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Leisure studies in the 21st century: Challenges and opportunities in our collective identity

Mary G. Parr[a] and Dorothy Schmalz[b]

[a]Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management, Kent State University; [b]Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation, University of Utah

ABSTRACT
The year 2018 marked a milestone for leisure research, as the *World Leisure Journal*, the *Journal of Leisure Research*, and *Leisure Sciences* will celebratet their 60th, 50th, and 40th years in publication, respectively. A review of previous articles chronicling the evolution and status of leisure studies revealed three common themes since the 1980s: (a) incompatible faculty roles, (b) insularity, and (c) fragmentation. We examined recent developments in higher education and patterns of change in departmental profiles, in revised undergraduate and graduate curricula that exclude leisure philosophy and theory in core requirements, and in faculty hiring practices. We suggest that these recent developments, combined with the issues posed in prior articles that remain unaddressed, raise concern about the sustainability of leisure studies in the current higher education model. A possible future rooted in a philosophical foundation of leisure is presented.

KEYWORDS
Higher education; leisure studies; parks and recreation education

The year 2018 marked a milestone for leisure research, as the *World Leisure Journal*, the *Journal of Leisure Research*, and *Leisure Sciences* celebrated their 60th, 50th, and 40th years in publication, respectively. In recognition of the momentous anniversaries, the recent reorganization of The Academy of Leisure Sciences (TALS) and the advent of the TALS Institute on Research and Teaching, along with the reformulation of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Research Sessions aimed at parks and recreation research and varying statuses of academic departments across the country, we found ourselves reflecting on the historical evolution of the field, considering challenges that leisure studies has and is facing, and contemplating directions for the future. Examinations of the historical development of leisure studies and its current status are not an original idea; regularly appearing as a topic of discussion at conferences, in leisure studies journals, and edited books practically since its inception. Henderson (2010) referred to the fairy tale *Chicken Little* as a metaphor for questioning whether the "sky was falling." The use of a childhood parable to frame the discussion and the repetitiveness of the question of the state of the field brought similar comparisons to our mind as we approached this topic. For example, "the wheels on the bus go 'round and 'round" and "the little engine that could" would be fitting analogies as what we

CONTACT Mary G. Parr mparr@kent.edu
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present in the following pages is not far from what other scholars have presented in the past. Given the ages of the respective journals, a childhood comparison seems inappropriate. Likening leisure studies to "emerging adulthood" seemed more fitting—a relatively newly identified stage between adolescence and adulthood in which identity, security, and future paths are questioned (Arnett, 2000). Arnett contends that emerging adulthood is a stage of feeling "in-between" and is a time of self-focused identity exploration in the interest of identifying goals and possible future selves. As we reviewed discussions on this topic, we were notably concerned that while our observations are not new, this fact is an issue. What changes need to happen for leisure studies to be competitive in the new higher education model?

Before we proceed, we want to clarify terms and how they are used throughout this essay. First, leisure studies and the study of leisure are two distinct things. We use the term "leisure studies" to refer to an academic field of research, and in some cases, it functions as an academic department or degree name. The "study of leisure," "leisure research," and/or "leisure theory" refer to products produced by those operating within the field of leisure studies. Leisure philosophy is distinct, albeit related to leisure research, as philosophy is one of the many academic disciplines from which leisure researchers draw. However, Elkington (2013), drawing on Pieper's understanding of leisure, described leisure philosophy as an "orientation … refer[ring] to the specific ways in which an individual looks at the world and to such abilities as receptivity, stillness, thoughtfulness, as well as, criticality. … a person's orientation is at once composed of what they believe to be true, to be valuable and to be real (van Manen, 1977)" (Elkington, 2013, p. 453). We return to the significance of these distinctions later in the article.

Leisure studies: Past

The process of making our case that leisure studies continues to grapple with topics previously raised by scholars, we triangulated a variety of approaches. First, we reviewed the literature on the development of leisure studies as an academic field and articles published in the late 20th and early 21st centuries discussing its status in institutions. Second, we reviewed archived graduate assistant and faculty job announcements posted on TALS' electronic mailing list (TALSnet) between 2014 and 2016 for academic positions at doctoral granting institutions as an indication of perceived faculty needs and department profiles. Third, we examined the evolution of department/degree names to track academic focus, and finally, we reviewed the course requirements among doctoral programs in the United States and Canada to determine the presence or absence of leisure content in the preparation of future academics. In this process, we built on Parr's (2014) analysis showing a decline of "leisure" in academic degree program names through a request for historical data and rationales for name changes via TALSnet. We also requested information about doctoral curriculum requirements and rationale and reviewed curriculum documents posted on university websites to gain insight into what topics faculties across the country consider important for future scholars.

