
Articles

Delivering Communitas: Wilderness Adventure and the Making of Community

Erin K. Sharpe
Brock University

This paper offers an ethnographic account of Wilderness Inquiry (WI), a leisure service provider with the organizational goal of delivering *communitas*, an intense form of social bonding. At WI, delivering *communitas* was linked to broader social goals of social integration and equality. However, WI was also a leisure provider, and participants arrived expecting a leisure experience. The paper provides an ethnographic account of how the organization and its trip leaders went about delivering *communitas*, emphasizing the key elements of establishing the mission, selecting and training trip leaders, setting the tone, maximizing authority, and guiding interpretations. This study concludes by raising some general questions about authenticity, community, and structural transformation when leisure is used as a setting for delivering *communitas*.

KEYWORDS: *Communitas, wilderness adventure, ethnography, social integration, community*

Introduction

The combination of the Golden Oldies playing on the radio, a post-trip overdose of chocolate and pop, and three days of canoeing in the rain made for a quiet van ride to the Wilderness Inquiry parking lot, the official beginning and ending point of our trip. Gord broke the silence of the van with a question for our trip leader. "Hey Scott, what's another word for "motley?" He explained to Scott that he was looking for a word to describe our group, and had chosen motley because it described a diverse group with varied backgrounds. This question sent all of us into a search for the perfect word to describe our group experience. Virginia said that we needed a word that described how when you bring different things together it makes something beautiful. Someone mentioned "kaleidoscope," and another suggested "mosaic," but neither of these suggestions satisfied Gord, and the group became quiet as folks continued to think about other possibilities. Scott then spoke up. "What about "quilt?" After a pause, Gord said softly, "Yes. We were woven together in this experience, even if only briefly."

Address correspondence to: Erin Sharpe, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, L2S 3A1. Phone: (905) 688-5550 ext. 3989. E-mail: erin.sharpe@brocku.ca.

Author note: Erin K. Sharpe, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Brock University. This paper is based on the author's doctoral research, and the author thanks Alan Ewert and Leo McAvoy for their guidance.

How did our canoe trip evolve into such a profound experience of togetherness? When we departed days earlier we had little expectation other than to relax and enjoy three days in the wilderness. By the time we said our goodbyes, we all believed that together we had made something special. Our farewells were emotional; Virginia and I hugged tightly. Michael and Gord clasped hands, and quietly expressed their appreciation for having had the opportunity to get to know one another. And as Dave departed, he told me that the most important part of the trip was, "all the different people, and of different ages. When I first saw Virginia on the trip, I was really surprised, and then, after finding out she was seventy-five years old . . ." After a pause he added thoughtfully, "It was really neat seeing people come together."

The term to capture the feeling of equality, community, and togetherness we experienced on the trip described above is *communitas*. First coined by anthropologist Victor Turner (1969), *communitas* emerges when people step out of their structural roles and obligations, and into a sphere that is decidedly "anti-structural." In this anti-structural sphere, people are "betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life," and the rules of everyday life can be altered, inverted, and made topsy-turvy (Turner, 1974, p. 273). These conditions fostered an emerging social dynamic characterized by feelings of equality, linkage, belonging, and group devotion to a transcendent goal (Arnould & Price, 1993). And, as Turner (1969, p. 139) suggested, *communitas* "has something magical about it. Subjectively, there is in it the feeling of endless power":

When the mood, style, or "fit" of spontaneous *communitas* is upon us, we place a high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of pretensions or pretentiousness. We feel that it is important to relate directly to another person as he presents himself in the here-and-now, to understand him in a sympathetic way, free from the culturally defined encumbrances of his role, status, reputation, class, caste, sex, or other structural niche. Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous *communitas* become totally absorbed into a single synchronized, fluid event. (1982, p. 48)

Once solely the domain of ritual, *communitas* has begun to enter the realm of leisure. There is a growing collection of studies that document *communitas* emerging in contemporary leisure settings that exhibit similar anti-structural qualities to their ritual counterpart. These include such settings as adult fantasy baseball camp (Brandmeyer & Alexander, 1986), white water river rafting trips (Arnould & Price, 1993), "alternative" bus travel (Neumann, 1993), mountain man rendezvous reenactments (Belk & Costa, 1998), and music festivals and raves (St. John, 1997; Trammachi, 2000). Indeed, Turner (1982) suggested that what was emerging in contemporary life were permanent anti-structural settings such as bars, pubs, cafes, and social clubs—spaces where people can go to temporarily step out of their everyday lives and into a world of ambiguity and possibility. In concert with the emergence of these spaces is a service industry that aims to deliver this world of possibility and magic to those wishing to enter.

It is the perspective of the leisure service provider that is the focus of this paper. Although this paper also describes the emergence of *communitas*, it specifically examines the role played by the service provider and its workers to deliver *communitas* to its customers. What follows is an ethnographic account of Wilderness Inquiry (WI), an outdoor adventure trip provider that had the explicit goal of generating *communitas*—in fact, generating *communitas* was its organizational mission. However, WI was also a provider of leisure, and the leisure context of the trip dictated how the organization went about fulfilling its mission. Thus, what is described are a collection of strategies that the organization and its trip leaders used to generate *communitas* that also allowed for the maintenance of the leisure-oriented qualities of fun, relaxation, and freedom of choice.

For those interested in *communitas*, understanding the role of the leisure service provider is important for how it may offer unique insights into understanding contemporary leisure rituals. This is particularly notable in settings where the leisure provider supplies guides (e.g., river guide, tour guide) who accompany their customers and take an active role in shaping the social dynamics of the trip. Additionally, leisure providers may offer some unique insights on some of the tensions that accompany being in the business of generating *communitas* in contemporary leisure. Because *communitas* is an intensely positive experience that likely contributes to customer satisfaction, leisure providers have a stake in whether *communitas* emerges and may be strongly motivated to work to generate it.

Studying the leisure provider may also reveal more clearly some of the tensions that emerge in delivering *communitas* in leisure, particularly surrounding the aspect of freedom of choice. Turner's early work documented *communitas* emerging in rituals in which participants had little freedom of choice; participation resulted from obligatory duty to the greater collective. In contrast to ritual, leisure is engaged in voluntarily, for personal pleasure and enjoyment. This makes for a significant difference in the meaning of the experience, as Turner (1982) describes in his contrast of the carnival with the tribal ritual:

One is all play and choice, and entertainment, the other is a matter of deep seriousness, even dread, it is demanding, compulsory, though indeed, fear provokes nervous laughter from the women . . . and the carnival is unlike a tribal ritual in that it can be attended or avoided, performed or merely watched, at will. It is a genre of leisure enjoyment, not an obligatory ritual. (p. 43)

For those interested in outdoor adventure, this study is also well positioned to investigate how the meanings surrounding outdoor adventure trips are constructed. In general, outdoor adventure research takes for granted the meaning of outdoor adventure, following the "received" idea of outdoor adventure, which is: Activity that involves interaction with the natural environment, contains elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome is uncertain but can be influenced by the participant (Ewert, 1989; Priest, 1999). What is not examined is how different elements of the outdoor

experience, including the interaction with the natural environment, elements of danger, and level of uncertainty, are actively constructed during the trip through situational and interactive processes. Interactions between trip leaders and trip participants can make the surroundings seem more or less natural, more or less dangerous, or more or less uncertain. For example, Arnould, Price, and Tierney (1998) found that trip leaders generated meanings for the setting associated with transcendence, character-building, and healing through a process of "communicative staging." Similarly, Holyfield (1999) and Jonas (1999) found that trip leaders worked to make river experiences seem adventurous and dangerous (but not too dangerous) by telling stories, giving wild rides, and using humor to defuse anxiety. In a similar vein, this study explores how the social experience of outdoor adventure is also actively constructed, by showing how guides influence and shape the meanings participants ascribe to their interactions with their fellow trip mates.

