Dublin Institute of Technology
ARROW@DIT

Articles

School of Hospitality Management and Tourism

2010-07-01

False Dichotomies, Facts and Values, and the Snares of Objectivism: Planning for Leisure from an Experiential Perspective?

Ross D. Neville
Dublin Institute of Technology, ross.neville2@student.dit.ie

Follow this and additional works at: http://arrow.dit.ie/tfschhmtart

Recommended Citation
Neville, R.D. (2010) 'False Dichotomies, Facts and Values, and the Snares of Objectivism: Planning for Leisure from an Experiential Perspective?', in L. Mansfield & D. Chatziefstathiou (eds) Leisure Identities and Authenticity (LSA Publication No. 110). Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp. 97-110.

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism at ARROW@DIT. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@DIT. For more information, please contact yvonne.desmond@dit.ie, arrow.admin@dit.ie.

False Dichotomies, Facts and Values, and the Snares of Objectivism: Planning for Leisure from an Experiential Perspective?

ROSS D. NEVILLE

School of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin, Ireland.

ABSTRACT Despite the fact that the experiential perspective has had a profound impact on the way we view leisure behaviour, experiential matters have been renounced for being overtly subjective. As a corollary, experiential matters have been castigated for their inability to offer concrete criteria for leisure policy and the provisions of services. This paper argues that this dismissal of experiential matters is based on an overinflated dichotomy – the fact/value dichotomy – and that, by valorising objectivist approaches to managing leisure resources, experiential matters have become nothing more than a policy-making faux pas. The paper argues that while experiential matters bring many challenges with respect to policy-making and the provision of leisure services, this type of experiential oversight is one of convenience rather than necessity.

Keywords: experiential perspective, false dichotomies, logical positivism, fact/value dichotomy, policy-making.

Introduction

While the leisure studies tradition has invariably tended towards the softer side of the social inquiry impasse, one cannot help but acknowledge the increasing occurrence of the term experience to refer to the types and varieties of actions that we call leisure. For example, the terms of the hermeneutic/phenomenological embrace in the leisure literature have been characteristically experiential, seeking a greater representational variety of leisure forms (cf. Harper and Hultsman, 1992; Hemmingway, 1995; Hultsman and Harper, 1992). Moreover, it has been posited by some that leisure is better suited to a phenomenological understanding – especially since it is such a multifaceted, social, and relational construction (cf. Dawson, 1984: Harper, 1981; Howe, 1991; Schmitz-Scherzer, 1990). The experiential repose, of course, is more than characteristically methodological. While it might be crude to differentiate it as a unified or unifying narrative, the ongoing trend towards an experiential perspective represents a broad shift in the intellectual sensibility of the West towards a post-rationalistic society. The Enlightenment project, or so it goes, left us with a culture premised on the notion that rationality would provide adequate understandings of how the universe operates, adequate meanings for human lives, and adequate solutions to human problems. According to Neville (1992: p. 338), however, "[t]here is a sense in much contemporary writing that rationality, like Christianity and Marxism, has been tried and has failed." The experiential perspective, as such, is a reactionary repose. It is rooted in the Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism which, after Rousseau and the Romantic poets, emphasised the concept of life. It is clearly evident in Hegel's contrast between life and positivity, Schleiermacher's appeal to feeling against sterile positivism, and Schiller's call for aesthetic freedom against an increasingly mechanistic society (Gadamer, 2004 [1975]). As such, if it can be said to have been reactionary, then it has been equally emancipatory.

If one contemplates leisure action, this Romantic ethic offers a lens through which leisure can be regarded as symbolically rich, inherently meaningful and capable of communicating meaning. It brings with it a view of leisure behaviour that is more typical of animals than machines, that our relationships with objects, possessions, and activities are essentially social, embodied, and emotional (not to mention playful and autotelic), and that rationalistic models of consumption (leisure or otherwise) have taken what is essentially

emotional and inherently meaningful and have approached it from neoclassical angle. While much of the current experiential theory has been guilty of adjectival intemperance and has been described as being ideological[1] (cf. Carù and Cova, 2003 Holbrook, 2007), the experiential perspective certainly demarcates some distinct ground from which the relationship between consumers, products and services, and symbolic meanings can be addressed. In fact, where other disciplines have discussed experiential consumption, they have focused almost exclusively on leisure activities (cf. Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi, Rose and Leigh, 1993; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook, 1995; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva and Greenleaf, 1984).

If the experiential perspective offers all of this to our understanding of leisure action, then what does it offer to leisure practice? Well, given the title of the recently held LSA Annual Conference 2009 – 'Leisure Experiences: Participating, Planning, Providing' – one would be led to believe that it offers (or has offered) a great deal. Nothing, it seems, could be further from the truth. While this, of course, is my own personal reading of the conference title – and perhaps one among a great many – it seems as though there continues to be an indefatigable tension between ideological positions on the one hand and the actual provision and delivery of leisure products and services at the ground level on the other. That is, despite the fact that the experiential perspective has had a profound impact on the way we view leisure behaviour, experiential matters have been renounced for being overtly subjective and for their inability to offer concrete criteria for leisure policy and the provisions of services. While it is acknowledged that the experiential view brings with it many challenges, the purpose of this paper is to argue that the dismissal of experiential matters is based on an overinflated dichotomy – a dichotomy that seems to be one of the lasting remnants of positivistic science – and that, by separating fact and value and valorising objectivist approaches to managing (providing for) leisure products and services, experiential matters become nothing more than a policy-making faux pas. The paper discusses some of the consequences of dichotomous thinking and, finally, the notion of planning for leisure from an experiential perspective.

False dichotomies in leisure research: Are we nearly there yet?