Chronicles of the development and status of leisure studies almost always include some discussion of the relationship between leisure research/theory and parks and

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recreation practice. It is widely claimed that alignment of leisure studies with the professional preparation of parks and recreation practitioners in an academic home has been detrimental to the advancement of leisure studies. However, conclusions about the lack of correspondence between research findings and parks and recreation practice usually stem from a search for direct and specific links connecting research and researchers with practice and practitioners. While there has been some movement to connect leisure research to parks and recreation practice, the connection between leisure philosophy and parks and recreation practice has received less attention. In addition, the source of the (dis)connect is narrowly focused on the academician's role as researcher and virtually ignores the academician's role as teacher. In this section we identify common criticisms of leisure studies and highlight more recent developments, particularly in terms of academic preparation. In our review of the literature, we identified three common topics associated with the development of leisure as an academic field that we feel continue to be concerns today: (a) incompatible faculty roles, (b) the insularity of leisure studies, and (c) the fragmentation of leisure studies.

Faculty roles

During the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars with a shared interest in the study of leisure from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, geography, etc.) took up residence in parks and recreation (PR) academic homes focused on the development of practical skills and techniques. At the same time, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission Report highlighted a need for PR research. Concurrently, PR practitioners represented by the National Recreation & Park Association (n.d.) were supportive of the NRPA's plan to publish a research journal (i.e., *Journal of Leisure Research*) (Dunn, 2000). With this burgeoning interest in PR practice expanding into academic research, the demand for university curricula and qualified faculty increased dramatically. Unfortunately, the supply of research faculty with training in PR topic areas that met the teaching needs fell far short of the demand, and faculty with non-research-focused degrees and some experience in public recreation filled the gap (Dunn, 2000). During this time, the higher education model put more emphasis on research and funding. While the solution to hire faculty with little training or interest in research solved the immediate teaching needs, it did not satisfy growing research expectations.

In this climate, many of the "discipline-trained" faculty were required to perform the dual role of leisure researcher and expert in parks and recreation education (PRE) (Sessoms, 1986). Burdge (1985) claimed that undergraduate programs in PRE were designed to train practitioners while graduate programs focused on research. This split extended to the requirement that faculty be able to teach undergraduate professional preparation courses and teach theory and methods of leisure research at the graduate level. He further claimed that "if park and recreation and leisure studies are ever to be linked then the research generated under the umbrella of leisure studies should eventually translate into a useful and useable knowledge for the many practitioners in the field" (p. 138).

Burdge's criticism of the blending of leisure studies and recreation was not received without pushback. Godbey (1985) contended that the "cross-pollination of leisure

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studies and PRE" (p. 143) was indeed occurring and believed that housing leisure studies and PRE together would increase understanding and mutual sharing and lessen, rather than exacerbate, the split between leisure studies and PRE faculty. He also proposed that as PRE curricula expanded to include a variety of fields of practice, those who study leisure would have much to contribute. Similarly, Sapora (1986) asserted, "As in other undergraduate programs in a university, … core courses in PR departments should be enriched with theoretical knowledges [sic] about leisure as a phenomenon" (p. 28). He also proposed a process for the integration of leisure research and practice in which he suggested that collaboration among groups of faculty interested in "basic" leisure research and faculty interested in applied research, with "applied research" defined as "research based on pressing problems" and "theoretical research directly applicable to operational needs" (i.e., PR management and administration) (p. 25), was necessary. The process clearly articulated a relationship between theoretical and applied management research and parks and recreation practice, but the relationship between theoretical leisure research and management of parks and recreation services was less clear. While he claimed that PRE could be enhanced by leisure research, the model did not include academic preparation per se as a pathway for research-informed practice and vice versa.

By the 1990s, a graduate curriculum in leisure studies was well established at universities across the United States, and academic positions were being filled by a generation of scholars trained specifically in the theoretical and philosophical foundations of leisure studies. However, the divide in faculty expertise required for meeting the teaching responsibilities that Burdge identified in 1985 was still present. With a few notable exceptions (e.g., Rossman's [1988] theory of program design), undergraduate curricula focused on technical and management expertise related to parks and recreation facilities and programs, while graduate curricula focused on theories and philosophies of leisure and human behavior.