Ethnography

This study followed the principles and practices of ethnographic research. Ethnography is one of a variety of forms of naturalistic and interpretive research that also includes biography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study (Cresswell, 1998). Similar to these other approaches, ethnographies are naturalistic because they study social life in its natural setting, and record behaviors and events as they happen, in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Ethnographies are interpretive because they follow inductive strategies that work toward generating understandings, rather than deductive strategies that work toward testing theories (Cresswell, 1998). What distinguishes the ethnography from these other forms of qualitative research is its focus on understanding culture (In the case of this study, the culture being investigated was that of the Wilderness Inquiry trip—what trip leaders often referred to as the "WI Way"). Ethnographers are interested in describing and interpreting the patterns of social life that are locally experienced (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999). The goal of the ethnography is to describe and analyze the patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life that are locally experienced and develop a holistic portrait of a cultural group, which incorporates both the views of the actors in the group and the researcher's interpretation of those views (Cresswell, 1998). What results from ethnographic research is an emergent construction that describes and analyses a culture and is used to build theories of social life (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The methods employed by ethnographers reflect their interest in describing culture-sharing groups (Cresswell, 1998). Indeed, of central importance to the ethnographer is prolonged engagement in the field (Rizzo, Corsaro, & Bates, 1992). As Corsaro (1999) contended, "In order to interpret what participants under study are doing and saying, the ethnographer needs to know what daily life is like for them" (p. 3). Ethnographers typically collect information on daily life through a sustained and engaged form of partici-

pant observation, in which they observe and participate as a member of the culture being studied. During this field engagement, ethnographers work toward developing an understanding of meaning and social organization from an insider's perspective (Corsaro, 1999). As such, ethnographers are highly sensitive to procedures that help and hinder their ability to gain an insider's perspective, including field entry, establishing membership, and ethical issues of participant observation (Cresswell, 1998).

Establishing an Insider Perspective

Field entry for this study took two forms: entering the field of Wilderness Inquiry the organization, and entering the field of each particular trip. Access to WI as a research site was facilitated by my previous experience with the organization as an employee. The summer before this study, I worked at WI as an assistant trip leader (ATL). In this role, I participated in a one-week staff training and led two wilderness trips. According to the WI Program Director, WI received dozens of requests for research studies each year, and most research studies were promptly rejected. However, I was treated as a WI insider who was sympathetic to and knowledgeable of the WI culture and mission. This familiarity facilitated the consideration and acceptance of my research proposal, as well as my interactions with WI staff and trip leaders, most of whom I had met the previous summer.

Entering the field of the particular trips was negotiated with the trip scheduling coordinator throughout the summer. Initially, I had requested a total of 40 days of participant observation in the field, with 20 of these days of observation in the role of assistant trip leader, and the other 20 days in the role of trip participant. As an assistant trip leader, I would take on a "helping" role, whereby I supported and implemented the decisions of the head trip leader. As a participant, I acted as a typical group member, and participated in all of the routines and customs of the WI trip. The scheduling coordinator worked to meet this request; however my schedule regularly changed according to the staffing needs of various trips. In the end, I participated in eight different WI trips for a total of 39 days of field observation—16 as a participant and 23 as an assistant trip leader (four trips as each). Off trail, I lived at the staff house with other trip leaders, twelve of whom I interviewed for this study. I was also given access to an assortment of organizational documents, including staff training manuals, videos, brochures and catalogs, and policy statements.

I attended trips as both a trip leader and participant because of the different access and perspective afforded to each role. As a trip leader, I had access to the WI "backstage" both on an off trip, including the staff quarters, after-hours meetings, and WI office. These backstage areas were important because they were the places that trip leaders were seemingly more open with their thoughts, intentions, and objectives with respect to generating *communitas* on trips. A second benefit of being a trip leader was that it put me in the position of generating *communitas* myself, and these trips were

extremely valuable for gaining a subjective understanding of the trip leader role. In contrast, my role as a participant brought me into the world of the participant. By participating with the other group members in the routines and practices of the WI trip and as the recipient of the trip leader's techniques, I gained an alternative perspective on the generation of *communitas*. Overall, the greatest advantage of participating in trips in both roles was how my experiences in one role sensitized me to the actions of the other.

One advantage of studying organized wilderness adventure trips of this kind is that it is not difficult to establish membership. Instead of struggling to achieve insider status in an established group, I was, along with all of the participants, one of the founding members of each group I observed. However, it was important to establish my identity as a researcher early in the trip, in an effort to minimize any deception of participants (Corsaro, 1985). Thus, although I aimed to be recognized as a participant or leader, it was also necessary to ensure that participants were aware that I was doing a research study, and that I would be taking notes of their actions and interactions. In negotiation with the trip leader, I would arrange a time early in the trip to formally introduce the research study and distribute an Informed Consent form. I also emphasized that participants could drop out of the study at any time, and that they could ask to read any notes I had written on them. In total, one participant refused to participate in the study and no one asked to read my notes.

Data Collection and Sampling

Developing a sampling strategy for participant observation involves making decisions about what to pay attention to and what to ignore. As Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p. 38) described, selective sampling is a "practical necessity and is theoretically mandatory" because no researcher can capture all aspects of social life. In ethnographic research, decisions about how to sample are inextricably linked to the eventual understanding and interpretation of social life that emerges from the researcher's data. Indeed, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) contended that, "what the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected to how she finds it out" (p. 11). Data collection strategies must emerge while the researcher is in the field and able to judge which strategy best captures what is theoretically relevant, based on the questions being asked, and physically possible, based on the amount of time available and constraints imposed on the researcher (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Some potential sampling strategies that Schatzman and Strauss (1973) proposed include sampling across time (e.g., gather data on what happens at all different points in a day), across location (e.g., sample what happens at different places through multiple positioning), across people (e.g., follow people around to see what they do) or across events (e.g., routine, special, or untoward situations). I chose to sample based on events, and my unit of analysis became the "episode." Hare and Blumberg (1988) characterized an

episode as people coming together to "follow a plan or carry out the actions necessary to complete a task" (p. 4). Indeed, episodic field notes tend to capture action rather than description; "unlike a sketch, which depicts a 'still-life' in one place, an episode recounts action and moves in time" (Emerson, Shaw, and Fretz, 1995, p. 87). Episodes are analogous to the theatrical concept of the scene.