According to Rorty (1989: p. 9), "[i]nteresting philosophy is [usually] a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things." If this notion is extrapolated to cover leisure research, we might pose the following question: if the experiential perspective really offers great things, then what does it seem to be up against? Well, if as Burton (1996: p. 28) suggested, "[l]eisure studies has suffered…from the inappropriate use of dichotomies" then logical positivism's separation of fact and value is by all accounts the most dangerous – and its danger is not lessened by the fact that it has been so widespread.[2] Western thought, Burton argues, "is characterized by the use of dichotomies…[and] such dichotomies are central to rational positivistic science" (p. 19). He argued further that, although there is an increasing plurality of methodological representations of leisure behaviour, "[the] increased questioning of positivistic, quantitative science…has not led to a serious re-examination of the appropriate place of logic and reason in the social domain" (p. 18). The following sections of this paper seek to both elucidate and address the nature of this impasse and, moreover, it's implications for leisure.

A case of thy blood or mine?

If, looking back, the logical positivists were to be considered experts at anything outside of "language, truth, and logic"[3] it is clear, given the vehement expression of their theses throughout the scientific enterprise, that it was marketing. Now while this might appear to be

a rather irreverent remark, Magee (2001) has also likened the members of the Vienna Circle to a sort of pseudo-political party. He described how they "self-consciously organized themselves like a political party, with regular meetings, publications and international congresses, propagating their doctrines with missionary zeal" (Magee, 2001: p. 95). The brand of thinking behind their campaign was clearly dichotomous, a style within which the separation between fact and value was a clear forerunner.

Logical positivism, according to Putnam (1995: p. 155), "was fundamentally a denial of entanglement, [and] an insistence on sharp dichotomies: science-ethics, science-metaphysics, analytic-synthetic" (emphasis added). This denial of entanglement was based on a tripartite system of classification that, according to the logical positivists at least, could be applied to absolutely every meaningful judgement. All of our putative judgements, Putnam (2002) recalls, were to be classified as (i) analytic, and thus tautological or true by convention, (ii) synthetic, and thus empirically verifiable or falsifiable, and (iii) those that are cognitively meaningless. This tripartite classification system served as an Occam's razor of sorts, cutting away all matters that could not be rationally justified and dumping them in the metaphysical wastebasket. As Carnap made clear in his book The Unity of Science, "[a]ll statements belonging to Metaphysics, regulative ethics, and (metaphysical) Epistemology have this defect, are in fact unverifiable and, therefore, unscientific. In the Viennese Circle, we are accustomed to describe such statements as nonsense (after Wittgenstein)" (cited in Putnam, 2002: p. 18: emphasis added). Because verification or falsification do not operate in the arena of evaluative judgements (in ethics or aesthetics for example), value judgements were deemed to be logically weak (McNamee, 1994). Moreover, not only were value terms deemed to express mere assertions (or imperatives) and not logical arguments, the fact/value dichotomy was further premised on the notion that value terms could not (and did not) describe states of affairs in the world. So, for scientists at least, value judgements were deemed to be cognitively meaningless.[4]

But of course, it wasn't just scientists. And while matters of fact and value might seem like ivory-tower issues, nothing it seems could be further from the truth. Both Putnam (1995; 2002) and Sen (1987) highlight how this dichotomy came to be regarded as undoubtedly correct by economists in the first half of the twentieth century (in the US in particular), citing Lionel Robbins as its most (in)famous proponent. Robbins emphasised the arbitrary character of ethical discussion in jettisoning welfare economics (at the depths of the depression Putnam reminds us). The position, in Robbins' terms, can be stated as follows:

> If we disagree about ends it is a case of thy blood or mine – or live and let live according to the importance of the difference, or the relative strength of our opponents. But if we disagree about means, then scientific analysis can often help us resolve our differences. If we disagree about the morality of the taking of interest (and we understand what we are talking about), then there is no room for argument (Robbins, 1952 [1935]: p. 150).

Sen (1987) makes an important comment on this Robbinsonian perspective – and one that could be extended to logical positivism more generally. In asserting his position, Robbins appears more concerned with establishing a negative proposition that disagreements about ends are "non-scientific" (or not amenable to scientific verification) rather than asserting the positive proposition that there is a "normative" or "ethical" character to such disagreements. The net effect of Robbins' position was that one could only talk about ethics and economics in juxtaposition because economics deals with ascertainable facts and ethics with obligation and evaluation. As Putnam (2002: p. 54) described, "[w]ith one stroke, the idea that the economist could and should be concerned with the welfare of society in an evaluative sense was rejected." Through a policy-science whose recommendations impact the lives of billions

of people through governmental and non-governmental organisations, it seems as though there is no aspect of human life that has gone unaffected by this kind of objectivism.[5]

