

Leisure, Crime and Cops: Exploring A Paradox of Our Civility

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What makes the year 2000 special is the moment it creates to "take stock" of our civilization as it is now and how it might become. While it is tempting to conclude that we are more civilized than ever before and that the development of leisure, recreation and sport in our societies are clear signs of that progress, further consideration is warranted. As 2000 approaches it is difficult to escape the stark contrasts created by our most contemporary acts of horror. While the string of school killings dominate our view of this subject, other arenas commonly viewed as safe havens are becoming contemporary killing fields. In Texas eight are killed in a church. In California three are killed in a hospital. In Yosemite three are killed in a National Park.

Leisure settings, while obscured by these prominent events, are not immune from this contemporary trend. As in Yosemite, two women were recently murdered in Shenandoah National Park. Urban parks in Oregon have been the recent locations of serial homicides of women. Acts of violence against rangers and employees who manage public recreational land is showing a marked increase punctuated by the 1999 murders of two park rangers in Oregon. The backdrop to these disturbing events is an increase in crime in these leisure settings (Pendleton, 1996; Shore, 1994).

Predictably the response has been to place a higher emphasis on enforcement capability. A shift to a hard enforcement philosophy is evident across these recreational settings as indicated by specialty law enforcement careers in the National Park service and the move to arm state park rangers as evidenced most recently in Washington state, reversing an 85 year tradition of unarmed rangers.

As the Millennium approaches it seems possible that crime and enforcement may become a defining part of an evolving leisure experience that has not been fully recognized and explored. Literature reviews of the crime-leisure nexus reveal a mere handful of studies that fail to examine leisure as anything other than a programmatic feature of crime prevention or as a metaphor for unoccupied time and thus an antecedent of criminal behavior. The data on policing and leisure is even more scant. Recent contemporary events along with emerging data, suggest the need to blend leisure, crime and enforcement into a research and policy development agenda (Pendle-

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ton, 1998). It seems relevant, on the occasion of the Millennium, to consider the challenges and opportunities that such an odd analytical marriage might present.

Barriers to Understanding Leisure, Crime and Enforcement

Intellectual Ambivalence: The first challenge to pursuing the study of leisure, crime and enforcement is the intellectual ambivalence that precludes such a study. When taken together the contrasts between leisure, crime and the use of force to secure safety underscore a fundamental paradox of our civility: the dependence of a civil way of life on the willingness or not to use force (uncivil means) to guarantee it. Inherent in the paradox of civility is a distaste toward coercion as a feature of our life. Arguably the study of leisure, recreation and sport has precluded the inclusion of crime and enforcement because of the antithetical character of such an intellectual pursuit. Findings from recent research reflect the operational features of this paradox:

Canadian Park Warden: Historically the Warden Service has been dominated by the view that our job was to help visitors have a pleasant experience. Consequently we are guided by the view that we should give information, and help people and not ruin their trip by giving them a ticket (Pendleton, 1997, p. 56).

A corresponding inattention to the presence of crime and the need for enforcement in recreational settings is evident in resent data reflecting institutional pressures to look the other way and/or a general lack of awareness of the nature of the phenomenon (Pendleton, 1997b,). Again data from participants in recent studies sum up this view:

High Ranking Forest Service Administrator: "I don't want to be that close to it (enforcement). I don't understand it . . . and I have no experience with it. Consequently I am very uncomfortable with it. There is no output, how are we supposed to measure it?" (Pendleton, 1997b, p. 336).

Yet crime *is* a part of the leisure setting. Recognizing the need to overcome the professional and intellectual ambivalence that precludes understanding is an important first step toward research-based public policy.

Conventional Views of Crime and Cops. In the absence of a leisure setting model of crime and enforcement, the scramble to respond to crime in leisure settings is being shaped by conventional views of crime and police. The result is a wholesale importation of the urban model of crime and cops which ignores the paradoxical nature of leisure setting crime, the special features of the setting (destination vs. residential) and the dramatic differences between criminal justice institutions (single purpose) and leisure institutions (multi-purpose). The influence of the conventional view of crime and enforcement accounts for an operational view that leisure setting crime is "anything that occurs in the city" (Pendleton, 1996b, p. 21) requiring "aggressive professional law enforcement" (Frome, 1992, p. 11). Again, emerging data suggest that these intellectual and operating assumptions are either incom-

plete or inaccurate promising irrelevant or worse harmful operational policy (Pendleton, 1997a, p. 102; Pendleton, 1998).

