

(Re)Theorizing Leisure, Experience and Race

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Abstract

Leisure scholars have attempted to examine experience through a social-psychological lens that locates the individual and her/his interpretation of leisure experiences at the center of discussions about leisure, leisure experience and identity. However, this primarily social-psychological perspective lacks an accompanying discussion about the ideologies and discourses that structure those experiences. The purpose of this paper is to examine how “leisure experience” has been conceptualized and how individuals have been represented in terms of race in the Leisure Studies literature. It is not a call to abandon Leisure Studies’ focus on individuals and their experiences of leisure. Rather, it is an attempt to offer alternative strategies for how to (re) conceptualize and conduct kinds of research that account for individual experiences within broader discourses of ideology and power.

KEYWORDS: Race, experience, leisure, collective memory work, critical ethnography

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While scholars have pursued knowledge about “leisure experiences,” there has been no clear consensus about what constitutes “experience” or for that matter, what constitutes an individual’s identity. One way scholars have attempted to examine experience has been through a social-psychological lens that locates the individual and her/his interpretation of leisure experiences at the center of discussions about leisure, leisure experience and identity (c.f., Iso-Ahola, 1980; Neulinger, 1974). However, what this perspective lacks is an accompanying discussion about the ideologies and discourses that structure those experiences. The social-psychological framework has led scholars to seek out subjective, cognitive and affective components of leisure and the meaning of leisure experience for individuals. Despite our reliance on the term “experience” in leisure studies, more than 20 years (Gunter, 1987) have passed since theorists have explicitly examined experience as an elusive construct. Indeed, there seems to be an assumption that leisure is, first and foremost, a construct that is rooted in experience. Kelly & Freysinger (2000) capture this perspective when they suggest that “Whatever else it is, leisure is experience. . .” (p. 79).

Much of the inquiry around “experience” in Leisure Studies apart from the conceptual work of feminist scholars (e.g., Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996), has focused on meanings of leisure experience at individual, non-ideological levels. Attempts to capture and represent the leisure experiences of individuals based on various identity politics (race, gender, sexual orientation) has focused on examining and presenting differences among and between people based on these social categories of identity. Most scholarship has not, however, included theorizing around the ways in which institutional structures and oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, and heterosexism) operate in leisure settings.

Instead of presenting “experience” apart from context, as most scholars in Leisure Studies have done, sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987) argued for a contextualization of experience that is based on an examination of social relations and institutional structures. She asserted that, “Rather than explaining behavior, we begin from where people are in the world, explaining the social relations of the society of which we are part, explaining an organization that is not fully present in any one individual’s everyday experience” (p. 89).

She argued that while we may not “see” these institutional structures, they do operate in various ways at many levels to influence our everyday experiences. Leisure scholars have not fully addressed the tension that emerges between two competing needs: describing and presenting “different” experiences; and grounding those experiences within broader social, cultural discourses of institutional oppression such as racism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism.

Experience is never simply a reflection of what someone has done, feels or thinks—experience is always constituted through discourses of power and a priori knowledge (Scott, 1993). Similarly, individuals emerge in and through various ideologies²

² Discourse or discursive practices are semiotic and social practices whereby meanings, truth-claims, and subjectivities are produced (Purvis & Hunt, 1993).

³ The purpose of ideology critique in late capitalism, then, is to uncover and demystify reification, domination and hegemony found in people’s everyday experiences and activities. Ideology in late capitalism is dispersed into culture from texts, per se, such as the bible, and thus requires new conceptualizations and interpretive methods of ideology critique” (Agger, 1998, p. 81).

and discourses of power that revolve around a variety of identity markers including gender, race, and sexuality. Thus, how can leisure scholars examine individuals and their experiences of leisure apart from the ideologies and discourses that shape everyday lives (Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Kivel, 2000). Instead, leisure “experiences” need to be contextualized and theorized in relation to these important social factors.

Two theorists, Frankenberg (1997) and Craib (1998) offer explanations of “experience” that account for the complexity of this construct. Frankenberg (1997) argued that “the word experience describes the production of meaning at the intersection of material life and interpretive frameworks” (p. 241). Craib (1998) asserted that in talking about experience, “each immediately evident ‘fact’ is understood not in terms of its independent existence or in terms of an external causal relationship; rather its existence is understood as the product of a number of relationships, a structure of relationships” (p. 15).

Both Frankenberg (1997) and Craib (1998) provide support for the argument that “experiences” are socially and culturally produced and constructed at the intersection of identity, ideology and discourse. This interrelationship reveals the complexity involved in attempts to “present” and “represent” an individual’s experiences.

While all identity politics (e.g., gender, sexuality, age, class, disability, etc.) need to be discursively analyzed, the purpose of this paper is to examine how “experience” has been conceptualized and how individuals have been represented in terms of “race” in the leisure literature. It is not a call to abandon leisure studies’ focus on individuals and their experiences of leisure. Rather, it is an attempt to offer alternative strategies for how to conceptualize and conduct research that accounts for individual experiences within broader discourses of ideology and power. It aims to do so in a way that accounts for the influence of institutional structures on individuals and their experiences.

