The Unsettling Nature of Prejudice

An Introduction to the Special Issue

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Guest Editors

"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." – Apple, Inc. (1997)

Issues of social and environmental justice are critical in leisure research and delivery, yet to date these topics have been underrepresented in the existing leisure literature. In May 2012, the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism at the University of Utah hosted the First International Symposium on "Speaking Up and Speaking Out: Working for Social and Environmental Justice through Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Leisure" with the intention of presenting current research in these important areas. The symposium brought leisure researchers who have shared interests in social and environmental justice together and provided an opportunity for discussion, collaboration, and critical consideration. What precipitated was camaraderie and enthusiasm to explore leisure behavior through the complex and sometimes discomfiting lenses of oppression and privilege. The assembly of leisure scholars with this special issue was designed to bring a collection of studies and discussions that present questions of justice within leisure to the fore, to inspire further discourse, and to expand leisure scholarship in an increasingly changing global society.

To suggest that disparities in leisure provisions and services have not been addressed in the literature is a disservice. In addition to the 2012 Symposium in Utah, calls for social justice

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research have been articulated at the George Butler Lecture at the 2012 NRPA Leisure Research Symposium and a panel discussion following the Lecture, and in research (Allison, 2000; Arai & Kivel, 2009; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Johnson, Delgado-Romero, 2012; Mowatt, 2012; Mowatt, 2013; Paisley & Dustin, 2011; Parry, 2012; Parry, Johnson, & Stewart, 2013; Samdahl, 2011; Stewart, 2012; Taylor, Floyd, Whitt, Glover, & Brooks, 2007). After all, issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability among others have been examined for decades. What some of the published literature lacks, though not all, is a critical examination of not only the experiences of those who are marginalized, but also and more precisely, social and environmental justice are a paradigmatic break from the critique of power of institutions in *Critical Theory* or the social responsibility to interact with communities in *Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research* but a call to action for what should be done to incur social equity, social change, and the acquisition of power. Pierre Bourdieu (1997) argued,

> Only the illusion of the omnipotence of thought could lead one to believe that the most radical doubt is capable of suspending presuppositions, linked to our various affiliations, memberships, implications, that we engage in our thoughts (p. 9).

The subjects of our inquiry are influenced by our culturally centered assumptions, our prejudicial presuppositions. But equally so, the people we interact with in our inquiries are influenced and motivated by prejudicial presuppositions. Without a penetrating agitation, there is little motivation, for us as researchers and for the populations we engage with, to reflexively question how those prejudices impact society at large and at the individual level.

Truly addressing questions of oppression and privilege from a social psychological perspective requires an insight and self-awareness of not only prejudice in society, but one's own prejudice as well (Plous, 2003). This process can be unsettling, and as mentioned previously, discomfiting, as no one is free of prejudice. The tendency among scholars is to couch topics in an approachable and gentle way so as not to alienate readers. Yet, the process of being faced with the realities of prejudices and injustices we subscribe to and might otherwise not consider can prove to be discouraging enough to avoid the conversation. The importance of prejudice is that it is faint, an evidence marker, or a breadcrumb that oppression has crossed our path. Prejudice is not the system that inflicts oppression with the might of power but it does give us a glimmer of the group attitudes and orientations that are prevailing in a given society that inform discriminatory actions (Bobo, 1999). What we argue is that a more rigorous stance of inquiry and reflexivity is needed in examining Western Civilization based social order (Canada, United States, United Kingdom). Prejudice is a cultural production and social construct that determines one's placement and experiences in a society.

Prejudice manifests in a variety of subtle ways. Overt, explicit prejudice has decreased considerably since the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. However, subtle, implicit prejudice in which prejudice is subliminal and automatic remains prevalent in society. Oftentimes, people don't realize that the things they hear, say or do are prejudicial, because the stigma is veiled in socially accepted pretense; a phenomenon identified as attributional ambiguity (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Snyder, Kleck, Strenta, & Mentzer, 2003). According to this concept, people rationalize a personally held prejudice by using some other excuse for discrimination. For example, a recreation agency that does not provide opportunities for sports for girls might ambiguously attribute the lack of programming to girls' lack of interest rather than a social prejudice that they should not play. Due to the salience of the cultural production of prejudice, we all bear "unconscious associations, which are cultural shared and automatically activated" (Dovidio et

al., 1997, p. 512). We form implicit attitudes of other groups or orientation outside of our own Dovidio et al. (1997) noted that in comparison with high prejudiced people, "lower prejudiced people are more motivated to control, suppress, and counteract their initial, automatic, biased reactions" (p. 512). This evidence indicates that prejudice is an "overlearned response" that can be unlearned "by making these nonconscious negative responses conscious" (p. 535).

