Leisure Research and Leisure Practice: Three Perspectives on Constructing the Research–Practice Relation

J. L. HEMINGWAY

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

MARY GREEN WOOD PARR

School of Exercise, Leisure, and Sport
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio, USA

The leisure research–leisure practice relation remains uncertain. Assuming leisure provides a preexisting link is not supported by research. Leisure research and leisure practice are independent professional paradigms between which a relation must be constructed. Three perspectives on constructing the research–practice relation are examined in this article: the traditional, the personal, and the critical. The benefits approach to leisure is a test case in each perspective. The traditional and personal perspectives subordinate one professional paradigm to the other or intensify their separation. The benefits approach fails to resolve these difficulties. The critical perspective emphasizes developmental activity and emancipation, facilitates research–practice interaction, and maintains the professional paradigms' integrity, and it reveals shortcomings in the benefits approach. The critical perspective enables the most dynamic research–practice relation.

Keywords   leisure, leisure benefits, practice, research, theory

What is the relation between leisure research and leisure practice? Are there alternative constructions of this relation? If so, what are the consequences of adopting one construction rather than another?

These questions remain open, as indicated by recent discussion in the *Journal of Leisure Research* (1999, vol. 32:2) and SPRENET exchanges, despite a number of thoughtful analyses (e.g., Burdge, 1985; Goodale, 1991; Howe, 1996; Sapora, 1986; Sylvester, 1995). Answers will be elusive, as long as what must be proved is assumed—namely, that research and practice are parts of a whole, linked by leisure in a preexisting research–practice relation simply awaiting proper articulation. The ongoing difficulties encountered in doing so raise two troubling prospects, that a particular relation will instead be imposed or the possibility of it will be denied. In both cases, personal or professional preferences and ideologies prevail over analysis, leading to conceptualizations of the research–practice relation that are reductionist (one term is subordinated to the other) or oppositional (the two terms are

irreconcilable). The research–practice relation is suppressed or severed, not clarified, by these moves.

We adopt a different starting point. Leisure research and leisure practice are conceived of here as independent professional paradigms, with no assumption of a preexisting link between them. Any relation between leisure research and leisure practice must therefore be *constructed*. There are three reasons to explore this approach. First, it is doubtful that the *leisure* in *leisure research* and *leisure practice* has the same references (Parr, 1996); it thus cannot form a common link between them. Second, there are several perspectives within which the research–practice relation may be constructed, each with different conceptualizations of research and practice and each giving leisure itself a different aspect. Third, perspectives vary in their sensitivity to contextual influences on research and practice as well as on leisure. The consequences of these differing sensitivities must be understood to avoid unreflectively incorporating them into leisure research and leisure practice.

We analyze three alternative perspectives in this article: the traditional, the personal, and the critical. After examining their characteristic conceptualizations of research and practice, we explore their implications for leisure research and leisure practice by applying each perspective to the benefits approach to leisure, widely discussed among leisure researchers and practitioners over the past decade. Schreyer and Driver (1989) and Driver and Bruns (1999), whose arguments represent the benefits approach here, advance it as a systematic means to reduce the disjunction between leisure research and leisure practice. Three goals are identified for the benefits approach (Schreyer & Driver, p. 399; see Driver & Bruns, pp. 349–350): to develop and refine an empirically supported professional body of knowledge about leisure, to aid public policy makers in resource allocation decisions, and to enhance the quality of leisure consumers' choices. At least on the face of it, these stated goals suggest the benefits approach might avoid the reductionist and oppositional tendencies noted above. It thus offers a meaningful test for the research–practice relations constructed in the three perspectives and also provides an appraisal of how the benefits approach links leisure research and leisure practice.

Laying the Conceptual Groundwork

In this section, we discuss several concepts fundamental to our argument (including paradigm, perspective, practice, profession, and research). These concepts have dimensions not often addressed with reference to the relation between leisure research and leisure practice. Indeed, their very familiarity poses a problem in doing so. To avoid subsequent misunderstandings, we therefore begin by defining how we use these constructs in this article.

Professional Paradigm and Perspective

Adapting Benhabib's (1996, p. 27) nontechnical definition of *paradigm*, a distinct *professional paradigm* is created by a "coherent set of assumptions" broadly recognized and agreed on by those working within the paradigm thus defined. These assumptions, not all of which are explicit, are self-referential, based on self-understandings that need not have external sources (though they are more powerful if more broadly accepted). A professional paradigm (e.g., leisure research, leisure practice) includes assumptions specifying at least in broad terms the distinctive knowledge and activities its adherents agree characterize it. It is commonplace for a profession to be defined by a distinctive body of knowledge consistently deployed in distinguishing patterns of activity located in a specifiable range of settings. A professional paradigm does more, however: It establishes the location and

stringency of gate-keeping functions for entry into the profession, legitimates professional hierarchies, polices professional activity, enforces professional standards, sanctions formats and channels for distributing information, and standardizes career paths and reward structures. Individuals working within a professional paradigm organize and make sense of their professional activities according to the paradigm's constitutive assumptions, which in turn facilitate establishing individual and collective professional identities (e.g., leisure researcher, leisure practitioner). To the degree that they are coherent, broadly recognized, and broadly agreed on, an extended set of such constitutive assumptions creates a professional paradigm.

A *perspective* is a framework for constructing relations among professional paradigms. Within a perspective, professional paradigms are conceived of in terms of their relations to other professional paradigms. Picture the familiar Venn diagram, with its overlapping circles representing professional paradigms (e.g., leisure research, leisure practice). A professional paradigm provides rules for intraparadigm (the nonoverlapping areas) mediation of cooperation, conflict, or hierarchy; a perspective does so for interparadigm (the overlapping areas) mediation. Thus, for example, each professional paradigm independently specifies different locations and stringency of gate-keeping functions or patterns of career development; a perspective sorts out the consequences when the two paradigms overlap or intersect. Adopting one perspective or another is therefore of considerable importance because they have (as outlined below) very different implications for mediating between professional paradigms.

Perspectives and Keywords

The concept of perspective can be clarified by considering the use of keywords (see Rodgers, 1987; Williams, 1976). In any professional paradigm, certain keywords play central roles in organizing the core assumptions around which professional identities coalesce. Keywords represent clusters of characteristic tasks or attributes that are anchor points for the boundaries drawn by professional paradigms. The force of keywords derives from their operation on both connotative and denotative levels, from their capacity to reflect both the articulated and the unarticulated assumptions that are the substance of professional paradigms. The meanings of keywords are not confined within any specific professional paradigm, however. There are two considerations here. First, keywords' meanings are shaped by broader societal and cultural influences that do not disappear when these keywords are used within professional paradigms. Among the contextual influences on the extended meanings of keywords are values, belief structures, status hierarchies, and forms and distributions of power. The extended meanings of keywords may be at odds with favored keyword usages in a professional paradigm (e.g., leisure/spare time, client/dependency) or favored usages may themselves make subtle use of extended meanings (e.g., practitioner/skill, researcher/expertise). Second, the same word (understood linguistically) may serve as a keyword (understood symbolically) in more than one professional paradigm. Professional paradigms differ in their sensitivity to contextual influences on the meanings of keywords. The symbolic meanings of keywords may also be incongruent across professional paradigms. Variable meanings of keywords always contain the potential for conflict, hence keywords are often the sites at which conflict appears when professional paradigms intersect. This, we suggest, may well be the case with *leisure* when used in the two professional paradigms leisure research and leisure practice.

Constructing a relation between intersecting professional paradigms requires mediating conflicts between them, including use of keywords. Conflicts across professional paradigms are not removed but are instead mediated by a perspective. A perspective draws from the broader societal and cultural context for this mediation as well as from the professional

paradigms' self-referential constitutive assumptions. It is thus likely to be socially and culturally, not just professionally, complex. As the boundaries of professional paradigms establish professional identities as well as activities, a perspective must address identity conflicts. Where these identities are enduring and conflict among them persists, a perspective must provide the means to mediate them on an ongoing basis. Each perspective discussed below differs in the criteria it uses in doing so. Once again, which perspective is adopted has considerable significance for the expression and preservation of individual and collective professional identities.

Research and Practice as Keywords

Leisure, *practice*, and *research* are keywords in the construction of the relation between leisure research and leisure practice. They include multilayered references to broad professional settings (e.g., academia, public or nonprofit agencies), to hierarchies within them (e.g., basic research/applied research; central administration/activity leadership), and to distinctive career paths (involving such issues as gate keeping, professional advancement, and others mentioned earlier). Along with their meanings in professional paradigms, *leisure*, *research*, and *practice* also have societal and cultural extended meanings incorporating, for example, valuations of leisure and work, conceptions of higher education's purposes, and beliefs about the role of public services in a market economy.