When considering “experience” and racial identity politics, several questions will structure the argument of this paper. First, how have leisure scholars gathered and presented/represented individuals in terms of their leisure experiences? Second, how have individuals been constructed in terms of their racial identities? Do researchers construct individuals as “subjects” by examining them apart from the ideological discourses that have constructed their identities and their subsequent experiences? Third, do representations of the leisure experiences of marginalized groups reinscribe their status as “other?” Finally, these theoretical questions beg a larger question: How can we move beyond descriptions of leisure experience and begin to theorize the social, political, and ideological contexts within which individuals experience leisure? To address this larger question, we offer two methodological strategies, collective memory work and critical race ethnography, and detail how some of their unique features can transform the study of the race and the leisure experience. As Butsch (2001) asserted, “We have examined the individual threads enough. They are conceptually and empirically sound. Now we can weave our tapestry of power and struggle” (p. 78).

History of Leisure Experience

Since the 1960s, leisure theorists have sought to make sense of “leisure experiences” (Clawson, 1963; Mercer, 1971) in terms of phenomenology (Harper, 1981; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986), and in terms of its psychological (Neulinger, 1974) and

social-psychological dimensions (Iso-Ahola, 1980). They argued that factors such as perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, innate drive, leisure attitudes and situational and social factors (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Iso-Ahola, 1980, 1984; Kelly, 1972, 1978; Mannell, 1980; Neulinger, 1974, 1976, 1981) would influence if, and the extent to which, someone would “experience” leisure. Experience, as these theorists constructed it, seemed to be more about a “process” than an “outcome”—a distinction that matters in terms of how to measure and make sense of one’s experience.

The earliest published studies on “experience” and leisure were located in research about wilderness and outdoor recreation. The bulk of these studies reflected the experience of the primary users of these spaces—white men. Clawson’s (1963) model of the “recreation experience” involved five stages: anticipation, travel, on-site activity, return travel and recollection. These five parameters helped to establish how experience could be understood and measured. Scholars in the 1970s asserted that experience was psychological—a state of mind (Driver & Tocher, 1970; Mercer, 1971). This conceptualization has been one of the prevailing perspectives on the meaning of leisure for more than 30 years (Brown & Haas, 1980; Manfredi, Driver & Brown, 1983; Mannell, 1980; Schreyer, Lime & Williams, 1984; Shaw, 1985). Although some theorists have argued that experiences rest within the mind (Driver & Tocher, 1970; Mercer, 1971), others have argued that it can also be manifested and measured through individual behaviors (Schreyer, et al., 1984).

Mannell (1980) was instrumental in articulating that experience was a state of mind, but he also identified one of the key problems associated with this perspective in terms of measuring it. He wrote: “leisure experience is a mental experience; therefore, it is private experience. . . [and] psychological experience can be reported by only one observer” (p. 68-69). Presumably, the limitation of measuring experience was that individuals may not be capable of accurately conveying their own experiences and that it would be limiting to “empirically” gather evidence based on the subjective interpretation of one individual. Harper (1981) did not necessarily see a problem with a sample of one, but explained the difficulty in trying to pinpoint what exactly and precisely constitutes an experience. He suggested that researchers were not really measuring experiences, but instead, something else—namely, behavior.

These divergent perspectives on what constituted “experience” made it difficult to figure out the best strategy for measuring such an elusive construct. Although leisure scholars may have asserted that they were measuring experiences, they were, perhaps more accurately, measuring the psychological/qualitative dimensions of behaviors of individuals associated with experience—e.g., satisfaction, motivation, and benefits, etcetera (Harper, 1981). Later in the same decade, echoing the concerns raised by Harper (1981) and Mannell (1980) about the limitations of measuring experience, Shaw (1986) argued:

One reason why theoretical conceptualizations of leisure have not been more widely incorporated into empirical research is the practical difficulty of operationalizing and measuring subjectives (sic) states or experiences. Such an undertaking is more time-consuming (and thus more expensive) than simply measuring activity participation (p. 179).

Therefore, not only did experience come to be associated with participation rates, it also came to be associated with popular or important markers of identity and with leisure behaviors.

While Gunter (1987) also questioned the ability to measure experience, he was, nevertheless, interested in the question of what constitutes the individual and her/his experience? He asked salient questions about how leisure researchers measure “experience.” For example, he began to ask questions such as: “What type of experience should be studied, and whose? How should they (both individuals and experiences) be selected?” (p. 117). Gunter, like his predecessors, linked experience with behavior, yet, unlike his predecessors, he explicitly argued that experiences needed to be contextualized in terms of the “. . . prevailing social circumstances associated with them.” (p. 117).

Gunter’s (1987) work underscores the need for explicit discussions about how leisure scholars constructed knowledge about experience and about individuals. His work hinges on two key premises that serve as the basis for North American Leisure Studies (Coalter, 1997). First, the epistemology of leisure in North America has historically reflected a linear trajectory toward the use of empirical data that might lead to the discovery of the “true” nature of the leisure experience for various individuals. Second, leisure as experience assumes that the experience resides within the individual’s mind (and, by extension, body) and that the individual serves as a vehicle through which experiences are constructed and expressed.