Perhaps the most significant barrier presented by the adoption of the urban based understanding of crime and enforcement is the potential change in the shared meaning of leisure settings and those who are responsible for these settings. Settings commonly viewed as pristine, fun, and safe are open to new definitions such as dangerous, crime plagued and public "bad lands" (Shore, 1994). Correspondingly leisure setting professionals commonly viewed as friends can be viewed as "caustic cops" (Cannon, 1991). As these shared meanings evolve it seems likely that the very essence of leisure will evolve as well. One possibility is an increasing limitation on the leisure experience that corresponds to a *spiral of disorder* (Pendleton and Thompson, 1999 p. 3) that simply constrains participation. People will not come because of fear, an essential ingredient to yet more crime. More likely is the evolution of the meaning of leisure and recreation to reflect the need to prepare and respond to the possibility of crime and enforcement. In both cases the change in meaning will likely be based on an intrinsic distortion of leisure setting danger and those who are considered responsible for participant safety. Again emerging data on the nature of crime, criminals and the perception of leisure setting enforcers suggest such a distortion is currently evident (Pendleton, 1996).

To overcome the distorting effect of the urban model of crime, criminals and enforcement, and arguably the ambivalence surrounding greater insight in this area, it seems important to pursue a "leisure specific" understanding of crime and enforcement. Such an understanding must marry the unique features of the leisure setting with those areas in criminal justice research that logically intersect.

Toward a Leisure Setting Model of Crime and Enforcement: Future Research Opportunities

While several theoretical avenues seem immediately relevant to leisure settings, two analytical models are offered below as promising approaches to both concept and policy development.

Social Interactionist Perspective and the Shared Meaning of Leisure. Renewed interest in the multiphase nature of leisure, as a dynamic and evolving experience is consistent with a long tradition in criminal justice thinking referred to as the social interactionist perspective. A central feature in both of these views is that the meaning of crime and the meaning of leisure are determined by interactions between people and between people and the settings in which they find themselves. Both theoretical traditions recognize the expressive and instrumental qualities of the leisure and crime experience and thus inform both understanding (conceptual) and policy (operational) development (Stewart, 1998; Rubington and Weinberg, 1973). Pendleton's (1998) work on understanding soft enforcement in the park setting illustrates how the symbolic and behavioral features of policing a park combine

to produce a conceptual model that has applied strategic potential that is unique to the park setting. This work, which builds on Manning's (1977) application of the dramaturgical perspective, can be compared to the work of Patterson et al. (1998, p. 427) where the meaning of leisure emerges from the interpretation of texts that flow from social interaction.

The intersection of crime and leisure in this analytical tradition is a series of questions that flow from how crime and enforcement in leisure settings shape the meaning of leisure to the recreationalist and the professional. For example do highly visible symbols of enforcement (marked patrol cars, uniformed rangers, guns, etc.) impact the meaning of the leisure experience in parks and other leisure settings? Does the beheading of women in Yosemite National Park stifle visitation or change how recreationalists proceed through the five sequential phases of outdoor recreation (Clawson, 1993)? Do enforcement crackdowns to "take back" parks and other leisure settings (Pendleton and Thompson, 1999) have an affect on crime or visitation over what period of time (decay effect). These and a host of other questions can provide an initial focus for understanding the conceptual meaning of crime and enforcement in leisure settings.

The Routine Activities Perspective. A leading sociological theory of crime, known as the routine activities perspective seems particularly relevant and useful to the study of crime in leisure settings. This approach suggests that the routine activities of people in leisure settings determine the location of crime targets in available places at available times. It is these same routines that determine the presence or absence of capable guardians (police, visitors, parents etc.) who may effect the commission of crime. Crime is not, however, simply an interaction between offenders, targets, and guardians but is also determined by various subculture definitions of what is acceptable within these interactions. The routines that both lead to and explain crime are determined by the shared meanings that are assigned to both the acts *and* the leisure setting. In effect crime is the result of symbiotic relationships that are shaped by the structure and meaning of the setting where offenders prey on victims and where victims and guardians in turn use the experience to adjust their behavior and so on (Cohen and Felson, 1979). This model not only provides an analytical framework for understanding crime and enforcement in leisure settings, it also provides the basic components for crime prevention. This line of inquiry has informed the understanding of crime hotspots in leisure settings and how hotspots have stages of development that define the *criminal career* of a leisure setting (Pendleton and Thompson, 1999). In addition this framework has guided research to explore the relationship between leisure activities and rates of crime (Messner and Blau, 1987).

Once again a wide range of questions flow from the routine activities model. For example why do some leisure settings and not others experience what types of crime? What are the convergence routines that enable or preclude crime? What type of guardianship is most effective in what stages of the criminal career of a leisure setting? What is the normative structure within a leisure setting that encourages or inhibits criminal activities? Etc.

Conclusion

To suggest that leisure settings are or will be plagued with crime is not warranted by existing data. The sky is not falling. Rather, recent events combined with a limited amount of emerging data simply signal that the issues of crime and enforcement are, in some way, a part of the leisure experience. An uninformed rush to adopt an urban based understanding of crime and subsequent enforcement promises to be inappropriate to many if not most leisure settings. The effects of an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of leisure setting crime may be to distort the nature of crime, criminals and those who enforce the law. It follows that these distortions will promote irrelevant means to manage the real threats posed by both crime and inappropriate enforcement in leisure settings. As the Millennium approaches, it seems appropriate to extend an invitation to develop a leisure setting based understanding of these fascinating if not pressing leisure issues.

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