   Leisure research designates a professional paradigm assembled around principles taken to govern the pursuit of theory-based knowledge about leisure (conventionally but not always accurately distingushed from applied research). The leisure research professional paradigm centers on theory-based research, or systematic inquiry guided by theoretically informed hypotheses using recognized research designs and methods while adhering to accepted standards for evaluating research findings. Although a considerable portion of existing leisure research can be rightly criticized as atheoretic (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Stockdale, 1989), theory-based research nonetheless serves as a professional ideal within this paradigm. It is one constitutive assumption in constructing the individual and collective identity labeled *leisure researcher*. It connects with other constitutive assumptions about, for example, the educational curricula in which leisure researchers should be prepared, the appropriate structure and content of research programs, and the role of peer review in regulating scholarly advancement and standing. Similarly, *leisure practice* designates a professional paradigm incorporating assumptions about training leisure services professionals, effective and efficient organization of service delivery, appropriate content of leisure services, and standards applied in evaluating service quality. These are constitutive assumptions in constructing *leisure practitioner* as an individual and collective professional identity. As keywords, then, *leisure research* and *leisure practice* designate characteristic activity clusters associated with specific professional settings and orientations, including self-referential assumptions about professional identities. They also reflect an extended range of social and cultural influences.

Leisure Research and Leisure Practice Reconsidered

The search for a preexisting relation between leisure research and leisure practice is misguided if they are in fact independent professional paradigms. The error lies in treating as a single professional paradigm what are actually two paradigms. Paradoxically, emphasizing their assumed common features either reduces one to the other ("has in common with") or sharpens their opposition ("in contrast to"). In neither case is the *relation* between them clarified. Given what is at stake in a professional paradigm, the complexity of its constitutive

assumptions, and the dynamic environments in which leisure research and leisure practice are situated, it is hardly surprising the issue remains contested.

There are two broad criteria we believe any satisfactory perspective on the research–practice relation should meet. First, a perspective must open possibilities for sharing interactively the strengths of leisure research and leisure practice. Second, a perspective must respect their independence as professional paradigms. A satisfactory perspective will facilitate the construction of an empowering interactive relation between leisure research and leisure practice while enabling independent attention to their unique tasks. We acknowledge at the outset our conviction that of the three perspectives examined below, only the critical perspective satisfies these two criteria. We do not reject claims or arguments simply because they are made within either the traditional or the personal perspectives, but we do challenge such claims or arguments insofar as they reflect weaknesses in these two perspectives. Of course, we hope the following discussion makes clear the reasons for our endorsement of the critical perspective and even persuades others to share it. Most of all, however, we hope this essay stimulates further consideration of issues lying at the heart of leisure research and leisure practice.

The Traditional Perspective on the Research–Practice Relation

The traditional perspective is a natural starting point. It is the most established and familiar of the three perspectives, the personal and critical perspectives having originated in significant part as responses to it. The development of formal academic disciplines, professions, and professional education in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries has strong roots in the traditional perspective. Its influence is also revealed in the dominance of the research university in U.S. higher education. Although now more frequently challenged, the traditional perspective nonetheless remains a powerful influence in academia and the human services, not least in leisure research and leisure practice.

Traditional Practice

Practice is defined vocationally in the traditional perspective by what constitutes an identifiable "job." The need for a practice is determined by the existence of an identifiable set of conditions within an identifiable, more or less accessible target population assumed to require some form of service. The contents of a practice, however, are defined in terms of the craft as it is practiced by its practitioners themselves, including the services offered to target populations and the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to do so. Leisure practice, for example, has been examined on several occasions in order to identify the specific and unique tasks performed by practitioners as well as the characteristics of the practitioners themselves, including attitudes toward their jobs. These surveys have been updated periodically to identify changes in perceptions of leisure practice's contents (see Parr's 1996 review of this literature from the 1980s and early 1990s).

The accepted knowledge base for leisure practice is defined in general by (a) accreditation standards for service agencies and for academic units and (b) certification standards for practitioners. These standards are largely based on identification of tasks performed by practitioners as part of their work. Significantly, investigators have consistently reported differences among practitioners in a variety of subfields over the structures and contents of leisure practice (e.g., differences over terms to be included in a thesaurus representing the field's knowledge base [Blumenthal, 1991]; the conceptual structure of the leisure services content domain for recreation management students in contrast with therapeutic recreation students [Parr, 1997]; and the relative importance of academic accreditation

standards to the jobs of recreation practitioners [Zito, 1982]). These differences indicate uncertainty about leisure practice's knowledge base, scope, and purposes, suggesting it is not yet completely formed as a professional paradigm. Perhaps these differences reflect leisure practice's changing contexts, but they also create difficult problems within the traditional perspective on the research–practice relationship.

Traditional Research

Research as conceptualized in the traditional perspective derives from models of more or less deductive theory. Amended to reflect the variable mathematical precision of the social sciences, theory is the systematic articulation of relations among conceptual constructs, operationalized in hypotheses using empirically measurable variables allowing replication and generating further hypotheses for analysis (see, e.g., Babbie, 1998; Kerlinger, 1986). Traditional theory is hierarchically structured, ranging from microtheory about particular aspects of the behavior of particular populations in particular settings at particular times to grand theory about universal features of human behavior (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Traditional theory-based research aims at providing nomological (i.e., lawlike) statements about human behavior. Generalizable explanatory and predictive statements establish deductive frameworks. Within these frameworks, empirically testable hypotheses are derived to confirm, revise, or refute the generalized statements from which they originated. The foundation of traditional social research rests on three ontological and epistemological principles: There is a given, irreducible social world existing independently of human volition but accessible to human inquiry; such inquiry is feasible provided it avoids valuational or metaphysical assumptions; and the truth values of propositions about this irreducible social world depend on the methods by which they are generated and tested. Irreducibility in this context means that central features of the social world may be treated as given or natural, that nonrandom variations in the social world may be systematically predicted and explained. Parsimony and mathematical precision are valued in explanatory and predictive statements to avoid problems like overdetermination and autocorrelation, most especially in making causal claims. Traditional theory-based research therefore privileges powerful statistical techniques like multiple regression over correlational, associational, and descriptive analysis. Although these criteria are relaxed to varying degrees in social research, they remain central to the integrity of theory-based research (for these issues in leisure research, see Hemingway, 1995, 1999; Samdahl, 1999).

Separation of Research and Practice

Were the social world irreducible, perhaps the leisure in leisure research and leisure practice would provide a common link between them. The logic of the traditional perspective leads nonetheless to their separation. This separation has at least three aspects, which may be loosely characterized as supply side (what traditional theory-based research about leisure makes available to practice) and demand side (what practice wants from research). First, the irreducibility assumed in traditional theory-based research is incongruent with the social contexts in which practitioners define their craft (nor is there, as noted earlier, common agreement among practitioners). Second, the principles of traditional theory-based research require the individual researcher to maintain distance from the social settings in which research is conducted. The task of deriving applications from traditional theory-based research is thus left to practitioners. Such research, however, aims at generalizable statements, whereas practitioners seek solutions for specific problems. Third, because traditional research posits an irreducible social world, applications deviating from theory-based

knowledge are assumed to reflect either the intrusion of personal preferences or ignorance. In the traditional perspective, applied research addressing specific issues in practice is generally considered ad hoc, atheoretical, and at most inductive, exposed to contaminating influences. Descriptive analysis of leisure is useful, but the test of its value remains deductive theory (see Weissinger, 1995). The practitioner is likely to prefer other standards.

The separation of research and practice within the traditional perspective can be illustrated on the supply side by the structure of early social psychological leisure research. Its promise took several forms. First, it offered a more satisfactory explanatory framework in traditional social scientific terms than existing descriptive efforts. Second, it provided arguments for leisure's centrality to individual well-being. Third, it gave practitioners an apparent means to validate program advocacy and design using research findings. The appeal of social psychological research was considerably enhanced by the legitimating force of the traditional conception of social research, within which it was embedded.