Chick (1997) attributed the imbalance between the professional PRE teaching requirements and leisure scholarship to the NRPA's involvement in accreditation of academic programs. He contended that the definition of recreation as "something that is wholesome, good for one as an individual, and good for society" (p. 287) restricted leisure research and leisure studies to examining what people *should* do for leisure rather than what people *really* do [emphasis in the original]. Even more recently, Samdahl (2016) declared that "The experiment of the 1970s was a *failure* [emphasis added]: like water and oil, recreation practitioner training and the scholarly study of leisure were thrown together but did not mix" (p. 9). She suggested that as the early generation of scholars "that brought the study of leisure into our departments" retires, "the field can settle back into an amalgamation of professions with a weak common link to free time" (p. 16).

There is some evidence that the "cross-pollination" between PRE and leisure studies predicted by Godbey (1985) and Sapora (1986) has happened. For example, the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (COAPRT) curriculum standards have always included an understanding of the conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure and their connection to society and lifespan development (circa 1985). Concomitantly, the Council on Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies

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(CAPRA) standards have always included a standard for leisure education and the conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure as a basis for determining programs and services (circa 1994). However, there is also evidence that the attempt at blending the programs is on rocky terrain as suggested by Chick (1997) and Samdahl (2016) as we discuss herein.

Insularity

During the 1980s and 1990s, and into the new millennium, another common criticism of leisure studies was its insularity. Samdahl and Kelly (1999) concluded "We are indeed speaking only to ourselves" (p. 180) because leisure and recreation research published in the broader social science journals was rarely cited by leisure studies scholars publishing in leisure journals and vice versa. Shaw (2000) proposed that although leisure scholars argue that their research is relevant, it is infrequently cited outside of itself. However, Duerden, Edwards, Goates, & Dyer's (2018) recent analysis showed an uptick in citations of research published in the *Journal of Leisure Research* and *Leisure Sciences* in journals outside the field. More recent publication dates and quasi-experimental designs or measurement development were significant predictors of citation outside the leisure literature. The authors also noted that articles focusing on specific leisure phenomena such as place attachment or psychological motivations rather than general leisure seemed to be more prominent.

Kelly (2000) criticized leisure studies for a lack of connection to the "real-world," stating that "most of what we publish just doesn't connect to the issues being raised in other disciplines or in the media" (p. 75) and proposed that leisure research be directed toward larger social issues. He contended that we must begin to apply our significant body of leisure research to broader social problems and continue to articulate this knowledge in broader, philosophical frameworks. To Kelly's first point, there is evidence of a movement toward shifting research priorities from a social psychological analysis of leisure behavior aimed at understanding the qualities and characteristics associated with a "leisure experience" to increased interest in the study of leisure specifically situated in social and cultural contexts (See Johnson, Parry, & Wagler, 2018 and Payne, Schmalz, & Janke, 2018 for reviews of past, present, and future leisure research). Along with that is a body of research that connects leisure research to pressing social problems such as health and well-being. This shift is also evident in parks and recreation practice with the NRPA's recent, re-visioned purpose built around the intersection of parks and recreation and social equity, health and well-being, and conservation (NRPA, n.d.) and supported by research disseminated through the NRPA website (https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/). For example, *Relevant Research for Practice – 2015* contains an annotated bibliography summarizing research published between 2012 and 2015 in the areas of conservation ($n = 11$), health and wellness ($n = 18$), and social equity ($n = 15$) (Penbrooke, 2015). However, connections between knowledge gained through decades of leisure research and a broader philosophical framework is less obvious. Even with these apparent gains, leisure studies as a field continues to struggle, with some exceptions, to claim a seat at the proverbial academic and research tables.

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Fragmentation

The word "fragmented" is frequently used to describe leisure studies on a variety of levels. It has been used to describe the wide variety of topics and disciplinary influences in leisure research (e.g., Burton & Jackson, 1990; Johnson, Parry, & Wagler, 2018; Mommaas, 1997) and the splintering of "leisure services" and the academic curriculum into subfields such as sports, tourism, hospitality, and events aimed at preparing future practitioners in ever-more-specialized fields of practice (e.g., Henderson, 2010; Spracklen, 2014). Henderson (2010) discussed the importance of a collective identity and concluded

> [t]he challenge for any academic unit within the 21st century is to determine its mission, niche, and values. That unit, however, must have an intellectual identity with a broader social phenomenon. … Just as leisure studies segmented itself from a particular discipline, specialties are now establishing their own identities not necessarily related to the intellectual roots of leisure. (p. 395)

She emphasized that the academic home of a specialty should reflect the philosophical and intellectual orientation of the phenomenon and noted, for example, sport studied in a business school would be intellectually and philosophically different from sport studied in a traditional parks and recreation department.

