

Introduction to the Special Issue

Leisure Research to Enhance Social Justice

WILLIAM STEWART

Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism
University of Illinois
Champaign, IL, USA

Several streams of leisure research are directed at furthering an agenda for social justice. These lines of inquiry are motivated by the need to end various kinds of oppression related to one's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, ability, and socio-economic status. Rather than social justice, this special issue is focused on research frameworks that further social justice. Three inter-related research criteria are applied: (1) identification of a value orientation and vision for social justice, (2) development of a social or cultural framework to enhance social justice, and (3) connection to social and political action to move communities in the direction of a more socially just set of relations. These three research criteria are applied to three approaches to research: descriptive, explanatory, and transformative. The purpose of this special issue is to build capacity of leisure research to enhance social justice.

Keywords empowerment, epistemology, paradigm, philosophy of social sciences, research activism

Introduction

Several streams of leisure research are directed at furthering an agenda for social justice. These lines of inquiry are motivated by needs to end various kinds of oppression and marginalization related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, ability, and socio-economic status within leisure-related contexts. The leisure literature has conceptual and empirical traditions of understanding barriers to freely chosen behavior, and social contexts that otherwise would limit choices and pressure individuals to behave in restricted ways. Indeed, we have developed an impressive history of literature focused on “constraints to leisure” with an ostensible agenda to emancipate those who are otherwise restricted, oppressed, and controlled (Jackson, 2005). The leisure constraints literature has evolved over the years and shares concerns with an agenda for “social change” which underscores the need for societal change to improve lives and reduce barriers to leisure opportunities. A current topic in this stream of thought is social justice and emphasizes the needed direction for social change.

An earlier version of this paper, and others within this special issue, were presented as an organized panel at the 2012 Leisure Research Symposium, National Recreation and Park Association in Anaheim, California.

Address correspondence to William Stewart, Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism, 104 Huff Hall, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL 61820. E-mail: wstewart@illinois.edu

Over the past decade, social justice has received increased visibility in leisure research forums. Henderson (2011) reflected on research-based strategies appropriate to advance a social justice agenda (in her words, social change), and argued that post-positivism is a philosophical foundation and appropriate strategy to carry out such an agenda. Parry, Johnson, and Stewart (2013) countered that a social justice agenda aligns with the tenets of critical theories, and that social justice is enhanced when the research process integrates a commitment to breaking down and challenging social structures. The 2012 International Symposium “Speaking Up and Speaking Out: Working for Social and Environmental Justice through Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Leisure” included a diversity of speakers across thematic areas of leisure research to advance connections between leisure and social justice (Schwab & Dustin, 2013; see also Arai & Kivel, 2009; Hutchinson & Samdahl, 2000; Lashua & Fox, 2007; Paisley & Dustin, 2011). In addition, the 2012 Butler Lecture at the National Recreation and Park Association Congress was delivered by well-known civil rights attorney and community activist Robert Garcia, who detailed research-based political action principles to build parks in proximity to California’s urban poor (Garcia, 2013; Garcia & Strongin, 2013). As a final example of the increasing attention given to social justice, previous versions of the papers herein were presented as an organized panel at the 2012 Leisure Research Symposium (Stewart et al., 2012). The motivation behind this special issue is to provide timely insight to strengthen the capacity of the leisure research community in the area of social justice.

Social justice is receiving increased attention, in part, because it functions as a point of convergence for otherwise isolated pockets of literature. Over the past decade, social justice has become a common framework to discuss otherwise distinct problems of leisure (Schwab & Dustin, 2013). From an overview of topics presented at recent leisure-related conferences, research to enhance social justice has relevance for problems such as youth development, race and ethnicity, sexual identity, homelessness, disability, community-based tourism, environmentalism, gender, and spirituality, to name a few topics (Garcia, 2013; Schwab & Dustin, 2013; Stewart et al., 2012).

The purpose of this special issue is to bring attention to the philosophy and practice of research related to social justice. There are several publications and forums already devoted to connecting leisure to social justice (Bocarro & Stodolska, 2013). The focus here is directed at research-based strategies to enhance social justice. In other words, this special issue is not focused on social justice *per se* but rather is directed at research-based issues to enhance social justice and responds to the question: As researchers, what can we do to make the links between our research agendas and action to enhance social justice more explicit? The primary contribution of this special issue is to provide guidance to researchers interested in social justice. A significant appeal of social justice research is its implication for an outcome-oriented emancipatory focus (Bocarro & Stodolska, 2013; Parry, 2003). There are qualities about social justice research that distinguish it from other kinds of research, and the identification and deliberation of such qualities is at the center of this special issue.

What Does Research for Social Justice Look Like?

As a research-based framework, social justice functions more as a guide than a definitive concept or theory. Social justice directs attention to research outcomes and calibrates the assessment to be about impact of the research process. Rather than the application of theory and measurement to provide understanding, research to enhance social justice shifts consideration of scientific rigor to include not only the process of research but its consequences (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In other words, the rigor of social justice research includes

assessment of its impact, outcomes, and capacity to move communities or groups of people in the direction of a more socially just set of relations.

