

# **Professional Journal Research: An Analysis of Five Leisure Research**

## **Journals and Who is Publishing in the Field of Recreation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Publishing in professional research journals is of major importance to the field of recreation, especially to those employed in higher education. Publication success rates are often a significant measurement in tenure decisions. There is also a school of thought that it is difficult to establish a publication record, therefore creating a barrier to obtaining tenure and staying in higher education, which in turn creates a shortage of university faculty. This study examined the articles published in five research journals over a three year period. The journals were examined by looking at the number of articles published, the number of authors or co-authors and the number of articles published by each author and their institutional affiliation. The results showed that sixteen authors accounted for 33 percent of the articles. Of 451 authors, 366 published only once. The results of the study indicate that significant variance exists in publication rates in leisure research journals.*

**Keywords:** leisure research, professional journal publication, publication rates

### **Introduction**

The changing face of higher education has become a major concern in the profession. The 1970's was a time of surplus, with too few jobs and too many new grad-

uates with doctorate degrees looking to enter the teaching profession at the college level (Altbach, 1979). Fast forward to the 2000s, and the exact opposite is true. The professors of the 1970s have retired or will do so in the next few years. There will be a surplus of jobs in higher education. A major dilemma comes in the fact that not enough new doctorates will exist to fill the void (Smallwood, 2003). Many factors are creating that void. These factors include low salaries in the education field, the amount of time one must commit to earning a doctorate degree and the stress of teaching and researching to achieve tenure (Smallwood, 2003).

Another product of the "changing of the guard" in higher education is that more young professors equal a renewed fight for tenure. The need to publish frequently in related professional journals is a big factor in achieving tenure. The competition to be published is increased by cross-professional publishing. Journal articles are the most typical measure of acceptance in academia, and that acceptance is clearly vested in the positions of journal editors (Stokowski, 1999). It has been suggested that this situation is made even more difficult in that editors may be more inclined to publish articles written by who they know rather than who they don't (Stokowski, 1999).

Another issue relating to leisure research that arises, in part as a consequence of the shortage of doctorates, is the level of expertise of instructors and faculty in higher education. Expertise in the discipline in which an individual teaches affects the philosophical background and current research base of the discipline. The field of recreation and leisure studies is experiencing a shortage of faculty with doctorates in recreation to fill open positions. Consequently, recreation positions may be filled by candidates with degrees in other fields. With those diverse backgrounds also come diverse research strategies and philosophical differences (Jackson, 2003).

There have been a variety of research studies and articles written that focus on the research conducted in the field. Some of the studies support a broader perspective (Jackson, 2003; Witt, 2003) while others (Dawson, 2003) suggest staying true to the basic philosophical principles that the field represents.

### *Purpose Statement*

It has been suggested the number of academics publishing in the recreation and leisure field is too few in comparison to the number of articles published. The purpose of this study was to determine the spread of authors across publication and if research is conducted by those teaching in recreation and leisure studies programs in institutions of higher education. The value of the study is to determine if the departmental and institutional affiliation of the perceived current experts in the field actually represents the field. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the proposition that the number of professionals publishing is too few in comparison to the number of articles published. A wide spectrum of authors brings a broad philosophical base. Specific aspects related to authorship included frequency of publication,

institution and departmental affiliation. To determine this, five professional journals were examined:

- 1) The Journal of Leisure Research
- 2) The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration
- 3) Leisure Studies
- 4) Leisure Sciences
- 5) Schole

Each journal was examined for the years 2002, 2003 and 2004. All issues published by the five journals during the years identified were included in the study. The articles in the issues were content analyzed on the basis of the following factors:

- 1) The author(s);
- 2) The departmental and institutional affiliation(s) of the author(s);
- 3) The country of the institution(s) where the author(s) is/are employed; and
- 4) The Carnegie classification of the institution(s) where the author(s) is/are employed.

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

- 1) The number of authors who published more than three articles is disproportionate to the total number of articles published;
- 2) Authors employed at doctoral granting institutions according to the Carnegie classification system publish more than individuals employed at masters granting, baccalaureate colleges, or government agencies;
- 3) The majority of the authors are employed in recreation and leisure study departments; and
- 4) Authors employed at institutions in the US publish significantly more than authors from other countries in US based journals.

### **Literature Review**

The field of recreation and leisure research has been growing and developing in the past few decades. There have been struggles, both internal and external, but the field has grown. Leisure academics are both anxious and motivated to be close to the pulse of society and community needs (Stewart, 1999). Dawson (2003) stated that

leisure research should be recognized as a legitimate field of study because it possesses the three elements that constitute an intellectual discipline or academic community:

1. It has a recognizable tradition and identifiable history of its own;
2. It has an organized body of knowledge;
3. It addresses solutions to problems of significance to society.