Leisure studies: Current identity

We contend that in 2019, despite these topics having been presented by a variety of scholars in publications over the course of the past several decades, many of these issues remain the same. To some degree, the academic partnership between leisure studies and PRE has become more widely accepted; but while the interdisciplinary nature of the field allows it to conform to a modern university funding model, it may also threaten the future of leisure studies.

The academic partnership

Research conducted in the 1980s and 1990 s attempted to determine the job tasks of parks and recreation practitioners and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform them. Invariably, practitioners were asked to rate the importance of a list of knowledge and skills to the successful execution of their jobs, with leisure theory and/or philosophy always ranked at or near the bottom. This would seem to reinforce Burdge's (1985) claim that leisure research and PR practice were incompatible. However, Parr (1996) asked a group of parks and recreation directors to sort the knowledge, skills, and abilities contained in the COAPRT standards into categories that made sense to them and then explain how their categories fit together. Participants explained that "leisure theory and philosophy" was an important backdrop to the administrative and programmatic skills and tasks required in their jobs. This suggests that leisure research and leisure philosophy (as we have defined them) may inform practice in different but related ways.

Furthermore, we contend that Samdahl's (2016) proposition that the "experiment of the 1970s was a failure" (p. 9) and her assertion that the retirement of the

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first-generation leisure studies/parks and recreation pioneers would be the end of the experiment overlooks the existence and contribution of second and third generations of faculty educated in leisure's theoretical and philosophical underpinnings. These faculty comprise the current mass of faculty in departments across the country, are conducting leisure-focused research, and are integrating their training in leisure research and philosophy into comprehensive curricula. Furthermore, they have been trained in an environment in which LS and PRE are closely, if not inextricably, linked. Thus, the philosophical orientations of the second and third generations of leisure scholars reflect the integration of the two. That being said, we are concerned that changes to the academic funding and programming model have put the voices and presence of the faculty with doctoral preparation in leisure studies on unsure footing in the new millennium.

Leisure studies in the 21st century

Henderson (2010) wondered whether the "sky was falling" as she described the distinct but intertwined intellectual and institutional factors contributing to the precarious position of leisure studies. Her recommendations for moving forward included (a) working toward a condition of homeostasis, (b) articulating a collective identity, (c) recognizing and promoting the value of a "leisure analysis" for the broader social sciences, and (d) identifying connections with other researchers and practitioners. Elkington (2013), Fletcher et al. (2017), Spracklen (2017), and Pitas, Hickerson, Murray, and Newton (2018) have all recently documented the decline in leisure-based programs and content at the undergraduate level. The first three provided a predominantly U.K. accounting, and the latest focused on the United States. All cite the impact of economic conditions on the decline of leisure studies—and in the United States, recreation is included in that mix.

Increasing pressures on faculty to conform to growing expectations for research dollars to meet modern university funding models has contributed to the changing face of leisure studies in department names, in curricula, and in desired faculty qualifications. While Henderson (2010) and Pitas et. al. (2018) noted these institutional changes in response to economic changes, they did so anecdotally. In the interest of further exploring these observations, we sought information from departments across the country on these topics.

The changing face of leisure: Department names

Funding models for public institutions (both academic and public recreation services) has shifted from government support to fee-for-service strategies. In public PR departments, this means turning focus to the most efficient production of programs and services that sell well in the marketplace. In academic departments, this has meant increased pressure for higher enrollments at all levels and for extramural funding for research. Parks and recreation management research of the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the professionalization of academic and PR practices. Within academic departments, it set the stage for management to supplant leisure as the common core for research, curriculum, and practice. The management focus allowed academic departments to

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attract large numbers of students interested in sport, hospitality, tourism, events, recreation, parks, and so on. In the 1970s and 1980s, as departments established leisure studies curricula for graduate education, the field saw a rise in use of the word "leisure" in department names, missions, and program descriptions. However, this slowed in the 1990s, and by the 2010s the tide had shifted as "leisure" was more frequently dropped from the names and documents of academic departments than added (Parr, 2014). Schlag, Yoder, & Sheng, (2015) asked citizen respondents to their survey to select the academic department name they believed to be the most prestigious, with Parks and Recreation Administration and Parks and Recreation Studies leading the way (48.7% and 36.8%, respectively) and Leisure Studies and Play Studies a distant third and fourth (12.2% and 2.3%, respectively).