The implications of a social justice agenda are an expansion of traditional criteria to evaluate research. Questions of generalizability of data across populations, strength of statistical association, and ability of measures to reflect the concepts of study have been some traditional criteria to assess the scientific rigor and contribution of research (Riddick & Russell, 2011). This article is directed at expanding the toolkit of research strategies to incorporate a social justice agenda, and ultimately to identify appropriate criteria to assess research contributions that enhance social justice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Fortunately a social justice agenda crosses disciplinary boundaries; the attention given to conducting and evaluating social justice within the leisure research community runs parallel to developments in other social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Harding, 1991).

An important consideration to build research capacity is to understand the “justice” in social justice. An essential part of a social justice research framework is its explicit value orientation. By identifying a desired end-state or progressive vision for society, participants, and readers of the research have guidelines to assess the extent to which justice has been enhanced. Many leisure scholars have argued the need for a more transparent research discourse regarding value orientation and ideological premises (Dupuis, 1999; More, 2002; Rojek, 2000). In characterizing social justice as a conceptual umbrella for scholars who aspire to reduce oppression and marginalization, Allison (2000) indicated the need to disclose the ideological orientations underlying leisure scholarship (see also Roberts, 2009). In addition, Arai and Kivel (2009) articulated the emergence of a new wave of race research in leisure studies that recognizes the social and cultural contexts of white hegemony as a value orientation. Stewart, Parry, and Glover (2008) have also stated a need for ideologies to come to the surface to enhance the impact of leisure research for a social justice agenda. Parry and Fullagar (2013) provided an extensive rendering of ways in which ideology has emerged in leisure research to negotiate power imbalance and patriarchal structures. Because the research goal aspires to enhance justice, the value orientation and ideological vision for justice need to be part of the research framework. In short, research to enhance social justice reflects an ideological orientation about fairness and power differentials between groups of people. Such a reflection facilitates an assessment regarding the extent to which relationships have moved in the stated direction of fairness.

A second consideration to build research capacity is to understand the “social” in social justice. Frameworks that account for relationships between groups of people are essential for social justice research. Such frameworks provide yardsticks to assess fairness, equality, privilege, and oppression across groups of people due to sensitivities of social and cultural histories. Research to enhance social justice implies a change in relationships among groups or communities (Allison, 2000). Without a research framework that recognizes social and cultural contexts, examining progress in fairness between groups is problematic (Arai & Kivel, 2009). Social justice is more than one person with power over another, as in bullying. Frameworks that emphasize the individual as a unit of analysis in theory and method would not speak effectively to power differentials and oppression. Characterizing and taking action for social justice requires the depiction of social and cultural forces that systematically encourage one group’s dominance and privilege over another (Bullard, 1993; McDonald, 2009). If not for some macro-context of social and cultural relations, the injustice may lack distinction as being wrong, or even worse, could be interpreted as the natural order of society (Stewart, 2013). In short, an important characterization for leisure research that enhances social justice is a socio-political framework that invites both judgment and action on power differentials between groups of people.

A third criterion to evaluate the rigor of social justice research is the impact on the communities of study. In their review of leisure research on race and ethnicity, Floyd, Bocarro and Thompson (2008) concluded that many quantitative methodologies are intentionally employed to reinforce current power differentials, and that although “qualitative strategies have been advocated as a means of reducing the power gap” (p. 16) they often fail to do so. Floyd and colleagues recognized the ultimate implication of race and ethnicity research is to change the communities of study to reduce oppression and improve the power balance. For many scholars, the impact of research to reduce oppression and marginalization is the essential criterion to evaluate research for social justice (Denzin, 2011; Parry et al., 2013).

This article applies the above three inter-related criteria to assess the effectiveness of research approaches to enhance social justice. The criteria of research to enhance social justice are: (1) the extent the research provides a value orientation of the inequality or oppression, and identifies a vision to enhance social justice; (2) the extent the research integrates a social or cultural framework to change society to enhance social justice; and (3) the extent the research is connected to social and political action with capacity to move communities or groups of people in the direction of a more socially just set of relations.

At its most basic, research to enhance social justice is like a stick that pokes and nudges for social change. Social justice research functions as a stick to move society forward, which is different than traditional approaches where the outcome of research is the elaboration of theoretical understanding or the revelation of a set of relations heretofore unknown. For a social justice agenda, the research sticks range from weak to strong depending on its impact of moving social relations in the direction of a more just world. Research that addresses the above three criteria is considered a strong stick to enhance social justice.

Three Approaches for Social Justice Research

There are several approaches to leisure research that work to enhance social justice. Just three approaches are discussed in this article. They each have potential to reduce oppression and enhance justice and are referred to as descriptive, explanatory, and transformative. However in each case, their effectiveness as a stick could be improved by addressing the three criteria as part of the research process. Although advancement in research strategies is sometimes referred to as sequential waves or consecutive phases (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Parry & Fullagar, 2013), these approaches run parallel to one another, and continue to contribute to leisure research.

These three approaches are treated as prototypes, when in actuality the lines between them can be blurred. The analysis and discussion of this paper is directed at application of the three criteria to the traditions of the three approaches to research. Although there are many other characteristics of research that merit scrutiny, evaluation is directed at the capacity to integrate a value orientation, a social and cultural framework, and focus on outcomes. Because these criteria are not always explicitly addressed (Allison, 2000; Stewart et al., 2008), interpretation and inferencing may be necessary. The approaches to research of descriptive, explanatory, and transformative are each discussed in turn.

