Journal of Leisure Research
2008, Vol. 40, No.3, pp. 360–384

Writing Leisure: Values and Ideologies of Research

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Abstract

Writing leisure constructs a normative reality about ways in which life should be lived. Leisure research, like all discourses, is embedded in values and situated in ideological contexts. This paper contributes to an on-going dialogue concerned with the impact of ideology on leisure research. The tendencies for discourses of leisure are to provide: (1) idealized visions for end states of society, and (2) roles for research that move society closer to the idealized vision. This paper identifies values and ideologies in writing leisure across topical areas of health, recreation policy, and outdoor recreation where significant portions of the research discourse privilege medicalization, neoliberalism, and pristine land, respectively. Although it may seem that research simply documents the facts about leisure, the writing of leisure does not escape ideological contexts. To enhance the intended impact of leisure research, its values and ideologies need to come to the surface. There are numerous strategies to increase the capacity of leisure research to account for its value orientations.

KEYWORDS: *Research culture, hegemony, ideology*

Introduction

Writing creates the worlds we inhabit. – Denzin, 2003, p. xii

Academic writing is a series of formal conversations engaging researchers on the subject matter of which they write. These conversations expose our processes of reasoning as we marshal evidence and theory to construct the stories of our research. When a stream of conversation gains influence within the practice of research, we refer to it as a discourse, and it tells us about accepted truths, beliefs and moral values within

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Authors note: We are grateful to the "pizza 'n papers seminar" at the University of Waterloo during Spring 2006 for their helpful comments on a previous version, specifically Mark Havitz, Andy Kaczynski, Heather Mair, Marica Mazurek, Luke Potwarka, Sue Shaw, and Dawn Trussell. Their encouragement and critiques played important roles in framing ideas. In addition, we would like to thank the Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program for their sabbatical support to the first author; without the weekly discussions inspiring this paper, it would not have been developed. Also, we thank three anonymous reviewers for comments that improved the quality of this paper, and also to Megan Cronan for her thoughtful responses to an earlier draft.

that line of research. This paper depicts three distinct discourses of leisure research, and identifies the accepted—and often implicit—values and ideologies of them. Roles for research are ones that inescapably promote values and ideologies. Although there are several streams of ideology that surface in this writing, the primary positioning is to enhance the capacity of leisure research to address values and ideologies in explicit ways, and ultimately, to embrace the social visions of our work as our own.

Scholars from other disciplines have been concerned about discourses that become so widespread that their assumptions and values are taken as natural truths that are "out there" rather than being constructed as a part of one's own doing and perpetuated within one's research. Guba and Lincoln (2005; see also "cultural texts" from Denzin, 1992, and "normalizing ideologies" from Miller & Crabtree, 2005) discuss master or meta-narratives that dominate our shared culture to the point of shaping our everyday experiences. They characterize prevailing discourses as helping us distinguish right from wrong behavior, fair from unjust treatment, and in general, to make sense of our world. When we tell about the events of our lives to others, we draw upon a prevailing discourse to guide our telling and frame our experiences. Our implicit assumptions are that others share this common core of knowledge, and drawing upon such discourse facilitates our telling. Although discourse enables the telling of experience when it parallels the reality one lived, it also limits our worldview and effectively constrains both our lived experiences and ways we tell about them (Burton, 1996; Hemingway, 1996; Henderson, 1990).

In the past couple decades, several scholars have noted that a single dominant discourse in leisure research is being replaced by a multiplicity of discourses (Burton & Glover, 1999; Hemingway, 1995, 1996; Henderson, 1990, 1996; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992; see also Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The transition is uneven with some areas of research more aggressive than others in exploring new ways of understanding (Burton, 1996; Henderson, 2000; Hemingway, 1999; Hunnicutt, 2000; More, 2002; Patterson & Williams, 2005; Rojek, 2005). Like all discourses, those of leisure research are embedded in values and situated in ideological contexts. To a limited extent, the values and ideologies of leisure are recognized within the written research.

This paper works to enhance the capacity of leisure research to debate the values and ideologies that are largely subtexts in its writing. In his discussion of deviant leisure, Rojek (2000) viewed a dominant discourse that confirms some values and marginalizes others. He compared dominant discourse to a kind of colonialism in so far as the apparent order to society is presented as normal and any non-conformity is framed as deviant. Rojek (1999, 2000) is concerned about the lack of debate regarding a research agenda that frames leisure as a progressive force, and ultimately reinforces the problems with society's social order. More (2002) identified several ideologies embedded in major discourses of leisure that marginalize groups of people. More argued that "we must recognize the political context within which our concepts exist. Inevitably scientific concepts are used for value ends" (2002, p. 74). Our focus of concern is the "value ends" of leisure research, referred to herein as end-states, that provide desired visions related to socio-political power, leisure, and society.

We build upon the dialogue concerned with ideology of leisure research (Goodale, 1990; Hemingway, 1995; Henderson, 1990, 1996; Sylvester, 1995). In general,

values and ideology are sets of ideas that further the well-being of one group of people over another (cf., Bourdieu, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Values and ideologies reflect power differentials between segments of society, suggest positions on issues of social justice, pass judgment on community interests, democracy, citizenship, multicultural contexts, and generally determine stances related to various socio-political relationships. To improve the dialogue of the leisure research community in the direction of openness, transparency, and reflexivity (Dupuis, 1999), we should increase the capacity of our discourses to explicitly recognize their values and ideologies. Our aim is not to criticize previous research that lacks explicit discussion about its own value orientation. North American leisure research does not have a strong tradition of accommodating ideological contexts about social values and political commentary (Coalter, 1999; More, 2002), and the lack of explicit recognition is understandably an artifact of our research culture. By developing sensitivity to the ideological contexts of discourse and acknowledging such contexts as mediating factors in research, we feel leisure research will enhance its credibility, extend its impact, and more effectively reach its goals.