Noting the trend in declining numbers of departments and degrees with "leisure" in the name, a request was sent out on TALSNet for historical information related to departmental name changes. Responses suggested that leisure as the foundational core for the field has been dropped in part due to the widespread concern that its meaning was trivialized and thus resulted in a devaluation and misunderstanding by students and faculty alike, which therefore affected marketability and enrollment:

> Many of us feel the term leisure has led to a drop in enrollment and a misunderstanding of what *leisure* means.

> … change[d] our name to the Department of Leisure Studies. That change was short lived because … we saw declining student numbers. Our department is focused on image and marketing, and faculty consensus in the word leisure is negatively perceived by administration as well as students.

> The impact we are aware of is a direct increase in enrollment – mainly for sport management but also significant is the "event" term.

> I believe they [faculty] thought that there would be more "respect" given to the program and may better represent which direction the students wished to go. Moreover, it was discussed that the word "leisure" may lead to some people not taking the type of degree as seriously. Thus, the word "tourism" was used in replacement and the focus shifted more towards including tourism type classes.

In its place, there was a concomitant increase in "amalgamated" departments united around management (e.g., recreation, parks, tourism, hospitality, sport, or event management). Marketability to students and parents and employability of graduates from these types of departments were also noted by Spracklen (2017), Fletcher et al. (2017), and Pitas et al. (2018).

The changing face of leisure: Curricula

Similar shifts are seen in graduate curricula originally established to train Ph.D.'s in leisure theory and philosophy, the same programs in which the aforementioned second- and third-generation leisure scholars matriculated. Through an Internet search, we concluded there are currently 16 doctoral programs in the United States and Canada that include some form of parks, recreation, tourism, sport, and/or leisure in their degree or concentration name. According to departmental websites of the 16 institutions, only

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three are listed with "Leisure Studies" or "Leisure Behavior" as a major or concentration, with the rest consisting of some amalgamation of the remaining terms. A review of program course requirements reveals two types of foundational leisure courses: (a) philosophical and conceptual foundations of leisure, and (b) survey/overview of leisure research/theory. We refer to these as "philosophy courses" and "leisure theory courses," respectively. Fewer than half ($n = 7$) of the programs require a philosophy course at the doctoral level. One program requires philosophy as a prerequisite to doctoral studies, and another program offers such a course as an option based on student interests. Almost all of the programs require leisure theory courses that survey major strands of theory-based leisure research and methodological approaches. One program offers a Ph.D. related to tourism but requires no coursework in the conceptual foundations of recreation and leisure, philosophy, or leisure theory/research.

Personal communications with faculty provided further context for both leisure theory courses and philosophy courses. In amalgamated departments, faculty who teach philosophical foundations of leisure try to appeal to a wide variety of student interests: "Since we have a diverse focus in our department, I cover main topics that are core/foundations to all our 'sub-disciplines' (sport, recreation, tourism) under that overarching umbrella of leisure" (November 2016). Most of the "theory survey" courses include research conducted in "activity contexts" such as sport, travel and tourism, events, and so on based on a particular disciplinary perspective such as social psychology. Other anecdotal comments suggest ongoing debates within some departments about the value of a course in the philosophical, conceptual foundations of leisure. Philosophy of leisure courses at the doctoral level are often met with a lack of enthusiasm from students at best and "no clue and no interest" at worst. Some students do admit in hindsight that the leisure theory courses were valuable to their current pursuits (November, 2016). Even if students have a deeper understanding of theory and research, a connection between that research and the philosophical underpinnings of leisure's value and potential may be lost (or never articulated). While discussing the value of core courses in leisure philosophy and theory and the content of those courses, the perspective that "leisure is dated. We don't do or teach leisure anymore" (personal communication, November 2016) led a charge to reevaluate the curriculum. In some cases, where leisure philosophy and theory are required courses in a degree program, faculty reported students are not accountable for demonstrating aptitude or comprehension of the material in their capstone expectations (e.g., comprehensive exams or thesis/dissertation). The inconsistency between curriculum requirements and a lack of expectation to demonstrate understanding of material, or ability to synthesize material from the core courses with an individual area of interest at a departmental level, along with some of the attitudes and comments provided, implies a lack of buy-in if not flippancy toward the material on the part of some faculty. Earlier in this essay, we made the point that sport studied from a business perspective would be philosophically, not to mention methodologically, different from sport studied from a traditional park and recreation perspective. Having required courses in the foundations of leisure is a means of ensuring that students gain the philosophical and methodological perspectives that make leisure studies unique from other disciplines. If students are not expected to demonstrate their knowledge of these underpinnings as it applies to their area of interest or research

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focus, then what is it that establishes their receiving a Ph.D. (i.e., doctor of *philosophy*) in PR from a Ph.D. in another field?