Enhancing Social Justice in Descriptive Approaches

Research with a goal of describing an injustice of a given social group has been a hallmark of leisure research related to marginalized populations. The point of describing the group is often to reveal a marginalized status and make visible a heretofore unseen glass ceiling. In their thorough review of five major leisure journals, Floyd et al. (2008) characterized the majority of literature as examinations of “differences and variation in leisure participation,

park use, and visitation” (p. 14) across racial and ethnic categories, and concluded that there has not been significant progress in developing explanatory frameworks for such differences. Drawing on the same literature stream, Arai and Kivel (2009) also critiqued the evolution of race and ethnic leisure research and reaffirmed its preoccupation with describing differences. They characterized its progression as encompassing a broader set of racial and ethnic populations, and growing to account for differences in a larger set of leisure behaviors. In their recent review, Henderson and Gibson (2013) characterized the descriptive approach to research on women and leisure during the 1980-90s as one of developing gendered meanings of leisure from perspectives of women, including identifying patterns of leisure in their lives. The likely intentions of such a goal is to raise the visibility of differences, problematize such differences as needing further appreciation by scholars and practitioners, or in some cases, declaring that such differences reflect constraints or a barrier to equality.

Descriptive approaches do not generally develop theory or offer a framework to explain differences between groups of people. Advancing descriptive research is generally centered on contributions that refine methodologies for design, measurement, and analysis. Henderson and Gibson (2013) characterized progress of women and leisure research in the 1980-90s as embracing contradictions and complexities in meanings of leisure, and saw this reflected in the development of methods to address complexity in patterns of leisure. Descriptive research related to social justice continues to advance with its focus on statistical association of patterns of leisure and characteristics related to gender, class, race, sexuality, or ability of the individuals being studied. The empirical search for differences in participation rates and individual patterns of leisure are sometimes framed as determinants of leisure activity, or latent factors.

Although leisure research that starts and ends with a descriptive search for differences between groups of people works toward social justice—it is a weak stick. Descriptive research fulfills its expectations and is deemed contributory by finding empirical evidence of difference and exhibiting complexity in patterns of participation. Its weakness in working toward social justice is due to its lack of a value orientation and vision for social justice, its omission of a social or cultural framework for social change, and its detachment from any policy context for action. This is not to say researchers who practice descriptive research fail to have a value orientation about inequality and oppression, fail to understand social and cultural issues related to social justice, and are unable to envision a policy context for their research. The weakness is related to the writing of leisure research that purposely omits these factors and does not view them as relevant to assess the merits of the research. The traditions of descriptive approaches value objectivity and political detachment from the subjects of study; inclusion of such may be perceived as contaminating or biasing the objectivity of the research.

Fortunately, an increasing number of descriptive studies are driven by a larger context than a politically detached search for differences (Arai & Kivel, 2009). These larger contexts are related to integration of the above criteria to assess social justice research, and lead to the development of a stronger stick for social justice. For example, Robert Garcia’s *The City Project* (2013; see also <http://www.cityprojectca.org/>) directs its activities to developing livable cities for all people, and is particularly focused on improving the quality of life for communities of poverty, and people of color. The vision of *The City Project* is for equal justice in access to green space (Garcia & Strongin, 2013). Much of its research is conducted with geographic information systems to document differences in spatial distribution of parks and green spaces. However this research does not stop at describing differences in spatial relationships between parks and the socio-demographic geography of Los Angeles. The research results are channeled into community and state organizations to engage city and

state politicians within policy contexts of anti-discrimination and civil rights agendas. By building a framework that includes a vision for social justice, a historical analysis of cultural disparities and systematic discrimination, and directing collective action to policy change, the descriptive research of Garcia's *The City Project* becomes a strong stick to enhance social justice. By extending a descriptive approach to inquiry, Garcia's research is able to celebrate the enhancement of social justice for communities through the development of parks for everyday use by urban poor.

Explanatory Approaches

The second approach to research explains reasons for a group being oppressed and marginalized, and in doing so, identifies culpability and suggests a solution. An important part of most theories are the causal propositions that tell us why something is just so. The application of frameworks that address causal factors for oppression, marginalization, and power differentials provide insight for social change.

More than a decade ago, Floyd (1998) characterized the two primary explanations to address low levels of outdoor recreation participation by African Americans as being the marginality and ethnicity hypotheses. He went on to state there has been minimal effort expended to develop theory beyond these two hypotheses. More recently, in their impressively thorough review of the ethnicity and leisure literature, Stodolska and Walker (2007) provided several characterizations of the history of explanatory frameworks that include a complexity of social and situational factors that influence patterns of leisure behavior. They stated that the ethnicity and leisure literature is dominated by social-psychological frameworks, that policy contexts for research "often escape the attention of leisure researchers" (p. 15), but Stodolska and Walker did not comment on the extent to which contexts for social and political action are (or should be) integrated in this literature stream. Arai and Kivel (2009) characterized a recent wave of race and ethnicity research as being haunted by the marginality-ethnicity discourse, yet adapting increasingly sophisticated set of theory and methods (see also Johnson, Kivel, & Scraton, 2009). However, they voiced concern for a dysfunctional effect of the research reaffirming the status quo rather than challenging it (see also Roberts, 2009). Arai and Kivel argued that the failure to problematize the categorical nature of race and ethnic variables leaves participants vulnerable to essentializing forces and stereotyping. To advance social justice, the outcomes of explanatory frameworks for ethnicity and leisure research appear mixed, and run the gamut from being an empirical search for factors that influence participation rates to being a force of inertia for the status quo.