The purposes of this paper are threefold. We first recognize values as being an integral part of leisure research that are sometimes forgotten and exist as subtexts in our writing. Second, we encourage researchers to be more critical of our collective selves regarding locating our research within a discourse. The end-state of our research, no matter how technical or instrumental we frame our study, has ideological implications that impose a vision of social reality and, over the long term, affect the capacity of leisure research to reach its goals. And third, we address problems in framing relationships between academics and practitioners, frequently alleged to have a gap in understanding. To do so, our interpretations of three topical areas of leisure research are discussed and work toward centering leisure practice on the lives of citizens and everyday people (rather than on leisure service professionals). Prior to interpreting three topical areas of leisure, we characterize discourse and focus on its connections to values and ideologies.

What is discourse?

Discourse is the public language of a culture or community of people with implied narratives about morality, fairness, and appropriate behavior (cf., Schwandt, 2001). It is connected to the power structure and ideology in a society. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000; see also Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992) indicate that communities and societies contain a power matrix, referred to as hegemony, comprised of social relations whose power differentials are legitimized as being natural or normal. This power imbalance is represented in social conventions, and reflected in our relationships that repeat a worldview, and in doing so, naturalize its existence. Various cultural institutions—like the family, media, schools, and professional organizations—are involved in the complex process of consenting to, and reaffirming, this power imbalance.

Other social theorists have explored the processes through which discourses operate. Foucault (1978) is known for his work exploring power, and in particular, the way power is constituted and transmitted through discourse. According to Foucault, discourse is connected to power and knowledge because it creates and reflects the rules of discussion, including boundaries on topics and procedures for the discussion.

Foucault argues power is ubiquitous, and that discourse has the capacity to privilege, appreciate, and show relevance, yet discourse also holds power to marginalize and validate the existing power structure (Foucault, 1977). British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) also was concerned with unequal distribution of social power, and developed a theory of structuration in which he analyzes whether individuals (agency) or social forces (structure) shape social reality. Privileging neither agency nor structure, Giddens argued that power imbalance is reflected in discourse and has potential to both constrain and enable changes in social reality.

The power imbalance exists as tensions amongst groups who espouse different agendas. As groups compete for authority, they construct ideology to enhance their position (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Ideology refers to an articulated worldview of a social group, and involves various cultural forms that function to reproduce an individual's place in the power imbalance (p. 282). Ideology, like its associated discourse, is useful to help people make sense of their world (Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990), but it also may conceal contradictions and masks unequal power relations to the point where people do not question any power imbalance (Shaw, 2001). Due to the ubiquity of ideology within human relationships, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) argue there is "no perspective unspoiled by ideology from which to study social life in an antiseptically objective way" (p. 302). The discourse of a society or group of people is the means through which ideology and power are produced. Because of its potential to reproduce a social order and leave the causes of problems unaddressed, discussions about the ideologies in leisure research are worthwhile to foster. Such discussions would provide a much-needed rendering of the "value ends" of our work, which generally has been isolated to scholars focused on leisure and the humanities (Coalter, 1998, 1999; Goodale, 1990; Hemingway, 1996, 1999; Sylvester, 1990, 1995).

Connecting ideology to discourse

Several characteristics of discourse already have been addressed with leisure literature and associated with tendencies for our research to dichotomize, individualize, essentialize, and commodify leisure (Burton, 1996; Coalter, 1999; Hemingway, 1996; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Hunnicutt, 2000; More, 2002; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). A contribution of this paper is to develop two tendencies of discourses that connect with values and ideologies, and at times, function to slow progress in affecting social change. First, a discourse provides an *idealized vision of end states of society*. These visions are based on cultural values and/or institutional ideology. They tell us what-should-be. Second, a research discourse prescribes *roles for research that move society closer to the idealized vision*. Although research is instrumental in moving social reality closer to the idealized vision, the research itself typically is not centered on, nor does it usually consider the array of possibilities for, alternative end states (Coalter, 1999; Hemingway, 1995; Sylvester, 1995). Leisure research functions to advocate idealized visions for society through its representations of people and interpretations for the practice (Hunnicutt, 2000).

Idealized visions. In cross-cultural research contexts, Bishop (2005) indicates that "Othering" often occurs where study participants are idealized as victims who are unable to cope, disenfranchised from political networks, and lacking power to initiate change. He claims these idealized visions are reproduced through the research process,

and ultimately lead to perverse effects with potential to demoralize the people being studied and strengthen colonizing forces. In the context of detailing various effects of discourse in leisure research, Burton (1996) argues that complex and diverse problems are idealized (or using his word—simplified) and that the reality becomes distorted through our analysis and unintended effects of our writing (pp. 20-22).

Other scholars have been concerned about the dysfunctional effects that idealized visions have on leisure research. Researchers on gender and leisure have a history of awareness of ideologies of femininity and masculinity. Shaw (1999) states that gender is not a fixed quality but that social expectations about appropriate behavior are continually being negotiated, and suggests that gender differences may be idealized (or using her word – stereotyped) within various social contexts, that in turn is reproduced within the research analysis and subsequent papers (pp. 272-274; see also Henderson, 1996). Floyd (1998) also depicts idealizations within research contexts of the marginality-ethnicity framework. He argues that a stream of discourse in leisure research assumes African-American class structure to be monolithic, when in actuality, there is considerable intra-ethnic differentiation (pp. 5-6; see also Johnson, Horan, & Pepper, 1997; Kivel, 2000, 2005). This framing of the debate has reproduced a reliance on static racialized categories that essentialize culture into a singular ideal (Floyd, 1998, p. 6). The point is that the values implicit in the discourse work to move society in the direction of the idealized vision. Unwitting as it may be, such ideological positioning of research ultimately advocates for a particular end-state of people and society.

