

## EDITORIAL

# Views on leisure studies: pasts, presents & future possibilities?

### Introduction

Within this commentary, we (the current Managing Editors) offer what we might term a ‘directional purview’ for the scholarly consideration of leisure. The very fact that each of the editors of this journal possesses their own markedly distinct (origin) narratives and understandings of leisure indicates that leisure scholarship is multiple and contested. Disparate researchers located around the world (some in groups, others in relative isolation) have, for various reasons (some empirical, others theoretical and/or methodological) differentially engaged with ‘leisure’, and have, whether knowingly or otherwise, contributed to the (loose) coalescence of the intellectual formation that we recognise currently as leisure studies. Somewhat reworking Stuart Hall’s (1992) reflections on the emergence of cultural studies, leisure studies has multiple trajectories, different ways of materialising, different histories in different disciplines and geographical locations.

Far from a coherent institutionalised formation, perhaps especially, in an increasingly corporatised/neoliberal higher education (HE) system that has decimated leisure/recreation departments and programmes, leisure studies is rather an intellectual assemblage perpetually in a state of flux and becoming. It is – and perhaps always has been – a site of struggle for precisely what it should and could be now and, perhaps more importantly, in the future. Within this piece, we acknowledge – and celebrate – both the complex derivation and extant plurality of leisure studies by bringing together our different ontological, theoretical and methodological backgrounds. We do this in an effort to simultaneously establish, excoriate and extend the contingent boundaries of leisure studies. Importantly, lest we are to be accused of prophesising on what leisure studies should be, we are not looking to offer a definitive meta-narrative of what leisure studies is, but instead we attempt to bring together differing tensions, positionalities, debates, politics and so on (our *views*), so as to think productively about what leisure studies *might* look like.

Rather than speaking from any sort of authority (and we acknowledge some may perceive this given our role as Editors), we would prefer to disavow any ascribed intellectual status and/or influence we may (or may not) have accumulated, and instead position ourselves as offering our contribution to the perpetually unfolding scholarly understandings of leisure in the contemporary moment. In the following, each of us sketches our own narratives, our own moorings that we bring to the study of leisure. When held together, they do not reveal a static state and they do not propose *the* direction of *Leisure Studies* in the future (hence, the quotation marks in the opening sentence around this ‘directional purview’). Instead, these oft-personal and reflective narratives are embryonic notes that speak to the tensions, complexities, divergent approaches and differing trajectories and influences that are, or might, shape leisure studies in the future. Certainly, they give insight into how we (as Editors) view the field, and its futures. But, this does not, and should not, mean that these narratives proffer *the* only way of seeing; they offer *a* way of seeing, to suggest differently would be dangerous, presumptive, arrogant, overly reductive and downright naïve! Instead, these views, in tandem with those that have gone before (e.g. see Collins paper in this issue), collectively speak to a field that is in flux, contestable and vibrant.

### **A view: from Jayne Caudwell**

As it is for most people, my current understanding of leisure studies is a consequence of previous experiences of, and engagement with the field. In preparing to write this editorial I took some time to reflect on this past, which is U.K.-centric because of where I have studied and worked. Starting places are not always clearly defined, but my first introduction to leisure as a topic of critical inquiry was during my Masters at Loughborough University, U.K. I can remember our class of 1989, consisting of mature students and younger fresh graduates, discussing 1980s ‘Tory’ government policy and making analogies between Compulsory Competitive Tendering of local authority leisure provision and the selling off of British Telecom, British Aerospace, Britoil, British Gas, British Steel, British Petroleum, British Airways and major utilities: water and electricity. Debate surrounded the policy implications, practicalities and pragmatics of Thatcher’s drive towards privatisation. I was drawn to a small group of mature students who criticised this shift to ‘popular capitalism’ describing it in terms of a culture war. This heady mix of politics, culture, leisure and agented polemic remained with me, but – ironically – lost some momentum during my early years of employment as a lifeguard in local authority leisure facilities.

A moment that I can clearly remember re-piquing my critical mind was at the *Leisure Studies Association* annual conference (1995) when Chas Critcher (author of *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain*, 1995) included a short anecdote in his keynote paper. He told us of his dismay when he was taken to Sheffield’s large out-of-town shopping centre (Meadowhall). He said he wanted to stand on one of the white Formica tables, throw his arms in the air, and shout to the shopping masses that there is more to (leisure)life than this: conspicuous consumption.