The latter of these two premises is also tied to an unexpressed, but implicit, assumption that identities emerge apart from social, political, economic and ideological discourses which shape our “experiences.” The focus on examining “different” individuals and their leisure and recreation experiences has been in terms of looking, uncritically, at “categories of identity”—a process that has resulted in categorical rather than contextual research about experience (e.g. Floyd, Shinew, McGuire, & Noe, 1994)

In the search for common, social/psychological dimensions of leisure experience, North American theorists predominantly relied upon invoking positivist methodologies that focused on mainstream populations and excluded marginalized individuals (Bella, 1989). This body of generalized knowledge reflected statistical data from mainstream populations. Only recently have North American theorists sought to examine individual, contextualized experiences of leisure (Henderson, Hodges & Kivel, 2002; Parry & Johnson, 2007). Indeed, feminist leisure researchers, both in the North America and the United Kingdom, have used interpretivist paradigms to make visible the leisure experiences of individuals with historically marginalized identities (i.e., women, people who are lesbian and gay, people of color, etc). Recognizing that everyday lived experiences of individuals are legitimate sources of knowledge, feminist researchers have questioned the notion of a common leisure experience because they discovered differences in leisure experiences among women and individuals who are lesbian and gay (Bialeschki & Pearce, 1997; Johnson, 2000, 2005; Kivel, 1994, 1997, 2000). This research has made explicit the idea that leisure experience and meaning exist in pluralities, rather than as monolithic structures. Feminist scholars have been instrumental in “describing” individual experience within broader ideological discourses using “categories” of social identity to explain “differences” in leisure experience and behavior between women and men instead of examining structural inequalities rooted in institutional “sexism” to explain “differences.”

Race as Experience

Although scholars in the 1970s began to examine differences in leisure experience based on racial markers of identity (Craig, 1972; Lindsay & Ogle, 1972), an explicit focus on research that examined the meaning of difference did not emerge until the mid 1980s with the work of liberal feminist scholars (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1986). Later echoed by Henderson et al. (1996), they noted that men's experiences had historically been the basis for the construction of knowledge about leisure. Bialeschki & Henderson argued that since those experiences were not representative of all people, perhaps scholars also needed to account for, and incorporate, the experiences of women.

Using similar theoretical approaches, researchers realized that only interviewing white people could not adequately explain the leisure experiences, behaviors and attitudes of different groups in North American culture (e.g., African Americans, Latinos or Asian Americans). The justification for gathering evidence from people from different racial groups was that in order to fully understand the meaning of "leisure," scholars had to understand and articulate "experiences" as they were located within "different" individuals. Increasing research that focused on the leisure experiences of various groups of individuals based on racial markers of identity further entrenched categories of social identity that were already "essentialist"⁴ and "monolithic" (Craig, 1972; Floyd, Gramann & Saenz, 1993; Hutchison, 1987; 1988; Klobus-Edwards, 1981; Lindsay & Ogle, 1972; Phillip, 1994; Stamps & Stamps, 1985; Washburne, 1978; Woodard, 1988; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

The explicit acknowledgement of Leisure Studies' reliance on categorical research is a first step (Sasidharan, 2002), but there continues to be no work in North American Leisure Studies that critically examines the *use* of categories in creating individuals with ideological markers of identity and their experiences. This categorical research has constructed race as a biological, independent variable attached to individuals in an effort to understand the "differences" in participation rates among and between "Black," "Latino/Hispanic," "Asian" and "White" people in the United States (Floyd, et al., 1993; Tinsley, Tinsley & Croskeys, 2002).

Race as a Social Construct

This categorical research has constructed "race" as a biological, independent variable attached to individuals in an effort to understand the "differences" in participation rates among and between "Black," "Latino/Hispanic," "Asian" and "White" people in the United States (Floyd, et al., 1993; Tinsley, Tinsley & Croskeys, 2002). Guillaumin (1980) identified the problem with the use of racial categorization. She wrote:

While attaching 'race' unproblematically to individuals makes it 'easy' to talk about one group in comparison to another, there is a danger that the use of these markers can be reductionist and can naturalize race and posit it as a 'social fact' instead of conceptualising 'race' as an ideologically produced marker of identity (p. 39).

There is some analysis of "race," but very few researchers have theorized that "race" is a social construct grounded in ideological and cultural discourses. Indeed, the two

⁴Essentialism can be defined as "...a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (Fuss, 1989).

primary theoretical frameworks used to explain “differences” in leisure behavior based on “race” are: marginality and ethnicity, both of which use “race” as a biologically determined, independent variable. Washburne (1978) explained that “The marginality perspective [suggests] that Blacks do not participate because of poverty and various consequences of socioeconomic discrimination...” (p. 176). In his “ethnicity” theory, Washburne argued that “leisure patterns of Blacks are based on their subcultural style, or ethnicity” (p. 177). The “marginality” theory actually offers an explanation of “underparticipation” that reflects “discriminatory” practices, but, nevertheless, focuses on the individual without consideration for the structural, institutional oppressions. While many researchers have offered critiques of Washburne’s theories, his work continues to be used to explain race-based differences (Gobster, 2002; Gomez, 2002; Outley & Floyd, 2002) with no accompanying theorization that looks at how “racism” itself structures individuals and their experiences of leisure. In terms of understanding and explaining leisure experiences vis-à-vis “race,” the bulk of work focuses on identifying and examining “differences” without regard to macro social issues.