Moving society toward the vision. The discourses of leisure generally prescribe roles for research that move society closer to the idealized vision. These roles position researchers as mediators between people at leisure (often users of a recreational site) and practitioners (usually those who manage a site). In these positions, researchers develop scientific knowledge that fits into agency and managerial frameworks. The knowledge developed for practitioners generally is meant to represent populations of users, prospective users, or some other relevant constituency. The problem for researchers, in our position as mediators between users, managers, and other constituencies is to represent our participants in ways that conform to managerial discourse. The "So what?" question has haunted the leisure research community for decades, and in general, the more seamlessly user-based data fit to managerial and organizational frameworks, the more relevant the research is judged. The value orientation of the research stems from the dominant discourse of the researcher-practitioner partnership, and functions to frame the research problem, provides boundaries for needed user-based information, and signifies (and thereby constrains) the set of solutions and alternatives for management.

An important step in researcher-practitioner partnerships is to problematize leisure issues for scientific investigation. Scientists frame a problem and then develop investigations to resolve the problem through research implications. The construction of problems, and need of evidence for their practical resolutions, is the cycle of practice for most leisure research, and is a cycle in which ideology plays a significant role to direct the conceptualization, research design, and expectations for practical implications. Discourse becomes a concern when the construction of problems is addressed across a diversity of research projects from the same value-orientation and ideological underpinnings. Research implications facilitate practical solutions that, among other

things, implement the ideology of the discourse in ways that the ideology of the discourse is not publicly discussed. By reproducing the problem and repeating the implementation, the ideology remains unchallenged and spreads. With repeated success and spread of the discourse, the problem becomes actualized as part of the normal state of affairs. As a consequence, the feedback loops of researcher-practitioner partnerships may create a self-fulfilling prophecy that normalize the vision of the discourse and perpetuates the distribution of power to those who control the discourse.

The notion of leisure research as instrumental in reproducing an undesirable end-state and having dysfunctional effects has been previously suggested. In his essay that discusses the "inevitable intrusion of values," Goodale (1990) indicates that leisure research has been psychologized to the point where leisure and community have been neglected (p. 298). Goodale (1990) indicates that defining relevance in contexts of individual leisure has led to a discourse that omits the lived reality of minority groups, the poor, and those with disability (p. 300). Henderson (1991) notes a similar dysfunctional potential for research on women's leisure that omits the social context of constraints, and in doing so, fails to break the status quo (pp. 367-368). She argues that without a social context, constraints to leisure will not be fully apprehended, and the research unable to challenge the status quo, or worse, the power imbalance of the social structure may be legitimized through the research process.

Our argument is that for leisure research to be more effective at social change, open discussions of values and ideology about leisure are needed. Several other researchers have already provided insight on this point, including Hemingway (1995) who states "rejection of questions about values. . .impoverishes the study of leisure and indeed separates leisure inquiry from the phenomena it wishes to study" (p. 32; see also Coalter, 1999; Sylvester, 1995). In his discussion of "making social science matter," Flyvbjerg (2001) asserts that the social sciences should focus on their strengths, which he portrays as inquiry into values and end states. Harding (1991) indicates that the sciences are first and foremost about politics, and can be both progressive and regressive regarding impacts on society. For social sciences to advance causes such as social justice, public health, and well-being (the end states that many leisure scholars would embrace), Harding argues for a "transformed logic of science" that levels the power structure of research through processes whereby experts, practitioners, and people being studied work in collaboration and, among other things, deliberate about end-states (pp. 307-311; see also Brown & Duguid, 1991; Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Wenger, 1998).

To illustrate values and ideologies of leisure research, ideologies of three topical areas are interpreted. We chose the topics of leisure and health, recreation policy, and outdoor recreation because they correspond to the discourses that we, the authors, know well and to which we have made previous contributions. The three accounts of discourse reflect our current ideological positions and portray the visions of social reality being promoted. These three accounts illustrate the need for explicit consideration of ideological positioning when writing leisure. This paper is not meant to recognize the multiple layers of complexity within our three topics, but is meant to recognize two layers particularly common across most research discourse: idealized visions, and research that moves society closer to the discourse. The paper is not meant to be exhaustive of tendencies in discourse, it is not meant to be inclusive of complicating factors

of any given discourse, it is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the evolution of discourse in the three topics of discussion, nor is it meant to compete with other discourse analyses of leisure research—complementary and/or compatible with our thoughts yet not necessarily germane.

Writing leisure shapes the world to fit a vision of reality. Unless this vision of reality is specified about the way leisure should be lived, the power of discourse will otherwise *impose a vision* and will be reproduced in the writing. The implications of a discourse are to position our research in ways that provide the most hope for end-states such as health, social justice, and well-being. We write this paper in the spirit of reflecting on our own positions as researchers who are still coming to terms with our relationships to participants, to cumulative impacts of leisure literature, and to exploring research-based strategies for social change.

Values and ideologies of discourse in leisure and health

Health and well-being are prominent themes around which many contemporary leisure scholars position their research. This growing area of scholarship is aimed at making leisure research more relevant to outside audiences, particularly grant-giving institutions, which are expending vast resources to problematize, understand, and address contemporary health issues. This trend is also evident in our journals where three special issues dedicated to the topic have been published in the past decade (see Iwasaki & Schneider, 2003; Ouellet, Iso-Ahola & Bisvert, 1995; Payne, 2002a). Centering leisure research on health has gained momentum to the point where Payne (2002b) calls upon leisure professionals to reposition themselves as "a 'core' component of community services and health care" (p. 3). There is no doubt that the leisure research community is embracing the potential of leisure to create positive health outcomes.