It will be conceded that Robbins' work preceded the collapse of the analytic-synthetic in Quine (1951). However, values (and experiential matters in general) remain very much a vexed question outside of philosophy to this day. As Bernstein (2005: p. 253) observed, "[e]ven though the analytic-synthetic and the fact-convention dichotomies…have collapsed, the idea that there really is an unbridgeable gap between fact and value stubbornly persists." Modern marketing-management theory[6] is an excellent case in point – and one that is relevant to leisure since it concerns the distribution and marketing of goods and services in the consumer marketplace. The work of Peter Drucker provides a useful context to explore this connection. While Drucker is most affectionately remembered for his pioneering role in the development of the marketing concept, there is no doubt that his work (and modern marketing-management more generally) is of an objectivist bent. Because its purpose is to create a customer, Drucker (2007: p. 16) writes, "the business enterprise [leisure or otherwise] has two – and only two – basic functions: marketing and innovation." Drucker shared with fellow strategist Michael Porter (among many other notable contemporaries who popularised his work) the recognition that the spirit of innovation is central to the project of competitive advantage. The entrepreneurial firm combines elements of production through acts of innovation – in such areas as design, process, distribution, resource allocation/utilisation, training etc. – in the creation and offering of value. And since Drucker states "You cannot manage what you cannot measure" modern marketing-management aims to establish empirically verifiable links between product features – the controllable elements of the marketing mix – and the image resulting from it. Timeless epithet or not, this line of thought is increasingly problematic: not least because it overlooks shifts in consumer assessment of quality and value throughout the second half of the twentieth century (see Firat and Schultz II, 1997; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh, 1997); but most disconcertingly, because it allows for the dismissal of all kinds of experiential concerns. That is, although modern marketing-management espouses a customer-centric approach, it fails to acknowledge the potentially negative consequences of consumption. As Hirschman (1989: p. 644) noted, "where there [is] a possibility for experiencing joy [in consumption], there [is] also the possibility of experiencing anguish; and consumers who [know] the exhilaration of success may also encounter the depression of defeat." The experiential consumer, as Hirschman put it, "[has] had to face the full consequences of his thoughts, his senses and his emotions" (ibid.). From the beginning then, the objectivist approach allows for the dismissal of hard ethical questions with respect to the use, misuse, and abuse of consumer products and services. Not only does the modern marketing concept appear self-refuting in this light, but it can also be said that the heights of Drucker's position with respect to the spirit of innovation is tempered significantly by the depths of his position with respect to business ethics (see Schwartz, 1998). Moreover, it can be confidently assumed that similar issues arise (and continue to arise) in leisure, especially since products, services, and activities of the experiential kind are often considered to be leisure related.

If, as Kuhn (1962) noted, the dominant paradigm explained why mature sciences progressed and others did not, then one immediately recognises why the products of a positivistic science became, for many, so ineluctable. Because knowledge was the province of philosophy, and because it was only the physical science that produced "real" knowledge, science earned an honorific status in modern culture. Indeed, since science was making progress – something that philosophy has often been criticised for its lack of – it was science that seemed to become foundational to culture. As Smith (2003: p. 122) described, "[since] philosophers thought science was the royal road to truth, they latched onto logic as the slice

of science that they could service: let the experimental scientists discover synthetic truths…[and] philosophers…monitor the analytic truths that were also needed" (emphasis added). This sort of philosophising, as such, became the hand-maiden to science; serving to clean up the logic as it were. Understood in this light, the dichotomous nature of logical positivism turns out to be rather self-serving – serving to legitimise philosophy's place in a culture dominated by science. Looking back, it would not be absurd to say that the diffusion of logical positivism and its objectivist bent throughout the scientific enterprise (and beyond as the aforementioned examples suggest) was as much a product of "how it was being sold" as it was of "what was being sold." And if that's not Marketing 101, then I don't know what is.

The snares of objectivism

Because science is a successful institution, the inclination towards objectivism is an understandable response to a culture that not only prizes success, but demands it. The revival of classical economic theory in the early twentieth century in the United States is case in point – especially since increasing mathematical rigour was central to the entire project (cf. Putnam, 2002; Walsh, 2000). The development of modern marketing-management and consumer behaviour theory proceeded in a likewise direction. Business Schools were scorned for their lack of academic rigour and, as such, their inclination towards an objectivist approach has been characteristic of their struggles for academic legitimacy (see Holbrook, 1995). So it has been with leisure research (see Hemmingway, 1995). Furthermore, such developments were regarded as largely positive, enabling all of these disciplines to assume a more privileged place among the more traditional social sciences. While it is more difficult to make a historical connection between this increased scientism and changes in the concerns of leisure provision, it is clear that leisure has not been exempt from the productive and performative demands of this type of culture. Indeed, in some respects it has taken centre stage. Just as work has been in the past, leisure is now represented as one of the major sites for the production of efficient bodies and for readying embodied subjects for the performative demands of technological culture (cf. Shilling and Mellor, 2007). One need only reflect on the changing nature of community leisure, the conflation between the delivery of sport and the delivery of social objectives, and the use of sport and leisure as strategic tools for actualising national standards of well-being for evidence of this connection. This connection, one might argue, is also self-serving. Moreover, this connection and the objective characteristics underlying it can be challenged on a number of aspects. The following are but a few: (i) the criteria for evaluating leisure practices, (ii) the rationality and motivation of leisure actors, and (iii) the resultant definitions of "normality" central to objectivist perspectives.

The criteria for evaluating leisure practices

The objectivist argument is most succinctly described in McNamee's (1994) paper Valuing Leisure Practices. While his own position is not to be interpreted as objectivist,[7] McNamee argued that "the subjectivist thesis is to be shunned by academics and other professionals concerned with leisure" (p. 291). The central reason for this, according to McNamee, is that "it offers no criteria (and hence no logical basis over mere preference) against which to evaluate such practices or make subsequent policy decisions" (p. 291-292: emphasis added). If we are concerned with what leisure practices are worth providing, "[t]he subjectivist thesis offers us no clues or direction" (p. 292). While this seems certainly to be the case, the objectivist position appears equally fraught with difficulties.

The snares of objectivism are to be found in Coalter's (1998) critique of the normative citizenship paradigm. According to Coalter, "it was accepted that public [leisure] provision

must provide equal opportunities for all…democratise areas of public leisure…reduc[e] constraints and encourag[e] participation" (p. 27). By the late 1980s, however, Coalter observed that leisure services came under attack for their failure to cater for those groups most in need. Because the provision of services were determined almost exclusively by "experts" (professionals, bureaucrats, the social elite etc.), the objectivist orientation led to a "crisis in the relationship between citizens and inflexible, bureaucratic and non-responsive public services" (Coalter, 1998: p. 28). In fact, while Coalter's discussion is directed towards the areas of public leisure provision that deal with the management of public sports and recreation facilities, it seems as though the management of tourist sites also provides examples germane to the problems with an objectivist position (heritage attractions in particular).