I recorded field notes in a pocket-sized spiral bound notepad that I carried in my pocket throughout the trip. As the episodes were occurring, I would take jottings, which are key words or phrases designed to trigger the memory of the researcher and make it possible to reconstruct the scene (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 20). Most of my jottings were snippets of dialogue, which I judged to be the most important data to capture verbatim. I made an effort to take notes on all of the episodes in a day, which amounted to taking notes on breakfast, morning group activity (e.g., canoeing or kayaking), lunch, afternoon group activity, dinner, and campfire. I used the time in between the episodes, when participants were dispersed (after lunch, late afternoon, after dinner, and late at night) to expand my jottings into field notes. The degree of detail for each field note varied. The shortest field note of an episode was approximately 150 words, and the longest notes were as long as 1000 words. The longest field notes tended to be for the more unique or interesting episodes, such as the expectations talk, tip test, and closure talk. I continued this pattern for the length of the trip. Upon return to the city, the written field notes were typed into a computer. At this point, I added detail and description to the notes as best as I could remember, which was generally limited to details for the episodes of the last one or two days of the trip.

I also collected data in the form of in-depth interviews with seven of the eight head trip leaders for the trips I observed, as well as five other experienced WI trip leaders, each of whom had led at least 20 trips for WI. Paget (1983) described in-depth interviewing as "the rigorous and systematic pursuit of subjective experience" (p. 68). In other words, in-depth interviewing follows a similar set of principles as more formal and structured methods of gaining information, but with different goals. Whereas the pursuit of objective truth rigorously applies standard and formal methods, the pursuit of subjective experience rigorously applies procedures that are flexible, dynamic, and interactionally sensitive. The researcher's goal for in-depth interviewing is to empower participants to talk about their subjective experience. In this study, the goal of the interviews was to empower the trip leaders to talk about the subjective experience of leading trips for Wilderness Unlimited.

In an attempt to fulfill this goal, I chose to hold the interview in an informal, comfortable setting of the interviewee's choice (Glesne, 1999). I also aimed to structure the interview so that it approximated regular, everyday conversation. I followed Becker's (1970, p. 59) suggestion of giving up the "bland, polite style of conversation designed to create rapport with their respondent and to avoid 'leading' them," in favor of a more flexible pro-

cedure in which I joked around with the participants, took positions on issues, and when appropriate, told a story of my own. I also followed the recommendation of Schatzman and Strauss (1973), who suggested that researchers forego using specific, ordered lists of questions because "this amount of formality would destroy the conversational style" (p. 73). Although each trip leader was asked a similar set of questions through the course of the interview, the order of the questions asked varied in each interview, and each response was followed up with what Berg (2001) described as "unscheduled probes" that "followed the subject's lead." As Berg (p. 70) described, "The interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions" (p. 71). Essentially, the researcher gives up control over the interview and lets the interviewee take it where they want it to go (Paget, 1983).

Data Analysis

Analysis in ethnographic research involves identifying patterns of behavior—in the form of rituals, routines, and practices—that become apparent through sustained field observation (or, from interviews, in an emerging pattern of shared beliefs among members of the culture). Once an initial amount of data is collected, data collection and analysis become concurrent, whereby the early "theories" offered to explain such patterns guide subsequent analyses, and the theories are thus refined or rejected. For this study, my field note categorization strategy outlined by Corsaro (1985) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973) facilitated concurrent data collection and analysis. This strategy involved categorizing notes into four main groups: (1) General field notes (FN), which were notes of what I saw and heard happening; (2) Methodological notes (MN), which were changes that I made in my research plan and challenges I faced in fulfilling my methods; (3) Theoretical notes (TN), which were conscious attempts to derive meaning from my field notes; and (4) Personal notes (PN), which were my emotional reactions to events I witnessed or personal challenges negotiating the group context. According to Corsaro (1985), this form of categorization has the advantage of allowing the researcher to separate out different types of information in the data while ensuring that the data are tied to the specific interactive context in which they occurred. This method also merges data collection with an initial data analysis, which Maxwell (1996) recommends because it helps the researcher develop a theoretical sensitivity that can guide and focus future data collection. Finally, analysis and interpretation also extend into the writing phase. Indeed, Wolcott (1994) suggested that ethnographic report writing is more than a rendering of a completed analysis; it is analysis.

Results

In total, there were five important steps to delivering *communitas*: (1) establish the mission; (2) select and train trip leaders; (3) set the tone; (4)

maximize authority; and (5) guide interpretations. These steps are presented in temporal sequence, and each step is illustrated with field notes from a three-day WI trip on the St. Croix River. Although all trip leaders followed the steps, I chose to include field notes from only one trip simply to maintain consistency of character. What follows is a description and discussion of the key steps to delivering *communitas* on a WI trip.

Establish the Mission

The streets of the neighborhood were still quiet as I arrived at the WI office for the trip to the St. Croix River. From a distance I could see our trip leaders Scott and Joanne scurrying around, taking care of the last-minute details prior to our departure. They had laid some tarps on the ground; the participants would use these tarps to keep their clothing and personal things off the dirty floor while they repacked it all into the WI standard issue packs and bags. They were hauling the canoes off of the warehouse racks and carrying them on their shoulders, one by one, out to the parking lot. As I approached the building, Scott and Joanne stopped their work, called out a cheerful hello, and beckoned me to follow them into the warehouse, where I would wait for my fellow trip mates.

The inside of the warehouse was decorated with photographs depicting scenes from past trips. These pictures—a misty morning on a Northwoods lake, a man in a wheelchair holding up a large fish, a group shot of participants hugging and laughing—told the story of the WI mission. Wilderness Inquiry described itself as “a non-profit organization providing outdoor adventures for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.” Its goal was “to make real outdoor experiences as accessible as possible to anyone who wanted to experience it—including people who were not the typical outdoor “type” (Brochure, 1999, p. 2). The outdoor “type,” according to most studies, is the well-educated, able-bodied, young, white male (c.f. Johnson, 1999). As such, WI made efforts to reach out to such “atypical” groups as women, non-Caucasians, people with disabilities, older adults, and people from low-income backgrounds.

Guiding the service delivery at WI was a philosophy of social integration. Rather than accommodating one particular underserved group at a time or separating underserved participants from more “typical” participants, WI brought participants who differed across a number of physical and social characteristics together into one trip group. This made each trip group quite diverse, of which WI was quite proud and often highlighted in its promotional material. For example, the following statement appeared on the front page of its 2001 web brochure: “Our trips are usually integrated to include lots of different folks, including older people, younger people, people with disabilities, veterans, accountants, physicians, people who live in the city and people who live in rural areas.”