The matter is not quite that simple, however. Leisure research continued to work with unidimensional conceptualizations of leisure's social psychological structure, even as awareness grew that this obscures profound differences in the construction of individual experience and identity (see, e.g., Gilligan's 1983/1992 seminal account). Traditional social science has tended to disembody the self by examining it presocially, that is, using individual characteristics devoid of social context. Yet these characteristics have social meanings only in historically specific contexts. Sex (i.e., being female or male), for example, is fundamentally different from the societal and cultural construction of gender or sexual identity (i.e., being a woman or man or transgendered, homosexual or heterosexual, gay or lesbian or bisexual or straight at a specific moment in a specific society). Similar observations apply to race, age, physical or mental condition, class, and so on. Individual-level characteristics cannot be used in research without attending to their societal and cultural construction. The disembodied selves of traditional social inquiry are empty of the contents (e.g., the purposes, values, and forms of rationality) that fill out what it means to be an actually existing human being in a historically specific context, that condition the psychological structures explored by social psychological leisure research.

Leisure is multidimensional, with many different meanings expressed in many different voices, whose multiplicity of meanings and voices are often opaque to traditional social science research. Our point is not simply that traditional research has limitations, but that its limitations lead to contradictions in constructing the research–practice relation. So long as practitioners are attentive to leisure's different meanings and voices, practitioners must acknowledge highly nuanced identities among the people with whom they work in dynamic contexts. This response violates the assumptions underlying traditional theory-based leisure research emphasis on generalization. If, on the other hand, practitioners generalize about the people with whom they work, ignoring their different identities, they are likely to be guilty of applying stereotypes and replacing individual autonomy with professional authority. The disjunction between theory-based leisure research and leisure practice cannot be resolved within the traditional perspective. Deriving applications to practice from theory-based leisure research is a task assigned to practitioners, but the irreducible social world assumed by the principles of traditional research is far removed from the richly textured social worlds of practice. The contradictions created between the principles of traditional theory-based research and the diverse social contexts of practice leaves practitioners with little guidance for the application of research findings.

That is the supply side of the separation between leisure research and leisure practice in the traditional perspective. There is also a demand side, reflected in the common complaint (it recurs several times, for example, in the *Journal of Leisure Research* (—, 1999) discussions mentioned earlier) that existing leisure research is uninteresting to practitioners. From the

demand side, reducing the separation between research and practice is a matter of paying attention to the information needs of practitioners. The issues for leisure research would then be twofold: What knowledge do practitioners want in order to derive applications from it? How might leisure research provide such knowledge? The difficulty is that, on reviewing research that examines practitioners' self-defined information needs (Parr, 1996) and explores perceptions of the core body of knowledge for leisure practice (Parr, 1997), little actual demand appears to exist among practitioners for theory-based knowledge about leisure. For practitioners, research turns out to mean (for those in agency administration) management studies, economics, marketing, and organizational behavior or (for those in therapeutic recreation) clinical psychology, counseling, kinesiology, and other allied health professions. It does not mean theory-based research about leisure itself, about leisure's forms or contents.

There is a double bind here. Traditional theory-based research about leisure supplies knowledge not in demand among practitioners, while practitioners demand what traditional theory-based leisure research is not intended to supply. Poorly conceived and executed research or uninformed practice are not at issue here. Leisure research and leisure practice are independent professional paradigms, grounded in different constitutive assumptions. No preexisting link is available in the traditional perspective to reduce their separation without subordinating one to the other, thus producing fatal contradictions. The demands of leisure practice challenge traditional theory-based leisure research's underlying assumptions (e.g., irreducibility, distance, value neutrality). Absent an alternative compatible with these assumptions, the traditional perspective does not provide a framework for constructing the research–practice relation.

Benefits as a Bridge between Research and Practice?

In concluding this discussion of the traditional perspective, we explore whether the benefits approach solves the problems identified in the traditional perspective on the research–practice relation. Does the benefits approach enable an interactive sharing of strengths between leisure research and leisure practice while respecting their independence as professional paradigms?

Proponents of the benefits approach offer it as a means to reduce the separation between leisure research and leisure practice while improving both (Driver & Bruns, 1999, pp. 349–350; Schreyer & Driver, 1989, p. 399). Current knowledge about leisure is "soft" and "largely intuitive or inferential" (Schreyer & Driver, p. 387). Improved research is needed to provide an empirical basis for statements about leisure's benefits, thus avoiding "naïve romanticism about the wonderful things leisure does for the folks" (Schreyer & Driver, p. 413). The benefits approach is characterized (Driver & Bruns, p. 349) as "a *system* for directing leisure research, instruction, policy development, and management," a "paradigm shift" in the conceptualization and management of "recreation resources and programs." Note how the claim to provide superior knowledge is crucial to legitimating the benefits approach. Replacing existing inadequate knowledge through more systematic research will allow construction of a leisure research–leisure practice relation soundly based on the principles of traditional social science. The benefits approach reaffirms the traditional perspective's hierarchy of research and practice. Their relation is strengthened by redefining and improving traditional research, which then guides practice.

The benefits approach reveals the influence of traditional social science by emphasizing increased explanatory and predictive power in leisure research as essential to establishing a causal link between leisure activity and beneficial outcomes. Unfortunately, the arguments used in the benefits approach do not satisfy basic traditional social science criteria

for demonstrating causal relationships. The fact that leisure is associated with beneficial outcomes does not mean that leisure causes them. Compilations of studies reporting associations between leisure and "beneficial outcomes," no matter how otherwise attractive, cannot be substituted for rigorous conceptual and empirical analysis. At least two basic criteria must be addressed to sustain a claim of causality: (a) the temporal sequence of the variables in question and (b) the isolation of the independent variable as cause of the dependent variable. Satisfying these criteria requires clear and precise articulation of relevant concepts and their relations, precise operationalization of variables, and use of rigorous research designs and methods to ensure valid and reliable measurement. The benefits approach, however, dismisses the need to conceptualize leisure and gives only slight attention to conceptualizing benefits (see Schreyer & Driver, 1989, pp. 387, 388). Without adequate conceptual foundations, any subsequent causal claims are fatally weakened.

Conceptual weakness is particularly evident in the systems model (Driver & Bruns, 1999, Fig. 21.2, p. 357) underlying the "benefit chain of causality" (Fig. 21.3, p. 359). Explicitly omitted from this model are "factors that affect leisure choice and behavior" (along with feedback loops [see p. 355]; neither reappear in the final model). These factors may have profound consequences for "the desires, preferences, and values of the customers," the only input specific to participants included in the model (p. 356). Among these excluded factors are some of the most powerful explanatory variables in traditional social science (e.g., age, education, income, race, and sex). Are they not likely to affect individual desires, preferences, and values? It is essential in causal analysis that artifacts not be mistaken for causes, that they not mask underlying causal forces. The omission of factors that affect leisure choice and behavior from the benefits systems model unjustifiably limits the causes of leisure's beneficial outcomes to proper leisure management. Actual causes may very well lie elsewhere but are excluded in advance from analysis. Ironically, in their absence, the causal role of leisure practice (i.e., the application of specific and unique professional knowledge to the management of recreation resources and programs in identifiable settings) cannot itself be established.

Whether the benefit chain of causality is meant seriously or not, it undermines the claim that the benefits approach provides more systematic and rigorous leisure research as the basis of leisure practice. Among the most important components in a systems model is the specification of system boundaries, which are dictated by the model's purposes. Despite claims that it is intended to support systematic leisure research, the boundaries of the benefits systems model reveal an underlying management orientation. As Churchman (1968, p. 71) pointed out, the basic criterion for establishing management system boundaries is the degree of control a system manager exercises over any specific variable. A quick examination of the benefits systems model suggests how its boundaries illustrate this principle. Any model intended to construct a leisure research–leisure practice relation on the basis of systematically acquired knowledge about *leisure* would necessarily require much broader boundaries. Leisure participants are, for example, assumed in the benefits systems model to have leisure desires, preferences, expectations, and values formed independently of contextual influences other than managerial actions. Such disembodied participants do not exist; hence, the boundaries of the benefits systems model are drawn too narrowly to support theory-based research about leisure.

In the end, arguments on behalf of the benefits approach do not satisfy standards they themselves establish within the traditional perspective on the research–practice relation. Recall that the benefits approach is intended to strengthen leisure research by enabling causal claims about leisure's beneficial outcomes. Unfortunately, conceptual weaknesses prevent the benefits approach from achieving this goal, insofar as causality is conceived of in traditional theory-based social science. The benefits systems model assumes what

must be proved, that the beneficial outcomes of leisure (dependent variable) are caused by proper management of recreation programs and resources (independent variable). Excluding factors that affect leisure choice and behavior in advance truncates the model on the input side, isolating the benefit chain of causality from the causes of individual leisure choices in complex social environments. No demand for theory-based research about leisure is created in the benefits approach. By emphasizing proper management, the weak conceptual foundations of the benefits approach have instead three contrary effects: Leisure is restricted to a narrow range of managed activities and resources, leisure practice is reduced to the production of beneficial outcomes, and powerful antecedent influences on leisure behavior are obscured. To build either theory-based research about leisure or leisure practice on such a foundation would be a perilous undertaking; as a bridge between them, it is simply inadequate.