Rojek's (1988; 1995) discussion of citizenship rights relating to the management of access at Stonehenge provides a particularly revealing example. Since the state undertakes the management of these resources "for all," Rojek highlighted how this can raise problems with social groupings who seek to occupy these public spaces in a manner conflicting with those specified by the state. By defining a minimal set of uses for the site (an objectivist orientation) the state stigmatized and obstructed groups who defined the use-value of the site on different terms. The application of secular, bureaucratic distinctions on site management, Rojek writes, has contributed to the disenchantment of the monument. For these minority groupings, the state has "violat[ed] the mystical integrity of the site…turning Stonehenge into just another tourist attraction" (p. 73). More recently, Garrod and Fyall (2000) have suggested that the key performance indicators utilised in the management of heritage attractions are anathema to the sustainability imperative. Site managers, according to Garrod and Fyall (2000: p. 698), "expect heritage attractions to adopt a largely reactive strategy towards the sustainability issue…[and] accept that more costly impacts are inevitable rather than…tak[ing] strategic measures to moderate them." The more explicit claim in this instance is that recreational welfarism (and notions of "access for all" and "equal opportunities") is at odds with the curatorial approach to site management.[8] As this preservationist position celebrates the inherent or intrinsic value of artefacts and monuments, management see themselves more as guardians of the past rather than tourism providers or facilitators of community leisure. So, although Poria and Ashworth (2009) have argued that heritage tourism can act as a mechanism for social stability, identity realization/creation, and solidarity, the curatorial approach to site management represents a significant barrier to this normative imperative.

Despite the fact that the experiential aspects of leisure consumption have been castigated for their inability to offer evaluative criteria for leisure policy, the key performance indicators typical of objectivist positions have also come under critical scrutiny – for their inability to develop welfare-related performance targets in particular (Coalter, 1995; 1998). Moreover, there appears to be nothing like a consensus on what the evaluative criteria should be. If performance related targets such as increasing visitor numbers or visitor spend are too crude, what are the alternatives? Increasing solidarity? Increasing social capital? Increasing societal efficiency? The objectivist orientation founders on the fact that any one of these normative imperatives assume a collective set of objectives, which is clearly a contentious issue. Indeed the idea of providing more and more of something is but a lasting remnant of utilitarianism and its image of homo economicus. It seems at least as plausible to say that what people want is not more value, or more of a given commodity, but different types of value – a point discussed at length in Holbrook (1999). Taken together with the broader leisure sector, the snares of objectivism highlight various inherent tensions between ideological positions and the actual provision, delivery, and consumption of products and

services at the ground level.[9] The tension, that is, between public projects and shared vocabularies on the one hand, and private projects of self creation, aggrandisement, and even self-debasement on the other. The assumption of rationality is central to this tension.

The rationality and motivation of leisure actors

The standard picture of economic man is a picture of rationality. And the assumption of rational behaviour has played a central role in modern economic theory. As such there are various objective characteristics (or foundations) from which economics must proceed. As Antonides (1996: p. 245) explained:

> Economics is based on the assumption of rational behavior, in the sense that it can be understood by asking how well-informed individuals would act to secure their best advantages. It is assumed that individuals have utility functions…that enable them to rank order all possible states of the world in terms of the satisfaction provided for them. Furthermore, individuals are assumed to be able…to determine which states of the world are attainable for them. From these states, individuals choose the ones yielding the highest utility (emphasis added).

Moreover, as Sen (1987) noted, "[h]uman beings are assumed to behave rationally, and given this special assumption, characterizing rational behaviour is not, in this approach, ultimately different from describing actual behaviour" (p. 11: emphasis added). The underlying assumption of rationality, its attendant assumption that rational behaviour is directed towards the maximisation of self-interest, and the assumption that all partners to a transaction (economic or otherwise) are reasonably well-informed seem to be problematic from the beginning. This, it seems, is an issue pregnant for those academics, professionals and policy-makers concerned with models of behavioural change.

The case of free-time physical activity presents an interesting example of where this seems to be especially the case. A wealth of medical research which has emerged over the past number of decades has substantiated the existence of health-related benefits of exercise and regular leisure-time physical activity. As such, sport and leisure have been leveraged by governments and policy-makers of all kinds in order to militate against the increasing trend towards obesity and inactivity. The underlying assumptions of the resulting interventionist models, however, need to be examined more closely. According to Sassatelli (1999; cf. Crossley, 2006) – whose research focused on the construction of the fitness experience – while clients clearly recognise the "rationality" of undertaking fitness workouts as being useful in mitigating the effects of degenerative conditions and in projects of self-creation they simply do not get into it. They understand that fitness workouts are useful in producing a better body (both functionally and aesthetically) yet they fail to maintain anything like a steady trajectory of their fitness participation. Her research exposes the limits of rational models of choice behaviour. Perhaps most disconcertingly, her research highlights that the more desired objectives are perceived as vital, the more participants will feel inadequate and unable to respond to the performative demands of our instrumental culture (cf. Mintel, 2007; Smith Maguire, 2008). Cross-cultural research in Tsai (2005) also suggested that the dissemination of information about the positive benefits of engaging in healthy activities – one of the major strategies implemented at the policy level – has no significant impact on the engagement in those activities. According to Tsai, beliefs in the physiological benefits of active recreation did not enhance interest or intention to participate in regular active recreation for either Hong Kong or Australian respondents. Tsai continued by saying that "leisure decisions may not always be as rational as social cognitive theories assume" and that "[p]eople do not always seek to maximise their leisure benefits" (ibid. p. 397). She continued by saying that "[m]any people tend to accept the "good-enough" experience rather than optimizing their long term benefits from leisure" (ibid.). Not only do the performative demands of an increasingly medicalised culture – as produced and perpetuated under the gaze

of national and regional health campaigns – seem to be rather self-serving, they appear to act somewhat paradoxically as barriers to the very ends they are trying to pursue.

