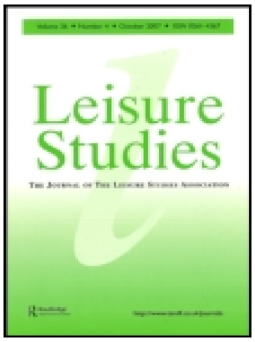

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Leisure and Indigenous Peoples

KAREN FOX
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta, Canada

The emerging coalitions and alliances between Indigenous peoples from disparate parts of the world are focused on concepts of 'traditional and land-specific' peoples and cultures while struggling to resist, manipulate, and utilise globalising and technological forces. Both the political and epistemological perspectives of Indigenous peoples challenge Eurocentric leisure practices, epistemologies, and scholarship. If leisure studies is to address the differences and develop praxis that is relevant to Indigenous peoples, responding to critiques by Indigenous scholars is essential. In this paper, I wish to begin a conversation about the complexity of the issues and sketch out elements for a leisure scholarship that connects with Indigenous peoples.

A conservative estimate for the worldwide population of Indigenous peoples is 250 million (http://web.worldbank.org). The identification of Indigenous peoples is complicated, since there is no precise definition that applies world wide, includes rural and urban contexts, or addresses the multiplicity of Indigenous peoples as distinct nations with various sovereign status, legal rights, and/or politically encapsulated within nation-state boundaries. Larger, universal categories are a Eurocentric practice that lumps together different Indigenous peoples based upon essential characteristics. Although problematic, the framework proposed by the United Nations does, at least, frame identity within larger political and economic forces, gives priority in time for occupation and use of specific lands, and connects with specific practices (i.e. language, social organisation, values, institutions), self-identification, and experiences or histories of subjugation (Daes, 1996). However, this approach leaves invisible Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that create knowledge differently and connect them in important but diverse ways to the land. Therefore, Indigenous scholars argue for using original languages and terms of tribe, band, clan, or kinship group. Although useful for many Indigenous peoples, this view remains within identity politics and obscures current challenges for cultural survival and urban people of mixed descent. Pan-Indigenous categories,

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Correspondence Address: Karen Fox, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, W1-34 Van Vliet Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2H9, Canada. Email: Karen.fox@ualberta.ca

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political efforts, and practices emerged in North America with the residential school experience and provide political leverage. Given the range of peoples and histories covered within the large category, the limited space allotted, Indigenous peoples, although a general and imperfect term, is used as an inclusive description of culturally-based forms not primarily rooted in Eurocentric philosophies, epistemologies, methodologies, and environmental understandings (Cajete, 2005).

Although Eurocentric leisure is obviously relevant within a modern and globalised world, the use of this category for understanding the worldviews of Indigenous peoples risks appropriating and deforming Indigenous knowledges and practices. For many Indigenous peoples 'research' is yet another form of European imperialism and colonisation. Smith states that 'the word itself is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary because it has dehumanised Indigenous peoples in the privileging of western epistemologies and methodologies' (cited in O'Riley, 2004: p. 89). Given that much of the conceptualisation and scholarship related to extant leisure literature has been created without an Indigenous voice or participation, based upon Eurocentric epistemologies, the extant knowledge and practices must be used with critical reflections, decolonising processes, and caution.

Rethinking Leisure Scholarship in Connection with Indigenous Scholarship

The very word 'leisure' is not present in many languages (including many Indigenous languages). However, even when the word is present the connection between an Indigenous concept and a Eurocentric leisure system is far from clear. In Hawaiian, *manawa nanea* are the words Christian missionaries associated with English leisure (Schütz, 1994; Benham & Heck, 1998). However, translation is never a straightforward process. In this case, the Christian missionaries were primarily concerned with developing a language to spread the 'word of God' and less about understanding the beliefs, practices, and worldviews of Native Hawaiians. *Manawa nanea* literally translated means 'lying in a shallow lagoon with water flowing over you while birds are singing'. Hawaiian, however, is a language of multiple layers of meaning that is not immediately comprehended, and this conceptual category has not been explored. What activities, processes, or events are signified by the terms? What are the symbolic and coded meanings related to water, lagoon, moving water, or birds singing? Are the terms metaphorical and include sitting among friends with the flow of generosity and *aloha* part of this category? If so, the early Christian missionaries saw these behaviours as idleness and wasteful.

These types of social interactions were present within other Indigenous societal structures. For instance, the Haida Gwaii in Canada structured their governmental processes around food, storytelling, song, and 'gifting' rather than capitalistic and legalistic forms. Again Europeans judged these practices negatively and rarely bothered to learn the language or entertain different understandings of government. Furthermore, Hawaiian has another word for sports. How did *manawa nanea* differ from sports? To even begin to understand *manawa nanea* requires substantial scholarly investigation and collaboration with Native Hawaiians who understand oral and cultural traditions.