The Personal Perspective on the Research–Practice Relation

The personal perspective is derived from teacher education research on continuities and discontinuities between the knowledge base for professional preparation and actual teaching practices. The education field includes a broad range of issues, from experimental psychology to classroom management, similar to those in the leisure research–leisure practice relation. Perhaps, then, the personal perspective offers a possible framework for constructing this relation. The personal perspective is best understood as a reaction to, not a rejection of, the traditional perspective. Both perspectives draw on traditional social science research, but the practitioner's role becomes central in the personal perspective, most evidently in the sources of knowledge.

Personal Knowledge

In both the traditional and the personal perspectives, research aims at systematic explanatory and predictive statements. They differ, however, in the value assigned to various sources of knowledge and the levels of generality at which it is stated. In the traditional perspective, theory-based research is the source of legitimate knowledge claims. Its status is derived from specific epistemological and methodological principles and dissemination of research findings through sanctioned channels (e.g., academic curricula, research journals, professional meetings). A second source of legitimate knowledge claims is recognized in the personal perspective, namely, personal or practical knowledge (not to be confused with M. Polanyi's 1962 use of this term). Traditional theory-based knowledge, aptly referred to by Griffiths and Tann (1992) as public knowledge, is blended with and modified by the practitioner's direct, personal experience in a particular environment, combining the impersonal generalities of traditional research with the specifics of the practitioner's everyday personal experience. Personal knowledge is the practitioner's own implicit yet systematic explanation for the situations encountered in practice and a guide for responding to them.

Practitioners' applications of traditional theory-based research in everyday practice are given considerably greater weight in the personal perspective than allowed in the traditional perspective. The value of public knowledge is not discounted as such. Instead, practitioners refine and modify it in response to the requirements of their daily practice. Usefulness is thus a primary criterion for personal knowledge, along with explanation and prediction. The practitioner develops useful personal knowledge by comparing and contrasting public knowledge with the everyday demands of the job. Research and practice are related in the personal perspective, but their priority is reversed from the traditional perspective. In the personal perspective, theory-based research is mediated by the practitioner's direct

experience in practice; in the traditional perspective, theory-based research shapes practice. The practice-based demand for useful knowledge is the dominant factor in the personal perspective.

Personal Practice

A similar shift occurs in the conception of practice. Practice is conceived of in the personal perspective as a complex set of interactions among service providers, service recipients, governing institutions, and others. The individual practitioner has in effect two roles in these interactions. Personal knowledge is constructed out of the everyday experience of practice, but this everyday experience has two origins: professional activity and personal activity. Their interaction influences and shapes practice. Differences between the conceptions of practice in the traditional and the personal perspectives are illustrated by a task Stofflett (1996) assigned her teacher education students. To uncover their personal theories of teaching practice, she asked them to write about and reflect on their personal learning and teaching histories, relating their experiences as both learners and teachers to their current teaching philosophy. Stofflett asked her students to address not only what they had learned about teaching but also their experiences as learners, again not only as learners in a professional preparation curriculum but as learners generally. This insertion of personal experience into the construction of practice is, of course, a sharp departure from the traditional perspective.

Applying this example, personal conceptualizations of leisure practice draw on individual experiences as both leisure practitioners and leisure participants. Early personal leisure experiences mold understandings of the meaning and value of leisure, influencing preferences for different patterns of personal leisure activity (see Iso-Ahola's 1980 leisure socialization model, p. 132). This ongoing socialization contributes to a practitioner's personal conceptualization of leisure practice just as professional education and experience do. A practitioner might, for example, understand the structure and content of participation in adult softball based on personal participation as a team member, experience as a team coach, employment in a recreation department as an administrator of adult athletic programs, professional preparation in leisure management, and traditional theory-based leisure behavior research. The sources of personal practice are multiple; the personal perspective grants all of them professional validity.

In the personal perspective, research and practice are connected by (a) practitioners who develop personal conceptualizations of practice by reflectively integrating public and personal knowledge and (b) researchers who analyze practitioners' implementation of these personal conceptualizations. Research extends beyond creating and disseminating traditional public knowledge to address the intersection of personal knowledge (with its openness to personal experience) with traditional theory-based research in practitioners' personal conceptualizations of practice. Practitioners are moved to the foreground in the research–practice relation, creating the misleading impression that the separation between research and practice is thereby reduced when contrasted to the traditional perspective. Both the personal and the traditional perspectives have several problems in common (e.g., incongruent conceptions of leisure, lack of practitioner demand for theory-based leisure research), and new ones emerge in the personal perspective.

The Personal Perspective in Leisure Research and Practice

Limitations on the research–practice relation constructed within the personal perspective arise from the manner in which the practitioner's role is expanded. Primary responsibility

for applying theory-based research in practice lies with practitioners in both the traditional and the personal perspectives. In the traditional perspective, the researcher has a defined if distant relation to the practitioner, reflecting the privileged status of theory-based research, whereas the practitioner assumes a derivative role largely as a technician. The practitioner's role in the personal perspective is much more sharply defined, however, and the researcher and indeed the research process itself have only shadowy presences. Standards or frameworks for integrating public knowledge (i.e., traditional theory-based research findings) and personal knowledge (i.e., direct personal experience with practice) are absent, exposing the practitioner to the danger of becoming isolated within narrowly constructed, self-referential conceptualizations of practice. The dependence of these conceptualizations on personal experience limits their extension across different contexts, let alone generalizing from them to practice as a whole. Their lack of extension or generalizability weakens any claim that personal conceptualizations of practice can effectively reduce the separation between practice and traditional theory-based research.

It is assumed in the traditional and personal perspectives that practitioners have both prior exposure and ongoing access to theory-based leisure research. Practitioners' more central role in the personal perspective entails a further assumption, that they do in fact actively reflect on theory-based leisure research in light of their personal experiences, subsequently discarding or integrating research into their personal conceptualizations of practice as appropriate. Without such reflection, the separation between research and practice cannot be reduced. Assuming this reflective component in practice is perhaps justifiable in a field like teacher education, where specific academic programs of study leading to a baccalaureate degree are required for professional certification and practice except in very unusual circumstances. In leisure practice, however, this assumption is considerably more problematic. Interestingly, although a minimum number of full-time faculty holding graduate degrees in recreation or leisure studies is required for accreditation of academic curricula, there is no general requirement that practitioners hold at least baccalaureate degrees in recreation or leisure studies for employment in the field, even as a prerequisite for designation as a Certified Leisure Professional (CLP).

This disparity raises questions about practitioner exposure to theory-based leisure research. Though of limited value, recent survey findings are mildly suggestive of practitioners' disengagement from theory-based leisure research (Jordan & Roland, 1999, Table 1, p. 167): Between 65% and 96% of the practitioners responding reported they never or rarely read the field's major research journals. That only 52% of academics read research materials (Table 2, p. 186) indicates a more general disengagement from research (due possibly to the vocational orientations of many recreation and leisure studies curriculums). In any case, there is no convincing evidence that practitioner engagement with theory-based research about leisure reaches levels adequate for the reflective creation of personal conceptualizations of practice assumed in the personal perspective. And yet this process is fundamental to the research–practice relation constructed in the personal perspective. By definition it includes attention to theory-based research, evaluated in light of practitioners' personal knowledge of practice with due consideration of individual preferences and contextual influences. Reflective personal conceptualizations of practice are (ideally) dialectical, yielding new understandings of leisure practice (and possibly leisure itself) rather than simply filtering one component (e.g., theory-based research findings) through another (e.g., personal experience).