WI fell at the more customer service-oriented end of the spectrum of wilderness adventure trip providers, as they essentially offered participants an “extended service encounter” (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 24) where the

needs and wants of the participant were given central attention. For example, along with providing equipment, WI also supplied participants with food, planned the route, offered basic instruction, and sent along trip leaders to keep them safe, organized, and well fed. Descriptions in trip brochures highlighted leisure, both in the sense of traveling at a leisurely pace, and of offering participants the freedom to choose what they wanted to do. As Steve described, participants viewed the trips as a vacation:

Our trips are generally fairly slow, but that doesn't seem to be a problem for folks. They're there to enjoy. They're on vacation and are enjoying a slower pace rather than a pushing pace. And even most people who come on our trips don't want to paddle 20 miles a day, don't want to do 6 portages a day. They're there to have the experience and to enjoy the experience. And a lot of times they just want a taste You want to see the sights and wildlife and learn something about the area and just enjoy being there.

Although WI has maintained a customer service orientation, over time it has also developed its own goals for the nature of the trip experience it delivered. Specifically, the organization developed the goal of fostering "social integration" on its trips, which was the term they used to describe an emergent social dynamic characterized by feelings of equality, understanding and respect, resonant with Turner's description of *communitas*. This goal emerged early in the organization's history, as a result of what the Executive Director described as a serendipitous discovery on one of his trips:

Over 20 years ago I started Wilderness Inquiry, a non-profit organization with the mission of bringing diverse groups of people together through wilderness adventure. Why? In 1977 I was privileged to canoe the Boundary Waters of Northern Minnesota with a unique bunch—people who were able bodied, people who used wheelchairs, people who were deaf, old, young, or who seemed different for some reason or another—at first. That trip was one of the most powerful experiences of my life. Our group discovered something profound: we are far more alike than we are different. Somehow, the awesome power and beauty of the wilderness helped us realize that. Not only did that experience alter my life view, but it set me on a course that I have not veered from for more than 22 years. (Brochure, 2001, p. i)

Thus, the unplanned emergence of *communitas* on this trip became the impetus for an organizational transformation from a leisure provider to one with a broader social agenda. WI began to position its trips to specifically address social problems related to social inequality and discrimination. Indeed, the opportunity to experience an idealized way of community living on trips was meant to serve as an "inspirational experience" (WI Case Statement, 1999, p. 4) that encouraged participants to implement such a way of life in their home environments. For trip leaders, ensuring that the trip experience approached this ideal was one of their job requirements, described in their Staff Manuals (1999, p. 1) as an "organizational goal."

Select and Train Trip Leaders

For our St. Croix River trip, Scott was to be our head guide and Joanne his assistant. I was looking forward to seeing Scott in action because he was a seasoned trip leader with a reputation for taking his role as a facilitator of social integration very seriously. According to Julianne, a former co-leader of his, Scott was "very intentional and deliberate about manipulating the variables of the trip, and really analyzing why things aren't happening, and being very deliberate about making changes." As Scott described, "I think integration has to deal with no matter where you're at—old, young, male, female, black, white, gay, straight . . . anything you can think of that would make someone different When I think about social integration, it's seeing people as their souls without their bodies." He then added, "I think I tend to wax a little more philosophic than most folks. It all becomes some big spiritual experiment for me, and I like to see it that way."

At WI, trip leaders were more than merely route finders and safety monitors; they were also the key players in shaping the appropriate social and experiential dynamic for the trip. As it stated in the Staff Manual (1999, p. 14), "the quality of leadership on a WI trip is *the* primary factor in determining the success or failure of the trip. Good leadership is far more important than weather, food, or equipment. It can literally make or break an experience." Thus, the organization worked hard to select and train leaders who were aware of their responsibilities and had the ability to fulfill them.

In selecting trip leaders, the organization afforded much importance to trip leader disposition or "personality." Although the ideal trip leader was one who not only had substantial outdoor experience and a solid skill base, WI occasionally hired leaders whose personality seemed well suited to social integration, even when they had few outdoor related skills. Joanne, our trip leader for the St. Croix River trip, illustrated this point well, as she was a novice trip leader—in fact, the St. Croix River trip was her first trip as an official wilderness trip leader. Although she was not yet confident of her skills, she was gregarious, energetic, and dedicated to doing "what it takes" to meet the needs and wants of the participants. Similarly, Rhea, another charming and effervescent trip leader, described her outdoor experience prior to working for WI: "The first time I was in a canoe was my first trip [with WI]. I read a book on how to paddle before I got on it! I'd never been in a canoe, never kayaked, never done any of that stuff."

The main role of staff training was to socialize trip leaders to the "WI Way" of trip leading. Here the central focus was on ensuring that trip leaders understood the mission of social integration and embraced their role in its generation. However, trip leaders were also informed about the orientation of the trip toward leisure, and the organization's expectation that trip leaders work to ensure that participants had fun, relaxed, and were free to do what they wanted. For example, whereas page one of the staff manual described the importance of social integration, page two reminded trip leaders that

"WI trips should be enjoyable recreational experiences . . . staff should never forget that fun and adventure are the primary reasons people join in on a WI trip." Well-trained trip leaders recognized that they were in fact working to meet the needs of two different constituents: the organization and the participants. As Julianne described in this next quote, trip leaders had to negotiate between ensuring that the participant had the experience that they wanted, and making sure that the experience was as socially integrated as WI wanted it to be:

[What do you see as your job when you're on trail?]

I guess what comes first is the preparation of getting all the crap together to make it happen . . . And then, as soon as you're paddling away from the van, then it just becomes the group, and making the experience meet their expectations, *and* meet WI's expectations. Sometimes you have a group that is perfectly willing to do nothing and not integrate, but to get that group to go through the WI experience. And that's the fun. [Laugh].

As employees of WI, ignoring the needs of the organization was not an option available to trip leaders—they had to facilitate social integration. Thus, trip leaders turned their attention to the task of transforming the needs and wants of their participants, so that they came to want the same experience that WI aimed to deliver. Ben, for example, described the trip leader's job as one of "instilling the desire" for social integration:

You need to instill that desire for people to want to be with other people. It's not that easy [because] they have to *want* to be a part of that . . . because it's a commitment . . . They share themselves and they make an investment in you. And you have to want to accept that and want to share that . . . And that's what I mean by voluntary. You have to instill that desire for them to get to know somebody else before social integration actually happens.

Set the Tone

Gradually, my trip mates began to arrive until there were eight of us altogether: Virginia, Rudy, Steve, Gord, Michael, Eric, Marianne, and me. Not all were strangers; Rudy was Virginia's son, Eric and Marianne were married, and Michael was a friend of theirs. We made our introductions and engaged in polite chitchat as we repacked our things into the WI bags. Scott and Joanne kept us working at a quick pace, and soon our gear was stowed and we were ready to climb aboard the van that would take us to the river. Scott turned on the radio and the music played quietly as Joanne slowly drove the van through the neighborhood to the nearby highway exit. We settled in for the ride.

Once we were on the highway, Scott tilted his seat back, turned to face us, and offered to field questions from the group about the upcoming adventure. Gord wanted to know how many people would be on the trip together (Scott said ten) and Rudy asked how many people were in each canoe (Scott said two). Gord did the calculations and figured out we would have five canoes. The fact that Gord had to think about such a simple math prob-

lem made him laugh, but he seemed pleased to be able to laugh at himself over the situation. "That's what these trips are about, right Scott? Lightening up." Scott agreed, saying that's what camping is, getting away from work and letting your hair down.

