborhoods. The increase in skateboarding and illegal acts could simply be a coincidence. It may be different students who skateboard, on the one hand, and who are involved in delinquent activities, on the other. These latter problems could be due to other unidentified factors, such as the degradation of the built environment in a neighborhood that makes it more attractive to adventurous skateboarders as well as to those individuals who are emboldened by the obvious neglect to engage in such activities such as breaking windows in abandoned buildings. Both activities may simply be symptoms of other problems.

The next step in this social psychological research would be to collect information that would allow you to examine the presence or absence of a cause-and-effect relationship between skateboarding and illegal activities in the neighborhood, as well as develop some understanding of what the link might be.

Theory and Cause-and-Effect Relationships

How did the authorities cited in the original article explain the relationship between video arcade playing and school problem behavior? What was their *theory*? Theories are just explanations of how and why events are related. The theory suggested by the original newspaper article seems to be that the presence of the arcade provided *opportunities* and seduced students to engage in the *behavior* of playing video games, which in turn led to addiction and ultimately resulted in truancy and larceny. As we noted earlier, there was little or no evidence provided in the article to support this theory.

In the skateboarding example, let's assume for the moment that your research demonstrates that an increase in crime in a neighborhood does seem to have occurred simultaneously with the increase in skateboarding activity. However, given the number of skaters involved and the number of crimes committed, it could not be concluded that skating led to criminal activity in all cases or even any particular case. Clearly, if any skaters were involved in the criminal activities, not all of them were. This state of affairs is a more accurate reflection of what one would likely find and of the complexity of the human behavior that one typically encounters in one's daily life. Even

with this knowledge, however, you do not yet have enough information to begin to understand why certain individual students seem to be adversely affected by the skateboarding subculture, let alone suggest a solution to the skateboarding “problem.” The social psychological approach comes in handy at this point, and provides a useful framework for examining this redefined problem.

Social Psychological Ways of Looking at Problems

Throughout the development of psychology during the past century, competing views of how best to understand and predict people’s behavior have been suggested. Within social psychology, these views can be roughly categorized into three types of approaches which differ according to the types of factors that are seen as the most useful for explaining a person’s behavior and experience. These approaches differ according to the emphasis given to explanatory factors found in social situations (external factors) versus the person (internal psychological factors).

The Situation: Stimulus-Response Approach

B. F. Skinner was the best-known spokesperson for the stimulus-response (S-R) approach. He was an advocate of *behaviorism*, an extreme form of *situationism*. Behaviorism is not as popular as it once was as a framework for studying and explaining human behavior, but it is still applied in contexts where behavior management and “correction” is the purpose. Behaviorists argue that since people’s attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and motives cannot be seen, attention should be directed to understanding the conditions that can lead to actual changes in behavior. Skinner felt that the science of human behavior would be better served if psychologists focused on what they could observe with their eyes—the circumstances or *stimuli* in the individual’s environment that triggered the actual behavior, or *response*, itself, and the conditions or rewards that led to the reoccurrence of the behavior in these circumstances.

Situationism suggests that social situations or settings act as stimuli to elicit a response (behavior) and that this predictable response occurs because it leads to positive consequences or *rewards*. In other words, if a behavior in which a person engages under particular circumstances reliably produces a reward, then the likelihood that these circumstances will lead to the behavior in the future is quite high. Consequently, when using this approach, social psychologists do not need to rely on unseen mental or cognitive dispositions or processes such as attitudes, motives, personality traits, or emotions occurring within the individual to explain behavior.

If you as the researcher were to adopt this approach for understanding the connection between the video arcade and truancy and larceny, the skateboarding example or the other problems mentioned, you would develop

explanations or theories that are restricted to identifying stimuli and rewards found in the social situations that are part of the students' daily lives. For example, you might theorize that the mere presence of other skateboarders stimulates the response of skateboarding. The rewards that maintain this behavior and perhaps result in it becoming excessive and even destructive to property might include the admiring words of peers. Skateboarding requires the resources of both time and money. You might theorize that these rewards are also responsible for students skipping school and stealing money. The reward for their deviant behavior is being able to continue to engage in the activity of skateboarding. This theory would be consistent with a cause-and-effect link between the presence of skateboarders, property destruction, and other delinquent behavior.