Despite the positive links between leisure and health, researchers face a major tension between the medicalization of health and traditional frameworks of leisure. Medicalization is a social process whereby an expert-based biomedical paradigm dominates discussion of our health and frames it in negative ways, usually as illness understood as biological and individualistic (Thomas-MacLean, 2004, p. 630; Talbot, Bibace, Bokhour, & Bamberg, 1996). The process of medicalization occurs when life events come to be understood as questions of illness and are then subject to the authority of medical institutions with their cadre of experts upon whom we expect proper diagnosis and isolation of our health problems. Once a life event becomes medicalized, it is described in medical terminology, treated in medical institutions, and people affected by it regarded as patients (Greil, 1991). Idealizing a medicalized vision of health is a reality for most people, as demonstrated by the ease by which we transform ourselves into patients and allow the expertise of medical institutions to shape our life events (Lorber, 1997). Critics of medicalization argue that biological frameworks are narrowly focused and ignore other ways for people to make sense of their health and well-being. Recognizing that medicalization as an ideology is spreading, social movements have slowly emerged to assert alternative ways to appreciate health and influence our well-being (Boston Women's Health Collective, 2005).

Many leisure researchers who study health are aware of medicalization as a constraining discourse. In the introduction of a special issue on the topic, Payne (2002a) stated that "due to a number of changes in society, including advancements in knowl-

edge, researchers and public health officials have shifted from a medical model to a more holistic wellness model of health" (p.1). Similarly, Aitchison (2003) notes the dysfunctional influence of medicalization on leisure and disability literature and argues that "much of the North American research on disability and leisure is underpinned by a medical model of disability that offers few possibilities for disrupting the paternalistic discourse of therapeutic recreation" (p. 964). Rojek (2000) also argues there has been large scale medicalization of human behavior in the past two and a half centuries, including attention toward leisure. Clearly the leisure research community is aware of medicalization as a dominant discourse within the health literature, and to some extent, is concerned about locating leisure in relation to this dominant discourse.

The tension occurs for leisure scholars who recognize the appeal of medicalizing discourse, but are mixed about their place in it. Some scholars are framing research to accommodate the discourse by demonstrating the value of leisure to biological health. In other words, they direct their research to assess the positive impacts of leisure on physiological health. For example, Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) examined involvement in leisure as a way to help reduce the negative impact of stress on physical health. Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd, and Payne (2005) argued leisure research promotes "preventative health," which involves physical activities to reduce the risks of illness. Both of these articles were focused on documenting the positive effects of leisure activities, most often physically active pursuits, on biological health. Such a perspective constructs leisure as part of the medicalization of health. Moreover, linking leisure to biological health is particularly attractive to scholars who want to apply and receive funding from health-related agencies (such as the U.S. National Institutes of Health, or Canadian Institutes of Health Research) which generally embrace medicalization as an ideology.

In contrast to those who medicalize leisure, others are working with alternate strategies to connect leisure to health. Due to the dominance of the medical discourse and widespread acceptance of medicalization as the idealized vision, these alternative strategies have the difficult challenge of redefining public meanings of health. A more holistic approach to health is taking shape as an alternative discourse. Insel and Roth (2006) identify dimensions of health, including social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, environmental and physical dimensions. This multidimensional view of health resists the separation of mind, body, and spirit, but does not necessarily preclude a biomedical perspective. It redefines health as the ability to live life fully – with vitality and meaning (Insel & Roth, 2006). Health is determined by decisions about living one's life, including one's leisure decisions. Warner-Smith and Brown (2002) examine linkages between leisure and various dimensions of health among women living in remote areas, and found leisure lifestyles to be affected by emotional and environmental dimensions of health.

Another strategy that resists medicalization is to study self-perceptions of health. This strategy posits individuals as their own experts about well-being, and that medical technology is not always the appropriate path for a healthier life. Parry and Shaw (1999) explore women's health during menopause and mid-life. They found leisure activities had various affects on well-being, and that many of their participants made decisions for themselves to effectively deal with the challenges of menopause or midlife. Parry and Shaw's findings reinforce previous criticisms of the medicalization of menopause

by further indicating the inadequacy of a narrow medical model for understanding this life process. Both the multidimensional and self-perception strategies for health resist the idealization of medical expertise, and instead, seek to understand the way health is lived on a day-to-day basis.

Roles for research are contingent upon alignment with a discourse, and hence one's ideological stance. If health problems are framed in a medicalized context, research reproduces this ideology by advocating leisure as an instrumentality to prevent illness. In other words, if research acquiesces to the end states of medicalized health—no illness and no disease—then the research problem is to connect leisure to a lack of illness experiences, or rather, connect the lack of leisure to illness. If health problems are framed by alternative ideologies, such as multidimensional or self-perceptions of health, the roles for research lead to reconceptualizations of health, and in doing so, the research process is comparatively democratized. In these latter cases, values and ideology about health are open for discussion.

It seems timely to be discussing the leisure and health literature as this area of research has caught on as a major initiative within the leisure research community. Indeed, many academic departments related to leisure research are positioning themselves to focus on health promotion. Thus, while the links between leisure and health have been explored for years, the need to center leisure on health is more compelling than ever. Understandably, the leisure research community is at a crossroads regarding how to handle this area of research. As social scientists, we could join the medicalized model, but run the risk of being overtaken by the natural sciences which have a long and effective history at dominating the health literature (Miller & Crabtree, 2005). We also could maintain our center in the social sciences and forge new health agendas involving leisure and everyday life. In addition, there are several hybrids of these positions that could be forged. The point is not to reach judgment on the merits of any one of them, but to recognize our relationship to the medicalization of health as being relevant to the questions we ask and solutions we inspire. In short, whatever position we take in relation to the discourse of leisure and health, commits our research approach to a value orientation and ideology.

An example where recognition of ideology has had a powerful effect on re-evaluating research directions is connected with the North American obesity literature. Society has medicalized body weight to the extent that obesity (or being overweight) is seen as a health problem of major proportions (Campos, 2004). However, Gard and Wright (2005) indicate that obesity is a culturally and politically determined concept. The social meaning of being obese is determined by both moral and ideological agendas that hide behind the science of public health. These authors are skeptical of what they call "the increasingly alarmist debate about weight and health" and problematize the problem of obesity. In contrast to medicalizing obesity, an emerging discourse is directed at de-constructing the social processes that frame people as obese and point toward alternate "solutions" for understanding health. These types of discussions bring to the fore the power of discourse and the ubiquity of ideology within our research agendas about leisure and health.