Our unfamiliarity with what was to come was typical of a WI group. Generally, participants had vague expectations about the upcoming experience, particularly surrounding the social dynamics of the trip. As Becky described, "I think they don't think about it ahead of time. I think that they think they're going to go on a trip and that some other people are going to be there and it's going to be a good time . . . but I don't think a lot of them expect the interaction." Similar to what Arnould and Price (1993) found in their study of white water rafters, although customers had concrete expectations with respect to the natural environment and activities of the trip, "expectations about guides, other rafters, and feelings were vague" (p. 31). Thus, for trip leaders, an early priority was to begin establishing the expectations for the social dynamics of the trip. At WI, the goal was to convey the idea that the trip would be fun, but that participants would be expected to open up, form connections, tell their stories, or otherwise socially integrate with the group. The process of conveying the idea of the trip was referred to at WI as "setting the tone."

Setting the tone involved creating an atmosphere or ambience that implicitly communicated the desired values and expectations to participants. As Maffesoli (1991) described, tone or "ambience" is a highly influential yet largely unrecognized cultural force: "This all-permeating ambience serves to unite the disparate elements of culture while itself remaining inisolable and largely unnoticed . . . social ambience comprises a set of beliefs, images, symbols, and myths shared by all the members of a community" (p. 179). Because participants placed, a high value on freedom of choice, this approach was useful because it allowed trip leaders to convey the social expectations of the trip, without explicitly needing to tell participants how to behave.

Trip leaders went about setting the tone in two main ways. One was to "lead by example," and role model to participants the expected behaviors of the trip. As described in the staff manual (1999, p. 42), "participants will look to the leader for direction on how to act . . . the best way for staff to establish a positive atmosphere is to model the types of behaviors they would like to see." In other words, the goal was for trip leaders to offer participants "expressive cues" (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 42). Because the goal was for participants to form intense social connections, WI encouraged trip leaders to "be honest about their own feelings, desires, and goals and make a point of sharing them with the group" (Staff Manual, 1999, p. 42). In other words, in leading by example, trip leaders were called upon to act as friends as well as guides, and tell their own stories as much, if not more, than the trip participants.

Trip leaders began giving these expressive cues in the early moments of the trip. Indeed, even during the van ride, trip leaders began working toward

their goal of facilitating connections within the group. For example, Rick described what he told his assistant leaders in terms of his expectations for the van ride:

When I go on trips I'll tell staff, ok, we're going on a van ride and if you need time to sleep, then sleep, but it's also a time to get the integration going right there and then. Find out stuff about people and work the integration. "Hey yeah, you like knitting, right? So how do you do hats, and what does purl mean?" Like that. Getting people to open up and getting conversations flowing. Ferreting stuff out about people because I bet you that someone else in the van has some common interests with this person.

Further, this form of role modeling continued for the duration of the trip. For example, Steve commented that he made a daily effort to "actually connect with each person on that trip. You don't have to spend an hour discussing Nietzsche or anything, but where you actually have a substantial conversation, more than just 'Hey, how are you?'"

A second way to set the tone was with props or activities. Props are a form of "communicative staging" (Arnould, Price, & Tierney, 1998); indeed, the "right" atmosphere can be generated through the adept use of props, activities, and performances that communicate the definition of the situation (Brandmeyer & Alexander, 1986). Pink flamingos, Hawaiian shirts, or rubber chickens regularly accompanied trips, and they helped trip leaders establish a festive mood. Occasionally these props were employed at moments where the trip leader felt the mood was getting "down" and needed a lift. For example, at one point during the St. Croix River trip when rain had forced our group to make an early stop, Scott emerged from his tent to prepare dinner wearing a tall chef's hat and pants covered in a wild hot pepper design. Scott explained why he wore this outfit:

Sometimes I bring it out and sometimes I don't. Sometimes I bring it out later in the trip. But I kind of felt then that people were—you know—it was raining and it rained horrendously and we couldn't put on the water . . . and there was a need for—I felt we needed to set the tone as staff that said, "Hey, it's raining but we're having fun."

Overall, success in setting the tone was determined by a trip leader's ability to maintain a sense of authenticity surrounding their performance. As Arnould and Price (1993, p. 26) found, "provider emotions must be perceived as authentic—spontaneous . . . rather than directed," in order to effectively generate the desired response in participants. As such, trip leaders paid close attention to how their performance would be perceived by their participants. For example, some trip leaders were reticent to use more formal "icebreaker" games common in adventure programming because they seemed too contrived an attempt to facilitate connections. As Becky described, "Those [games] can be really great for integration or they can just be like, 'We're going to play this little game now that everybody plays on WI trips to learn about each other.'" In sum, a good performance was one that

seemed genuine; a poor performance was one that seemed insincere, too routine, or “canned”:

[In a good performance] I think that the leader is sharing something that is really inside. They're not approaching it and they're not coming across as saying, “I do this all summer and I've done this for a couple of years,” which a lot of people can give that approach to. They don't even say it, they just have that feel about it. They say, “Well, I'm on this trip now, and I'll be on this trip then.” Whereas other people are doing it where they're present, they're with the group, they're reaching out for something that's in them, and they're giving it to the group. They're saying, “Hey, this is me, we're having this experience together right now, and I'm asking if you can reach inside of yourself too.” And you can get a beautiful bond happening, if it's done well. If people don't get that sense of “Oh, this happens all the time,” these people don't really want to hear this. (Rhea, TL)

Maximize Authority

Soon after we arrived at our destination, Scott gathered us together to give us some basic instruction in wilderness travel and WI procedures. He laid three tarps on the ground, and explained that each tarp had a specific purpose. The first tarp was the “bedroom” tarp, and we were to put our tents and the packs that held our clothes and sleeping bags on this tarp. The next tarp was the “kitchen,” and on this tarp we would keep our food, stoves, and fuel. The last tarp was the “garage,” and we would use this tarp to store all of our boating equipment. Following this orientation, we were given some basic instruction in canoeing. Joanne showed us how to pick a paddle of the correct size, explained to us how to care for our paddles, and introduced us to some of the basic strokes—forward, backward, sweep, stop. As she talked, we quietly followed her through the paddling motions of the demonstration—reach out in front, pull to our side, lift out, and cut through the air, keeping our blade flat.

Later that day, Scott gathered us back together to explain to us what was incorporated into the trip to make it safe. He described the qualifications of the leaders, which he explained was “the first line of defense.” He also told us about the throw ropes they had in case something happened to us on the water and we needed to be rescued. He then told us that we would need to undergo a canoe tipping procedure, which was designed to help us know what it was like to tip out of a canoe, as well as to help the trip leaders know how we would each respond to such an event. Scott finished his explanation by stating, “It is a very important thing because it can make the trip a lot safer.”