If you follow a strict situational approach, you might expect a large number of the students in the neighborhood to be at risk and respond similarly to the growth of skateboarding. However, connecting an increase in skateboarding to the inevitable destruction of property or other kinds of delinquent behavior is an "empirical question"; and if destructive behavior does not inevitably coincide with skateboarding or if destructive behavior occurs in the absence of skateboarding, then the association is tenuous at best.

How do you explain with situationism why some students have become involved while others have not? You might take a closer look at other aspects of the social environment of the students and attempt to identify additional situational influences that affect some students and not others. For example, in the case of the use of library Internet facilities that were used to promote antisocial gang-related messages, you could have proposed a theory that suggests that the mere availability of the Internet facilities is insufficient by itself to trigger the sending of gang-related messages. Perhaps, for the libraries' facilities to have stimulated such aggressive communications, there would have to have been a peer subculture present that encourages and rewards such behavior. In addition to the perpetrators being members of gangs that support this deviant behavior, you could have theorized that they are likely to come from families with restricted financial resources, making it necessary to use library facilities where home computers are not available. Additionally, the youth involved may not have part-time jobs or may not be involved in extra-curricular school activities and, therefore, have so much free time on their hands that they are more susceptible to negative social influences. Finally, the nature of the Internet websites available through the library could also be examined for their influence as stimuli that prompt various kinds of social behavior.

The Person: Organism-Response Approach

Many people would look elsewhere than the social situation for an explanation of why some students are involved in this deviant behavior and others

are not. In fact, most people would want to know who these offending students were and something about them as individuals. Researchers who believe that differences among people can be measured and used to predict and explain why they behave as they do take a *person or organism-response (O-R) approach*. In contrast to situationism, the O-R approach is based on the assumption that people demonstrate stable and enduring differences in their needs, motives, attitudes, and personalities, independent of the situation, which lead them to behave consistently across a wide range of situations, yet differently from one another. Consequently, if you want to understand why some students are attracted to video games, skateboarding, social networking, and those activities that may be destructive or delinquent, you need to look for those characteristics that they carry around with them in their minds and that distinguish them from their more conventional and law-abiding peers.

A number of constructs have been used to identify and explain stable person differences, such as attitudes, needs, motives, and personality traits. These psychological dispositions may be learned, inherited, or a result of both types of influences. In the arcade example, what attitudinal or personality disposition could explain why some students gravitated toward the arcade while others did not, and why this activity leads to deviant school behavior for some? The same basic question could also be asked of skateboarders and those attracted to social networking as well as to gang activity and to other delinquent activities. Perhaps some adolescents have a greater need for excitement, what some researchers have called “sensation seeking.” They may be more likely to be drawn to unconventional and risky activities—both legally recreational and deviant or delinquent—that satisfy their need for excitement. There are a large number of psychological *organismic*, or person, differences that could be identified that might explain why some students are more susceptible than others. For example, you could hypothesize that those utilizing library Internet sites for social networking—whether in relation to gangs or for other purposes—are more socially outgoing (extroverted) than others. Perhaps those with very negative attitudes toward authority are more susceptible to joining skateboarding groups than in doing leisure activities that involve adult supervision.

To test such *hypotheses*, you could administer personality tests to those involved and ask them to report on their various free time activities. Researchers have developed paper-and-pencil tests to measure a large number of personality traits and attitudes. You could see if the personalities and attitudes of those involved in the problematic activities differ from others who are comparable in other respects.

In spite of the fact that most people rely heavily on individual differences and personality to explain and understand other people’s behavior as well as their own, research has shown that people tend to overestimate the power of

person factors in explaining behavior (Aronson, 2008; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). In fact, people do not appear to behave as consistently in different situations as might be expected. People seen as “dishonest” are not dishonest in all situations, nor are “honest” people honest in all situations. A person’s inflated belief in the importance of person factors for explaining behavior, together with the failure to recognize the importance of situational factors, has been termed the *fundamental attribution error* (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

Consequently, today most personality and social psychologists have adopted a framework that looks for explanations of people’s behavior and experience in the interaction of social situation and person factors.