Values and ideologies of discourse in recreation policy

Since the mid-1970s, a major discourse in research related to recreation policy has gradually embraced the extension of market relationships to the governance of public recreation. Referred to as "neo-liberalism," this ideology has been a prevailing value-orientation of various streams of thought related to recreation policy, including recreation administration, community recreation, and recreation and leisure management. The ideology reflects a preference for a minimalist state, with researchers (sometimes unwittingly) advocating the superiority of markets over direct state provision for reasons of competition, economic efficiency, and individual choice. In addition, deregulation and privatization have become central themes in debates over government restructuring. Neo-liberalism calls into question any and all roles played by government that serve as obstacles to the logic of the pure market (Bourdieu, 1998, para 5).

A significant portion of recreation policy discourse incorporates the language of neo-liberalism. Over a quarter century ago, Howard and Crompton (1980, p. 48) warned recreation practitioners that

> a transformation in the way in which recreation and park agencies are financed is taking place. It is a sudden, dramatic, upheaval for which many managers are not prepared. The manager's role has changed from that of being an administrator of public funds to that of an entrepreneur operating in the public sector. In this new role, the manager is required to search out and aggressively exploit opportunities which will enhance the services which can be delivered. This is the financial challenge with which we are now confronted.

Twenty years later, market-based ideology has become a major discourse for research related to political-economic governance of recreation. In characterizing the contemporary reality with which practitioners are faced, Crompton (1999) provides a concise assessment: "in order to retain existing services [local park and recreation agencies] increasingly have to develop alternative financing sources to supplement property taxes" (1999, p. 7). He later added, "the public treasury [will] never have enough money to provide exclusively for the continued growing demands of citizens for more services" (p. 9). His conclusion reflects the general theme of neo-liberalism, stating "when any new service or facility is proposed, the starting point of managers with an entrepreneurial mind-set is to determine how it can be produced with minimal use of public funds and resources" (p. 10-11). Such ideology currently runs deep in the leisure research community, with emphases on the adoption of alternative forms of service delivery (Burton & Glover, 1999; Glover & Burton, 1998) and alternative revenue sources (Gladwell, Anderson & Sellers, 2003, p. 114; Havitz & Glover, 2001), the efficiency of markets in the provision of "public" services (Glover, 1999, p. 1-2), the inability of the public sector to "tackle" social concerns itself (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 2), and the role of the commercial sector in forwarding market-based forms of citizenship (Coalter, 1998). These understandings of contemporary recreation policy shape our readings of the scope and content of possible political interventions, and in doing so, implicate researchers as proponents of market-based ideology who minimize roles for government in public recreation.

The language of neo-liberalism has infiltrated the lexicon of this discourse to the point where, in some instances, scholars may not be aware of the connection between

their words and the politics that underpin them. In forwarding a benefits approach to leisure, Driver and Bruns (1999, p. 355-356) made clear they adopted the word customer to denote the person being served rather than 'user,' 'visitor,' or 'client.' Customer is more accurate because modern dictionaries that define that word to include 'patron,' 'client,' and 'paying guest' and does not limit the word customer just to paying guest as some people believe. Also, the concept of customer more inclusively covers impacts to both on- and off-site stakeholders, while the notion of user has historically referred only to the on-site visitor.

The adoption of the word "customer" (and client, as in the case of McCarville, 2002) is forwarded by the authors who imply that any concern about this change is unjustified. To some extent, the adoption of the word customer is quite uncontroversial, particularly given that it has been driven by an attempt to make government more responsive to the recipients of services and the public. Not many people would advocate a government that treats its citizens with disdain or that ignores their preferences. However, the situation is more complicated than this simple formulation suggests. As Aberbach and Christenson (2005, p. 235) explain:

> It sidesteps questions like who should government agencies serve, what are appropriate service levels and, perhaps more importantly, at least from the internal perspective of customer service advocates, what does the private sector—considered as the standard in these matters by most reformers – actually do when it comes to customers?

If such questions are sidestepped, scholars and practitioners effectively accept that citizens' relationship with the state ought to be at arm's length and based on personal satisfaction with the services they receive from government. The state is seen primarily as a service provider and citizens function mainly as individuals who consume services for their personal needs. To question this set of assumptions is viewed by some scholars as failing to comprehend the "political reality" (Johnson Tew & Johnson, 2005).

The consequences of neo-liberalism for public leisure service provision have been substantial. For one, they have led to what Cowen (2005, p. 336) has referred to as "the rise of selective or targeted social policy." That is, subsidies are made available to selected populations in lieu of providing equal access to all. Cowen (2005, p. 337) believes,

> Targeting signals a shift away from welfarist forms of citizenship and their 'universal' entitlements, which articulated a project for all members of a jurisdiction. This is not to say that they ever actually achieved universality in practice, but that they governed in the name of people-in-general, or according to a logic of 'the social'

With targeted social policy, public leisure provision becomes a means to identify and treat as a problem group of "non-normative citizens," rather than a means to achieve objectives of collective welfare (Cowen, 2005, p. 337). Under such contexts, the vision of fully subsidized recreation services is thus considered a luxury.