In 1996, I returned to study (PhD) leisure, and sport, at the University of North London. Working within the Centre for Tourism and Leisure Studies I benefited from a very strong women’s studies department (e.g. Liz Kelly, Clare Hemmings, Elizabeth Wilson, Lucy Bland) at the University at the time. This is when I found the feminist leisure studies literatures, for example, Cara Aitchison’s (1997) on: *A decade of compulsory competitive tendering in UK sport and leisure services: some feminist reflections*. Guided by my supervisor – Judy White<sup>1</sup> – I spent time reading and re-reading feminist theory and feminist methodology (e.g. Ahmed, 1998; Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Braidotti, 1991; Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990; Gunew, 1990; Henderson, 1991; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992; hooks, 1984, 1991; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; McRobbie, 1982; Scraton, 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Wearing, 1999). Like other feminists at this time Butler (1990, 1993, 1998) had a significant impact on our existing and/or developing feminist thinking, theory and advocacy. It was a period when there were noticeable moves towards post-structuralism. At the same time within leisure studies there were turns to cultural geographies and spatiality (e.g. Aitchison, 1999).

These early experiences were followed by employment at Leeds Metropolitan University (working with Sheila Scraton, Rebecca Watson, Pete Bramham and John Spink) and the University of Brighton (working with Alan Tomlinson, Graham McFee, Neil Ravenscroft and Belinda Wheaton). Both institutions and the people within, like similar places elsewhere around the world, have a reputation for critical, and political, analyses of leisure; and, for pushing the boundaries of leisure concepts, theory/ies and methodology/ies. We taught leisure studies to undergraduates and postgraduates, we researched and documented leisure, and some colleagues were/had been editors of the journal *Leisure Studies* (i.e. Tomlinson, Scraton, Ravenscroft, Watson).

It is this past, albeit a brief representation here, that underpins my view that leisure and leisure studies cannot be considered as detached from dominant societal structures, cultural practices and political histories. Leisure is linked to, for example, inequalities, social in/justice, failing capitalism, emerging right-wing geopolitics, poverty, migration, environmentalism, rights and freedoms. There are multiple ways to interrogate these associations and relations, and debate over methodologies must remain vigorous and purposive if we are to continue to grow and develop the critical study of leisure.

As I have alluded to, fundamental to the integrity of scholarly work on leisure are the principles of robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks; rigorous critical analyses; and coherent and ethical

methodologies. In many ways, the multiple activities, sites and sights that constitute leisure are secondary. With that said, it is obvious that we must stay abreast of real-world leisure participation, practice and cultures. This world is changing at pace because of our current epoch of Internet and technological innovation. Indeed, many studies are deemed an original contribution by virtue of their unique topic of study. This turn to a previously unknown and/or unseen mode of leisure does spike readers' interest, however, a simple descriptive account is usually insufficient to carry the work to a point where it makes a difference.

In terms of the journal *Leisure Studies* perhaps one of the most common reasons work is returned to authors is because it is descriptive, as opposed to rich description (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), without being informed by in-depth scholarship. One thing I learned as a PhD student writing from a feminist perspective is the need to justify what does/does not constitute knowledge and how we give value to what we know (epistemology and methodology). Descriptions of leisure and descriptions of methodologies (both qualitative and quantitative) such as simple accounts of the practicalities of research methods are insufficient for most studies aimed at peer-review journal publication. Indeed, our tasks as scholars and critical thinkers are to maintain the worth of our research through well-informed research practice, and to expand the frameworks of analyses through developing relevant concepts, theories and methodologies. This endeavour is evident in many works held within *Leisure Studies*. It is also evident in the emerging field of Events and the aims of a Critical Event Studies (CES) (e.g. Lamond & Platt, 2016). Recent scholarly developments such as this (CES) complement and can be supported by the established field of leisure studies.

It is clear from the range of submissions *Leisure Studies* receives, and previous commentary (see Collins paper in this issue), that there are strong scholarly connections between aspects of leisure, physical activity, sport, events and tourism. What are less apparent are the bonds between leisure and scholarly fields such as urban studies, international relations, health studies and performing arts. To reiterate previous commentators, these veins of scholarship offer potential for new, unique contributors and for expanding the readership of the journal.

To end, it is difficult to ignore our past scholarly experiences and endeavours and this means that I appreciate research that reveals previously unknown and/or unheard accounts of human relations, and research that makes a difference in the broadest sense. Brought up on a diet of feminism that sought to inform practice and promote cultural change, I prefer research that seeks to influence the lived, everyday experiences of individuals, groups and communities. Here, making a difference might be viewed as emancipatory, praxis and policy focused. Or, it might be a simple moment between an author and a reader within which the reader is moved to think, and act, differently because of the author's critical and informed documentation.