The changing face of leisure: Desired faculty qualifications

Another concern that is contributing to the erosion of the foundation of leisure studies is a growing trend in seeking faculty from "related fields." The cultural trivialization and widely misunderstood concept of leisure as an interdisciplinary academic field has put leisure research in an "underdog" position in the competition for funding. Subsequently, institutional requirements for highly productive, externally funded research lines along with high demand concentration areas present a quandary for departments that (a) seek to hire faculty with degrees in recreation and leisure studies who have a solid footing in these foundations and a strong background in research principles or (b) seek to hire faculty with training in fields that have more established name recognition among funders to increase the potential for successful external funding but risk slighting the early principles on which leisure studies was founded. Out of 25 faculty position announcements posted on TALSNet (2014–2016) from research-intensive universities, 14 required the qualification of a Ph.D. in parks, recreation, tourism, or "related field" with only five specifically including leisure studies in the list. Some of these 14 calls for applications also listed fields such as public health, urban planning, community development, geography, or economics, among others. The remaining 11 positions did not mention parks and recreation or leisure. In addition, faculty with degrees in various forms of management (e.g., sport, hospitality, and so on), both in tenure track and instructor lines, are being sought to meet enrollment demands. Both of these scenarios, in effect, reduce the demand for research-trained faculty with expertise in recreation and/or leisure. (Note: position announcements for therapeutic recreation [TR]/recreation therapy [RT] faculty were omitted in this analysis due to the highly specific qualifications required for certification in TR/RT.)

As an interdisciplinary field, it makes sense that faculty should represent a variety of disciplines; after all, the faculty that established the original leisure departments across the country were a coming together of various perspectives, expertise, and training. They were drawn together because they shared an interest in leisure and brought a desirable research component to the applied and specialized technical PRE undergraduate curriculum. The modern compilation of faculty from a variety of "related fields" is philosophically and fundamentally different in their interests and have contributed to a shift in the PRE and leisure studies cores. It is important to note here that having knowledge and training in PR and leisure studies and being competitive for funding need not be and should not be mutually exclusive. The fact that departments have resorted to this kind of hiring qualification suggests a passive acceptance. Rather than increasing or keeping up with new research approaches and knowledge and relaying it to students, we have apologetically accepted that seeking graduates from programs with what might be arbitrarily perceived as more robust research programs is the best solution. Some overlap in research interests exists peripherally, but faculty often operate in isolation in recreation or parks or tourism, as compared to the former model where all interests in recreation, parks, and tourism were linked by "leisure." The trend of

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building departments around a common management theme or an interdisciplinary concept such as sustainability, community development, or health, combined with a loss of a critical mass of faculty versed in leisure theory and philosophy concentrated in a common academic department, will continue to erode leisure studies. While this trend complies with Kelly's (2000) appeal that PR/leisure research should address more applied, "real world" topics, the concern is that the research being conducted by faculty without training in foundational leisure material inherently leaves any connection to leisure out of the contribution to the literature.

Furthermore, the change in faculty caused by the demand for externally funded research programs has, as a by-product, created a demand for graduate students with knowledge, skills, and/or aptitude to assist with a faculty member's research program. Common qualifying knowledge and skills listed on announcements for graduate assistantships (both master's and Ph.D.) on TALSNet (2014–2016) included statistics, writing, quantitative and/or qualitative research, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and project management. Students enroll with the aim of working with a faculty member, with little or no regard to the curriculum that they will be required to complete. Subsequently, these students are at risk of experiencing a disconnect between their assistantship and the required curriculum, and often do. If their supervising faculty are among those who lack a background in the foundations of leisure and/or do not buy in to leisure as a body of knowledge, then the value of the curriculum objectives falls flat, and the perspective that the courses are merely hoops the student has to jump through is perpetuated.

Our concern lies with the sneaking suspicion that the frequency with which Ph.D.s who are trained in recreation and leisure are hired in "related" departments is not met with the same frequency that Ph.D.s with degrees in "related fields" are hired in recreation departments. The question must be asked, is there a demand for terminal graduate degrees in recreation and leisure studies, or is the academic pendulum swinging back to the preleisure model where scholars from a variety of fields come together over a shared interest in recreation, play, and leisure behavior? To compound this question, it is possible that these scholars have little interest in recreation, play, and/or leisure. If not, then their expertise contributes to collaborative research but does not take the place of faculty with expertise in leisure theory and philosophy. But the current pipeline (i.e., coursework, experience, and research) in which students become professionals (both inside and outside of academia) will surely limit the supply of individuals with expertise in leisure theory, research, and philosophy.