The assumption of rationality as a mediating element between predicted behaviour and actual behaviour is, to borrow from Putnam (2002: p. 44), but a "methodological hope." And the assumption that leisure actors only act upon self-interested motives fails to account for the great variety of loyalties that are attached to very meaning of belonging to a group. Moreover, this assumed homologous relation between predicted and actual behaviour overlooks the fact that boredom, weakness, apathy, self-contempt, despair, and other "experiential" states can make people fail to desire certain prescriptive outcomes (Anderson, 1995; Putnam, 2002). One might believe that something is inherently good yet be unmotivated to desire or choose it – a problem Putnam (2002) reminds us that is a old as Aristotle's writings about akrasia (weakness of will). Economic actors are assumed to make cost-benefit assessments in the name of maximising self-interest and, moreover, these choices are deemed to isomorphically reflect one's beliefs, intentions, goals, and values. This assumption is foundational even though it is oftentimes not the case. Models of behavioural change seem to be unable to account for this experiential indifference – or seem to proceed ignorant of it in the first place. Moreover, they seem to take for granted that leisure actors are reasonably well-informed despite the fact that asymmetries of all kinds are intrinsic to even the most modest of marketplace exchanges.

The problem of normality

Both of the previous sections raise important questions about the definition of normality with respect to leisure policy – but in quite different ways. Rojek's (1995) discussion of Weber and the bureaucratization of society is useful here. At the heart of Weber's discussion, Rojek writes, is the idea that the bureaucratization of society increases calculation, measurement and control – at both the bodily and the societal level. In terms of the body, activities with respect to the objectification, regulation, and standardisation of working bodies abound in current epidemiological research and practice. And, in the case of interventionist models or models of behavioural change, there has been an overwhelming tendency to reify the observational base from which classifications of health can be made. The measurement of obesity through Body Mass Index (BMI) is the clearest case in point. In a recent review of the epidemiological literature, Burkhauser and Cawley (2008; cf. Prentice and Jebb, 2001) found that obesity using BMI is weakly correlated with obesity defined using more accurate measures of fatness (measures of total body fat and body fat percentage) and that obesity defined using BMI resulted in the misclassification of individuals into inappropriate categories. More specifically, the black-white gap in obesity rates changes when one classifies people as obese using alternative methods of analysis (body fat percentage). According to Burkhauser and Cawley, the gap between African American and white females falls by more than half whereas it appears that the distinction between African American and white males – commonly thought of as being insignificant – actually widens significantly. Based on this account at least, it seems as though the class-based stratification of health changes dramatically when obesity is classified through alternative measures. Apart from racial distinctions, Prentice and Jebb (2001) argued that the reification of obesity/health through BMI can result in misleading information relating to infants and children, athletes, military and civil forces personnel among other segments of the population. Moreover, it does not account for weight loss/maintenance through carnal or harmful dieting and exercise techniques (see Crossley, 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Frew and McGillivray, 2005). This, according to Kragelund and Omland (2005), leaves open scepticism about whether obesity is a public health problem at all – or as much of a problem as the popular press would have you believe (cf. Gard and Wright, 2005).

At the level of society, Rojek's (ibid.) discussion of access issues with respect to Stonehenge (and heritage attractions more generally) presents an interesting example of how definitions of normality can result in contested leisure spaces. On the charge of the disenchantment of Stonehenge, the state rebuttal was that, in order to manage the sustainability of such sites, these public spaces are maintained to serve the needs of "normal" visitors. As Rojek (1988; 1995) noted, this raises questions about the appropriate definition of "normality" and the place of discriminatory approaches to site management. The case at Stonehenge is a prime example of how leisure can be (and often is) a site for the reproduction of wider socio-cultural inequalities and not merely a vehicle of social or moral progress. While the heritage example represents only one area among many that could be considered contested leisure, it obviously raises some general questions as to the ownership of leisure spaces, the representation of minority groups' needs, the low trust evaluation afforded to certain population sub-groupings, conflict, and social inclusion/exclusion.

Conclusion: Planning for leisure from an experiential perspective?

It seems quite paradoxical that, on the one hand, we have a view of leisure consumption that clearly reflects a fundamental shift towards a more experientially oriented society yet, on the other, we have an attitude towards policy-making and the provision of services that occludes such criteria. There have been various different reasons offered to explain this.

The relative absence of a concern with experiential matters, according to Coalter (1998: p. 23), "is in part explained by a failure to develop a strong body of research in the psychology of leisure." While this might be significant enough in itself, Burton (1996) argues that it is due to an inappropriate fit between the outmoded and archaic ideological approach to leisure provision and the more fluid, protean, and fragmented needs of the market. Highly rational (objectivist) approaches to policy making, according to Burton, "do not meet the needs of [the] diverse and complex mix of people who make up the real world and for whom leisure services are provided." He continued by saying that "[b]y oversimplifying and denying the complicated and often paradoxical characteristics and needs of difference social groups, these models perpetuate policies and delivery systems that are out of step with the complexities of social reality" (p. 26). According to Holbrook (1985; 1995), this tension results not merely because delivery systems are out of step, but rather, because of an indefatigable conflict of interest between both parties to the exchange – a position he seems to have inherited from Veblen. According to Veblen (2007 [1918]: p. 22), who was commenting on the academic ethic in America at the time, "the technologist and the professional man are, like other men of affairs, necessarily and habitually impatient of any scientific or scholarly work that does not obviously lend itself to some practical use." The technologist, he continued, "appreciates what is mechanically serviceable; the professional man…appreciates what promises pecuniary gain; and the two unite with the business-man at large in repudiating whatever does not look directly to such a utilitarian outcome" (p. 22). If business executives, economists, policy-makers, and managers of all kinds are to be considered the Gods of commerce, then Holbrook reminds us that, like the Greek Hermes, they are also the patron of thieves. While they, like Hermes, are the guardians of the marketplace, the inventors and traders, the heralds of information and information exchange, they concern themselves not with what is worth making or communicating, but with what sells. If we want ethics and aesthetics, we will have to look elsewhere. If we seek solace for our experiential misfortunes, we are on our own. The world of the technologist and the professional man is, to borrow from Shilling and Mellor (2007: p. 540), "inherently inhospitable" to matters of this kind.