The Situation by the Person: Stimulus-Organism-Response Approach

Approaches that take both the stimulus, or situation, and the organism, or person, into consideration to explain responses or behavior are called *interactionist*. The assumption underlying interactionism is that people’s behavior and experience can be best understood by taking into account both the influence of the social situation (e.g., the presence and behavior of other people and other environmental conditions), and the influence of what people bring to the situation (e.g., perceptions, attitudes, motives, personality traits). The interaction of situation and person factors often results in different people perceiving or construing, and consequently responding to, the same objective situations quite differently. While interactionism may sound like a relatively straightforward idea, it turns out to be a complex notion with a number of versions. Not only can situation and person factors interact in different ways, but theorists differ in how they conceptualize the person factors.

An early and very influential perspective was succinctly expressed by Lewin (1935), in his classic statement that behavior is a function of the person and the environment, that is, $B=f(P, E)$. Lewin believed that it is not the person and the environment that determine behavior, but a person-environment unit—what he called the *life space*. From this perspective, the individual cannot be separated from the environment because “they interpenetrate one another in such a complex manner that any attempt to unravel them tends to destroy the natural unity of the whole and to create an artificial distinction between organism and environment” (p. 83). One way to understand this is with the idea of *construal*, which refers to the personal and subjective meaning that people attach to situations (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Social psychologists taking this approach assume that a person’s understanding of situations is the result of an active, constructive process, rather than a passive reception and registering of the situation. Consequently, the impact of any “objective” situation depends on the personal and subjective meaning that the individual attaches to that situation. To predict the behavior of a given

person successfully, one must be able to comprehend her or his construal of the situation—that is, the manner in which the person understands the situation as a whole. In the case of the video arcade problem from years past, for example, had this approach been utilized, authorities would have tried to develop an idea of how those involved were thinking and feeling about the arcade and school settings.

Since Lewin's statement, social psychological researchers who adopt the interactionist perspective have differed in the extent to which they feel that situation and person factors can be separated for study. On the one hand, some are interested in the general processes of social perception and construal common to all people—that is, the way people come to interpret their social environments and other people's behavior. In their research and analyses of behavior, these researchers are careful to assess how the people they are studying perceive and interpret surrounding social contexts. On the other hand, other researchers are interested in how the relatively stable personality, motivational, and attitudinal differences that people carry around with them affect both how they perceive the social situations that they encounter and, in turn, how they respond to them. The following illustration from the skateboarding problem would be an example of interactionism of the latter type. Students who are members of peer groups that value skating expertise (social situation influence) might be more likely to get into trouble in the neighborhoods where the activity takes place. However, only a small percentage of these adolescents typically do get into trouble. Let's also say that a small portion of the students who are assessed as sensation seekers get involved (person influence), but, again, not everyone who has a high need for sensation gets involved with skating. Neither situation nor person factors by themselves seem to explain very effectively the deviant behavior of concern. However, if you were to examine sensation seekers who are also members of peer groups who value skating and find that a very high percentage of them engage in property destruction and other kinds of deviant behavior at school or in the neighborhoods, you would have a *situation by person interaction* and, perhaps, a much better explanation of the behavior in question.

This scenario exemplifies only one type or form of interactionism, that is, the *additive model of interactionism* (Endler, 1983). The behavior and experience of the individual are seen to be dependent on three sources of influence: situations, persons, and their interaction. As noted previously, there was a small independent influence of the situational influence—a peer group. Also the person variable, the sensation seeker, had a small independent influence. However, it was only when these situation and person variables both were present or interacting that they have a strong influence on behavior.

Other types of interactionism differ in the way that the situation and person are seen to interact or influence a person's experience and behavior (Diener,

Larsen, & Emmons, 1984). For example *reciprocal* interactionism (Bowers, 1973; Pervin, 1968) is a more dynamic model. Reciprocal interactionism has been studied by researchers who believe in the importance of identifying and measuring stable individual differences (e.g., personality traits, needs, attitudes). It predicts that there is a relationship between personality and the situations people naturally choose to be in most of the time. In everyday life, people usually have some freedom of choice over the types of situations in which they spend time. It might be expected that personality variables have an influence on this choice (Mischel, 1977). It also could be expected that in their everyday lives people, when not constrained by situational demands, would choose to spend their time in the kinds of settings that are most congruent or compatible with their personalities (Emmons, Diener, & Larsen, 1986).