Over 30 years ago, Godbey (1985) suggested that "as PRE curricula expanded to include a variety of fields of practice, those who study leisure would have a lot to contribute" (p. 145). With the recent trends in hiring and curricula that we have discussed, other disciplinary scholars and perspectives have been invited to our table; but in the willingness to forgo curricula in leisure theory and philosophy at all levels of academic preparation, leisure scholars are forfeiting a seat at our own table and continue to be excluded from theirs. We fear that this dilution will eventually undermine the foundation of recreation and leisure studies; in fact, this is already happening, as the evidence presented shows. The expertise of faculty from outside leisure studies contributes to collaborative research but should not take the place of faculty with expertise in leisure theory and philosophy.

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Kestenbaum (1991) made a distinction between finite "little leisures" [our term] and a broader concept of infinite leisure as a state of mind or personal experience. "Finite leisure," as he defined it, referred to specific activities such as stamp collecting, attending the theater, playing a sport, and so on. Research examining behavior or management issues around specific activities is convenient because it is inexpensive and easy to operationalize and interpret. In this kind of research, the broader psychosocial, holistic effects of leisure on participants is implied as a distal outcome but is rarely assessed or discussed. Thus, such research perpetuates the triviality of leisure studies as a field of scholarship because it fails to communicate the powerful and valuable effects of leisure on the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and the environment. Leisure only becomes important when its transcendent potential, the infinitude expressed in its finite instances, are considered; that is, a "leisure ideal."

This is the point at which leisure research/theory diverges from a philosophy of leisure. Hemingway (1996) argued that leisure must be liberated from its instrumental (finite) forms in order to extend its potential to the infinite; "stand[ing] against an open horizon that will never be achieved, but instead promises constantly greater extension of human capacities and cultural richness (p. 40)." Thus, to argue the importance of leisure, we must consider it as human potential in addition to finite activities and/or something to be "managed." Hemingway and Parr (2000) suggested that a connection between leisure theory and leisure practice lies within a critical perspective, that is, research and practice that are both "attuned to leisure's developmental and emancipatory content, … respect[ing] their independence as professional paradigms while enabling mutually supportive interaction, interaction to make a difference in people's lives" (p. 159). It is precisely this critical understanding of "leisure as potential" that earns us a seat at the table. And as Godbey (1985) predicted, "those who study leisure, will have a lot to contribute" (p. 146).

Leisure studies: A possible future

Talmage, Searle, & Wilson (2017) examined the status of parks and recreation degree programs and claimed "provocation for expansion and stretching is not limited to parks and recreation but also overlaps to leisure studies, which is a connection that cannot be overlooked" (p. 28). The authors posed a series of questions that bear further examination in order to "expand and stretch" (i.e., reposition) PR and PRE. Of particular relevance to our purpose are questions related to a distinctive body of knowledge and the value of obtaining this knowledge through a degree in PR: How do current PRE curricula emphasize quality of life associated with preservation, conservation, and human development, and to what extent should faculty infuse the philosophy and roots of parks and recreation into PRE? Talmage, Searle, and Wilson (2017) suggested that the field's "conceptual and philosophical underpinnings distinguish what its graduates possess and other do not" (p. 44); and we would agree.

In 2019, leisure studies scholars seem unsure of their role and future in the changing face of higher education and questioning how to best position the field so that its underpinnings are well understood and recognized by others. In recent years, there has been increased interest for leisure-related concepts such as the need to reconnect with

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nature, mindfulness for stress relief, living in the moment, and more attention to the positive aspects of subjective experience in the interest of health and well-being. These long-held leisure-related concepts are embraced, lauded, and marketed as "new" ideas by scholars in positive psychology, education, public health, and health promotion. Clearly then, leisure-related concepts that those in leisure studies have valued, researched, and included as part of the curriculum since its inception as an academic field in the 1970s are indeed important and valued and should be heard.