The purpose of “race” research in North America has primarily been to explain “differences” between “marginalized” (non-white) and dominant groups (white), in terms of leisure experiences, behaviors and attitudes. However, researchers have not explored “whiteness” as the standard for “difference” nor have they included an examination of any other categories that were used to differentiate people based on race.

In general, the use of racial categories in North America has come to codify the notion that “race” is a social fact manifested through physical characteristics rather than a social construct “linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time” (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 11). Moreover, there currently seems to be no movement toward lessening the focus on categorical research despite theorists’ arguments that leisure research and theory on race have been underdeveloped and undertheorized (Floyd, 1998; Sasidharan, 2002).

Historically, race has been theorized primarily as an independent variable attached to biology and/or physical characteristics within positivist research projects (Craig, 1972; Floyd & Gramann, 1993; Hutchison, 1988; Stamps & Stamps, 1985; Washburne, 1978). However, some researchers in Leisure Studies (Floyd, 1998; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Johnson, Richmond, & Kivel, 2008) have begun to offer more critical analyses of how “race” has been conceptualized in the literature. Floyd (1998) asserted that previous “studies have not been careful in conceptualizing race and ethnicity, nor in operationalizing these concepts” (p. 8). Even in a special issue of *Leisure Sciences* on multicultural perspectives on recreation and the environment, categories of “race” were underdeveloped and undertheorized (Gobster, 2002; Gomez, 2002; Payne, Mowen & Orsega-Smith, 2002; Tinsley, et al. 2002).

The Racialized “Other”

For North American Leisure Scholars, the sustained engagement in the discursive practice of producing the “other” continues to be central to the work that involves empirical investigation of the experiences of “different” people (Aitchison, 2000). The justification for gathering empirical evidence of “different” leisure experiences has been based on the invisibility of certain voices (e.g., typically marginalized) within the leisure literature – invisibility in terms of race (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002), in terms of

“gender” (Henderson, et al., 1996), and in terms of “sexuality” (Johnson, 2000; Kivel, 1994). While the efforts of scholars to make visible the leisure experiences of individuals from marginalized groups have been sincere and noteworthy, these efforts have been undermined by the absence of additional research that examines the dominant discourses from which the comparisons should be made.

Consequently, uncovering “differences” in experience without simultaneously theorizing the basis of or for that difference has rendered marginalized individuals and their experiences as “other.” Scott (1993) identified this as problematic, asserting that the evidence of experience “becomes evidence for the fact of difference rather than a way of explaining how difference is established, how it operates and how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world” (pp. 399-400).

(Re)Theorizing Race and Identity

Given that we are unlikely to abandon experience as the basis of knowledge; and given the fluidity of individual’s identities, standpoints and subjectivities; and because researchers need to avoid marginalizing and rendering people as “other,” how can we approach the study of leisure, experience and identity? Experience is a complex dialectic that has no clear beginning or ending, and it is both a process and a product of who we are and who we have yet to become (Kelly, 1999). Similarly, experience shapes our identities and, in turn, experience is shaped by our identities, or rather, some would argue that our experiences are shaped by the ideologies that construct our identities (Riley, 1988). The notion of identity as it is used here should not suggest or imply a fixed or essential identity. Rather, identities are fluid and contextual. Fuss (1989) argued that “‘experience’ emerges as the essential truth of the individual subject, and personal ‘identity’ metamorphoses into knowledge. Who we are becomes what we know; ontology shades into epistemology” (p. 113).

The notion that experience is a product of ideology reveals the depth and complexity of the construct, and it also suggests that researchers need to interrogate the discourses that constitute individuals and their social relations. How can researchers represent individuals and their experiences in ways that take into account the creation of social relations and, at the same time, agency and/or resistance? Current conceptualizations of “race” need to shift away from tacitly “biological” and “natural” identity markers toward analyses that interrogate the ways in which such identity markers are socially and culturally constructed and produced. Talking about “race” in terms of a social construct involves explicitly acknowledging the meaning that “race” holds in various contexts, including “leisure.” This acknowledgment is the first step; the second step involves conceptualising “experience” in new ways that account for the intersection of experience with “race,” “gender” and “sexuality.”

Researchers can begin to conceptualize leisure experiences by locating experiences within socio-historical and political contexts; and by acknowledging the fluidity of identity and identity categories. Thus, for example, a study that would attempt to understand the leisure experiences of individuals who are African American and European American might begin with several premises. First, such a study would acknowledge that everyone’s racialized identity has been mediated and constructed through pre-existing ideologies that shape individuals. The second premise is that individuals contribute to the construction of their identities in and through various contexts,

including leisure; and the third premise is that communities play a role in how individuals have been constructed and how they have constructed their identities (Brah, 1996). In terms of the third premise, it might be tempting to rely solely upon readily available demographic and census information to contextualize and locate individuals, but a much more detailed analysis is required.