This model has some interesting implications for leisure researchers. In fact, a leisure researcher might expect that what people do during their leisure more accurately reflects their personalities than activities done at any other time in their daily lives, given the greater freedom to choose and fewer constraints operating in their social environments (Kulka, 1979; Pervin, 1968). High-sensation seekers may choose to spend more time in more adventurous and exciting activities and experience them more positively as a consequence of this “congruency” between their personalities and the situation. Consequently, person variables may be seen to operate at least twice. People choose to seek out specific situations and to avoid others based on differences in their personalities, and once in these situations person variables may influence their behavior and experience.

One final note on interactionism—sometimes the situation may have more influence on a person’s behavior and experience, and at other times person factors may be more influential. It has been demonstrated that the effects of personality on behavior are likely to be greatest when situational influences are weak and less restrictive in terms of the possible behaviors that may be exhibited (e.g., Buss, 1989; Mannell & Bradley, 1986; Monson, Hesley, & Chernick, 1982; Price & Bouffard, 1974). For example, there may be circumstances in which being part of a social group or having friends who do social networking online may overpower personality differences such that even relatively more introverted individuals become involved. When outside the peer group context, personality differences may have a stronger influence on participation or nonparticipation in this activity.

In the above discussion, the various leisure problems identified have not been solved. But hopefully, the reader has arrived at a clearer understanding of social psychological thinking and analysis in action. Also, as the leisure services practitioner in this situation, you should have a better idea of where to look for answers and what types of information gathering might be useful in understanding the problem and developing effective solutions. The chapter

will now be concluded by more formally defining social psychology and the social psychology of leisure.

Pinning Down the Social Psychology of Leisure

Social psychology is the scientific study of the behavior and experience of individuals in social situations. The social psychology of leisure can be identified in much the same way, with leisure being the behavior and experience of specific interest. The activity problems introduced demonstrated that social psychology is different from other types of knowing, including other social sciences and areas of psychology, because of its focus on the influence of social situations on the individual. Consequently, the social psychology of leisure is *the scientific study of the leisure behavior and experience of individuals in social situations.*

The social psychology of leisure involves scientific study. As we discussed, there are many approaches to understanding how people think, feel, and behave. One can learn about human behavior from novels, films, history, and philosophy. What makes social psychology different from these artistic and humanistic endeavors is the use of social science. It applies the scientific method of systematic observation, description, and interpretation to the study of people.

The social psychology of leisure focuses on the *individual*. Many other disciplines also employ scientific techniques to study human behavior: anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology. All of these disciplines along with social psychology are called social sciences. They differ in the aspects of human behavior that are of primary concern. The level of analysis sets social psychology apart from other social sciences. Sociology, for instance, classifies people in terms of their nationality, race, socioeconomic class, and other social factors. Sociologists are more interested in how collectives of people, such as small groups, organizations, institutions, and societies as a whole operate. Social psychology is concerned with how individuals behave in and perceive their social world: how they learn about it, remember what they experience in it, and appraise and evaluate it.

The social psychology of leisure involves the study of experience and behavior. Experience is a general term that refers to the awareness of the individual. What a person perceives, feels, learns, or remembers—in a word, her or his *experience*—is often inferred from behavior. Researchers can also observe experience by communicating with people, that is, having people tell them what is on their minds. Behavior is comprised of those actions of the person that researchers can see and observe. However, even here a full understanding of behavior can only be achieved when a researcher knows

what it means to the person who performed it. Consequently, the researcher will be interested in both leisure behavior and experience as defined “objectively” by outside observers and “subjectively” by the individual herself or himself. *Leisure*, itself, is challenging to define. There is no universally accepted way of defining leisure. Definitions and measurements will vary depending on the nature of the leisure issue or problem of interest. We will tackle defining leisure in Chapter 3.

The phrase “in social situations” refers to the social contexts in which most human behavior occurs. During the course of people’s daily lives, they are constantly moving from one social context to another. Social situations refer to other individuals, groups, the institutions of family, work and church, cultures and subcultures, and even the products and creations (artifacts) of human activity, such as films, books, and the built environment, that influence one’s experience and behavior.

Finally, we would like to remind the reader that social science can never be completely value free. Many scientists today do not believe that any kind of science can ever be completely unbiased and objective. And indeed how could it be? Science is a human enterprise. Certainly social scientists choose what and how to study; their choices are influenced by their personal perspectives and values. However, good social science is the effort to shake ourselves free of preconceptions, or at least become aware of them, and more clearly see, even if never perfectly, what is going on around us as observers. We turn now to the story of how those values and purposes have gradually taken shape in an emerging social psychology of leisure.