Further complicating the subtle nature of prejudice is that it is often institutionalized and supported by social circles and communities (Niens, Cairns, & Bishop, 2004). Prejudice is complex as it can exist both at the individual-level via personality, stereotypes, and beliefs and then at the group-level through a desired comparison, competition, and control (Adorno, Frankel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Tilly, 1998). But it is important to understand how institutional level practices are the outgrowth of mediated biases, stereotypes, and prejudices of individuals, as institutions are either unsuccessful in constraining their representatives in enacting prejudice, prejudicially produced discrimination exists in society and people reflect this reality, or the structures that enable prejudice to flourish (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994). Despite the less tangible nature of modern forms of prejudice, social psychologists contend that its subtleness is as harmful to people of non-dominant groups as more explicit forms of prejudice that society has come to actively discourage (Dovidio, 2001). As Pager and Shepard (2008) warned, "These new formulations of prejudice include a blending of negative affect and beliefs about members of certain groups with more abstract political ideologies that reinforce the status quo" (p. 12). Subtle and overt forms of prejudice affect three realms of our enterprise and philosophy as researchers: 1) *Knowledge* of the practices and structures, evidence markers, of systems and dominant groups; 2) the *Aesthetics* of cultural and social inquiry to appreciate differences in society as opposed to false generalizations or categorical "lumping"; and lastly, 3) addressing *Ethics*, as expressed by laws and policies, to identify where we are situated in the order of domination of others.

Forms of Subtle Prejudice

In general terms, subtle, sometimes referred to as "modern" prejudice (McConahay, 1986) is demonstrated in the attitude that marginalized populations have all the rights they need, and that prejudice and discrimination is not an issue in today's society. Individuals who are prejudice in subtle ways might claim to be "color blind"; that demands made by marginalized groups are unfair to other groups; or that efforts to accommodate for or account for discrepancies in opportunities are undue. In specific terms, four kinds of subtle prejudice have been explored by researchers: (1) ambivalent prejudice, (2) aversive prejudice, (3) benevolent prejudice, and (4) symbolic prejudice.

Ambivalent prejudice (Katz, 1981, Katz & Hass, 1988; Whitley & Kite, 2010) refers to mixed emotions about a group that stem from contradicting American values. On the one hand, Americans put faith in the idea that if people work hard, they will get what they deserve. On the other, Americans believe that all people are equal and that we should help the less fortunate. The conflicting ideals of working toward one's own success vs. helping those in need lead to positive and negative feelings about a marginalized group. In the case of race, a White person, although thinking of oneself as accepting and tolerant of other races, may wrestle with the conflicting emotions that Blacks have some financial and social disadvantages and therefore support social efforts to lessen the disparity, yet might also wonder why Blacks do not work harder to overcome their situation. Ambivalent prejudice results because a person is unable or unwilling to negotiate the conflicting ideas and make sense of the positive and negative attitudes toward the group in question (Whitley & Kite, 2010).

Aversive prejudice (Dovidio, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kovel, 1970) proposes that attitudes toward groups different from one's own can be detected through persistent avoidance, or an aversion to the other groups. Like ambivalent prejudice, aversive prejudice is founded in egalitarian notions of society; that everyone is equal. However, people who have an aversion to other groups will avoid interacting with another group and will justify the behavior by attributing it to some other reason. For example, rationalizing not giving a job to a woman due to lack of ability, not allowing people with disabilities to participate in an activity because of the potential risk to other participants, or not giving the same benefit of the doubt to a Black political candidate that one would a White candidate (Dovidio, 2001). By avoiding one's prejudice and attributing avoidance to some rationalized other motive, people are able to protect their self-identity of being accepting and tolerant. However, their underlying purpose for making decisions that exclude members of other groups is rooted more in stereotype and prejudice than just, egalitarian beliefs.