Explanatory research on women and leisure may have a more convergent set of outcomes compared to the race and ethnicity literature. Many of the explanatory frameworks of the 1990s were social process theories applied to understand the ways in which women constructed their meanings of leisure. Stating "one size doesn't fit all" (Henderson, 1996, p. 139), gendered explanations varied across different groups of women due to their life or situational narratives and led to distinct leisure meanings. Explanatory frameworks of the 1990s were not positioned as universal in defining relationships among variables, but meant to bring understanding to social processes grounded in the daily lives of women (Deem, 2002; Henderson, 1996; James, 2000). Although a patriarchal system was recognized as an important force in shaping leisure contexts, the meanings constructed were partially attributed to other forces in the lives of women. In addition, Henderson and Gibson (2013; Henderson, this issue) identified the development of intersectionality as being a future conceptual direction of literature related to women and leisure, and in doing so, indicated that the oppression of women shares common features with other groups not privileged by a patriarchal system. For the women and leisure literature, explanatory frameworks

frequently identify a value orientation and vision for social change, as well as the social and cultural mechanisms leading to oppression and power differentials.

Explanatory research has potential to be a strong stick for social justice particularly if the theoretical framework is linked to a value orientation with social or cultural relevance, and a policy context for action. However, there are historical issues that serve to constrain its capacity to enhance social justice. The traditions of explanatory research are focused on the development of theory (Babbie, 2008; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002), not on the enhancement of social justice. Political action and academic theory, although compatible, are traditionally treated as two distinct end states. Typically sharing the same concerns for objectivity as researchers who practice descriptive research, the development of a value orientation and links to political action is not considered relevant to assess the merits of the research. Political outcomes, if any, would be superfluous to the research process. Implications of explanatory approaches are directed at contributions to theory, future research recommendations, and if there are outcomes developed for practitioners, they have been constrained by a research process focused on theoretical development. If there are any political agendas, they are directed at persuading others in the research community to recognize the merits of the research framework.

Fortunately there are several researchers who have gone beyond the historical constraints of explanatory frameworks and been creative in ways to extend this approach to further social justice. In an innovative study of homelessness and use of public space in Salt Lake City, Utah, Rose (2013) problematized the criminalization of people who are homeless, and created a vision for rights of citizens to public space. Using a political ecology framework, Rose examined the connections between urban economics, social-political factors, and ecological processes for the “Hillside Residents” (pp. 65–66). Putting his explanatory framework to work, Rose (2013) indicated the need for a socioenvironmental justice movement, and provided a vision for the policy context of such a movement. Although stopping short of political action, his work provided hope for an emerging strategy to address social justice for the Hillside Residents.

In addition, Theriault and Dunlap (2013) provided a creative example of extending an approach, that otherwise would end at theoretical explanation, to enhance social justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The authors were troubled by the universal stages specified in youth development theory, yet rather than discard the theory they adapted it to the experiences of LGBTQ youth. Within their research process, they characterized the “forces of oppression that shape the everyday lives of LGBTQ youth” (p. 69) to conform to heteronormative behavior. In addition, they provided a vision for LGBTQ youth that encompasses perspectives on marriage, religion, and decisions to publicly acknowledge their identity. Although framed as a theoretical application, they characterized the impact of their research with the design and implementation of an organized leisure program serving LGBTQ youth. Their study detailed program operations, the improvement and development of the program through feedback of participants, the training of staff to administer the program, and the responsiveness of the program to serve the everyday experiences of LGBTQ youth. By putting their theoretical framework to work, Theriault and Dunlap (2013) have gone beyond the boundaries of expectations for traditional explanatory approaches by connecting their study with community-based action to enhance social justice.

Transformative Approaches

The final approach for research to enhance social justice is specifically directed at transformation of participants and their communities. Over the past couple decades, there has been a growth in theory and methods with purposes focused on social or political action.

The evolution of qualitative research has been particularly fertile with strategies for social and political action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Floyd et al., 2008; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Arai and Kivel (2009) deliberately commented on research strategies for political action, and assert that race and ethnicity research should be directed at social change by addressing questions of “how leisure affords spaces for resistance and the mobilization of power for people of color” (p. 460). Arai and Kivel (2009), as well as the articles within their special issue, spoke to the transformative potential of emerging research paradigms linked to critical theory (Yuen & Pedlar, 2009). These new paradigms problematize whiteness as an ethnic category (rather than the norm from which others deviate) and connect it with hegemonic power that racializes spaces, institutions, and research processes. The introduction to their special issue provided hope for the development of leisure research strategies to enhance social justice in order to impact communities being studied.