### **A view: from Heather Gibson**

As a scholar, people often do not know how to categorise me. Some associate me with sport management as this field has been very welcoming to our work in sport tourism. However, while I have many connections to this community, my disciplinary inclination leans more towards sport sociology where I started first at what is now the University of Brighton and continued as a graduate student at the University of Connecticut. On the other hand, my academic line (my job title) is in tourism and I teach more tourism classes than those in sport or leisure, and I have published many papers in tourism journals, yet I would say that the tourism community does not tend to count me as one of their own. So if not sport and if not tourism, where do I see myself? When asked I say leisure studies as I consider leisure to be the overall domain from which to study sport or tourism. After all, over 75% of tourism is leisure-travel, vacations (holidays), weekend trips, etc. (WTTC, 2013) and as Cohen (1974) suggested, tourism is a special form of leisure. Similarly, while some people's engagement in sport can be classified as work (using the classic work/non-work definition of leisure), for many sport is leisure, whether watching, playing, talking about and so on. Thus, leisure studies is a field that can, and has through the years, embraced scholarly and practical endeavours about various aspects of

sport and tourism under the umbrella of leisure. However, while this can, and has resulted in a field that has showcased work on a myriad of activities (see Collins paper in this issue), it has also been a shortcoming; as Roberts (2011) lamented this focus on 'little leisures' has been a detriment to the field. As Western societies (where leisure studies first emerged) have become more specialised and universities have become more akin to businesses concerned with raising money and job preparation rather than education per se, fields such as sport management, tourism management and event management (the little leisures) have risen to prominence, leaving what was the broader focus of leisure studies and leisure management degrees in the dust.

The demise of leisure studies (e.g. Henderson, 2010) has been the focus of debate across North America, Australia and the U.K. where the field first emerged and took root in university curricula in various forms, most commonly in the guise of recreation/leisure management. Debates over why this demise has occurred continue, and scholars lament 'why is nobody listening?' (Shaw, 2000) when many of us feel that we are as relevant if not more so in society today than ever. But as Mike Collins (in this issue) noted, why have leisure scholars not been more evident in the recent debates over work-life balance when many of us would say achieving balance among the three domains of life, work, family and leisure is at the heart of our field? Another timely issue and policy initiative in the U.K. is well-being. Leisure scholars through the years have examined the contribution of leisure to well-being in such variations as leisure and life satisfaction (Nimrod, 2007), quality of life (Shaw, 1984) or health and wellness (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). In this journal, Haworth (2003) positioned leisure as having a central role in initiatives and potential policy directions concerning well-being, yet beyond the pervasive belief within the leisure studies community that leisure contributes to health and well-being, scholars in other fields (e.g. positive psychology, public health, tourism, sport) are the researchers with the large funded projects on various aspects of well-being. Where are the leisure scholars in all of this? Haven't we been advocating well-being through leisure since the beginning? All is not bleak however, in the U.S. some leisure scholars were early participants in the [Active Living Research](http://activelivingresearch.org/) agenda funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (<http://activelivingresearch.org/>) as it was recognised that public parks, recreation facilities and programmes could play an important role in encouraging more physical activity, especially among children and youth (Bedimo-Rung, Mowen, & Cohen, 2005). Yet, this success story seems to be an anomaly rather than the norm and the contribution of leisure scholars in addressing key social issues is minimal. Why is this so? In the U.S., where I have been based for much of my academic career, answers range from the lack of consensus among the leisure scholars about the definition of leisure to the persistence of negative connotations associated with the term leisure in a country where work is central to identity and the tenets of the Protestant Work Ethic are still pervasive (Sylvester, 1999). After all, this (the U.S.A.) is one of the only countries in the world without a law mandating paid vacation benefit and when employers do provide vacation days, Americans not only receive less days than say Europeans, they often do not take their full allocation of days for fear of retribution from their colleagues or their employers (Greenberg, 2014). So, is it any wonder that the term leisure and the field of leisure studies has not fared well in recent times when the U.S. state governments are requesting 'proof' that university degrees lead to well-paying jobs, sentiments that seem to have echoed around the Western world.