Therefore, I propose that an essential element of rethinking leisure and its relevance to Indigenous scholars is rethinking how we approach the study of leisure. First, we are in dire need of descriptive studies (Kelly, 1992, 1994; Chick, 1998, 2000). Regardless of definitions or characterisations of leisure, the concepts of activity narrowly defined, time, and choice are always implicated. An examination of our literature demonstrates that these huge categories and others (e.g. outdoor recreation, camping, soccer, football, sports, idleness, television watching) are used without any detailed descriptions or theorising. A reader must have substantial cultural knowledge to understand these categories. Furthermore, the assumption that these are implemented the same across all cultures even in Eurocentric nations is illusionary. At some level the broad and vague labels construct 'similarities' without a concurrent understanding of differences.

Indigenous people's worldviews are cognitive maps of particular ecosystems and are directed toward creating harmony in the world and cosmos. Leisure scholarship that has focused on linear, compartmentalised, noun-related aspects of Indigenous peoples' worlds often misconstrues the dynamic, cyclical and verb-based world of Indigenous peoples. Tewa scholar Cajete (2005) argued that Indigenous contextualisation is substantially different than the Eurocentric emphasis on delimited spaces and activities. Therefore, the extant research that documents and lists games, sports, and other activities without connecting them to spiritual, governmental, ecological, or community processes is an example of imposing Eurocentric categories upon Indigenous worldviews and in need of critical assessments.

Onandaga scholar Newhouse (2004) proposed that 'complex understanding occurs when we begin to see a phenomenon from various perspectives, as well as the relationships among these perspectives' (p. 143). Complex understanding ensures that all views are given due consideration rather than replacing one view with another. Complex understanding is all things at one time rather than one or the other, grounded in dialogue rather than dialectic, and posits a view of a constantly changing reality capable of transformation at any moment. The recounting and memory related to conquest, harm, slavery, oppression, illness, and political and cultural decimation related to Eurocentric leisure (e.g. deaths from sexually transmitted diseases, introduction of alcohol, outlawing of cultural traditions, and objectification of Indigenous people for non-Indigenous tourism) becomes essential components of the study of leisures because of its crucial role in the resistance, identity, creativity, and survival of Indigenous peoples (Graveline, 1998; Fixico, 2003).

Second, the concept of leisure needs to be problematised and opened for theorising and critique. Extant leisure scholarship connected to Indigenous peoples has begun with assumptions about 'the goodness' of leisure and Eurocentric research and scholarship. Even when critical or raising complex issues, 'the goodness' of leisure and Eurocentric frameworks permeate extant leisure scholarship. A crucial process for addressing these requirements entails the construction of knowledge centred on Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies as well as focused on collaborative approaches.

Comstock (1984) suggested that the problem with definitions does not lie with what is to be defined, but with an inadequate grasp of what a definition is supposed to accomplish. Smith (2004) enunciated a detailed and interactive comparative process using polythetic strategies. The best known example of a polythetic approach is Wittgenstein's (1958) explanation of the meaning of 'game'. He described a wide variety of activities that are connected to games but noted that there is no single feature common to all games. Wittgenstein proposed that resemblances could be found among the different types of games even if they did not share any features in common. Positing leisures with resemblances places Eurocentric leisure as one of many. Then, the scholarship task is to theorise about second-order intellectual categories and the rationale for comparing two 'leisures' (e.g. Native Hawaiian and Canadian practices). This process is not without its own problematics given the Eurocentric framework, but it does provide an entrance for a different type of scholarship and structure for negotiating research and scholarship.

Third, Indigenous scholars have criticised the inherent hegemony implicit within western intellectual traditions with Indigenous epistemologies and praxis and embraced Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as a basis for decolonising the mind while securing a foundation for future cooperation (Deloria Jr., 1978; Grounds *et al*., 2003; Fleras, 2004). Indigenous scholarship (Battiste, 2000; Mihesuah & Cavender Wilson, 2004) requires moral dialogue with, and the participation of, Indigenous communities so knowledge constructions serve their needs and interests. Anglo-Canadian Fletcher (2003) suggested that community-based participatory research is a Eurocentric philosophy and method that engages people and communities in all phases of the research, respects Indigenous political autonomy, and has the potential to addresses the political economy of data. Attwood and Arnold (1997) further suggested that scholarship about, by, and with Indigenous peoples must be a complex and multivalent praxis that 'radically destabilise conventional ways of establishing identity or existential conditions of being for both Aborigines and ourselves' (p. iv). Future leisure scholarship needs to comprehend, resist, and transform the effect of colonisation of Eurocentric leisure on Indigenous peoples and the ongoing erosion of Indigenous languages, knowledge, and culture as a result of colonisation.