Over the past couple of decades, the literature on women and leisure has welcomed feminist paradigms which have led to significant progress in research to enhance social justice. As a kind of critical theory, feminist leisure research has focused on resistance to patriarchy and empowerment of women (Henderson & Gibson, 2013). Although it is clear that Henderson and Gibson (2013) appreciated the roles for leisure in resistance and empowerment, their text did not address leisure research as an instrumentality for political action connected to resistance and empowerment. Rather resistance and empowerment were treated as one of several themes for theory development, and not framed as intentional outcomes of the research process.

Among scholars who study women and leisure, there is growing appreciation of the need to explicitly identify the desired socio-political outcomes of research (Parry & Fullagar, 2013). Fullagar (2008) suggested that her research process allowed an intimate sharing of emotions rendering both her (as researcher) and the participants changed in ways that enlightened each other and empowered them collectively. As part of her research on breast cancer survivors, Parry (2007) detailed the purposeful nature of the researcher-participant relationships including the desired impact of the research on participants, provided guidelines for readers on criteria to evaluate the impact of her research (including the degree to which it motivated political action), and the impact of the research process on her participants. Parry’s research process enhanced social justice through the sharing of stories that empowered and allowed for healing among participants. The research by Fullagar and Parry provided argument and evidence of changes in their participants for their empowerment and emancipation from a patriarchal system. This research reflects the three criteria by integrating a value orientation of patriarchal oppression, adapting feminism as a social and cultural framework, and due to its impact on study participants, takes a step toward social and political action to enhance social justice.

Literature that connects leisure with people who identify as LGBTQ does not have the extensive history compared to leisure literature associated with race, ethnicity, women, or gender. However, within the leisure and LGBTQ literature, transformative approaches are common. For example, Johnson and Delgado-Romero (2012; see also Johnson & Samdahl, 2005) developed an action-based framework of research for LGBTQ youth in detention facilities in the state of Georgia. They were explicit about their concern for the harassment, violence, and general danger experienced by LGBTQ youth in detention facilities, and provided a nurturing vision for the way LGBTQ youth should be treated by staff and other inmates. Framing the research problem as a need for a shift of institutional culture within the detentions facilities, they developed LGBTQ training materials and hosted staff workshops on the topic. The outcomes of their research were tied to the impact of the training programs, as well as feedback from staff members and students who participated in the workshops (Johnson & Delgado-Romero, 2012). The focus and implementation

of their research to enhance social justice for LGBTQ youth by changing the institutional cultural of a youth detention facility was an excellent example of an effective transformative approach.

An empowering characteristic of most transformative approaches is its theoretical framing that grounds research questions in the community of study. Within the traditions of descriptive and explanatory approaches, value orientation and ideology are framed as biases and sources of contamination. In contrast to researchers positioning themselves as objective outsiders, researchers with a transformative approach are explicit about their value orientation and engage their participants from the start. A community's value orientation and ideology are essential for guiding a social justice agenda. Critical theorists, as practitioners of a transformative approach, generally embrace their biases as an indispensable compass to direct their research and channel political action. Because of this epistemological positioning of the researcher, participants identify with the research and take ownership of its outcomes. This is not the same as measurement bias or questions of methodological validity; rather it is about transparency in the socio-political agenda of the research and its aspirations to enhance social justice for the participants of study.

Transformative moments are characterized by individual and collective vision for the way forward from oppression and marginalization. The empowering force of transformative research is partially due to strategies that provide visions for a way forward, often by sharing stories of success that break "glass ceilings," overcome barriers, and resist institutional structures that otherwise would dominate and control (see Parry, 2003, and in this issue for her "politics of hope"). Unlike a prototypical descriptive study that would conclude by revealing social practices that marginalize, or an explanatory approach that points to the culprit of the power differential, a transformative approach is centered on liberation and successful narratives of negotiating oppressive forces. From start to finish, transformative research champions a progressive strategy, albeit qualified as embedded in the community of study, for resistance to power and enhancement of social justice.

Transformative approaches provide multiple visions for a way forward from the oppression, marginalization, and power differential. In other words, social and political action to enhance social justice comes in many forms. For instance, the capacity for the work of Fullagar (2008) and Parry (2007) to have consequences for political action and policy shifts is not an explicit aspiration. Their research-based vision for enhancing social justice is deeply rooted in an ethic of caring for one person and one community of people at time. Yet for Johnson and Delgado-Romero (2012), a policy shift for the institutional culture of the youth detention facilities was an explicit goal of their research. These various visions for transformation are complementary to one another, and collectively, provide a multi-prong approach for research to enhance social justice.

Building Stronger Sticks for Social Justice

The criteria to enhance social justice are applicable across research approaches and across the isolated streams of leisure research. There are a myriad of ways in which these criteria could be addressed in leisure research, and if done appropriately, would build a capacity for a strong stick to enhance social justice. The three inter-related criteria identified and applied in this article are a starting point for consideration of research that enhances social justice:

- identification of a value orientation of the inequality or oppression, along with a vision to enhance social justice,

- integration of a social or cultural framework to change society to enhance social justice, and
- connection of the research to social and political action with capacity to move communities or groups of people in the direction of a more socially just set of relations.