An example is available from teacher education research. Morrison (1996, citing Schön, 1983, 1987) described a model intended to link research and reflective practice through two types of reflection in which practitioners might engage: reflection-in-action (RIA) and reflection-on-action (ROA). RIA is "immediate, short term, concerned with technical

efficiency, restructuring a situation in terms of a new frame" and "draws upon tacit, sponta-neous knowledge" (p. 318). ROA is used after an event has taken place and represents "an ordered, systematically structured, deliberate and deliberative, logical analysis of events and situations" (pp. 318–319). In principle, a practitioner engaging in ROA is "empowered, through clarification, understanding and articulation of principles and theory, to develop greater professional autonomy through the conscious exercise of judgment" (p. 319). Earlier work by Griffiths and Tann (1992) has, however, suggested that ROA is shaped more by RIA than by integration of theory-based research. Asked to reflect on their teaching, Griffiths and Tann's teacher education students focused on the practical details of a smooth-running classroom, on what worked or was useful rather than on research findings or personal in-fluences (e.g., preferences, assumptions, beliefs). Too little is known about the reflective processes of leisure practitioners to permit extrapolation from this education research to leisure practice. Given, however, the apparently low interest in theory-based research about leisure among practitioners, the question of whether they are sufficiently engaged with it to form reflective personal conceptualizations of practice must remain open.

Benefits and Personal Conceptualizations of Practice?

The benefits approach is advanced as an empirically sound foundation for practice as well as research. In fairness, therefore, we must examine the benefits approach within the personal perspective, which shifts the emphasis from research to practice. To succeed in the personal perspective, the benefits approach should respond to practitioners' demands for research that can be integrated into practice while maintaining a supply of theory-based research about leisure's beneficial outcomes. Although this standard is established by the benefits approach itself, three problems arise in passing its self-imposed test: differences in orientations toward systematic knowledge, the audience to which the benefits approach is addressed, and the uses of benefits information.

Recall that the benefits approach is legitimated by the claim to replace existing infer-ential and intuitive knowledge about leisure with a more systematic orientation (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 349; Schreyer & Driver, 1989, p. 387). Here is an immediate difficulty. The intuitive and inferential knowledge that the benefits approach would replace in the personal perspective is central to practitioners' integration of public knowledge into their own systematic accounts of practice. Practitioners' privileged access to such knowledge is fundamental in the personal perspective. The systematic orientation promised in the benefits approach is different in kind, not simply in degree, and thus challenges one of the personal perspective's constitutive assumptions.

The audience problem follows. Systematic knowledge about leisure does not address practitioners' interests because, to restate a point, this knowledge plays an apparently limited role in their construction of practice (see Henry, 1993, chap. 5, for the United Kingdom; Parr, 1996, 1997, for the United States; Reid, 1995, for Canada). If leisure (defined as self-selected intrinsically rewarding activity) is being replaced by recreation (defined as consumption of or participation in services or activities), Reid (p. 48) also finds this occurring in leisure practice. The knowledge identified by leisure practitioners as most needed "indicates the professionals in recreation and leisure management view themselves as administrators and bureaucrats rather than involved with social and individual aspects of community development" (p. 50). Clearly, then, any research–practice relation constructed within the personal perspective must address not only different orientations to knowledge but also the differing information needs of specific audiences.

The audience targeted in the benefits approach consists of those who manage or develop policy for "recreation resources and programs" (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 349), particularly

in the public sector. *Management* and *policy development* have several meanings that must be carefully assessed, but they hardly exhaust the category of leisure practitioner. Targeting this specific audience leads to emphasizing the strategic value of benefits research for managers and policy developers (see p. 360). For example, one result claimed for benefits research is increased effectiveness in obtaining scarce resources and promoting leisure services (pp. 350, 353). Strategic use directs benefits research toward the knowledge that managers and policy developers need to work with stakeholders, who turn out to be largely other managers, agencies, or recreation providers. Interestingly, however, not only are managers and policy developers the only leisure practitioners discussed, but leisure participants are included as stakeholders only insofar as they are customers (p. 355). Targeting this specific audience not only reduces the range of theory-based research about leisure but also limits the beneficial outcomes addressed in leisure practice. Most disturbing is the marginalization of participants. On whose beneficial outcomes does the benefits approach focus, those of participants or those of managers who make strategic use of participants' experiences?

This discomforting question points to a disparity between current uses of the benefits approach and the centrality of reflective conceptualizations of practice in the personal perspective. Reflective conceptualizations refine practice by integrating personal experience in and public knowledge about practice. The strategic use of the benefits approach to legitimate existing leisure services (see Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 365), however, accelerates the redefinition of practice described by Reid (1995) and others. Consider, for example, recommendations on how to use benefits research in marketing messages (e.g., Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1997, p. ix). Rudick (1997) rightly cautioned that such messages must include supporting evidence, but this simply requires awareness of research findings and not understanding of the theory-based research process itself. Emphasizing strategic value in benefits research shifts attention from the integrity of the research process to the use value of findings, as revealed in the proliferating lists of leisure benefits. Under various topical headings, beneficial outcomes are summarily stated or described, accompanied by lists of references. No assessment of the research is provided, which reinforces the benefits approach's oversimplification of leisure as participation (Schreyer & Driver, 1989, p. 385). Experience with and knowledge of specific target audiences allows good use to be made of such material without any need to engage in leisure research itself.

Using the benefits approach to construct the research–practice relation in the personal perspective has three unfortunate effects. First, theory-based research about leisure is weakened by defining its value in terms of its strategic uses by recreation managers and policy developers. There is already sufficient ambiguity about the standards to which leisure research should adhere. Further muddying the water serves neither leisure research nor leisure practice well. Second, unreflectively citing research findings as evidence of leisure participation's beneficial outcomes trivializes the theory-based leisure research process. Research findings are not a menu from which to select as the need of the moment dictates. Indeed, doing so rapidly becomes self-defeating. Such marketing messages are easily dismissed as simply one more self-interested pleading in the policymaking process. Third, the strategic orientation pervading the benefits approach hampers new insights about links between leisure research and leisure practice. Rather than reducing their separation, by emphasizing management and policy development the benefits approach threatens to open another separation, in this case between recreation managers and policy developers on the one hand and front-line programmers and activity leaders on the other. If the leisure research–leisure practice relation constructed within personal perspective in the end proves unsatisfactory, applying the benefits approach within it does no better.

The Critical Perspective on the Research–Practice Relation

The critical perspective is open to several forms of knowledge (e.g., empirical, expressive, interpretive, normative) in constructing the research–practice relation. Its "epistemological openness" (Fraser, 1989, p. 113) is an immediate and fundamental difference from the other perspectives. Epistemological openness enables researchers and practitioners to develop "empirically rich" (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 89–90) understandings of leisure using a wide variety of methods, including those of the traditional social sciences, without attempting to maintain an artificial separation between facts and values. All research and practice contain value-based components. Rather than attempting to repress values, it is intellectually more honest to acknowledge their unavoidable presence openly in research and practice and to confront their implications.

The critical perspective, then, is oriented around two normatively grounded themes: a developmental conception of human activity and the emancipation of human capacities for developmental action (both are discussed below). Although open to many interpretations, these themes direct the attention of critical researchers and practitioners toward evidence that, for example, distributions of power or the resources (e.g., education, leisure) that embody power are being systematically reproduced in social roles, processes, and institutions. In some cases, such reproduction is legitimate, but if it leads to ongoing developmental and emancipatory disadvantages, critical research and practice challenge it. Significantly, those working in the critical perspective are expected to engage in ongoing self-reflective scrutiny of their own research and practice to avoid reproducing developmental or emancipatory barriers (on critical theory and leisure research, see Hemingway, 1999).

Critical Research

People act in ways that create meaningful identities for them, in ways that for the most part make sense and are consistent with the identities they attempt to establish. In the critical perspective, this activity is conceived of as at its best when it expands and enhances human capacities for further developmental action in an iterative, ongoing, and open-ended process. Expanding existing capacities allows new ones to emerge; emergence of new capacities enhances existing ones. As a leisure ideal, the developmental conception of human activity creates a normative standard against which leisure can be measured.

The critical perspective is not utopian, however. People act within historically specific societal, cultural, and material contexts that include patterns of social organization and interaction, value and power formations, distributions and valuations of resources, modes of thought and rationality, and the physical environment. If the social world is not irreducible, it is nonetheless circumscribed by what Bourdieu (1986, p. 241) termed *accumulated history*. Possibilities for and limitations on human activity exist as parts of accumulated history. Critical research and practice must therefore be open to historical content in factors shaping people's lives as actually lived (see Horkheimer, 1937/1972, pp. 210, 244). Empirical richness and epistemological openness merge because leisure (like all other social practices) is embedded in contexts that require many different types of inquiry. Without this richness and openness, research arbitrarily isolates leisure from its contexts, disembodying people whose meaning-seeking activity is set within the social world formed by this accumulated history.