While it would be remiss to suggest that we have not moved beyond the brand of Robbinsonian economics that was prevalent in the 1930s in the US, that there has not been a re-evaluation of the modern marketing-management principles outlined by Drucker and his contemporaries, or that the critique of the market in Veblen's 1918 account is an accurate reflection of the position within leisure market today, it is clear that the "snares of objectivism" outlined in this paper are born of the same kind. That is, they all reflect kind of dichotomous thinking that has been central to Western thought; the kind of dichotomous thinking that stems almost exclusively from the logical positivist separation of fact and value; the kind of dichotomous thinking that cultivates objectivist approaches to the provision and management of leisure products and services. The objectivist position is problematic because it allows leisure professionals and policy-makers of all kinds to relativise matters of experiential concern and, as a corollary, dismiss hard ethical questions with respect to the use, misuse, and abuse of leisure services. It has been shown to proceed on tenuous assumptions, lead to the misclassification of significant segments of the population, and propagate non-responsive public services. All of this raises questions with respect to the misrepresentation of needs and the contested nature and ownership of leisure spaces and resources. Moreover, it is within our current economic climate that this type of objectivism has the potential to be particularly prevalent. While it is acknowledged that experiential matters bring many challenges with respect to policy-making and the provision of leisure services, this type of experiential oversight is to be considered one of convenience rather than necessity. At the very least, I hope to have shown how this objectivist position still permeates the leisure tradition at various levels and, moreover, how it is inherently problematic.

For reasons that should be clear at this point, planning for leisure from an experiential perspective is a rather contested issue – perhaps even an oxymoron. It is contested because, despite the increasing occurrence of the term experience to refer to the types and varieties of actions that we call leisure, there still remains a rather noticeable tension between the provision of leisure services and the consumption of leisure experiences. That is, while the experiential consumer has to face the full consequences of their thoughts and feelings as they seek to grant space to emotions, the provision of products and services seems to float several feet above this experiential ground. This much, I hope to have covered in sufficient detail in this paper. It turns out to be an oxymoron if we follow Rorty (1989: p. xv) and "are content to treat the demands of self-creation and human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable." A view, no doubt, that challenges standard conventions with respect to the value of leisure in the public domain.

Notes

1. These charges of adjectival intemperance and ideology require some additional warrant. The former can be directed towards a plethora of current experiential theory (in the form of management self-help books) that argue we have outgrown our service-dominant hand-me-downs and have entered into a phase of experiential enlightenment. As a panacea for poor business performance, we must turn ordinary products into extraordinary experiences, "Wow" the customer, engage the customer in a memorable way and so on ad infinitum. Sell the sizzle not the steak and you will be granted ascendency from mere commodity status and the likes. For their part, the experiential perspective has been especially dragged through the mud. Not because the idea of selling experiences is unjustified, but rather, because they fail to say anything new. Marketing-management gurus as far back as Abbott (1955), Alderson (1957), Boyd and Levy (1963), and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; cf. Woods, 1981) more recently have offered us at least this much, if not more. As Holbrook (2007: p. 90) aptly put it, "[count] on [the] latecomers to the banquet of customer experiences…to make a meal of it." On the charge of the latter, the picture of consumer experiences portrayed in the literature has failed to adequately uncover the more quotidian aspects of ritualistic, habitual, compulsive, high-risk consumption. Rojek's (1995: pp. 99-101) account of deviant leisure is a testament to how important an issue this is for leisure research.

2. See Henderson (2000; 2006) for more on the topic of false dichotomies and leisure research.

3. This is a play on A.J. Ayer's famous treatise Language, Truth and Logic (Ayer, 1990 [1936]).

4. An important notion echoed in Putnam (2002) and Burton (1996) must be specified here, lest we underwrite the force of the positivistic movement outside of science. Putnam distinguishes between a mere distinction and a metaphysical dichotomy. Using John Dewey as his example, Putnam explains that, although Dewey's philosophical project entailed the foundering of a great many dualisms, it is a great misunderstanding to infer that he was, at the same time, attacking all philosophical distinctions. According to Putnam, "[n]othing could be further from the truth" (p. 9). As Burton (1996: p. 19) noted, "[d]ifficulties occur not because dichotomies are developed as analytic tools for problem identification and investigation, but because researchers and policymakers so often treat them not as intellectual constructs but as naturally occurring phenomena." There is a "fuzziness," Putnam suggests, between what should be considered an ordinary distinction and a metaphysical dichotomy and, for the logical positivists at least, the nature of facts and values fell under the latter remit – with rather deleterious consequences it must be added.

5. My use of "objectivism" here follows Bernstein (1983: p. 8). Although it is certainly crude to equate logical positivism with objectivism ipso facto, the latter provides a useful label for covering all of those disparate areas that have (explicitly or implicitly) been affected by it or lie closely alongside it. As Bernstein noted, "[b]y "objectivism," I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix…to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness." Moreover, since the notion that value judgements are subjective is deeply imbricated in Western narratives, the use of the objectivist label seems quite logical for heuristic purposes.