Benevolent prejudice refers to the association of apparently positive emotions or attitudes towards a group, but manifests in keeping the members of the group in lower or inferior positions (Whitley & Kite, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2003; Plous, 2003). To date, benevolent prejudice has been studied more in regard to issues of sexism than racism or other prejudice but can be applied to many different groups. The theory suggests that the notion that women are "fragile" and need to be "protected" and "provided for" by men appears at first blush to support and respect women. Because of this, women often subscribe to the prejudice as well, and consider being treated with fragility and delicacy by men as an advantage of being a woman. However, research has shown that this allegedly positive treatment of women is positioned as male self-sacrifice and chivalry, but in fact keeps women out of positions in prestigious and respected areas of society (Whitley & Kite, 2010). It might manifest in limiting women to lower level careers, receiving lower pay for doing the same jobs, and providing fewer opportunities for sport and recreation. As mentioned above, though less research has been done on other groups, symptoms of the construct can be seen in racism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism, among other prejudices.

Symbolic prejudice is the tendency to view groups different from one's own in the abstract; that members of other groups are all the same, and meet stereotypes about the group held by society (Whitley & Kite, 2010; McConahay & Hough, 1976). Symbolic prejudices subscribe to the notion that stereotypes exist because they are rooted in truth, and oppose social policies to promote equality. However, like the other forms of subtle prejudice presented, symbolic prejudice couches prejudicial attitudes toward another group in statements designed to feign the impression of being accepting and tolerant. In exploring racial prejudice, Sears and Henry (2005) posited that there are five primary ways people justify prejudice while assuming tolerance: (1) racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist, (2) economic disparities between the races are due to Black people's lack of motivation to work hard, (3) anger among Blacks about inequality is unjustified because they are unwilling to work for what they want, (4) Black people make unfair demands and seek favors rather than working hard, and (5) Black people get more economically than they deserve. As with other forms of subtle prejudice, it is not uncommon to see the racial rationalizations that Sears and Henry outline for symbolic prejudice to manifest against other groups as well.

Social and Environmental Justice

Our focus of prejudice is important as it allows oppression to be glossed over and serves as a factor or antecedent for injustice. In the current social climate, overt forms of prejudice and obscene forms of discrimination are not tolerable. Institutions are careful, through their representatives, to "ignore or circumvent weak [antidiscrimination] law but rather construct compliance

in a way that, at least in part, fits their interests" (Edelman, 1992, p. 1542). With this in mind and for the purposes of this special issue, we encouraged authors to consider social and environmental justice within the frameworks as established by Young (1990) and Bryant (1995). According to Young, social justice includes five areas of oppression: (a) exploitation, (b) marginalization, (c) powerlessness, (d) cultural imperialism and (e) violence. Bryant identified environmental justice as: (a) procedural justice, (b) distributive justice, (c) corrective justice, (d) environmental equity, and (e) environmental racism. What resulted is a collection of manuscripts that challenges the status quo in leisure literature, raising questions of subtle prejudice and social privilege that we have come to expect in our lives and scholarship.

The most prevalent theme among the manuscripts is social and environmental injustices to leisure based on social class. Rose presents a critical analysis of individuals who make their permanent residence in a greenspace and the stigmatizing label of "homeless" they are assigned in "Ontologies of socioenvironmental justice: Homelessness and the production of social natures." In "'Just Spaces': Urban Recreation Centers as Sites for Social Justice Youth Development," Kelly and Outley explore the role of youth services at an urban recreation center toward positive development. Madsen, Radel, and Endter-Wada explore issues of ethnicity in "Justice and immigrant Latino Recreation Geography in Cache Valley, Utah," an examination of recreation meanings and experiences among a Latino immigrant population in Utah. Farmer, Chancellor, Robinson, West, and Weddell consider the social and environmental injustices lower classes experience in access to locally produced foods in "Agrileisure: Farmers' Markets, CSAs, and the Privilege in Eating Local." Paisley, Jostad, and Sibthorp examine the accessibility of outdoor adventure education opportunities for underprivileged youth from diverse backgrounds in their manuscript "Considering Students' Experiences in Diverse Groups: Case Studies from the National Outdoor Leadership School." Lastly, Trussell takes a unique perspective in exploring how research agendas in the field are directly linked to personal identities, and perceptions of social and environmental justice in "Dancing in the Margins: Reflections on Social Justice and Researcher Identities."

As a collection, these articles represent but a fraction of the work currently being done exploring issues of social and environmental justice in leisure and critical questions as yet to be asked. Our intention is that this compilation be a springboard for discussion and scholarship, as well as to encourage introspection not only into the field and the research, but into also into the perspectives and approaches we embrace as researchers, professionals, practitioners, and educators.

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