These three talks—the “gear talk,” “paddle talk,” and “safety talk”—were part of the standard series of talks that WI leaders gave at the beginning of a trip. As lessons that oriented participants to the backcountry and to the “WI Way,” the talks were useful because they established a consistent set of practices that opened up more free time for participants to “get into the

trip, and into each other" (Ben, TL). However, the talks served an even more important purpose: they set the rules of the trip and also established the trip leader's authority to enforce these rules. Because the talks gave trip leaders an opportunity to display their knowledge and expertise in the various aspects of WI camping, they helped trip leaders earn status and, in turn, authority (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993; Hunt, 1995; Jonas, 1999).

Authority is legitimated power, which in wilderness adventure, translates into the ability to get people to do "what the boatmen say" (Jonas, 1999, p. 257). However, as Jonas stated, "The attainment of authority in a leisure setting is not an easy task. Authority relations tend to be problematic because individuals engage in leisure to escape the routinized and rule-bound life of work, where authority is omnipresent and widely resented" (p. 249). In terms of the WI mission, establishing authority was important, because it gave trip leaders the ability to command participants into situations that facilitated social integration. Thus, the more trip leaders could earn a "voluntary allegiance" (Fine & Holyfield, 1996) from their participants, the more tools they had at their disposal to generate social integration.

At WI, trip leaders were generally successful in establishing authority over the domains of the trip related to safety and logistics, which translated into having control over who paddled with whom, who cooked meals, and the way the group traveled through the day. Trip leaders used this authority strategically. As Rhea described,

You can really stop and think about how you want to be cooking dinner tonight. And you can use this to your advantage. You get this group together, cooking dinner, and all sorts of things can happen . . . It's a really important tool to be able to use.

The benefits of such arrangements became apparent as a trip went on. Friendships developed and a group history and identity began to emerge. Indeed, as trip leaders suggested, such arrangements were a form of "structured spontaneity" (Holyfield & Fine, 1997), because although they maximized the opportunities for groups to share in the unexpected surprises of the wilderness. As a result, trip leaders generally looked for ways to associate their strategies to further social integration with the rhetoric of safety or logistics. Ben described a typical scenario:

Splitting up the people so that they're not paddling with the same person every day has a lot to do with getting the social integration going. [So is that something you like to do?] Yep . . . I say, "I'd like to mix this up, I think you would be stronger with this person," but ultimately what I'm trying to do is get different people in it. It's bullshit, there are no strength differences at all sometimes, you just want to manipulate them to get them into a different boat.

Further, the more trip leaders could bolster the link between action and safety, the more they were able to compel participants to act, even when participants actively resisted. One such example was the "tip test"—a procedure where participants were required to tip over a canoe and fall into the water. Although the tip test was a legitimate safety practice, WI and its

trip leaders also recognized the value of the tip test as a group ritual that facilitated social integration. The Staff Manual (1999, p. 54) described the tip test as a "group event, a "hardship" that participants share with one another." As trip leader Eric described, "More than a safety thing, it's something that the group does together. It's something they can share and it's something they can talk about. It's one of those things they can talk about and stories develop from."

On warm and sunny days, the tip test could be a fun event that, as Rhea described, "everyone got totally involved in and got to play with afterward." However, on cold or windy days, the tip test was typically an event that was more endured than enjoyed, and trip leaders had to make significant efforts to link the tip test to trip safety to get their participants to acquiesce. These efforts were apparent on Scott's trip, where Gord resisted participating:

On shore, Gord sat in his chair and as he watched the other participants tip, he began to get restless. The next time Scott came by, Gord told Scott that he didn't want to do this. "I just don't see the point of it. I don't see what I'm going to get out of tipping except get cold." Scott replied, "What you'll get out of it is doing something that everybody else in the group has done and you'll have the chance to have some camaraderie with the group." Gord didn't seem to think that this was a very good reason, because he made no move to get out of his chair. Scott then changed the direction of his argument. He told Gord that the tipping procedure was also a safety issue, and as head leader on the trip he needed to know how people reacted when they tip over. As a trip leader, he wouldn't feel the trip was safe unless he knew how everyone reacted when they tipped in a canoe. He then said that if he was asked by a lawyer what he did in the case of an accident and if he had to say he just took someone at their word that they were fine when a canoe tipped, it would be his butt on the line. He closed by stating, "So it's a legal issue, really." Gord made no comment, but he started moving out of the chair and toward the canoe. A few minutes later, he completed the tip test.

Although trip leader authority was extensive, it was not absolute, and in general the authority to command participants weakened as the appeals to safety became less convincing. For example, on occasions participants were able to fulfill the safety criteria of balanced strength, experience, or weight, without having to also submit to the trip leader's arrangement of paddling partners. Becky described how she occasionally faced this situation on trips with family members. In these situations, the trip leaders were unable to override the preferences of their participants, and subsequently had to give in to the wants of their group members:

[Whether or not I mix people up] depends upon if that's going to inhibit their enjoyment. If they are there to spend time with each other and they're just coming because they don't have the equipment, then you have to put them together for a certain extent . . . Sometimes we can use, well, there's rapids coming up and we need to have a really strong sternsperson and we think that you might be better in the bow, but that doesn't always work either because you might have a really strong sternsperson and it might make sense physically for them to stay together.

Overall, associating the techniques of social integration with trip safety and logistics allowed trip leaders to keep their efforts to bring people together hidden from participants. Indeed, for trip leaders, the goal was to be as “subtle” as possible in bringing people together. As Scott described, “You don’t want to make things obvious. You want to make them subtle and in the background, but set it up so that people are interacting.”

However, trip leaders interpreted the practice of hiding their efforts from participants in different ways. Some trip leaders believed that keeping their techniques hidden contributed positively to the resulting social experience because it added to the feelings of spontaneity—and thus authenticity—surrounding the social integration emerging on the trip. For example, Scott suggested that such a practice created a “very powerful” experience that left participants with the sense that they could re-create the experience on their own at home:

Hopefully you can set it up so that they facilitate everything without even knowing it. And then that becomes a very powerful experience for them because then they can leave the trip saying, “Wow, we were here and we all interacted on our own, and the guides were there and they helped us out, but we did a lot to really create a perfect community out here, and gosh, let’s take that home and do that with our own family and friends and communities.

In contrast, other trip leaders suggested that such hidden practices undermined the organizational mission of social integration. As Julianne’s use of the term “social manipulation” suggested, having a backstage area where trip leaders schemed and planned how to integrate the group effectively destroyed any semblance of spontaneity associated with the trip. Indeed, hiding the mission and the techniques from participants so that the integration would appear “just like magic” seemed to them to give the trip the feel of an elaborately staged performance where participants were being unwittingly duped into coming together. To some trip leaders, the staging of the trip made the social integration seem hollow and inauthentic. Ben described the trip in such terms:

What we do is subtle and manipulating. We don’t let people know that we’re socially integrating them, and we hope that it happens by our techniques, just like magic. What one hand is doing up in front, the other hand is in the back, pulling the strings or setting up the choices. What you choose to believe is not necessarily your own choice.

Guide Interpretations

As our trip with Scott and Joanne went on, we spent our days paddling easily down the river, playing in the rapids, telling stories around the campfire, and talking about life, love, and our dreams for the future. We had even survived a vicious storm together, on the final night of the trip. Now, on the last morning, Scott and Joanne gathered us into a circle for one final group moment. Joanne asked us to think back to the beginning of the trip and of what we had said we wanted to leave behind and hoped to take with us from our trip. She asked us to talk about whether we had been successful in ful-

filling our hopes, and what we thought we had learned as a result of the experience. Each of us then took our turn to speak to the group.