Fortunately, several critiques of neo-liberalism have surfaced in our literature over the years, providing alternative visions and competing discourses. In his critical assessment of the current state of recreation policy, More (2002a, p. 58) argued "the discourse on recreation is driven largely by concerns over money (the budget) and power (prestige)." For these reasons, he noted, administrative and legislative interests prevail over public interests, even though, he insisted, "the public is the most important group" (p. 58). The economic priorities embodied in contemporary recreation policy have been questioned by a number of scholars who challenge professional and

political acceptance of the priorities (see also Borrie et al., 2002; Glover, 1998; Ravenscroft, 1993). Hunnicutt (2000) has lamented the current direction of recreation policy, calling on leisure scholars to renew the reform agenda that characterized the origins of our field and recover the vision of *community* leisure service. Hunnicutt's theme of community was extended by Glover and Stewart (2006) in their recent call for a transition from community *recreation* to *community* recreation. Arai and Pedlar (2003) also advocated for a communitarian vision for leisure research and state that such a vision is distinct from summing-up benefits to individuals. In addition, Borrie and others' (2002) concern for relationships between citizens and public recreation agencies—along lines of trust and social responsibility—indicate an ideological agenda distinct from neo-liberalism. Generally speaking, these alternate visions voice concern about the reduction of leisure's emancipatory potential (Hemingway, 1996), the commodification of leisure (Reid, 1995), and the rise of "bottom-line thinking" above the social service ethic that has traditionally guided the field (Schultz, McAvoy & Dustin, 1988; Dustin, More, & McAvoy, 2000). To be clear, opposition to neo-liberalism is present within leisure studies, yet in the end, neo-liberal doctrine pervades in practice. As More (2002b, p. 106) explained,

> The crucial point is that we recognize that many claims we make come within an argumentative context and depend upon assumptions, suggesting there is at least one other perspective with something legitimate to be said for it. Unfortunately, only one side is usually presented as truth. Typically it is the side on which our bread is buttered.

All told, the socially constructed and institutionally sanctioned prioritization of fiscal pressures ultimately serves to reproduce neo-liberal policies and deflate any resistance.

As an example, the implementation of recreation policy largely shifts responsibility for social and human welfare to individuals themselves. This phenomenon is perhaps best illustrated by *Active Living* policies – initiatives designed to promote physically active lifestyles among the general population (see www.activeliving.org for a description). *Active Living* policies have been widely adopted across North America as public health initiatives to combat obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and stress. The explicit intent is to forward a social agenda of preventative health. However Bercovitz (2000) observed a secondary agenda that is designed to absolve governments from committing additional resources into fitness and health. She argued that implementation of neo-liberal ideology is illustrated in the push for informal and ordinary forms of physical activity to legitimize a decentralized government role in fitness leadership. When viewed through this lens, it is no surprise that

> the thrust toward mass participation has not been accompanied by increased budget allocations to fitness (i.e., Fitness Canada) or to fitness and Active Living research. Instead, the state has promoted the notion of 'Active Living' and 'healthy active lifestyles'. Under the guise of 'lifestyle', 'empowerment', 'emancipation', 'the community', and 'population health', the responsibility for one's health and fitness is now returned to the individual and the community, and is less a state responsibility (Bercovitz, 2000, p. 33).

Dominant discourses of targeted social policy and *Active Living* reproduce ideology that unifies the majority of recreation policy research insofar as it shifts responsibilities toward individuals, relies on market mechanisms, and further limits legitimacy of the state.

This examination is meant to offer an alternate interpretation of a policy that is widely accepted in our field (see Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd & Payne, 2005). Clearly, *Active Living* has its merits. The positive health effects of even moderate physical activity are well documented, so any public policy designed to encourage a more active lifestyle among citizens should conceivably be met with encouragement and support. Frankish, Milligan, and Reid (1998), in positioning *Active Living* as a basis for health promotion research and professional practice, argued persuasively that policies aimed at encouraging physically active lifestyles confer important population health benefits. More recently, Sallis and others (2006) emphasized "physical activity by choice" (p. 308) as an important domain of active living initiatives, therein implying individuals, not governments, as the primary agents of lifestyle change. In making this case, they forwarded parks and recreation as significant interventions in targeting individuals to achieve population change in physical activity. Support for this position pervades in our field. In voicing such support, however, is our field unintentionally aiding and abetting proponents of neo-liberalism?

Values and ideologies of discourse in outdoor recreation research

A significant ideology of outdoor recreation research is one that privileges the values of pristine land. The development of the ideology is closely aligned with the history of land-use preservation and wilderness management (Gottleib, 1993; Simpson, 2005; White, 1995). Several excellent histories have chronicled the development of the untouched and virgin wilderness as the North American idealized landscape (Nash, 2001; Oelschlager, 1991; Runte, 1997). These histories have implicated politicians, academics, artists, writers, journalists, businessmen, various layers of government, and numerous organizations. Indeed, there is nary a profession or academic discipline that has not played a role in the crowning of pristine land as being America's most sacred myth of origin (e.g., Burnham, 2000; Cronon, 1995; Gottlieb, 1993; Takaki, 2000).

When the narrative of one landscape is socially and politically privileged through decades of build-up, other meanings and other landscapes decrease in status. To this point, Cronon (1995; for further critique of preservation and wilderness as ideologies see Baldwin, DeLuce, & Pletsch, 1994; Callicott & Nelson, 1998; Cronon, Miles, & Gitlin, 1992; Drysek & Schlosberg, 1998; Price, 1995; Rudzitis, 1996; Spence, 1999; White, 1995) frames wilderness as a "dangerous" land ethic due to its power to diminish the value of other places—particularly places of home, work, and everyday life. In his critique of wilderness as a dominant environmental value, he argues that it poses a serious threat to responsible environmentalism:

> Idealizing a distant wilderness too often means not idealizing the environment in which we actually live, the landscape that for better or worse we call home. Most of our serious environmental problems start right here, at home, and if we are to solve those problems, we need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about *using* nature as about *not* using it. (p. 85)

The point is to illustrate the power of idealized cultural meanings to frame alternative landscape meanings as low priority in a policy triage of environments to "save" and meanings to "defend." As an example, Cronon (2003) is concerned about the representation of the layers of humanity that have inhabited the Apostle Islands in the southwest corner of Lake Superior. His essay details the challenges of managing a wil-

derness full of human stories that directly compete with the ideology of wilderness.