Questions raised by this type of analysis might include: What constitutes “community” in a particular city or town? Are there several communities divided by “race”? What is the history of African American people and white people in this city/town? If several communities exist, what is the relationship between these communities? Where do individuals live and work? Are neighborhoods, schools and work places racially integrated? Which individuals hold obvious positions of leadership in the community, businesses, schools, and so forth? What has been the obvious and hidden history of racism in this community? Who are the decision-makers in these communities and what is the relationship among and between them? What socio-economic information is available? What information is available that details the history of discrimination in terms of housing, education and employment in this city/town?

Such questions may appear to be beyond the scope of what most of us want to know in terms of understanding issues of leisure experience and “race,” but it is precisely these kinds of questions that ground the experiences of individuals and provide much more of a context for interpreting meanings of leisure experience. While written records may be available that answer some of these questions, many questions can be posed to the participants in our research projects. We can also pursue questions that focus on how people of different “races” negotiate racism generally, and in terms of leisure contexts.

Such conceptualizing requires researchers to actively “locate” individuals who will become part of our research projects. As theorist Avtar Brah (1996) suggests, theorists need to understand where the individual fits within a “politics of location” and within a social, historical network of interrelationships. Distancing herself from the use of essential identity categories, Brah instead attempts to examine identity in more fluid terms as she attends to issues of “representation.” Using geographic terms to help locate individuals and their experiences, she talks about mapping, boundaries, and *diasporas*:

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora (p. 182). . . the concept of diaspora concerns the historically variable forms of relationality within and between diasporic formations. It is about relations of power that similarize and differentiate between and across changing diasporic constellations. . . the concept of diaspora centres on the configurations of power which differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another (p. 183).

Thus, the mere fact of dispersing a once homogeneous group of individuals does not fully explain the diaspora concept. In her work, Brah (1996) points to the significance of locating individuals and their experiences at the intersection of competing discourses of gender, race, sexuality, etc. Thus, representing an individual and her/his experience involves a process of mapping and subsequently, articulating, the individual’s experiences in terms of where the individual is located socially, historically and

politically. For example, studies that examine leisure experiences and racial identity markers in the southern parts of the United States will be dramatically different from studies located in the middle or northeastern part of the country. Currently, discussions of such differences are couched solely in terms of identifying locations (e.g., the south-eastern United States, the Midwest, etc.) rather than examining the meaning that different locations have for individuals in terms of “race,” “racial identity formation,” and “racism.”

Although differences exist in terms of geographic location, there is a common thread in most studies that focus on the leisure experiences of individuals who are African American. Regardless of location, their experiences will be mediated by most of the following: experiences of individuals who are white (white privilege/white hegemony); institutional racism and individual prejudice and discrimination extant throughout their respective communities. Brah (1996) supports this notion arguing that researchers must identify and conceptualize the ways in which individuals have been *constructed* “...similarly or differently...vis-à-vis one another. Such relational positioning will, in part, be structured with reference to the main dominant group” (p. 189).

In Leisure Studies in the United States, to suggest that racial categories of identity are fluid is to question many of the underlying assumptions that leisure researchers have relied upon in empirical and theoretical discussions of “race.” Echoing Brah’s assertion, theorists Omi & Winant (1994) argue for an explicit contextualization of the meaning of race as it relates to racial formation. They wrote:

Once we understand that race overflows the boundaries of skin color, super-exploitation, social stratification, discrimination and prejudice, cultural domination and cultural resistance, state policy (or of any other particular social relationship we list), once we recognize the racial dimension present to some degree in every identity, institution and social practice in the United States—once we have done this, it becomes possible to speak of racial formation (p. 17).

Clearly, the process of deconstructing experience also requires us to examine hegemonic discourses around essentialized and natural categories of identity. The idea that identities are contingent and historically and socially produced may lead to a destabilizing of assumptions about the “nature” of identity. From a Leisure Studies perspective, individuals seem to have “essential” aspects of identity; and as Leisure Science scholars we have pursued research strategies that suggest that if we ask the right questions and if we dig deeply enough, we will uncover the illusive “essence” of individuals and their leisure experiences. Yet, a shift in focus is needed to strategize new ways to conceptualise and analyze “race” and other identity politics.

In their historical analysis of how “race” has been constructed in the U.S., Omi & Winant (1994) argue that:

the meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and reformed. We use the term racial formation to refer to the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings (p. 14).

Their discussion of racial identity formation reveals not only the fluidity of “race,” but also that meanings of “race” are socially, politically and historically contested and situated.

Feminist and poststructuralist theorists have also argued for analyses of identity that account for fluidity. Butler (1990), whose work focuses on analyzing gender, argues that identity is a fluid, rather than stable category. According to Butler, identity is not tied to essential characteristics, but rather, to performance – it is about what you do at particular times rather than a universal of who you are. She writes: “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (p. 25). Her work moves away from stabilizing identities and identity categories and instead leads us to ask questions that focus on how individuals “perform” their ideologically-based identities and the ways in which various contexts influence performativity.