Fourth, postcolonial analysis and decolonisation describe symbolic strategies for shaping desirable futures through understanding the harms of the past, shifting power relationships, and rejecting simplistic choices. Analogously, decolonising and critical self-reflexive processes move Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and researchers toward knowledge respectful of Indigenous individuals and communities (Davis, 2004) and responsive to the responsibilities of translation and interpretation between different cultures, languages, concepts, and societies (Bhabha, 2004). These responsibilities include a transparency related to our concepts and theories, use of power, processes that are open-ended and responsive to change, and attention to multiple interpretations. From a Maori standpoint, Bishop (cited in Stairs, 2004) reminds us why non-Indigenous researchers should be involved in Indigenous research – for us to leave it all to the first peoples is to abrogate our responsibilities as partners on this earth.

Additional Elements for Research about Leisures

Indigenous peoples' exposure/engagement with Eurocentric leisure has both positive and negative consequences. Therefore, extant leisure research connected with

Indigenous peoples must be carefully, rigorously, and critically evaluated for Eurocentric bias, racism, and power within the language, assumptions, and frameworks of the research. Although there have been some moves toward collaborative research, the majority of leisure research connected with Indigenous peoples is framed in Eurocentric perspectives, focuses only on positive outcomes as defined within Eurocentric categories, and isolates leisure and related concepts from holistic Indigenous languages, perspectives, cultures, and political strategies for self-governance and self-determination (Hollinshead, 1992, Lashua, in press; Lashua & Fox, in press).

Clearly leisures are paradoxical, hybrid constructions, and fluid among the forces of globalisation, dominant societies, pan-Indigenous movements and coalitions, and resurgence of local traditions and languages. Eurocentric leisure, emerging globalised forms of leisures, and Indigenous leisures are important components of the lives, health, and worlds of Indigenous peoples. Navigating through the forces of oppression and colonialisation and opportunities for agency is difficult and fraught with challenges that require reciprocal and mutual efforts and scholarship by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

A primary challenge in the future will be to cultivate polythetic approaches to leisures that work across historical eras, traditional practices, worldviews, and cultural differences, and inclusive of multiple research and knowledge strategies. Furthermore, research praxis that attends to multidisciplinary insights, theories, and research as well as Indigenous critiques and propositions for collaboration and ownership will need to be developed and refined. To think more clearly about this difference, Indigenous scholars suggest that there must be Indigenous critiques of existing Eurocentric scholarship and a decolonisation of scholarship. Quechua scholar Grande (2004) states:

> While there is nothing inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary about theory, it is one of our primary responsibilities as educators to link the lived experience of theorizing to the processes of self-recovery and social transformation. (p. 3)

Emerging forms of theorising consistent with Indigenous scholarship: (1) need to be situated within and evaluated against Indigenous goals of self-determination and self-governance; (2) must honour Indigenous language rights and stories; (3) need to approach both the practices, definitions of problems, and solutions from a holistic, mind–body–spirit–nature interconnected perspective; and (4) must address a ‘complex understanding’ (Newhouse, 2004).

The majority of leisure research and scholarship assumes a self-evident and transparent aspect of language rather than address scholarship and theories about language, translation, and cognition. The loss of Indigenous languages worldwide is of concern to Indigenous scholars and peoples (Walsh, 2005). For many Indigenous groups, language is more than a political issue. Language is about aesthetics, beauty, ceremonies, fertile land, sustaining culture, and spiritual connections (Johansen, 2004). Pattanayak (2000) writes, ‘By luring people to opt for globalisation without enabling them to communicate with the local and the proximate, globalisation is an agent of cultural destruction’ (p. 47).

Finally, even the characterisation of Indigenous peoples by the United Nations and International Labour Organisation leaves invisible the issues surrounding

Indigenous people whose primary residences are urban or nomadic and the glocalised (i.e. local practices influenced by global forces) modern world. Indigenous people struggling to construct urban identities and integrate traditional ways (i.e. traditional protocols and strategies for addressing the current world) do not fit easily into categories based around traditional land-based residences nor within modern Eurocentric political and social structures. Leisure scholarship has yet to explore the significance and difference within urban Indigenous leisure practices such as hip-hop/rap/traditional music/dance, storytelling, and visual and performance art (Merlan, 1997; Kwaku, 1999; Mitchell, 2000). Although Eurocentric scholarship about identity, hybridity, and movement has highlighted some of the issues, an Indigenous perspective and/or dialogue is just emerging. Indigenous education projects (Meyer, 2003; Kahakalau, personal communication, 12 June 2006), Indigenous interpretations of popular culture, and emerging artistic directions all suggest strength and creativity for addressing these challenges and weaving Indigenous traditions (i.e. a specific protocol or approach for living in the world) with globalising forces creating alternative understandings of leisures.

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