At the risk of seeming territorial, it appears that the concepts and psychosocial phenomena that have defined leisure studies since its origins are in danger of being usurped by academic fields with greater name recognition and wider acceptance (e.g., psychology, conservation, and health). If leisure studies is to survive as an academic field, then the onus is on the aforementioned second and third generations of scholars who matriculated from leisure studies programs and curricula. The time is ripe for revitalizing the salience of leisure studies in a near-future generation of scholars, educators, and practitioners, utilizing the hard work invested over the past 30+ years in the development of a leisure-based body of knowledge. To achieve this, departments need to refocus energy around three objectives: (a) leisure-focused research aimed at theory development, (b) a connection to broader social issues, and (c) a firm grasp of leisure's philosophical roots. But the key ingredient to an integrated approach to research and practice(s) in the field of leisure studies is an understanding of its philosophical underpinnings. A shared philosophy is the foundation of any interdisciplinary field and can serve as a solid framework. Without a shared understanding of leisure as the unique and valuable perspective that leisure brings to sustainability, conservation, and well-being, then leisure and PR departments run the risk of being overrun by more widely recognized and therefore fundable fields such as psychology that are embracing leisure-related concepts.

We propose a pathway between leisure research and parks and recreation management that seeks to answer the question "toward what end?" How can knowing something about leisure help parks and recreation managers (and hospitality managers, sport managers, event managers, educators, health professionals, social workers, and so on) make a difference in people's lives? Sapora's (1986) model, with its heavy focus on management and operational practices, left research about leisure itself disconnected to parks and recreation practice *and* education. We believe academic preparation at all degree levels, grounded in leisure, creates "useful and useable knowledge for the many practitioners in the field" (Burdge, 1985, p. 138) in the form of a solid philosophical foundation with the aim of making a difference in peoples' lives. A second generation of leisure scholars, born in the house of leisure studies circa the late 1970s to late 1990s, is uniquely positioned to stake leisure's claim at the table due to their preparation in both leisure theory/research and philosophy. The recent integration of the TALS Institute for Research and Teaching presents a unique opportunity to develop, promote, and extend the integration of leisure theory and philosophy into curriculum and pedagogy at all degree levels.

Elkington (2013) argued "that the challenges facing leisure scholars in this changing H[igher] E[ducation] landscape are, in fact, inherently pedagogic" (p. 448). Teaching a set of "core disciplinary formalisms" based on leisure research findings and connecting

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them to broader social problems is necessary but insufficient for preparing students to "prosper amid uncertainty in situations in which there are no stable descriptions, no concepts to be grasped with any assuredness and no value system that holds sway over any other" (p. 451). Building on Pieper's conceptions of leisure and liberal education, Elkington (2013) teaches his students about leisure by having them do leisure, that is, "cultivate a contemplative approach to life that transcends the hegemonic ethos of modern living" (p. 452). Leisure philosophy must be a precurser to leisure research because it provides a context for interrogating who we are and what we can become. The "we" here can refer to individuals, communities, societies, and even the field of leisure studies.

Dustin, McAvoy, and Schultz (2007) used the story of three stonecutters to emphasize the ultimate ends of the efforts of scholars and practitioners in the leisure studies and PRE fields. The first stonecutter sees his purpose as cutting stones to be used as bricks (e.g., an array of courses, programs, and services). The second stonecutter sees his work as building a church (e.g., a PR agency or academic department occupying its place in the market), and the third stonecutter sees his stonecutting as "giving glory to God" (p. viii) (i.e., leisure's potential to elevate the human condition). The metaphor can be extended to include an array of groups (e.g., education groups, allied health organizations, environmental groups, recreation agencies, sport organizations, and so on) whose professional practices represent the mediums through which quality of life and well-being in a just world can be attained.

While we have provided evidence of the waning use of the term "leisure" in department names, it is the concept that is far more important than the word itself. We are not arguing a return to the name "leisure studies" as leisure goes well beyond activities and experiences borne by parks, recreation, tourism, and so on. Leisure, in its truest form, yields quality of life and gives life meaning by connecting it to humanity's foundation. We argue that leisure can, and should, serve as the connecting force among the applied, "related" fields of practice and study currently coalescing in academic departments. Leisure viewed as potential (for harm or for good) opens a vast array of topics for research, teaching, and service at all levels. For this to happen, we are advocating a return to the education of future scholars in the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of leisure. We contend that the issues of fragmentation in current programs are one of the greatest threats to departments across the country. In the effort to conform to the new models in higher education, the field of leisure studies has become its own enemy. Lack of commitment to leisure-based curricula, attempting to hire faculty with little or no training in leisure studies, and the fracturing of department names does not contribute to broader understanding or being more competitive to students and funders, but rather leads to inconsistency in branding. By coming together in agreement on what we as scholars do, value, and study, we can hold steady as a unified front with a consistent message and brand.

As an ostensibly "emerging adult," leisure studies continues to explore possible directions and identities in academia. However, if positioned well and with a unified understanding and respect for who we are and what we do, leisure studies can be a keystone to the imminently fundable and highly sought-after domains of human and environmental health and well-being.

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