In addition to conceptualising identity in more fluid terms, another strategy for locating “experience” involves incorporating analyses of power within the context of examining leisure experience. Betsy Wearing (1998) argued for “conceptualizing leisure as experience, rather than as time and/or activity [because it] allowed for inclusion in the concept itself of the notions of freedom and constraint” (p. 51). In her research around experience and the role that experience plays in contesting dominant discourses and ideologies, she concluded: “For the 30 middle-class and 30 working-class mothers interviewed, ideas and experiences of leisure both reinforced the identity of ‘mother’ and provided a sphere for resistance” (p. 51).

In a different study, Wearing (1998) worked with a smaller sample (13 women, 7 men) from a Sydney university. She explored the meanings the participants attached to their leisure experiences in relation to their construction of gender identity. Ultimately, Wearing argued that “leisure” provides opportunities for:

Individual self-expression within the constraints or encouragement of ‘significant others,’ reference groups and generalized other or discourses. . . this research demonstrated that for some women resistance to the domination inherent in traditional passive, submissive feminine stereotypes is possible. Some autonomy of subjectivity or identity is possible (p. 53).

In her discussion and analysis, Wearing contextualizes “experience” within historically located and produced situations. She provides us with a description and representation of an individual’s experience that is grounded in broader macro and structural analyses of power and issues of oppression.

In a quest to confirm essential differences, leisure researchers have yet to examine, in a critical way, the construction of individuals. Some leisure theorists (see, e.g., Hemingway 1999; Sylvester, 1995) have introduced critical theory as an alternative to the narrow foci on social psychological explanations of leisure experiences. However, to make for a more robust discussion and analysis of leisure experiences and identity markers, it would seem appropriate to make use of Smith’s (1989) standpoint epistemology, to incorporate Fuss’ (1989) strategic essentialism and to utilize Butler’s work on “troubling” identity.

Similar to Brah (1996), Aitchison (2000) has argued for grounding of experience within geographic boundaries and, like Wearing (1998), she advocates for more complex analyses of experience. Aitchison writes: “everyday leisure experiences have begun to be researched and theorized within social and cultural geographies where binary divides have been challenged and deconstructed within poststructural analyses. . .” (p. 141). She concludes that poststructural feminist analyses might help to bridge the discursive divide between North America with its focus on apolitical and non-ideological analyses of individuals, and the U.K. with its focus on ideological discourses that de-center individuals and their experiences.

Feminist post-structural and post-modern analyses, as articulated by Aitchison (2000) and Wearing (1998), may offer us models for how to theorize and conceptualize experiences, individuals and their subjectivities. Aitchison (2000) has provided a critical framework through which theorists can critically deconstruct “the other” without total annihilation of the individual. Her challenge to the research community is to “provide a broad analysis of cultural difference in leisure relations while simultaneously attending to the broader structural relations of power previously identified by the society in leisure approach” (p. 135).

Learning from ‘Others’: Collective Memory Work and Critical Race Ethnography

So how can we begin to theorize moving away from describing the “experiences” of individuals and reinscribing power differentials toward incorporating contextually located experiences into our research processes and projects? The final section of this paper addresses this concern; we offer two potential methodological strategies for effectively attending to the issues on (re)theorizing race and identity in leisure research: collective memory work and critical race ethnography. In the following sections we describe the theoretical underpinning of each methodology and provide a recent example from the literature to demonstrate how the strategy attends to the (re)theorized racial experience in leisure research.

Collective Memory Work

As an empirical research method, memory-work was first articulated by a socialist-feminist collective in West Germany. Frigga Haug (1987), one of the collective members, edited and published a collection of the group’s research projects. Since that time, Haug (1992, 1998) and the collective have published or presented various materials related to memory-work. Reflecting on the emerging popularity of memory-work, Haug (1998) remarked that “the interesting part of memory-work consists of two dimensions: the collaborative nature of the process and the theoretical background which is again and again made explicit” (p. 1).

The theoretical foundation of memory-work rests on the premise that the effects of ideology and discourses (the metaphorical point where culture and language converge) position us in relation to a variety of social forces, they *subject* us. In other words, discourses enable us to see the ideological positions that are registered socially in cultural institutions and language. Rather than merely describing or mirroring reality, these discourses constitute and shape our concepts of identity (Campbell and Kean, 1997). The collective engages in a process of discourse analysis whereby they

examine and deconstruct their use of language in their own personal written narratives since “language is not simply a tool” but rather a means to “convey ... the construction of meaning” (Haug, 1998, p. 9).

The goal of this deconstructive analysis is to politicize speech and recognize the complexities that are obscured by the tacit and implied knowledge found within conversation. In the end, collective memory-work seeks to unravel the ways in which individuals, although subconsciously, collaborate with discourse and ideology by constructing themselves into the social structures that act to oppress them (Haug, 1987, 1992, 1998). This unraveling allows us to see hegemonic identities at work. The result is the collective’s articulation of a theory that explains how everyday life is the site where society reproduces itself. This theory is grounded in the experiences of individuals constructed through cultural ideologies by processes of hegemony; in other words, this method allows for the personal sphere to be articulated in political terms (Haug, 1987).