The first of these criteria is the easiest to address. Study populations are often purposely selected because we think they are vulnerable or need visibility. Often researchers study a given population because they are members of this population, and have lived experiences to share that could serve as starting points for the articulation of an ideology and vision. Value orientations and visions to enhance social justice, if not explicit, are usually close to the surface of the research. Articulating them will provide a transparency to the research to understand the intentions and provide readers with an idiosyncratic guide to assess the contribution of the research.

The second criterion has its challenges for a research community with longstanding affinity to psychological and socio-psychological frameworks. At some point, research to enhance social justice needs to connect with social, political, and institutional structures. Fortunately, the first criterion—a value orientation and vision for social justice—provides a foundation to identify the social, political or institutional structures that need changing to enhance social justice. The challenge will be to adapt, extend, and connect the traditional psychological frameworks of leisure behavior with socio-political relevance. Such challenges are being addressed by some through development of collaborative teams with macro-level experts related to sociology, policy analysts, economists, public health, urban planning, and/or landscape architects (e.g., Son, Shinew, & Harvey, 2011).

The final criterion may take the most work and creativity. Academics are experts at reading, writing, and speaking in the narrowly defined ways of our discipline. We generally do not have expertise when it comes to organizing social and political movements. In addition, the merit structure of universities is generally not weighted heavily on public engagement and impact on communities. Yet the connection of research to social and political action is the ultimate step in research to enhance social justice. Fortunately, new strategies for research have been developed that build trust with communities, allow for an increasing array of data (e.g., visual, spatial, verbal, and emotional) to be translated into useful information, and technology for the development of social networks is readily accessible (e.g., Parry, Glover, & Mulcahy, 2013; Stewart & Floyd, 2004). These new developments could facilitate connections between our research and enhancement of social justice in the communities we study.

Across the three approaches of descriptive, explanatory, and transformative, leisure research has potential to work toward a social justice agenda. Given explicit attention to a value orientation for social justice, a social or cultural framework to change society, and a research-based capacity for social or political action, each of these research approaches could build a strong stick to poke and nudge society to a more socially just position. Transformative approaches generally encompass the three criteria for a strong stick to enhance social justice; researchers who practice descriptive and explanatory approaches may be challenged to extend their scope. To be sure, there are exceptional examples of descriptive (Garcia, 2013; Garcia & Strongin, 2013) and explanatory (Rose, 2013; Theriault & Dunlap, 2013) researchers who have built strong sticks to enhance social justice, and they have purposely enhanced the traditional scopes of the research approach in order to build such strong sticks.

The above presentation has made delineations between descriptive, explanatory, and transformative approaches as if their boundaries were well-defined. In practice, the boundaries that previously distinguished differences are becoming blurred. In addition for

purposes of simplification, this presentation refers to three distinct approaches to research and does not recognize the many other traditions or paradigms of inquiry that have been developed (for a thorough rendering see Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Researchers are articulating various hybrids across the assumptions of research traditions. As researchers, we are purposely deliberating and vetting our goals, and framing the tenets of research to specify the desired research-based outcomes in the communities we study. The purpose of this special issue is to reflect on the tenets and practices of research necessary to enhance social justice.

Insight from the Authors to Enhance Social Justice

There are several topical areas of leisure research that are working to enhance social justice, including those identified in this special issue: women and gender, race and ethnicity, and heteronormativity and sexual identity. With some exceptions (e.g., Arnold & Shinew, 1998; Bialeschki & Walbert, 1998; Parry & Fullagar, 2013), these literature streams have largely existed in isolation to one another, as if lacking capacity to share insights or learn from one another. With a focus on critiquing the philosophy and practice of research, rather than on the particular injustices, the above three criteria along with other cross-cutting themes emerge as bridges across traditionally isolated strands of research. The authors of the articles herein highlight various research practices to build a strong stick to move society toward social justice.

Henderson's article entitled "The imperative of leisure justice research" recalls the history of social justice as a line of leisure research. Tracing its evolution back more than 25 years to concepts of social responsibility, followed by just leisure, social change, and social justice, she extends it to the concept of leisure justice. Henderson argues that the common ideology across this lineage is the obligation we have to "create a healthy world" through our research. The trajectory has led to a value orientation that our research should have implications for social action and justice. Henderson envisions a growing movement that examines ways in which various forces of social inequality (e.g., sexism, ageism, homophobia, racism, ableism) combine and lead to systematic oppression and marginalization, referred to as intersectionality. She argues that a participatory action research framework would be particularly well-suited to address such problems, and points to the "commitment to honoring the lived experience and knowledge of people" being studied as holding promise to "integrate knowledge with action." Henderson's essay underscores the necessity for researchers to take seriously the need to impact the well-being of the people and communities we study.

Parry's article entitled "My transformative desires: Enacting feminist social justice leisure research" identifies guidelines for the practice of her research. In sharing her own transformation from an angry to a hopeful feminist, Parry's research "enacts social justice by helping to challenge and break down gendered social structures." On one level, her commitment to an ethic of care for participants is a hallmark of her work. Rather than social justice being a movement worthy of newspaper headlines, Parry directs her ethic of care to the face-to-face engagement with a "one person at a time" mindset, and aspirations for her research to impact the people and organizations she studies. The guidelines for the practice of her research collectively indicate her interviews with participants are more like conversations between friends who instill confidence in one another, than someone who collects data for a living. For a scholar who may appear to have relaxed many traditional boundaries of research, Parry has been proactive at developing criteria to frame the scholarly rigor of her research. To enhance sensitivity to the contributions of social justice research, it is just such criteria that need aeration within our leisure research community.