A significant stream of outdoor recreation research is closely connected to the history of the wilderness movement, and has nuanced the meanings of pristine land. Crowding and "encounters with other people" have fascinated American researchers for nearly half a century to facilitate feelings of the first white settler, and more generally, to manage for wilderness experiences (e.g., Alldredge, 1973; Graefe, Vaske, & Kuss, 1984; Manning, Lawson, Newman, Laven, & Valliere, 2002; Roggenbuck, Williams, Bange, & Dean, 1991; Shelby, 1980; Stewart & Carpenter, 1989). If land is to be pristine, it needs to be remote, difficult to access, and visitors should feel as though they are one of the first and few to travel on it (Hammitt & Patterson, 1991; West, 1981). Hence the pre-occupation that number of encounters in outdoor settings must detract from visitor experiences and the cumulative development of research strategies to further elaborate the vision of wilderness and pristine land in the context of leisure experience (see Manning, 1999 for a thorough rendering of the build-up of literature).

Yet explicit discussion of values in crowding-related research has yet to happen. The context for the few times it has been breached, could be characterized as inflammatory, where researchers are either accusing others of letting values influence their work, or defending research as insulated from social values. Accusers have argued that various streams of crowding-related research are uncritically advocating illusions of pristine land and wilderness (Burch, 1981; Becker, Jubenville, & Burnett, 1984; Stewart & Cole, 2003). However, there are others equally convinced that outdoor recreation research has been value-neutral and defend the research (and researchers) as being objective (Manning, 2003). Our point is that beyond some occasional offensive/defensive positioning, there has not been an open dialogue about the place for values in outdoor recreation research.

Our concern is the extent to which researchers have been self-conscious of the dominant cultural meanings of pristine land and the power of this ideology within the crowding-related discourse. Although there has been infrequent mentioning of values in the recreational crowding literature, the commentary – cryptic as it is – generally has been intended and interpreted as pejorative. In other words, commenting on the influence of values in crowding-related research has been viewed (by both accusers and defenders) as a potentially fatal blow that taints the scholarship as if questioning the sanctity of the research process. To identify the values and ideologies of the discourse is taboo, sometimes to the point where discussing it is viewed as debasing the professionalism of the scientific community (cf., Manning, 2003, p. 114). Although rather than voicing frustration with research (and researchers), we are sympathetic with various roles for researcher-practitioner partnerships and consider the context of assessing the discourse as being appropriate to discuss the merits of values and ideology that drive research.

Along with the crowding literature, there are several other streams of discourse in outdoor recreation research. In particular, the place literature has tempered the values and ideology that idealize pristine land and wilderness. As a literature, "place" is complex and its conceptual frameworks are not necessarily working toward (or against) a monolithic value or ideology about landscapes (Fried, 1963; Kruger & Shannon, 2000; Manzo, 2003; Patterson & Williams, 2005). Rather the discourses of place research

direct attention to interactions between people and their environments. At its core, place research suggests that we imbue the spaces of our lives with meaning, and by doing so, construct a sense of place (Tuan, 1975). Place asserts that environments are perceived as a whole and not reducible to some combination of attributes that could be reproduced elsewhere (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992, pp. 30-31). Place-based researchers in outdoor recreation generally are concerned with understanding relationships between park landscapes and visitors or local residents (e.g., Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Warzecha & Lime, 2001). In this sense, place research holds promise to understand everyday experiences in outdoor environments, and as a concept, would not necessarily privilege one environment over another. However, Stokowski (2002) indicates that a disproportionate amount of place research has been focused on wilderness, and questions of place are neglected in suburban and urban locales. She suggests that due to the trend in leisure places selected for study, the discourse is still reproducing wilderness ideology and championing its values (pp. 376-377). The context for her observation is to frame leisure-based place research as part of an ideological (or using her word—political) discourse (Stokowski, 2002). In short, although place research has potential to privilege park landscapes other than the remote and pristine, its implementation in outdoor recreation literature is not functioning to introduce values and ideologies from the larger discourse of which it belongs.

The discourse most explicit about its values and ideologies has emerged from the oddest of places—the natural sciences. The relatively new field of restoration ecology has embraced debates about ideology of restoration, including meanings of place and visions for the science and practice of restoration ecology (Davis & Slobodkin, 2004; Winterhalder, Clewell, & Aronson, 2004). This literature intersects with outdoor recreation research for many parks, especially ones aligning with values of pristine land and wilderness. Turning back time and "restoring" an ecosystem to its pre-settlement conditions is considered by most ecologists as being infeasible, impossible, or otherwise undesirable (e.g., Elliot, 1997; Jordan, 2003). The target vision for many restoration projects usually requires negotiation between land managers, experts, and stakeholders (Gobster & Barro, 2000). The values of the science have emerged in peer-reviewed forums to vet ideology and power relations as part of restoration ecology (Allison, 2004; Botkin, 1990; Box, 1996; Egan, 2004; Griffith, Scott, Carpenter, & Reed, 1989; Jordan, 2003). The values and ideology emerging have linked restoration ecology to social justice (Higgs, 1994), community development (Davis & Sobodkin, 2004; Siewers, 1998), social and political identity (Hull & Robertson, 2000; Jordan, 2003), and public trust and credibility (Helford, 2000; Irwin & Wynne, 1996). Because discussions about values and ideology are embraced by its researchers, restoration ecology has strengthened its position as self-reflexive and critical, has increased its social relevance to contexts beyond restoration, and advancement of the field has noticeably evolved due to its internal climate of debate.

Like the field of restoration ecology, outdoor recreation research could benefit from explicit recognition of the values and ideology in its various discourses. Fortunately there is growing awareness that plurality of societal values for outdoor recreation opportunities implies expanding roles for research (e.g., Stankey, McCool, Clark, & Brown, 1999; Patterson & Williams, 2005). In particular, recent studies sympathetic to multiculturalism—and thus sensitive to ideological contexts of discourse—have

predicted that research processes will become democratized and focused on values and ideology about natural environments (Dustin, Schneider, McAvoy, & Frakt, 2002; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Selin, Schuett, & Carr, 2000). As part of democratizing research, roles for science will become further delineated, and as urged by Burchfield (2001), researchers will become accustomed to explaining the values behind their work (p. 242).