6. As opposed to "postmodern" marketing management (see Brown, 1995; Firat and Schultz II, 1997; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh, 1997).

7. McNamee (1994) offered R.S. Peters as an example of someone who has articulated an objectivist position and described how his own position "will resist such an asocial, ahistorical and timeless vantage point" (p. 290).

8. Some examples of this line of thought were clearly evident in a number of presentations given at LSA 2009. For example, Richard Bailey's critical examination of the popular claim that sport and leisure contribute to the development of young people's well-being; Andrew Adams', Muir and Nichols', and Tony Charlton's discussion of the tendency to conflate the delivery of community sport and leisure with the promotion of social capital and achievement of shared social objectives; and Marlies Brinkhuijsen's research on the failure to cater for multiple (and often conflicting) leisure meanings in landscape design in the Dutch countryside.

9. According to Garrod and Fyall (2000) the curatorial approach designates those facets of property management that involve the preservation, maintenance, and (at times) the restoration of valued historic monuments and artefacts. According to Mason (2004), it involves the celebration, care for, and interpretation of valued individual monuments. Professionalisation of historic preservation and management, they described, naturally went hand-in-hand with the curatorial approach because "it presupposes a group of experts who know how to identify valued artefacts or monuments and how to care for them" (p. 141). Abutted to this is the notion that issues of financial solvency and public access enter into the decision-making process only is a secondary manner.

References

Abbott, L. (1955) Quality and competition. New York: Columbia University Press.

Alderson, W. (1957) Marketing and executive action. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Anderson, E. (1995) Value in ethics and economics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Antonides, G. (1996) Psychology in economics and business (2nd Ed.). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer.

Arnould, E.J. and Price, L.L. (1993) 'River magic: Extraordinary experience and the service encounter', Journal of Consumer Research Vol. 20, No. 1: pp. 24-45.

Ayer, A.J. (1990 [1936]) Language, truth and logic. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Bernstein, R.J. (1983) Beyond objectivism and relativism: Science, hermeneutics, and praxis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bernstein, R.J. (2005) 'The pragmatic turn: The entanglement of fact and value', in Y. Ben-Menahem (ed) Hilary Putnam. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 251-266.

Boyd Jr., H. and Levy, S.J. (1963) 'New dimensions in consumer analysis', Harvard Business Review Vol. 41, No. 6: pp. 129-140.

Brown, S. (1995) Postmodern marketing. London: Routledge.

Burkhauser, R.V. and Cawley, J. (2008) 'Beyond BMI: The value of more accurate measures of fatness and obesity in social science research', Journal of Health Economics Vol. 27, No. 2: pp. 519-529.

Burton, T.L. (1996) 'Safety nets and security blankets: False dichotomies in leisure research', Leisure Studies Vol. 15, No. 1: pp. 17-30.

Carù, A. and Cova, B. (2003) 'Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept', Marketing Theory Vol. 3, No. 2: pp. 167-186.

Celsi, R., Rose, R. and Leigh, T. (1993) 'An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through sky-diving', Journal of Consumer Research Vo. 20, No. 1: pp. 1-23.

Coalter, F. (1995) 'Compulsory competitive tendering: a missed opportunity?', Managing Leisure Vol. 1, No. 1: pp. 3-15.

Coalter, F. (1998) 'Leisure studies, leisure policy and social citizenship: the failure of welfare or the limits of welfare', Leisure Studies Vol. 17, No. 1: pp. 21-36.

Crossley, N. (1995) 'Merleau-Ponty, the elusive body and carnal sociology, Body & Society Vol. 1, No. 1: pp. 43-63.

Crossley, N. (2006) 'In the gym: Motives, meanings and moral careers', Body & Society Vol. 12, No. 3: pp. 23-50.

Dawson, D. (1984) 'Phenomenological approaches to leisure research', Recreation Research Review Vol. 11, No. 1: pp. 18-23.

Drucker, P.F. (2007) The essential Drucker. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Featherstone, M. (1991) Consumer culture and postmodernism. London: Sage.

Firat, A.F. and Schultz II, C.J. (1997) 'From segmentation to fragmentation: Markets and marketing strategy in the postmodern era', European Journal of Marketing Vol. 31, No. 3/4: pp. 183-207.

Firat, A.F. and Venkatesh, A. (1995) 'Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption', Journal of Consumer Research Vol. 22, No. 3: pp. 239-267.

Firat, A.F., Dholakia, N. and Venkatesh, A. (1995) 'Marketing in a postmodern world', European Journal of Marketing Vol. 29, No. 1: pp. 40-56.

Frew, M. and McGillivray, D. (2005) 'Health clubs and body politics: Aesthetics and the quest for physical capital', Leisure Studies Vol. 24, No. 2: pp. 161-175.

Gadamer, H.G. (2004 [1975]) Truth and method. London: Continuum.

Gard, M. and Wright, J. (2005) The obesity epidemic: Science, morality and ideology. London: Routledge.

Garrod, B. and Fyall, A. (2000) 'Managing heritage tourism', Annals of Tourism Research Vol. 27, No. 3: pp. 682-708.

Harper, W. (1981) 'The experience of leisure', Leisure Sciences Vol. 4: pp. 113-126.

Harper, W. and Hultsman, J. (1992) 'Interpreting leisure as text: The whole', Leisure Studies Vol. 11, No. 3: pp. 233-242.

Hemmingway, J. (1995) 'Leisure studies and interpretive social inquiry', Leisure Studies Vol. 14, No. 1: pp. 32-47.