Dawson (2003) also argued that the field of leisure research possesses the three basic discipline structures: organizational (academic curricula, research production), substantive (research questions, data interpretation), and syntactical (data collection, research methods) structure.

Yet, the field of leisure research has not lived up to its expectations. Witt (2003) stated that academics in the late 1960's were told of the coming age of leisure research and the growth in the number of scholars studying leisure issues. But over 30 years later the number of scholars investigating leisure issues in the recreation field is small in comparison to similar disciplines.

Some researchers have argued that there is plenty of leisure research occurring—just not in the recreation field. Madrigal (1999) and Dahl (1999) argued that leisure is interdisciplinary in nature and needs the contributions of many disciplines to be truly effective. They both stated that leisure research must be made relevant to other disciplines and that leisure scholars should make themselves more visible to those in other disciplines (Madrigal, 1999 and Dahl, 1999). Given the multi-dimensional nature of the leisure field and topics of study, researchers must recognize the benefits and need to work on collaborative projects that provide exposure to contemporary work and trends in associated disciplines (Dunn, 1999).

A major concern facing leisure research is the underlying purpose. Leisure is seen as having an audience that includes both academics and practitioners. Leisure research is largely an applied discipline with the desired end product of practical application (Madrigal, 1999). Yet Samdahl and Kelly (1999) argued that leisure research is intellectually isolated, not just from other disciplines, but also from scholars and practitioners within the field and that researchers are speaking “only to ourselves” (p. 10). They further stated that leisure research is “potentially isolated, inbred, and in need of intellectual oxygenation” (p. 10). A study conducted in 1999 investigated the concern that a large number of articles published in professional journals and magazines were not being read. The alarming results showed that 61% of the academic respondents and 86% of practitioners who responded, stated that they rarely or never read a research journal (Jordan & Roland, 1999). This study supported a widely-held and long existent belief that there is indeed a researcher-practitioner gap in the field of recreation.

Yet other research presents the argument that the underlying principle is just having research published in professional journals and who, if anybody, reads the article is unimportant. While some researchers write because they want to influence science or policy, others write because they want to display their skills to their colleagues and to be rewarded for it, with one such means being awarded tenure (Stokowski, 1999). For many, journal articles are the test for inclusion into academia and more journals means more opportunities to publish rather than to read (Stokowski, 1999).

Another concern in leisure research is the geographic isolation within the discipline. The majority of leisure scholars and scholarly institutions are located in the United States, Western Europe and Great Britain and thus, most research journals are written in English (Valentine, Allison & Schneider, 1999). In this time of a global community, it is alarming therefore to see that published leisure research is not effectively transcending cultural and geographical boundaries and that few cross-national articles are being published. Such a lack of global vision "suggests an ethnocentrism that limits academic and professional growth" (Valentine, Allison & Schneider, 1999, p.242).

In 2003, an article published by Edgar Jackson began to look at similarities and differences of North American and Canadian leisure research outlets. He found that there is "a very high degree of concentration of research activity among a small proportion of individuals within the larger research community" (Jackson, 2003, p. 293). He also concluded that there are two solitudes of leisure research between Canada and the United States with little collaboration and limited cross-border publishing. The results shed light on the fact that there appears to be an unwillingness to look outside of "our intellectual or geographical borders for new ideas about leisure" (Jackson, 2003, p.303).

In response to the article by Jackson, Shaw (2003) wrote that the findings of the study may just be the tip of the iceberg in regard to the importance of the apparent intellectual and theoretical isolation. She stated that the findings are "an indication of a level of academic parochialism that could have negative consequences for the leisure community as a whole" (Shaw, 2003, p. 316). Such studies are suggesting that the long-term strength of leisure research depends on the sharing of ideas regarding leisure behavior, culture and society.

Several concerns regarding leisure research have developed in the literature. First, certain individuals appeared repeatedly as authors or co-authors in journal articles and conference papers (Jackson, 2003). Witt (2003) asks why so few scholars are responsible for publishing 50 percent or more of the research in professional journals. Jackson reported that a relatively small group of people remained active in leisure research over an extended period of time and were responsible for a disproportionately large number of the journal articles published, thus putting leisure research in the danger of "academic incest" (p. 337).

Secondly, there is little cross-fertilization among academic disciplines. Witt (2003) suggested that looking at departmental disciplines of published articles may be more important than publishing across national borders. He concluded that if leisure is to be truly an inter-disciplinary field of study, then the publication rates should reflect that fact.