If historically specific contexts set the boundaries within which people act, their action may also reshape these boundaries. Thus, just as the critical perspective is not utopian, neither is it determinist. Here is a further difference between the critical perspective and

the other two. Particularly in the traditional perspective, the social world is conceived of as more or less given or even "natural," so that the spaces open for human developmental activity are also more or less given. In this sense, both the traditional and the personal perspectives are basically conservative. In the critical perspective, however, these spaces are conceived of as products of historical development, including human action, and thus subject to historical change. As Bernstein (1978) phrased it, "historically conditioned social and political patterns" should not be confused with "an unchangeable brute reality which is simply 'out there' to be confronted" (p. 106). Excepting obvious limitations imposed by finitude and mortality, human possibilities are not given. They reflect instead what it means to be a human being with particular characteristics assigned particular meanings in particular historical contexts. These contexts can be changed through human activity, and so too can the conceptualizations of human possibilities they contain. Neither past nor present is privileged in the critical perspective; they are instead subject to challenge in the name of future expansions of human possibilities. The status quo, in Horkheimer's (1937/1972, p. 248) formulation, does not exhaust the range of what it is to be a human being.

Emancipation

Critical research and practice have an emancipatory intent. Building on the developmental conception of human activity, emancipation is defined conceptually as the transformation of human capacities from possibility into actuality. Emancipatory activity opens spaces for development, in which people are able to explore, test, expand, enhance, and reflect on their capacities. It is, in short, activity that challenges the boundaries of the status quo. Drawing on a long philosophical and political heritage (see Benhabib, 1986; Bernstein, 1971), both research and practice are forms of emancipatory action in the critical perspective. Leisure researchers and leisure practitioners are equally charged with facilitating emancipatory action within their respective independent professional paradigms. Interaction between these professional paradigms is grounded in enabling developmental and emancipatory activity, not in their own self-referential constitutive principles. Theory-based research without this transformative dimension is sterile, practice without it moribund. In the critical perspective, research and practice must point beyond themselves.

Emancipatory action imposes unique demands on leisure research and leisure practice. Researchers and practitioners alike must be alert to the presence of legitimation processes, that is, ways in which historically specific contextual influences acquire the appearance of irreducibility, of being given or natural. Legitimation processes take many forms, some transparent and some opaque. In addition to specific social roles and institutions, values, power hierarchies, and distributions of resources, they also occur in ways of thinking, how people conceive of themselves, their pasts, presents, and possible futures. By imparting to existing human possibilities the appearance of irreducibility, legitimation processes are subtle and powerful barriers to developmental activity. Despite a historical association with freedom and assertions of its uniqueness, leisure is hardly empty of such legitimation processes (see, e.g., Hemingway, 1996; Rojek, 1995; Wearing, 1998). They exist, for example, when specific forms of leisure are privileged or suppressed, skewing leisure's possibilities, or when favored forms of leisure depend on specific power or resource distributions, limiting its inclusiveness. Consider the ways assumptions about "appropriate" leisure in fact reinforce constraining stereotypes (based, e.g., on age, gender, mental or physical condition, race, and so on). Even people disadvantaged by dominant assumptions about appropriate leisure may incorporate them in their own leisure. Taking specific forms of leisure or their contexts as given limits the range of possible developmental activity. Unreflectively

associating freedom with leisure contributes to legitimating such limits. Emancipation is the process of overcoming them.

Research and practice are inescapably situated in historical contexts, nor are they immune from contextually specific assumptions about social givens or stereotypes. Research and practice are not only professional paradigms but also social processes, and researcher and practitioner are social roles situated in social institutions. Research questions, much less management policies and programs, do not exist as neutral abstractions somehow divorced from their "social genesis" (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 244) in historically specific contexts. However intentionally or unintentionally, to select a research question, a policy to implement, or a program to promote is to intervene in the context within which this very decision is made. The critical perspective entails self-reflective professional activity; that is, critical researchers and critical practitioners have a fundamental obligation to assess the consequences of their professional decisions. Are they developmental and emancipatory, or do they reproduce and legitimate existing barriers and constraints?

We have pointed out the difficulty of constructing a leisure research–leisure practice relation in the traditional and personal perspectives without subordinating one professional paradigm to the other. This problem will persist as long as leisure research and leisure practice are conceived of solely in terms of self-referential constitutive assumptions. By instead orienting leisure research and leisure practice toward external principles (i.e., a developmental conception of human activity and emancipation), the critical perspective opens the way to recognizing that leisure researchers and leisure practitioners occupy different social roles located in different social institutions and are engaged in different social processes. Researchers and practitioners are not thereby irrevocably separated, but any relation between them must respect their unique contributions to developmental and emancipatory leisure. There is no justification in either professional paradigm for arranging them hierarchically. Doing so only reflects the influence of personal or professional ideological preferences.

Benefits and Emancipation?

The critical perspective presents the benefits approach with a more complex test than do the traditional and personal perspectives. At issue is not only whether the benefits approach contributes to the construction of a leisure research–leisure practice relation that respects their independence as professional paradigms. The critical perspective adds the further requirement that this relation facilitate developmental and emancipatory activity in research and practice. Interestingly, this issue is raised by proponents of the benefits approach, who have pointed to a need to reconnect leisure research and leisure practice with their origins in a tradition of social reform (Driver & Bruns, 1999, pp. 353–354). One advantage of the benefits approach, then, might be more effective articulation of leisure's social merits. We may therefore ask, Are leisure's social merits as presented through the benefits approach compatible with the principles of developmental activity and emancipation?

Answering this question requires attending to the words used in and the structure of the arguments advocating the benefits approach. We must be particularly alert to assumptions about the nature of human activity and how it is valued. The words used in an argument give it meanings that cannot be brushed aside simply as matters of semantics (as if semantics don't matter). Much more is involved. Words have denotative and rich connotative meanings that structure as well as express ideas. This is, after all, the importance of keywords in constructing professional paradigms and professional identities. Words reflect the historical contexts of their usages. Not to examine what and how words are used in research or practice simply reproduces the contexts in which their meanings are grounded. Even if this is intended, language must always be critically attended to as part of the messages one sends.

Demonstrating leisure's social merits requires challenging its devaluation (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 350; see Schreyer & Driver, 1989, pp. 403–407). Any such move is welcome to leisure researchers and leisure practitioners, but its language nonetheless requires critical scrutiny. Benefits approach proponents have argued a truer estimation of leisure's value would be possible were there an accurate system of industrial classification to assess the contributions of a leisure industrial sector in terms of "numbers of employees, expenditures by customers, personal disposable income, and tax revenue generated" (Driver & Bruns, p. 351). Similarly, to persuade stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, business people, other professionals, taxpayers) of leisure's importance as a social service, the delivery of leisure services must be structured with "its objective being to *optimize net benefits*—or as *much value as possible*" (emphasis added; Driver & Bruns, p. 350). The benefits systems model of the recreation production process is central to making this case (Driver & Bruns, p. 357). *Benefit* itself, however, is not to be defined as monetary price (Driver & Bruns, p. 355) or "monetary worth of recreation goods and services" (Schreyer & Driver, p. 387). Instead, the devaluation of leisure is to be countered by emphasizing the "*actual* benefits (utility) on which . . . economic 'benefits' are based" (Schreyer & Driver, p. 387). The goal of management is optimizing net benefits for customers (Driver & Bruns, pp. 350, 355–356; see the *Oxford English Dictionary* for standard usages of *customer*).

Note three features in this benefits argument. First, the objective of leisure practice is the optimization of net benefits. Second, *optimize* is itself defined as "maximize" ("as much value as possible"; Driver & Bruns, p. 350). Third, the actual value of leisure benefits is their utility, which is also the basis of any monetary value benefits have. Reformulating these features, the objective of leisure practice is to optimize the utilities produced (to maximize value) by leisure benefits. Despite rejecting an economic definition of benefit as a surplus of value retained by the consumer (Schreyer & Driver, 1989, p. 403, challenging Vickerman, 1989, p. 349), the benefits approach relies on similar economic logic. It is reminiscent of neoclassical marginalism, a school of economic thought holding that utilities are antecedent to price and reflect values attached to consumption of one specific good or service rather than another (paraphrasing Hunnicutt, 1985, p. 247; see pp. 247–251 generally). Utility is the relative value of a good or service consumed; the logic of utility implies only that the value realized in consumption should exceed the cost of consumption, with no reference to what is consumed or by whom. This logic appears in leisure practice once the benefits approach defines its objective as optimizing the net utility (maximizing net value) of leisure benefits. The implication for recreation management and policy development is that benefits must yield maximum possible returns for minimum feasible costs.