Implications of value-based discourse for writing leisure

Writing leisure constructs a reality about ways in which life should be lived. Although it may seem we are simply documenting the facts about leisure, our writing can not escape ideological positioning. The above three discourses of leisure illustrate our interpretation of the value-orientations of leisure research on health, recreation policy, and outdoor recreation – topical areas of which many would claim the research is apolitical and value neutral. In their own way, each discourse framed the problems of leisure with implied visions of end-states, and positioned research to address the problem. In each case, the discourse not only shaped the questions being asked but also limited the possibilities for solutions. *Discourse creates a framework in which the world fits, and our research shapes the world to fit.* Each of the above literature streams characterized the potential for leisure practice to grow into the framework of the research discourse. No doubt the world will change due to our research—in whatever small capacity—and the world changes in the direction of being a closer fit to the ideology of the discourse. Because of its ability to implement ideology, our writing becomes a tool that prescribes the way leisure should be lived and promotes a vision of social reality.

There are numerous strategies to enhance the capacity of leisure research to account for its value orientations, ideological contexts, and visions for social reality. Hemingway (1996, 1999) argues that leisure occurs in historical and political contexts that not only need recognition, but a critical research lens to more effectively address his desired end state—a democratic society. Shaw (1999, 2001) also recognizes the political contexts of leisure and is concerned with its reproduction of unequal gender relations. Her research portrays individual and collective ways in which women's leisure resists the dominant power relations in society, and suggests such ideological positioning as a strategy to improve the balance of power (Shaw, 2001, p. 195). Parry (2003) proposes a "politics of hope" and extends Shaw's perspectives through a framework connecting philosophical to practical issues about the leisure research process in order to "break down and challenge gendered social structures" (pp. 52-53). With similar end states as Shaw and Parry, Henderson and Bialeschki (1999) argue for a new paradigm in leisure research focused on women's everyday lives with critical analysis to the ways women negotiate gender barriers (p. 173).

Along with critical theory and its analysis, there are other strategies that could enhance the capacity of leisure research to address its social and political values. Some scholars have argued for a more democratized research process wherein delineations between researcher, practitioner, and participant are less distinct. Pedlar (1995, 1999) recommends an action research strategy emphasizing collaboration and trust-building to "bring research and practice together" (1999, p. 183). Rojek (2005) develops a hybridized position integrating both action research and critical theory as a strategy to address political contexts of leisure (the end-states for his research—empowerment,

distributive justice, and social inclusion). Although not recommending a particular strategy, Hunnicutt (2000) argues that the end-state of leisure research should return to its roots, which he portrays as a reform spirit of revitalizing communities and creating local culture (p. 60). We appreciate the diverse strategies to enhance impacts of research, and find them compatible with our own perspectives.

Our primary point is that *writing leisure commits to an ideological position*. Research does not have to align with critical theory or some rendition of action research to reflect a value orientation. Because research can not escape its connections to ideological contexts, writing leisure should be explicit about them, and hence, its deliberate agenda for the end-state of leisure and society. Research questions, regardless of paradigm or instrumental nature of the research, should be constructed in light of the intended impact and vision for social reality. A question for researchers, that many in the leisure research community already have asked, is to what vision of social reality am I committed?

In light of the power and influence of dominant discourse, writing leisure requires deliberate attention to ideological positioning. Kivel (2005) has made similar observations that leisure research may reinforce oppression (or using her words—hegemonic identities) through failure of researchers to locate their writing within an ideological context other than that implied by the discourse. She depicts several examples where research discourse reproduces ideologies of racism, marginalization, and discrimination albeit framed as objective social science. When we write leisure, we create our visions for end-states of leisure and society. To borrow from Goodale (1990), the research problem *inevitably* privileges, marginalizes, and otherwise takes positions relative to various end states for society.

Writing leisure in light of ideological contexts may lead to hybridized philosophical positions. With research questions being formulated in light of end-states for social power, more forceful positioning of research assumptions, morals, and values is necessary. Some streams of discourse explicitly develop philosophical positions of relationships between researcher, participants, society, and knowledge, often with uniquely argued standpoints (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Such developments should become more common across the breadth of leisure research to further identify the targeted visions of social reality, and will facilitate various confluences of paradigms (cf., Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Centering research rationales on society, rather than leisure, may re-orient discussion about the "gap" between theory and practice. Jordan and Roland (1999) claim the practice is about leisure service professionals and allege a gap between researchers and practitioners. With a focus on end-states about society (e.g., health, social justice, empowerment), the search for research impacts is broader than leisure service professionals. This paper characterizes the end-states of leisure research as broader than providing technical assistance to leisure service professionals. The framing of relationships between researchers and practitioners needs reformulation to focus on visions for social reality, because both researchers and practitioners are embedded in socio-political processes that promote specific values and ideologies. By broadening the context for impacts of leisure research (and practice), such reformulations will build well-needed bridges to other disciplines and undoubtedly improve the visibility of our research (Jackson, 2003; Samdahl & Kelly, 1999).

The cumulative impact of research fits social reality closer to the ideology of the discourse. This is in contrast to the commonly accepted view of research, that is, the cumulative impact fits the research discourse closer to social reality. Or put differently, although our research may appear to discover relationships between leisure and society, it functions to create relationships between leisure and society. As illustrated across three topical areas of leisure research, some discourses are more explicit about deliberating their impacts and intended end-states. The discourse of leisure and health research was most explicit about its exploration of ideological agendas. Its public aeration of end-states has fostered several streams of research, each connected to a distinct context for social relevance and anticipated impact. Explaining one's values and ideological agenda is a significant step at strengthening leisure scholarship and enhancing its intended impact.

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