The third concern is that the research is coming from a few major research institutions, thus increasing the problem of geographic and intellectual isolation. A study conducted in 1993 reviewing ten professional journals published between 1985 and 1991, found that 319 U.S. and Canadian institutions were represented. The five institutions represented with the most faculty publishing were University of Illinois, Texas A&M, University of Waterloo, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of North-Carolina-Chapel Hill (Henderson et.al, 1993).

### Methods

This research addresses issues and concerns regarding leisure research as posed in the previous literature. Such concerns included a lack of global collaboration and circulation of leisure research; too few authors publishing too much of the research in the discipline; isolation of research in only a few higher education institutions; and lack of collaboration with other disciplines.

The study examined the articles published in five leisure research journals. The journals examined were *The Journal of Leisure Research*, *Leisure Studies*, *Leisure Sciences*, *The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* and *Schole*. All research articles and article reactions of all issues of each publication were reviewed for the years 2002, 2003 and 2004. No book reviews were included in the study.

The following information was documented for each article:

- 1) The author(s);
- 2) Academic department affiliation of the author(s);
- 3) Institution(s) where the author(s) is/are employed; and
- 4) The Carnegie classification of the institution(s).

Several analyses were computed to generate descriptive data and test hypotheses.

First, frequencies were computed as individuals were listed as an author or co-author of an article. Second, the country of the institution where an author is employed was recorded as US, Canada, European, Australia, or other. Third, author's who are employed at a US institution were classified according to the Carnegie system. Carnegie classifications included doctoral granting, masters granting, and baccalau-

reate colleges. In addition, authors employed by government agencies were coded as a government entity. Two types of analyses were used to examine the hypotheses: a distribution assessment and independent t-test.

Further analysis included examining the number of faculty members by institution, with each faculty member only being counted once. The department affiliation was also considered. The departments were noted as being recreation and leisure departments or as being another discipline. The department affiliation was noted for each faculty member, for each article.

### **Results and Discussion**

The five journals combined published 48 issues in the collective years of 2002, 2003 and 2004. There were 297 total research articles in the 48 issues with 336 authors and co-authors. The 336 authors represented over 100 institutions of higher education from several countries. There were 38 authors who published three or more times during 2002-2004 for a total of 114 articles. The 114 articles represented 38 percent of the total 297 articles. 84 authors published more than one article for a total of 167(56%) articles. The results also showed that 366 authors published only once in the four journals reviewed. The 16 researchers who authored or co-authored the most articles are represented in Table 4.1. Each author is ranked based on the number of articles he/she wrote or co-wrote. The number of articles published ranged from 4 to 13. Only two of these authors had articles published in each of the four journals examined. The number of articles written by the 16 authors totaled 98. The mean number of articles published for those authors was 6.13. In all, the 98 articles represented 33 percent of the 297 articles published in the five journals over the period in question.

The 16 authors were individually affiliated with 12 institutions of higher education and two practitioner agencies. Two institutions, Texas A & M and the University of Waterloo, were represented by two authors. Two institutions, the University of Waterloo and the University of Manitoba, were Canadian institutions. Of the 10 schools located in the United States, nine of them were classified as Extensive Doctoral/Research Universities by the Carnegie Foundation. The only exception was the University of Montana, which was classified as an Intensive Doctoral/Research University.

The number of authors representing institutions located outside of the United States was substantial. Forty authors represented 16 academic institutions and four practitioner agencies from Canada alone. Leisure Studies contained 61 articles written by 96 authors. Only 15 of those authors were from institutions in the United States.

TABLE 1

*Top 16 Authors Based on Total Number of Articles Published*

Ranking	Author	# of Articles Authored	# of Journals Published In	Institution Represented
1	AG	13	3	Penn State
2	RM	11	3	Univ. of Waterloo
3	GK	10	4	Clemson
4	JC	9	3	Texas A & M
5	KS	7	3	Univ. of Illinois
6	TG	6	2	Univ. of Waterloo
7	YI	5	4	Univ. of Manitoba
8	MF	5	3	Univ. of Florida
9	WF	4	3	Univ. of Montana
10	KH	4	3	N. Carolina State
11	AM	4	3	Cleveland Metroparks
12	JA	4	2	USDA
13	SL	4	2	Univ. of Vermont
14	IS	4	2	Univ. of Minnesota
15	DS	4	2	Texas A & M
16	JV	4	1	Colorado State

A chi-square analysis was used to examine the first hypotheses that stated the number of authors who published more than three articles is disproportionate to the total number of articles published. In all, the 62 articles represented 21 percent of the 297 articles published in the five journals over a three-year period. The chi-square value was 43.65 and was significant at the .0001 level. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported indicating there are a large number of articles being published by a small number of authors.