Take for example the recent research of Johnson, Richmond & Kivel (2008) that used collective memory work to encourage young men to recall, examine and analyze their earliest memories of media to connect their individual experiences to shared experiences of similar and/or different groups in society. The participant researchers in the study were seven young men (1 Vietnamese-American, 1 Mexican-American, 2 Asian-Americans, 1 Pacific-Islander, 2 Whites) who ranged in age from 19-26 years of age. The men were asked to write a 3-5 page descriptive story detailing a significant memory of the media that influenced their identity as a [self-identified race] [self-identified gender] and then they engaged in a process of collectively constructing social understandings of the memory narratives drawn from their own earlier experiences. This collective theorizing occurred through processes of debate about individual memories, and acknowledged that meanings are to be contested, that contradiction and dispute will be common and fruitful, and that multiple meanings are possible. Unlike in a semi-structured interview, the topics were participant driven, the layers of meaning deep, and the check and balance of information resulted in a greater degree of freedom to negotiate situated context and collective environmental factors.

In this case, the facilitators guided the discussion by asking participants to (a) express opinions and ideas about each story, (b) look for similarities and differences in each story, and (c) identify generalizations and overarching themes regarding race and gender. Rich contextual data were generated during this focus group and some of the experiences were shared at the sub-conscious level, so that individuals who would have otherwise found it difficult to articulate it in a direct interview situation (Lupton, 1994).

Twenty-four hours after the interview (an extension of Haug’s methodological strategy), Johnson, Richmond & Kivel (2008) provided participants with a transcript of the focus group session, and asked the participants to write an individual response to the session, connecting the discussion back to other sources of information. This third stage of moving the individual (their response) back to the collective discourse (public information and research) encouraged continued involvement in the interpretation of the data and a greater sense of trustworthiness of the final representations.

In another example, the first author conducted a memory work group with four middle-aged white women, in an urban city in northern England. The focus of the

memory-work group was on early memories of racial identity. The four women were asked to write about their earliest memories of realizing their racial identities vis-à-vis leisure. One of the four stories and the collective analysis of it demonstrates the ways in which individual experiences exist within larger ideological frameworks and thus analysis of “experience” is never simply a matter of someone sharing their story apart from the context in which the story has been lived. In one of the stories, a participant described a story of when she was about eight going on holiday with boys whose backgrounds were different from her own. In the process of collective analysis, participants agreed that the initial meaning of the story was: “A little girl is on holiday admiring teenage boys who called themselves Rastas and who are different from her and from one another” (Kivel, 2001). Additionally, members of the collective were asked to “theorize” about this story. Their initial theorizing yielded this explanation: “Leisure is about going away to somewhere different and having fun and having a holiday with a big group of teenage boys from different places and different backgrounds” (Kivel, 2001). As the collective went through the process of discourse analysis that involved examining the verbs and adjectives in the story and in examining the way the memory was constructed, the participants came to a different meaning and theory of the story. The group said that story was really about “going on group holiday, having fun and being fascinated by fitting in, but not belonging because of differences of age, race, sex and ethnicity” (Kivel, 2001). Ultimately, the group theorized that this was the message of the story: “children learn about how differences of race, age, sex and ethnicity are constructed and reproduced in formal, organized leisure settings” (Kivel, 2001).

The research by Richmond, Johnson and Kivel (2008) and the example of the race story (Kivel, 2001) illustrate how the research method of Collective Memory Work contextualizes the meaning of one’s experiences within a broader social, cultural and ideological framework. It is not merely enough to gather experiences through research; rather, such experiences must be dissected and analyzed through a lens that recognizes that theory cannot be separated from experience (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Collective memory work also reminds us that experience is socially and culturally produced and reminds us of Smith (as cited in Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1997), who argued that “. . . the knowledge that can be told from experience is local knowledge of everyday life ‘the secret underpinnings of everything we do’” (p. 72).

Critical Race Ethnography

Described as both an art and science, ethnography is a unique kind of qualitative inquiry distinguishable from case study research, phenomenology, grounded theory studies, or focus group endeavors given that it is the process and product of describing and interpreting a culture. Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) explained that:

As a process, researchers participate overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions—in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (p. 1).

Involved in this process of participant-observation, ethnographers turn their observations into data: they write down their observations in field notes, ask questions and write extensively about the answers. Thus, through participant-observation and

ethnographic interviews, ethnographers create a systematic, cumulative written record of their experiences and other sources of written and visual information, to create the product/representation—an ethnography.

Despite ethnography's methodological power of interpretive cultural description, many contemporary ethnographers prefer a more critical approach, an approach that criticizes the current social order in a way that facilitates emancipation or liberation from the oppressive structures that keep people captive, marginalized or in fear. Although some topic oriented ethnographers use theoretical frameworks such as feminism (to focus on gender) or Marxist theories (to focus on class), to achieve a more critical perspective on race, we suggest leisure researchers use critical race theory (CRT).

Given our critique of how race has been used in the leisure studies literature we believe that Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows us to “emphasize the importance of [racial meaning] making in the proper historical and cultural context to deconstruct their racialized content” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). CRT postulates that race should be examined as a political, social, and cultural construct and that like gender, race is an identity construct; its meanings are infused by those individuals and collectives who create it (Boris, 1994). CRT moves away from Eurocentric views and holds as its main focus a framework that is anti-oppressive and considers race equality. One basic tenet of CRT is connecting racism and a person's race with other forms of oppression including structural and power relations. Freedom from oppression and transformation of the connection of race and oppression is exemplified in CRT through a commitment to social justice and activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hylton, 2005).