Although everyone had their individual stories and memorable moments, most people talked of how they thought the conditions of the trip, and particularly the storm, had brought us together as a group. Gord spoke of the teamwork the storm had fostered. "The rain could have been construed as a negative thing, but I think it was good for the group for us to celebrate our unity. We all pitched in together." Joanne talked of how the trip gave us the opportunity to show our true selves, because in this situation, "you see people in their rawest form," and she thanked us for the opportunity to get to know us. Virginia, a participant who had arrived with few expectations except to spend some time with her son, said that what she came to value most was the opportunity to get to know all of the people in the group and work together to make a community. "And that's what we've done," she added, "We've made a community."

What Joanne led us through was a typical WI "closure talk," which was a final group ritual where participants were called upon to reflect on the events of the trip. It was during the closure talk that participants shared their feelings with others, and collectively the group made sense of their shared experience and established some lasting interpretations of the trip. With the organizational goal of social integration, what trip leaders hoped would emerge from the closure talk was the notion that the trip had become more than simply a fun getaway, but that *communitas* had emerged, and that the shared experience of *communitas* had led to new discoveries and life lessons about the importance of diversity, equality, and community. Although the closure talk was meant to be an "honest sharing of feelings," WI also assigned to it the secondary goal of "putting the experience in a positive light" (Staff Manual, 1999, p. 50). In other words, while the closure talk was meant to be a time for participants to reveal what the trip had meant to them, trip leaders were also expected to take an active role in guiding participant interpretations of the experience, so that they came to see the trip as meaningful and worthwhile.

The extent to which trip leaders were required to guide interpretations depended on the extent to which the group experience had socially integrated. For groups where social integration had been well received, trip leaders gave participants the freedom to say what they wished and ample opportunity to say it. With these groups, trip leaders constructed elaborate closure talks that called on participants to talk at length about both the experience and the interpersonal dynamics of the trip. However, trip leaders learned from experience that such elaborate talks were actually counterproductive with groups that had not integrated well. Instead of putting the trip in a positive light, such a lengthy closure talk merely called attention to how poorly the group had integrated. Julianne explained,

And another thing I've done is to start with an individual and have other people say their memories of that person. And I've tried and failed with groups. If the group has integrated well, then it's fine. If the group hasn't integrated very much, it just makes it worse.

Thus, one way that trip leaders guided interpretations was by tailoring the talk to the level of social integration that the group had achieved. For groups that had not achieved such a high level of social integration, closure talks were shorter in length and called upon participants to recount positive memories in the form of highlights or "Kodak moments." In rare cases when the group experience was so poor, some trip leaders recommended foregoing the closure talk altogether:

[The closure talk] is another thing you should feel trip by trip. I don't think some of these things should be things you must do. Because I've seen people wince through closure talks. You can see people not wanting to be there. Because it really wasn't a group experience, and now they're forced to pretend to be a group, to make up these memories, which they don't want to be doing. So in that case, I don't think you should necessarily do a closure talk. (Rhea, TL)

Another way trip leaders guided interpretations was by offering their own evaluation of the group experience. Because trip leaders had observed many different groups, they were endowed with a certain level of expertise in their evaluation of group experiences. As such, their comments held a lot of weight toward shaping the interpretation of the trip. Trip leaders realized this, and it was not uncommon to hear trip leaders describe the group experience as good or even superior to the typical group. Rick's comments during his closure talk demonstrated this:

Rick spoke last, and said that he had a lot of snapshots from the trip, but what stood out for him was how well everyone got along. "Right from the very beginning," he said, "You guys just clicked. Not all groups do that." A couple of participants said "Really?" and "Hm," when Rick said this.

Generally trip leaders made an effort to remain honest in their group assessment, which meant that they occasionally had to do some creative wordsmithing to describe the group as special. As Becky described, "You have to find ways of saying without lying, 'Yeah, I've never seen a group come together this fast before.' I've seen groups maybe come together even closer after a long period of time, but you don't say that."

Overall, the closure talk provided trip leaders with an opportunity to determine if the group successfully socially integrated—a task that seemed straightforward in theory, but in practice turned out to be quite problematic. Although trip leaders had a consistent and solid idea of what comprised a socially integrated group, they found that it was difficult to evaluate the success of a trip based on these criteria. In practice, the criteria for measuring the success of a trip tended to be quite fluid, taking into consideration the particular conditions of the trip that were out of the trip leader's control, such as the pre-trip expectations of participants, pre-established relationships, and length of time participants spent together. As Julianne described, "You have different starting points, so your end point's going to be different as well." As a result, trips tended to be evaluated in relative terms, whereby

if the group had shown some kind of "improvement," the trip was deemed a success. For example, Ben explained this idea best:

[What does social integration mean to you, when you talk about it?]

I don't know. It's a catch phrase so it loses it's meaning. All the time, it's re-defining itself on every trip. "Oh yeah, I met social integration," when who knows if you did or not . . . I don't know if everybody does it, but you kind of reassess your meaning of social integration to meet the group to say that it's successful.

[That way you're always successful?]

Not necessarily. It meets the needs of the individuals in there. [For example], on our trip it was a high level of social integration, whereas what happened the first day usually happens on day two or three of the trip with another group. So we really hit the social integration mark on that trip. They were into each other, for whatever reason, from the moment they saw each other pretty much. And the trips that take three days to get that, you haven't reached the same level of social integration, but you've reached a level. It's a lot lower than what we reached on that trip, but you're still fusing in them that this is oriented toward social integration.

Further, trip leaders easily accepted the fact that regardless of their efforts, the conditions of the trip and their participants may ultimately limit their ability to actually do so. As Ben noted, there was "no guarantee" that their techniques would work:

If you follow the steps to social integration it may not happen. All you're doing if you follow the steps is you're providing the environment for it to happen. Like growing a seed—if you have the dirt, the water, the sunshine, there's no guarantee that the seed is going to grow, but at least you know that it's in the right environment to grow, and it's up to that seed to blossom, not for you to pull them out of that.

Discussion

At WI, there were five key steps to delivering *communitas*: establishing the mission, selecting and training trip leaders, setting the tone, maximizing authority, and guiding interpretations. Some of these responsibilities fell to organization administrators whereas others were in the purview of the trip leaders. All of these steps, however, reflected the organizational commitment to generating *communitas* and delivering leisure in that they encouraged social integration while also striving to maintain freedom of choice.

One point of discussion that emerges from this study revolves around the issue of authenticity. Indeed, a common theme within the comments of trip leaders was whether the *communitas* that emerged was real and genuine, or whether it was a contrived performance. These questions emerged as trip leaders worked to make sense of the realization that they were actively, although subtly, working to generate *communitas*. Some trip leaders believed that the emergent *communitas* was genuine regardless of their efforts, whereas others considered themselves to be maestros of an elaborately staged

performance. For these trip leaders, this perspective resulted in incongruous interpretations that were told with more than a hint of irony.