An independent t-test was used to determine if the mean number of articles published by authors employed at doctoral granting institutions according to the Carnegie classification system published significantly more than the individuals employed at masters granting, baccalaureate colleges, or government agencies. If an author was affiliated with multiple institutions or were not affiliated with a US institution, they were not included in the analysis. Of the 187 authors affiliated with a single US institution throughout the three-year period, 149 were employed at doctoral granting institutions. Twenty-two individuals were affiliated with masters granting, baccalaureate colleges or government agencies. The mean number of publications for authors at a doctoral granting institution was 1.62 compared to 1.32 for authors affiliated with other institutions. The t-value was 1.65 and not significant.



However, it should be noted that there are fewer doctoral schools than there are schools that offer masters degrees and there are more authors from doctoral granting institutions indicating that those who publish will write an average of 1.5 articles over three years and one is more likely to publish if employed by a doctoral granting institution.

The number of authors representing institutions located outside of the United States was 129. There were 203 institutions represented from the United States. The mean number of articles per author from within the US was 1.52 compared to 1.18 for authors from institutions outside the US. The t-value was 3.29 and was significant at the .05 level.

The *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration* and *Leisure Sciences* are all based in the United States. *Leisure Studies* is published outside of the United States and was dominated by authors (84% of 96 authors) in the eastern hemisphere and Canada. In the three US based journals there were 91 authors (20%) from institutions outside of the US. While the majority of research published was by researchers in the United States, there were substantial contributions from other countries. Jackson (2003) indicated that more cross-nation publishing was needed. The current study indicates an increased presence from other nations in United States based journals.

There were 10 United States universities represented by the 16 most published authors. Of those 10, nine were from extensive doctoral/research institutions each of which has between 15-40 faculty and one was from an intensive doctoral/research institution. The five most represented universities were all classified as extensive research institutions. The most five most represented U.S. schools were: Pennsylvania State Univ. (15 authors out of 29 faculty), Univ. of Florida (15 authors out of 21 faculty), Univ. of Vermont (10 authors out of 40 faculty), Colorado State Univ. (10 authors out of 15 faculty), and the Univ. of Illinois (9 authors out of 16 faculty). The top ten most represented schools would include only one (Univ. of Montana) intensive research school.

This is not surprising because, as stated earlier, significant publishing is required for the right of passage into tenure for the research universities. The professors employed at these universities are given a reduced teaching load and resources such as graduate assistants to encourage publication. They also have doctoral students. Doctoral students must learn to research and must write a dissertation before completing their studies. Therefore faculty have an atmosphere where research is encouraged.

On the other hand, masters granting institutions may have some release time from teaching and some graduate assistants, but the level of resources is reduced in comparison to doctoral granting institutions. When looking at the institutions that

were listed in the top producing universities, they were not only doctoral granting but they were also among the larger universities, supporting a significant number of faculty to share in the production of writing.

Part of the hypothesis included the statement that the faculty publishing a disproportionate number of articles would be from doctoral granting institutions. They have a large faculty, resources and release time to publish and are encouraged to do so. Authors from other institutions are also publishing, but their job descriptions are quite different. The research did not indicate that any one author was favored in any one journal. In fact, if an author published more than three articles, they were spread in up to four different journals. Peer reviewed journals want to publish quality research and everyone has the same chance to submit. A good researcher, therefore, will find their name in a number of journals.

The majority of the authors were employed in leisure service related departments. Not all authors' departmental affiliations were denoted in the published articles. Of those who were, only a small percentage of authors (under 10%) were employed in academic departments outside of leisure services. In most cases, the authors were serving as co-authors with another researcher in a leisure studies department. These small percentages show that there is cross-discipline collaboration on publications submitted to the five journals. Such a small percentage indicates that there is still room for cross-discipline collaboration and there is no danger of losing discipline identity. It is expected that recreation and leisure professionals would look to publish in leisure journals and they would be the best home for the articles.

The research conducted in this study leads to several implications. First, the journals should indicate which authors are professors and which are doctoral students. If these separations were made, the institutions with the most published faculty may be ranked differently as doctoral students could be identified separately from faculty. Second, there was a significant number of authors who published only once, which leads to the question: "How many are not publishing at all in these journals, and if they are writing, in which journals?" There are other journals that are recreation and leisure oriented that were not included. Perhaps others are publishing, but either in one or more of the recreation oriented journals or in related sociology, public administration or other related journals. Finally, this study shows that there are a variety of authors conducting research. Yet, more variety in authors, institutions and disciplines would continue to enhance the field of leisure research.

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