Robinett's article entitled "Heteronormativity in leisure research: Emancipation as social justice" develops ideological positioning by explaining his own struggle to negotiate heteronormativity. In just two paragraphs, Robinett's lived experience of growing-up in a heteronormative world orients readers to his values and vision. Ideological positioning is not complicated; Robinett simply states he wants to enjoy the liberty of an inconspicuous life. Robinett claims that rather than standpoint as a framework, social justice research requires "ethical practices that allow researchers to reflect and place themselves in relation to those with whom they are engaged." Robinett's strategies lead to research practices with emancipation as an outcome. By exposing and sharing vulnerabilities, research outcomes do not resolve the pain as much as they open dialogue to explore similarities between researcher and participants, deflect culpability away from individuals and toward normalized social practices, and create strategies to effectively negotiate heteronormative situations of daily life. For Robinett, research to enhance social justice is about developing strategies for successful negotiation of oppressive social structures.

Floyd's article entitled "Social justice as an integrating force for leisure research" recognizes the need for research processes that are open and accessible to members of communities of color. Floyd argues that a social justice agenda could be addressed through a variety of research approaches. However he observes the aloofness of traditional scientific processes, and provides examples of the need to integrate an active role for participants in research agendas. Floyd anticipates a needed shift away from simply describing disparities, to addressing practical problems related to distributive and procedural inequities in providing leisure services. To do so, he argues that the moral imperatives that drive the research need explicit consideration. The primary responsibility of researchers is to understand the ways in which the research connects with the inequality or exclusion. To do so, our research needs to be accessible to the people we study. In his words, "we must be willing to embrace standards that go beyond the usual standards to which we are bound by our IRBs and professional ethics."

Johnson's article entitled "'All you need is love': Considerations for a social justice inquiry in leisure studies" details his "politics of practice." Like Henderson, he too anticipates intersectionality as being a theoretical framing appropriate for enhancing social justice. Johnson observes the accumulation of leisure research built around disenfranchised populations but existing in isolation of one another. He appreciates the shared and systematic forces that have left many communities oppressed and marginalized. By exploring similarities across these populations, and integrating frameworks related to love and friendship into his research practice, Johnson's research celebrates the success stories of empowered individuals and communities, and purposely plays activist roles in his communities of study to educate, train, and otherwise leads to a shift in institutional cultures.

The authors of the articles in this special issue highlight various research practices to build a strong stick to poke and nudge society to move toward a more socially just world. The range of research practices suggested by them reflects the collective wisdom across several thematic areas of leisure research in which social justice is relevant. This special issue provides an explicit set of talking points to provoke further consideration of ways our research has impacts on the communities we study, and new ways to assess the scientific rigor of our inquiry. By exploring the suggestions to extend the scope of our research, we can rise to the challenges set forth by Henderson, Parry, Robinett, Floyd, and Johnson to enhance the visibility and celebrate the outcomes of our research.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful for the insight and helpful comments from Diana Parry and two anonymous reviewers who challenged me to think broadly about suitability of research

approaches for social justice. In addition, the author appreciates Gerard Kyle for facilitating the reviews on this paper, and for Co-Chairs Jason Bocarro and Monika Stodolska for encouraging thematic panel presentations as part of the 2012 Leisure Research Symposium.

References

- Allison, M. (2000). Leisure, diversity, and social justice. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(2), 2–6.
- Arai, S., & Kivel, B. D. (2009). Critical race theory and social justice perspectives on whiteness, difference(s), and (anti)racism: A fourth wave of race research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(4), 459–470.
- Arnold, M., & Shinew, K. (1998). The role of gender, race, and income on park use constraints. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 16(4), 39–56.
- Babbie, E. (2008). *The basics of social research* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Bialeschki, M., & Walbert, K. (1998). “You have to have some fun to go along with your work”: The interplay of race, class, gender, and leisure in the industrial new South. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(1), 79–100.
- Bocarro, J., & Stodolska, M. (2013). Researcher and advocate: Using research to promote social justice change. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 46(1), 2–6.
- Bullard, R. (1993). *Confronting environmental racism: Voices from the grassroots*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Deem, R. (1992). The sociology of gender and leisure in Britain—past progress and future prospects. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 15(1), 21–37.
- Denzin, N. (2011). The politics of evidence. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 645–657). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dupuis, S. (1999). Naked truths: Towards a reflexive methodology in leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, 21(1), 43–64.
- Floyd, M. (1998). Getting beyond marginality and ethnicity: The challenge for race and ethnic studies in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(1), 3–22.
- Floyd, M., Bocarro, J., & Thompson, T. (2008). Research on race and ethnicity in leisure studies: A review of five major journals. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 40(1), 1–22.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social sciences matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Fullagar, S. (2008). Leisure practices as counter-depressants: Emotion-work and emotion-play with women’s recovery from depression. *Leisure Sciences*, 30(1), 35–52.
- Garcia, R. (2013). Social justice and leisure: The usefulness and uselessness of research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 46(1), 7–22.
- Garcia, R., & Strongin, S. (2013). Healthy parks and communities: Green access and equity for Los Angeles. In K. Schwab & D. Dustin (Eds.), *Just leisure: Things that we believe in* (pp. 167–188). Urbana, IL: Sagamore.
- Greenwood, D., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge?* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Henderson, K. (1996). One size doesn’t fit all: The meanings of women’s leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(3), 139–154.
- Henderson, K. (2011). Post-positivism and the pragmatics of leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, 33(4), 341–346.
- Henderson, K., & Gibson, H. (2013). An integrative review of women, gender and leisure: Increasing complexities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45(2), 115–135.
- Hutchison, S., & Samdahl, D. (2000). Reflections on the “voice of authority” in leisure research and practice. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 23(1), 237–250.
- Jackson, E. (Ed.). (2005). *Constraints to leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.