The story of Wilderness Inquiry is not the only tale of liminal leisure that raises the issue of authenticity. In general, incongruous meanings of authenticity seem to consistently emerge in studies about liminal leisure settings that aim to present the experience as "real," in the sense that the desire is for the experience to be seen as spontaneous, natural, and genuine, when in fact it is, to some degree, controlled by a host or leisure provider. An early example of this incongruity was seen in MacCannell's (1976) description of contemporary tourist sites as an enactment of "staged authenticity." More recently, Neumann's (1993) ethnography of the Green Tortoise bus tour aptly illustrated the tension between spontaneity and organizational control. As Neumann (1993) noted, the Green Tortoise bus tour valued authenticity, believing that its spontaneous and improvisational way of traveling "off the beaten track" was a more authentic way of experiencing the sights of the American Southwest. However, while the trip was meant to be an open-ended journey through the Southwest where the trip could change at any twist and turn, he noted that what the group actually experienced was a form of "planned spontaneity" whereby trip leaders made the decisions as to when and where the group should travel, and generally took the tour group to the same collection of sites that the "mass" tourists also visited. Neumann thus noted that the "dialectic of spontaneity and organizational control . . . gave an ironic and incongruous shape" to the *communitas* that emerged on the trip, suggesting that it felt both "real" and "artificial." As he stated, "general feeling of improvisation and freedom cultivated a distinct feeling of kinship . . . this spontaneity sometimes appeared contrived" (p. 217).

Holyfield and Fine (1997) described a similar tension in their ethnography of ropes courses. As they noted, ropes course events were highly staged and scripted by the facilitators, however they were presented to participants as unstructured. They suggested that the *communitas* that emerged in the program was less spontaneous than it was encouraged by pre-established rules that "prefigure or anticipate the development of group or community" (p. 357). As such, rather than consider the events as spontaneous, they suggested that the ropes course facilitators imposed "structured spontaneity." The authors had difficulty determining whether participants were able to experience a real "therapeutic moment" within such a context.

In contrast, questions of authenticity tend to be absent in studies of liminal leisure that openly embrace the idea that the experience is a form of fantasy play, rather than a manifestation of real life. For example, Belk and Costa's (1998) ethnography of the mountain man rendezvous reenactment described the experience as a form of fantasy—a "special world of play"—in which the participants acted out the "real" rendezvous days, complete with clothing, teepees, and other objects from the period. Brandmeyer and Alexander (1986) similarly described the adult baseball camp as a "fantasy camp" where participants were engaged in an "adult version of 'Let's Pretend'" (p. 32). What is noteworthy is that the fantasy elements of the

setting did not diminish the experience of *communitas*. As Belk and Costa (1998, p. 231) suggested, "the bonding and feelings of community under these conditions are no less real because they involve temporary enactments of an imaginary time and place."

However, it was difficult for WI to embrace the fantasy elements of the trip because it was heavily invested in the idea that the wilderness setting was a "deep reality," or a setting that offers a more real or authentic way of experiencing life than what is found in the everyday world (Fine, 1992). It is likely that the commitment to the authenticity of the wilderness experience was tied to the organizational mission that presented the trip experience as an agent of social change. Wilderness Inquiry had a broad social agenda related to social inequality and discrimination, and the trip experience was framed as an inspirational experience to foster changes in attitudes and behaviors in everyday life. Similar to how Victor Turner theorized liminality, WI saw wilderness adventure as a domain that contains the "germ of future social developments [and] societal change" (1982, p. 52).

We may need to be cautious in applying Turner's ideas to the wilderness adventure context, because the efficacy of this domain in engendering social transformation decreases when it is found in leisure (Deegan, 1989). Although rituals have long been recognized for having such transformative effects (e.g., Turner, 1969), Deegan (1989) pointed out that what made these rituals efficacious was that they were collective events, in which "the whole community goes through the entire ritual round . . . sooner or later, no one is exempt from ritual duty." In contrast, contemporary leisure rituals are missing this dialogue with structure; they tend to be encapsulated within their own sphere of activity, rather than integrated into the everyday lives of its participants (Turner, 1969). Thus, rather than exhibiting the "anti-structural capacity for renewal and liberation" (Deegan, 1989, p. 17), leisure rituals become vacations and holidays—what Cohen and Taylor (1974) describe as "escape attempts," or "excursions from the domain of paramount reality" (p. 119). Cohen and Taylor added, "It is the rare holiday . . . which totally transforms our mode of being in the world . . . although we might return feeling relaxed and unburdened, all that we have to prove this is a *suntan* rather than a new self" (p. 117).

With freedom at the core of leisure, attempts to use leisure as an agent of change is limited because interpretations and meanings generated from the leisure experience will always be personalized and individualized. As a consequence, leisure rituals may be "meaningless for some, very important to others, and only partially meaningful to most" (Deegan, 1989, p. 16). Such a limitation may encourage us to reconsider our field's practice of "justifying fun" (Fine, 1991) through such instrumental associations.

Conclusion

Postmodernity has ushered in social and cultural changes that have broadened and transformed the meaning and experience of community. As

the emergence of such social phenomena as Internet chat rooms illustrate, conceptualization of community as being tied to a fixed location or shared territory has expanded to include communities that exist in virtual or hyperreal space (Jones, 1998; Lashua, 2001). Bender (1978) contended that community is best defined as "an experience rather than a place. As simply as possible, community is where community happens" (p. 6). Further, as communities de-place, so too do they proliferate. Individuals now have the mobility and technology to maintain membership in numerous discrete communities in which they have unique identities and social relations (Gergen, 1991).

What has emerged in postmodern culture are communities that form less often around instrumental relationships and more often around shared interest and emotion—what Shields (1992) characterized as a shift from the "contract community" to the "contact community." Maffesoli (1996) similarly described the emergence of emotional communities, which he characterized as intense, temporary groupings based on feeling, not obligation. As explained by Rojek (1995), "the momentary coherence of people in 'emotional communities' such as arts festivals, soccer stands, theatre auditoriums, and so on are examples of what Maffesoli had in mind" (p. 151).

In sum, what postmodernity has ushered in is a weakening of community commitment to the extent that community is now best described as a "light cloak" rather than an "iron cage" (Bauman, 2000). In fact, Bauman suggested that we have reached the point where "all communities are *postulated*; projects rather than realities, something that comes *after*, not *before* the individual choice (p. 169). For leisure, the most obvious implication of this movement toward community as a chosen pursuit is that leisure takes on a central role as a domain to make and experience community. Consequently, a direction for future research is to further investigate the processes and experiences of community-making within the leisure sphere.

As we undertake this investigation, we must recognize that although contemporary leisure community is not necessarily a substitute for traditional community, as it is a unique form of sociability with its own meanings. In fact, what we tend to find in leisure communities is a unification of the contradictory elements of intimacy and anonymity, obligation and freedom, and attachment and ephemerality. Attention to these unique characteristics can help us make sense of the experiences reported within these communities as well as better understand their role in fostering social solidarity.

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