Critical race ethnography merges the methods of ethnography with tenets of CRT to capture how the larger social structures of society create social problems or inequities for members of that society based on racist social systems and ideologies. One strong feature of critical race ethnography is that it inherently and intimately involves people from the community studied, allowing the researcher bound up in the community struggles, to identify, understand, and resolve social problem(s) with the goal of bringing about social change for racial minorities who suffer at the hand of domination, subjugation, and oppression.

Although there are a few examples of the use of CRT in leisure studies (e.g., Glover 2007), we were unable to find any examples of critical race ethnography in the leisure, sport or tourism literatures (or *on* leisure, sport, or tourism in other social science literatures). Therefore, we turn to the education literature for an example of critical race ethnography in action. Duncan (2002) noted that although there are no shortage of studies that document the plight of adolescent black male students in public secondary schools, he longed to understand how that was an expression of racism endemic to North American society.

Duncan (2002) set out on a multi-stage critical race ethnography of City High School from December 1998-2001. Founded in the 1970s in the metropolitan Midwest, City High School was a magnet school with approximately 300 students. Over the past two decades the school had gained national notoriety as a racially integrated public school which emphasized rigorous curriculum, produced first-rate students, and had a caring institutional culture.

With an approximately 90% black population at City High School, there were only 24 black males in a body of over 274 in 1998 when the study began, with only one graduating that same year. After gaining permissions and access to the ethnographic site, Duncan (2002) began collecting information such as attrition and retention rates, graduation rates, school and community demographics, standardized test scores, attendance records, and documents related to the historical, ideological and programmatic features of the school. Although his stages of engagement with the school varied, he was able to collect participant observations over the course of three years to document the formal and informal interactions at the school. Interactions that illuminated the day-to-day culture in classrooms, hallways, pass periods, the main office, lunchroom, extra-curricular activities and staff training sessions.

As a result of using critical race ethnography, Duncan (2002) found:

Black male students in schools suffer a condition characteristic of a population that is beyond love, a condition of those who are excluded from society's economic and networks of care and thus expelled from useful participation in social life. Further, because black males are constructed as a strange population, that is, as a group with values and attitudes that are fundamentally different from other students, their marginalization and oppression are understood as natural and primarily of their own doing (p.140).

What Duncan (2002) is able to do with a critical race ethnography that others might not have been able to achieve, is demonstrate with observational and interview data, the tenacity with which racist stereotypes remain fixed to the imaginations (read: essentialized minds) of the dominant group in ways that keep the community from eradicating cultural and institutional conditions of oppression. In the end, Duncan is able to call for the creation of a space and place where young black males speak their stories and invite others in to see the world through their eyes as opposed to envisioning that world the way that is easiest. This emancipated space is surely an outcome that we hope racial minorities (and racial majorities for that matter), could achieve in leisure and subsequently within our research. Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002) argued that "reality exists independently of people's consciousness of it, but the connections between what is real, what is thought and what is experienced cannot be easily disentangled" (p. 72). It is precisely these points of intersection that make one's experience complex and, at the same time, provide insight into how the experience can be understood and interpreted within leisure research.

Exploring the construction of self and identity in the process of collective memory work or critical race ethnography provides leisure researchers methodological solutions so that participants are not passive recipients of the categorizations placed upon them without consideration of historical or contextual factors necessary for understanding leisure experience, but instead realize how they are taken up to describe who they were as individuals—individuals who collectively make up the social fabric embedded in the history and politics of experience. Work like this moves leisure research beyond the predictive behavior models, illuminating the complexity of culture, subtle institutional power and the ways it might impact personal and social identity development. In addition, research participants become active agents in the construction of knowledge and what-is-to-be-known about them regarding leisure makes for a complete re-positioning of study participants and researcher. Further, the research

provides a broader context for understanding and contextualizing individual, personal experience.

Conclusion

By focusing solely on identity politics such as race without asking questions about how those markers are constructed and how they impact people, we continue to create monolithic images of diverse communities. As Leisure Scholars, we have focused on individual characteristics that create artificial differences among and between individuals and groups of people. Perhaps what we really wanted to understand is how institutions construct and perpetuate racism, sexism and heterosexism, in addition to how do hegemonies of whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality (as found in and through leisure contexts) contribute to discourses of “othering.” It is not the race or gender or sexuality of the individual that we need to understand per se, but rather the ideologies and social and cultural practices that emerge in and through these categories of identity and how they converge to afford – or constrain - opportunities. In the quest to “represent” individuals and their experiences, leisure studies scholars need to attend to the important endeavour of theorizing leisure experience and identity without “othering” people and without representing their experiences in reductionist, and overly deterministic ways. In an effort to attend to these issues we have offered two methodological strategies: collective memory work and critical ethnography. Using these two approaches leisure studies scholars can begin to conceptualize leisure experiences by locating experiences within socio-historical and political contexts and by acknowledging the fluidity of identity and identity categories in ways that shift the paradigm of how we study race and the leisure experience.

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