- James, K. (2000). "You can feel them looking at you": The experiences of adolescent girls at swimming pools. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(2), 262–280.
- Johnson, C., & Delgado-Romero, E. (2012). Safer spaces: Meeting the needs of GLBTQ youth in Georgia detention facilities: A social justice approach. *Journal of Community Engagement in Higher Education*, 3(1), 1–11.
- Johnson, C., Kivel, D., & Scraton, S. (2009). (Re)theorizing leisure, experience and race. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(4), 479–494.
- Johnson, C., & Samdahl, D. (2005). "The night they took over": Gay men's reaction to lesbian night in a country-western gay bar. *Leisure Sciences*, 27(4), 331–348.
- Kivel, D., Johnson, C., & Scraton, S. (2009). (Re)theorizing leisure experience and race. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(4), 473–493.
- Lashua, B., & Fox, K. (2007). Defining the grove: From remix to research in the Beat of Boyle Street. *Leisure Sciences*, 29(2), 143–158.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McDonald, M. (2009). Dialogues on whiteness, leisure and (anti)racism. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(1), 5–21.
- More, T. (2002). "The parks are being loved to death" and other frauds and deceits in recreation management. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(1), 79–88.
- Nunnally, J., & Bernstein, I. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Paisley, K., & Dustin, D. (Eds.). (2011). *Speaking up and speaking out: Working for social and environmental justice through parks, recreation and leisure*. Urbana, IL: Sagamore Publishing.
- Parry, D. C. (2003). Towards a 'politics of hope': Advocating a sixth phase of feminist leisure research. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 26(1), 49–67.
- Parry, D. C. (2007). "There is life after breast cancer": Nine vignettes exploring dragon boat racing for breast cancer survivors. *Leisure Sciences*, 29(1), 53–69.
- Parry, D. C., & Fullagar, S. (2013). Feminist leisure research in the contemporary era. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45(5), 571–582.
- Parry, D. C., Johnson, C., & Stewart, W. (2013). Leisure research for social justice: A response to Henderson. *Leisure Sciences*, 35(1), 81–87.
- Riddick, C., & Russell, R. (2011). *Research in recreation, parks, sports and tourism* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Sagamore.
- Roberts, N. (2009). Crossing the color line with a different perspective on whiteness, and (anti)racism: A response to Mary McDonald. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(4), 495–509.
- Rojek, C. (2000). *Leisure and culture*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Rose, J. (2013). Contesting homelessness: Public nature, political ecology, and socioenvironmental justice. In K. Schwab & D. Dustin (Eds.), *Just leisure: Things that we believe in* (pp. 58–66). Urbana, IL: Sagamore.
- Schwab, K., & Dustin, D. (Eds.). (2013). *Just leisure: Things that we believe in*. Urbana, IL: Sagamore.
- Shadish, W., Cook, T., & Campbell, D. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experiment designs for general causal inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Son, J., Shinew, K., & Harvey, S. (2011). Community readiness for leisure-based health promotions: Findings from an underserved and racially diverse rural community. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 29(2), 90–106.
- Stewart, W. (2013). Public memory for an inclusive society. In K. Schwab & D. Dustin (Eds.), *Just leisure: Things that we believe in* (pp. 189–196). Urbana, IL: Sagamore.
- Stewart, W., & Floyd, M. (2004). Visualizing leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(4), 445–460.
- Stewart, W., Parry, D., & Glover, T. (2008). Writing leisure: Values and ideologies of research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 40(3), 360–384.
- Stewart, W., Parry, D., Robinett, J., Floyd, M., Henderson, K., & Johnson, C. (2012). Leisure research for social justice: A panel presentation. In J. Bocarro & M. Stodolska (Eds.), *Book of abstracts*,

Leisure Research Symposium, National Recreation and Park Association Congress at Anaheim, CA, October 16–19.

- Stodolska, M., & Walker, G. (2007). Ethnicity and leisure: Historical development, current status, and future directions. *Leisure/Loisir*, 31(1), 3–26.
- Theriault, D., & Dunlap, R. (2013). John Dewey's moral philosophy as a route to social and environmental justice through youth development theory. In K. Schwab & D. Dustin (Eds.), *Just leisure: Things that we believe in* (pp. 67–74). Urbana, IL: Sagamore.
- Yuen, F., & Pedlar, F. (2009). Leisure as a context for justice: Experiences of justice for aboriginal women in prison. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(4), 547–564.

Copyright of Leisure Sciences is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.