Benefits, given this underlying economic logic, must be quantifiable if their optimization (maximization) is to be assessed. Further, once the objective of leisure practice, optimize net benefits, is linked to as much value as possible (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 350), optimization becomes maximization. *Optimum* simply means the arithmetic sum of leisure's quantifiable utilities and costs. This presents difficulties. The arithmetic conceptualization of optimum (maximum) contains no reference to the content of the benefits produced or to their distribution among stakeholders. What type of benefits are available to whom is subordinated to maximizing the amount of benefits. So long as leisure research or leisure practice facilitates the optimization of net utility (maximization of net value), they satisfy the criteria of the benefits approach.

The consequences are worth emphasizing here. Scenarios are easily imagined in which a management decision or policy optimizes net utility (maximizes net value) but concentrates it within a single benefit type (e.g., economic; for benefit types, see Driver & Bruns, 1999, pp. 352–353; Schreyer & Driver, 1989, p. 388). Using the arithmetic notion of optimum (maximum), this decision or policy would be evaluated more favorably than alternatives

that yield even marginally less net utility (marginally less than maximum value) but include several benefit types (e.g., environmental, personal, social, and cultural). Lying at the center of the benefits approach is the question "How much?" (answer: "as much value as possible"), while "Of what?" or "For whom?" receive considerably less attention. Surely these questions are relevant to public sector management and policy development, yet nothing in the benefits approach requires production of specific benefit types (see Driver & Bruns, p. 389) in certain minimum amounts distributed among specific stakeholders. What counts is the quantity of benefits produced.

The benefits approach does not reflect the full diversity of leisure. Imposing an arithmetic notion of optimum (maximum) distorts leisure benefits (e.g., aesthetic quality, cultural and individual identity, inclusion, social justice) and excludes leisure purposes (e.g., expressive, solidary, communal) other than optimization (maximization). How, without violating either the experiences or the people who value them, do people quantify the peaceful contemplation of a sunset or the affirmation of identity through participation in a cultural festival? What is their optimum (maximum)? If the benefits produced are invaluable to some people, can they be defended with a logic that would translate *invaluable* as "without value" because such benefits cannot be summed? Consider how the word *stakeholder* arranges leisure, as though all leisure can be reduced to equivalent quantifiable units or "stakes" that can then be measured and summed. Can people who value sunsets or affirmation of identity have effective voice in policy development networks (consisting of such stakeholders as policymakers, business people, other professionals, and taxpayers) responding only to optimization (maximization)? What "stake" can one "hold" in peacefully contemplating a sunset? Does it matter if people do so from their suburban backyards or from the weeds alongside urban railroad tracks (see Kotlowitz, 1991, pp. 3–7, especially p. 7)? If recreation participants are "customers," then does greater ability to pay create a larger entitlement to more developmental and emancipatory leisure activity? What benefits matter in the recreation policymaking process? Whose benefits?

There is ironic truth in the assertion that the benefits approach "is more than a management system" because it "influences how we think about leisure" (Driver & Bruns, 1999, p. 349). Leisure is reduced in the benefits approach to the common denominator of optimized net utility (maximized net value), but the benefits approach says little about the effects of this reduction on the types of benefits produced or their distribution in society. Remarkably, nothing in the benefits approach requires that leisure participants themselves derive any net utility (value) at all. Even an "intrinsically rewarding psychological state" (p. 357) momentarily experienced by participants may have considerable and varied costs, short and long term. Yet such costs to participants would not delegitimize leisure management or policy development so long as they are outweighed by larger net gains for other stakeholders, including those whose stakes may have little to do with leisure itself. This is an awkward basis on which to demonstrate leisure's social merits.

Reconstructing the Leisure Research–Leisure Practice Relation

We believe the critical perspective is best able to construct a research–practice relation that satisfies the criteria established earlier (p. 143): that possibilities be opened for interactive sharing of the strengths of research and practice while respecting their independence as professional paradigms. The traditional and personal perspectives are unable to meet these requirements because they construct the research–practice relation based on the self-referential assumptions constituting leisure research and leisure practice as professional paradigms. In contrast, the critical perspective constructs this relation with reference to two principles independent of any specific professional paradigm: a developmental conception

of human activity and emancipation. Incorporating these principles into leisure research is independent of incorporating them into leisure practice, providing a basis for interaction without subordination.

Having been critical of the benefits approach while using it as a test case for the three perspectives, we emphasize that our purpose is not to deny the proposition that leisure may be beneficial. It is rather to demonstrate the importance of the perspective within which such propositions are advanced. Consider, for example, that optimization (maximization) as defined in the benefits approach lacks social context but has striking social content. The absence of context disembodies people as stakeholders, whereas their behavior as stakeholders is given content by two unstated assumptions about human activity, that (a) its many forms are reducible to a single instrumental dimension and (b) its purposes are reducible to the optimization of net utility (maximization of net value). Both assumptions are historically grounded in conceptions of human beings as essentially producers and consumers, with corresponding social roles, processes, and institutions (on the historical background, see, e.g., Macpherson, 1973; McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1982; K. Polanyi, 1944). But, as Euben (1996) noted, "A theory that adopts the same notion of rationality as the structure it studies helps that structure operate rather than effects a theoretical distance from it" (p. 73). Granted its intention to counter leisure's devaluation, uncritical adoption of these assumptions about human activity means the benefits approach reproduces the very principles on which the devaluation of leisure is based. As a result, leisure is confined within a narrow range of instrumental activity whose utility (value) can be quantified, sharply reducing possibilities for development and emancipatory leisure activity.

The critical perspective, alone among the three, requires that leisure research and leisure practice be self-reflectively scrutinized to guard against assumptions that create barriers to developmental and emancipatory leisure. SPRENET discussions (fall 1999) regarding youth at risk illustrate this point. Although ideally leisure-based interventions are supported by leisure research, claims of unique professional expertise also serve to legitimate the considerable power held by researchers and practitioners (along with their agencies and funding sources). Expertise is often misunderstood as professional entitlement to determine, for example, if an individual or group is at risk, to design interventions or programs, and to select program evaluation standards. From the critical perspective, it is most important to note how legitimizing this entitling assumption reduces intervention itself to application of professional techniques. Perhaps it would be better to surrender legitimation by expertise in order to empower others through developmental and emancipatory activity. In a comment applicable to both leisure practice and leisure research, Samdahl (1999) noted that

> if we are unable to understand how values influence our choice of research questions, our research may do little more than reinforce the status quo. The challenge before us is to examine, as critically as we can, why we are interested in studying those questions that we choose to pursue. (p. 122)

A professional paradigm constructed around self-referential claims (e.g., possession of unique expertise) can be fairly challenged as more likely to lead to dependency than to development and emancipation. This challenge is central in assessing the contributions of professions to a developmentally and emancipatorily rich democratic society (see, e.g., Brint, 1994; Brint & Levy, 1999).

As a second illustration, important segments of leisure research and leisure practice (in addition to the benefits approach, consider tourism, aspects of natural resource management, and the influence of private sector models in public recreation) unreflectively

adopt conceptions of human beings as essentially consumers and producers. Intentionally or not, these assumptions are thereby legitimated within leisure research and leisure practice, along with their social, political, and economic consequences. Little attention is given, for example, to the fact that access to leisure is already part of the nonrandom distribution of advantages and disadvantages in society. Simply put, there are no benefits of leisure without *access* to leisure benefits. And expanding access is more a matter of equitably distributing resources in society than of enhancing consumer choice. Among the resources in question are, of course, disposable income and disposable time, both inequitably distributed in the United States (on income, see Shapiro & Greenstein, 1999; on time, see Clarkberg & Moen, 1999). The further systematic effects of race, sex, ethnicity, education, and social class on individual and community resources, and thus on access to leisure, cannot be ignored in leisure research and leisure practice without the unhappy consequence of reproducing their effects. To conceive of leisure as consumption of benefits and of leisure practice as maximization of utilities (value) is only to tether leisure all the more closely to existing constraints on leisure's developmental content and emancipatory potential.

Research and practice are situated in specific societal, cultural, and material contexts that are in significant part the result of historical human activity. These contexts include, along with skewed resource distributions, specific conceptions of rights, entitlements, social justice, and how public resources should be used to secure them. These are the boundaries within which researchers must act but beyond which they must aim. Leisure is not fixed or natural, independent of context. Developmental and emancipatory activity is possible in leisure only to the extent that people are able to open spaces within which they may expand their capacities, explore the lives they wish to lead, and build the communities in which they wish to live. Here in these spaces is where leisure's social merits will be created.