Henderson, K.A. (2000) 'False dichotomies, intellectual diversity, and the "either/or" world: Leisure research in transition', Journal of Leisure Research Vol. 32, No. 1: pp. 49-53.

Henderson, K.A. (2006) 'False dichotomies and leisure research', Leisure Studies Vol. 25, No. 4: pp. 391-395.

Hirschman, E.C. (1989) 'Consumer behavior theories as heroic quest', in T. Srull (ed) Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 16). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 639-646.

Hirschman, E.C. and Holbrook, M.B. (1982) 'Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions', Journal of Marketing Vol. 46, No. 3: pp. 92-101.

Holbrook, M.B. (1985) 'Why business is bad for consumer research', in E.C. Hirschman and M.B. Holbrook (eds) Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 12). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 145-156.

Holbrook, M.B. (1995) Consumer research: Introspective essays on the study of consumption. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Holbrook, M.B. (ed) (1999) Consumer value: A framework for analysis and research. London: Routledge.

Holbrook, M.B. (2007) 'The consumption experience – Something new, something old, something borrowed, something sold: Part 2', Journal of Macromarketing Vol. 27, No. 1: pp. 86-96.

Holbrook, M.B. and Hirschman, E.C. (1982) 'The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun', Journal of Consumer Research Vol. 9, No. 2: pp. 132-140.

Holbrook, M.B. Chestnut, R.W., Oliva, T.A. and Greenleaf, E.A. (1984) 'Play as a consumption experience: The roles emotions, performance, and personality in the enjoyment of games', Journal of Consumer Research Vol. 11, No. 2: pp. 728-739.

Howe, C. (1991) 'Considerations when using phenomenology in leisure inquiry: Beliefs, myths, and analysis in naturalistic research', Leisure Studies Vol. 10, No. 1: pp. 49-62.

Hultsman, J. and Harper, W. (1992) 'Interpreting leisure as text: The part', Leisure Studies Vol. 11, No. 2: pp. 135-146.

Kragelund, C. and Omland, T. (2005) 'A farewell to body-mass index?', The Lancet Vol. 366, No. 9497: pp. 1589-1591.

Kuhn, T.S. (1962) The structure of scientific revolutions. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Magee, B. (2001) Talking philosophy: Dialogues with fifteen leading philosophers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mason, R. (2004) 'Historic preservation, public memory, and the making of modern New York city', in M. Page and R. Mason (eds) Giving preservation a history: Histories of historic preservation in the United States. New York: Routledge, pp. 131-162.

McNamee, M. (1994) 'Valuing leisure practices; towards a theoretical framework', Leisure Studies Vol. 13, No. 4: pp. 288-309.

Mintel (2007) Exercise/fitness habits: Fad or modern lifestyle? Retrieved May 5 2009, from http://academic.mintel.com.ditlib.dit.ie/sinatra/oxygen_academic/my_reports/display/id=232181&anchor=atom/display/id=298115/display/id=298040?select_section=298041.

Neville, B. (1992) 'The charm of Hermes: Hillman, Lyotard, and the postmodern condition', Journal of Analytical Psychology Vol. 37, No. 3: pp. 337-353.

Poria, Y. and Ashworth, G. (2009) 'Heritage tourism – Current resource for conflict', Annals of Tourism Research Vol. 36, No. 3: pp. 522-525.

Prentice, A.M. and Jebb, S.A. (2001) 'Beyond body mass index', Obesity Reviews Vol. 2, No. 3: pp. 141-147.

Putnam, H. (1995) 'Objectivity and the science-ethics distinction', in M.C. Nussbaum and A.K. Sen (eds) The quality of life. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 143-157.

Putnam, H. (2002) The collapse of the fact/value dichotomy and other essays. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Quine, W.V.O. (1980 [1951]) 'Two dogmas of empiricism', in W.V.O. Quine (ed) From a logical point of view: Nine logico-philosophical essays (2nd Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 20-46.

Robbins, L. (1952 [1935]) An essay on the nature and significance of economic science. London: McMillan.

Rojek, C. (1988) 'The convoy of pollution', Leisure Studies Vol. 7, No. 1: pp. 20-31.

Rojek, C. (1995) Decentring leisure: Rethinking leisure theory. London: Sage.

Rorty, R. (1989) Contingency, irony, and solidarity. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Sassatelli, R. (1999) 'Fitness gyms and the local organization of experience', Sociological Research Online Vol. 4, No. 3: Retrieved April 30 2008, from http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/4/3/sassatelli.html.

Schmitz-Sherzer, R. (1990) 'Research note: A phenomenological approach to leisure', Leisure Studies Vol. 9, No. 2: pp. 163-166.

Schwartz, M. (1998) 'Peter Drucker and the denial of business ethics', Journal of Business Ethics Vol. 17, No. 15: pp. 1685-1692.

Sen, A.K. (1987) On ethics and economics. Oxford: Blackwell.

Shilling, C. and Mellor, P.A. (2007) 'Cultures of embodied experience: Technology, religion and body pedagogics', The Sociological Review Vol. 55, No. 3: pp. 531-549.

Smith Maguire, J. (2008) Fit for consumption: Sociology and the business of fitness. New York: Routledge.

Smith, H. (2003) Beyond the postmodern mind: The place of meaning in a global civilization. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

Tsai, E.H.L. (2005) 'A cross-cultural study of the influence of perceived positive outcomes on participation in regular active recreation: Hong Kong and Australian university students', Leisure Sciences Vol. 27, No. 5: pp. 385-404.

Veblen, T. (2007 [1918]) The higher learning in America. New York: Cosimo.

Walsh, V. (2000) 'Smith after Sen', Review of the Political Economy Vol. 12, No. 1: pp. 5-25.

Woods, W. (1981) Consumer behavior. New York: North Holland.