The truly radical potential of leisure lies not in nostalgia for an early reform movement that largely reproduced ideologies of social control and labor discipline (see, e.g., Andrew, 1981; Gleason, 1999, esp. chap. 1; Rojek, 1995; Storrmann, 1991, 1993). It lies in providing access to developmental and emancipatory leisure opportunities for people disadvantaged by those and similar ideologies. As a social phenomenon, leisure is neither isomorphic to nor coterminous with leisure practice, which includes only a small portion of the leisure actually occurring in society (see Coalter, 1998). To explore leisure's complexity, research must necessarily look considerably beyond practice. Yet researchers may learn from practitioners. Leisure in theory-based research is too often lifeless and disembodied. Whatever it is, leisure occurs in people's lives, which leisure research must engage as they are actually lived in all their complexities. Leisure research must thus be sensitive to historical and contextual influences, epistemologically open, and profoundly transdisciplinary. We return to our starting point: Leisure does not provide a preexisting link between leisure research and leisure practice. With both leisure research and leisure practice attuned to leisure's developmental and emancipatory content, however, the critical perspective respects their independence as professional paradigms while enabling mutually supportive interaction, interaction to make a difference in people's lives.

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). Benefits of leisure: A social psychological perspective. In B. Driver, P. Brown, & G. L. Peterson (Eds.), *Benefits of leisure* (pp. 411–417). State College, PA: Venture.

Andrew, E. (1981). *Closing the iron cage: The scientific management of work and leisure.* Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Black Rose.

Babbie, E. (1998). *The practice of social research* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Benhabib, S. (1986). *Critique, norm, and utopia: A study of the foundations of critical theory.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Benhabib, S. (1996). From identity politics to social feminism: A plea for the nineties. In D. Trend (Ed.), *Radical democracy: Identity, citizenship, and the state* (pp. 27–41). New York: Routledge.

Bernstein, R. (1971). *Praxis and action: Contemporary philosophies of human activity.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bernstein, R. (1978). *The restructuring of social and political theory.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Blumenthal, K. (1991). The conceptual structure of a thesaurus for the park, recreation and leisure service profession. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 52,* 1076A. (University Microfilms No. AAC 9121316).

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research in the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

Brint, S. (1994). *In an age of experts: The changing role of professionals in politics and public life.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brint, S., & Levy, C. (1999). Professionals and civic engagement: Trends in rhetoric and practice, 1875–1995. In T. Skocpol & M. Fiorina (Eds.), *Civic engagement in American democracy* (pp. 163–210). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution/Russell Sage Foundation.

Burdge, R. (1985). The coming separation of leisure studies from parks and recreation education. *Journal of Leisure Research, 17,* 131–141.

Calhoun, C. (1995). *Critical social theory: Culture, history, and the challenge of difference.* Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.

Canadian Parks/Recreation Association. (1997). *The benefits catalog.* Gloucester, Ontario, Canada: Author.

Churchman, C. (1968). *The systems approach.* New York: Dell.

Clarkberg, M., & Moen, P. (1999, January). *The time-squeeze: The mismatch between work-hours patterns and preferences among married couples.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Anaheim, CA.

Coalter, F. (1998). Leisure studies, leisure policy, and social citizenship: The failure of welfare or the limits of welfare? *Leisure Studies, 17,* 21–36.

Driver, B., & Bruns, D. (1999). Concepts and uses of the benefits approach to leisure. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Leisure studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century* (pp. 349–369). State College, PA: Venture.

Euben, J. (1996). Taking it to the streets: Radical democracy, radicalizing theory. In D. Trend (Ed.), *Radical democracy: Identity, citizenship, and the state* (pp. 62–77). New York: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (1989). *Unruly practices: Power, discourse, and gender in contemporary social theory.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gilligan, C. (1992). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original published 1983)

Gleason, W. (1999). *The leisure ethic: Work and play in American literature, 1840–1940.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research.* Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Goodale, T. (1991). Bridging the gap between research, practice, and policy. *Journal of Applied Recreation Research, 16,* 69–84.

Griffiths, M., & Tann, S. (1992). Using reflective practice to link personal and public theories. *Journal for Education and Teaching, 18,* 69–84.

Hemingway, J. (1995). Leisure studies and interpretive social inquiry. *Leisure Studies, 14,* 32–47.

Hemingway, J. (1996). Emancipating leisure: The recovery of freedom in leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 28,* 27–43.

Hemingway, J. (1999). Emancipation and critique: Toward a critical theory of leisure. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Leisure studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century* (pp. 487–506). State College, PA: Venture.

Henry, I. (1993). *The politics of leisure policy.* Basingstoke, England: Macmillan.

Horkheimer, M. (1972). Traditional and critical theory. In M. Horkheimer, *Critical theory: Selected Essays* (pp. 188–252; M. O'Connell, Trans.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1937)

Howe, C. (1986). An undergraduate body of core knowledge for professional preparation in recreation and leisure studies. *SPRE Annual on Education, 1*, 31–46.

Hunnicutt, B. (1985). Economic constraints on leisure. In M. Wade (Ed.), *Constraints on leisure* (pp. 243–286). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Iso-Ahola, S. (1980). *The social psychology of leisure and recreation*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. Brown.

Jordan, D., & Roland, M. (1999). An examination of differences between academics and practitioners in frequency of reading research and attitudes toward research. *Journal of Leisure Research, 31*, 166–170.

Kerlinger, F. (1986). *Foundations of behavioral research* (3d ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Kotlowitz, A. (1991). *There are no children here: The story of two boys growing up in the other America*. New York: Anchor Books.

Macpherson, C. (1973). *Democratic theory: Essays in retrieval*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

McKendrick, N., Brewer, J., & Plumb, J. (1982). (Eds.). *The birth of a consumer society: The commercialization of eighteenth-century England*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Morrison, K. (1996). Developing reflective practice in higher degree students through a learning journal. *Studies in Higher Education,* 21, 317–332.

Parr, M. (1996). The relation between leisure theory and recreation practice. *Leisure Sciences, 18*, 315–332.

Parr, M. (1997). The core body of knowledge as perceived by therapeutic recreation students vs. leisure services management students. *Schole, 12*, 75–90.

Polanyi, K. (1944). *The great transformation: The economic and political origins of our time* (R. MacIver, Ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reid, D. (1995). *Work and leisure in the 21st century: From production to citizenship*. Toronto: Wall & Emerson.

Rodgers, D. (1987). *Contested truths: Keywords in American politics since independence*. New York: Basic Books.

Rojek, C. (1995). *Decentering leisure: Rethinking leisure theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rudick, J. (1997, December). Write to the point: How to get your story printed and on the air. *Parks and Recreation, 32*, 22.

Samdahl, D. (1999). Epistemological and methodological issues in leisure research. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Leisure studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century* (pp. 119–133). State College, PA: Venture.

Sapora, A. (1986). Leisure theory and practice: Integrated or separate? *SPRE Annual on Education, 1*, 19–30.

Schreyer, R., & Driver, B. (1989). The benefits of leisure. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Understanding leisure and recreation: Mapping the past, charting the future* (pp. 385–419). State College, PA: Venture.

Shapiro, I., & Greenstein, R. (1999). *The widening income gulf*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget & Policy Priorities.

Stockdale, J. (1989). Concepts and measures of leisure participation and preference. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Understanding leisure and recreation: Mapping the past, charting the future* (pp. 113–150). State College, PA: Venture.

Stofflett, R. (1996). Metaphor development by secondary teachers enrolled in graduate teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 12*, 577–589.

Storrmann, W. (1991). The ideology of the American parks and recreation movement: Past and future. *Leisure Sciences, 13*, 137–151.

Storrmann, W. (1993). The recreation profession, capital, and democracy. *Leisure Sciences, 15*, 49–66.

Sylvester, C. (1995). Relevance and rationality in leisure studies: A plea for good reason. *Leisure Sciences, 17*, 125–131.

Vickerman, R. (1989). Economic models of leisure and its impact. In E. Jackson & T. Burton (Eds.), *Understanding leisure and recreation: Mapping the past, charting the future* (pp. 331–356). State College, PA: Venture.

Wearing, B. (1998). *Leisure and feminist theory*. London: Sage.

Weissinger, E. (1995). Judging the relevance of deductive inquiry: The central role of theory. *Leisure Sciences, 17*, 141–145.

Williams, R. (1976). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zito, A. (1982). An evaluation of the professional education core standards of the recreation, leisure services, and resource education national council on accreditation (doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa, 1982). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *43*, 2573A.