So you might be thinking that we are signalling the end of the field and the journal with all of this doom and gloom. Far from it! The journal is doing well in terms of submissions and what seems to be happening is that scholars in countries that have not traditionally been active in leisure studies are experiencing a growth in scholarly interest in various aspects of leisure, sport, tourism and events. I also maintain the position that leisure scholars are well positioned to join interdisciplinary teams to tackle some of society's pressing issues such as well-being, physical inactivity, quality of life among the old, cultural assimilation among migrants and more. We have a wealth of relevant knowledge and we can play important roles in shaping policy and practice, and in our role as scholars adding to our body of knowledge.

This last point is of particular relevance as a Managing Editor of this journal. I will echo the sentiments of my co-editors in the need for theoretically informed work that is of social relevance. However,

with my academic training and home in the U.S. since my undergraduate days, I hold a pragmatic position to method believing that the research problem shapes the decision over which method is most appropriate (Henderson, 2011). I am excited to see that we appear to be on the wave of new forms of data collection from the likes of netnography to the analysis of Twitter feeds and various other forms of so called Big Data. However, method is a tool and should be harnessed in the pursuit of high-quality theoretically informed insights on various aspects of leisure. I challenge authors to address the issue as to how their study contributes to the body of leisure knowledge being mindful of what has gone before and how their work points the way for future projects. My doctoral advisor set Forscher's (1963) treatise *Chaos in the Brickyard* as required reading. While this paper was written 54 years ago, it is still highly relevant today and should be part of every scholar's training as they take on the task of adding to and caring for, the body of knowledge of our field.

### **A view: from Michael Silk**

Based within my background (a loose and tense amalgam of sociology and [physical] cultural studies), my view of a productive and meaningful leisure studies is a collective and democratic project, incorporating a productive tension of divergent foci, viewpoints and opinions (very) loosely united by a common concern with understanding the existence, operation and effects of power and power relations as they are manifest within, and through, the complex and contextual fields of leisure. In other words, with Spracklen (2015), my approach to leisure is one that can unpack nuanced understandings of how various instances, experiences, practices and structures of leisure are embedded in complex inter-connections with the economic and political trajectories of (neoliberal) consumer capitalism, surveillance and the unequal power relations extant in all leisure practices. Differently put, this is a Leisure Studies that has some very clear 'touching points' to Mike Collins' piece in this issue (and indeed, those of my co-Editors); a field centred around questions of difference, inequality, inequity and social exclusion. As such, I see the role of leisure studies as part of a conversation that aims to co-produce consciousness (Freire, 2000; see also Donnelly & Atkinson's discussion on a public sociology of sport, 2015) related to the field's object of knowledge: namely, leisure in general (encompassing a multitude of forms, instances, experiences, structures, meanings not limited to shopping, eating, consuming, playing, prosuming, travelling, relaxing, working out, spectating, socialising, gardening, knitting, drinking, partying, dancing, listening, reading, hanging out in spaces as diverse as the home or sanitised/spectacular urban consumer temples,<sup>2</sup>) and, more specifically, the manner in which specific sites, forms and/or expressions of leisure are organised, disciplined, embodied, represented and experienced in relation to the operations of social power.

This involves a scholarly understanding of leisure as being informed by a variety of intellectual influences (e.g. cultural studies, body studies, feminism, sociology, media studies, history, cultural geography, critical psychology and urban studies); indeed, I would argue that to be attuned to some of the most pressing social concerns of our time (to which leisure forms are unarguably and intricately tied) requires holding together (often uncomfortably) the competing tensions and concerns inherent within such influences. In this sense, I see the scholarly study of leisure within the unfolding transdisciplinary, transtheoretical and transmethodological nature of academic work that places it at odds with distinct (sub-)disciplinary boundaries as understood in the traditional sense of these disciplines. This then is a leisure studies that is/could be *dynamic, self-reflexive, and transdisciplinary*; a 'field' rooted in qualitative (although not exclusively) and critical forms of inquiry (for expansion on these influences on my understandings of leisure, see Silk, Andrews, & Thorpe, 2017). With an unequivocal 'commitment to progressive social change' (Miller, 2001, p. 1), and a methodological commitment (e.g. Fine, 1994; Frow & Morris, 2000) that attaches the lives of the private individuals, the texts, the institutions who form the essence of our scrap of ordinary to structures (e.g. racial, gendered, economic, national, global), this is a leisure studies that produces the type of knowledge through which it would be in a position to intervene into the broader social world, and, *make a difference*. This is certainly nothing particularly new; there are long histories and debates over such scholarly orientations across multiple



fields of study and within leisure studies itself (cf. Coalter, 1998, 2000; Deem, 1999; Stebbins, 2011; Spracklen, 2015; see also Jayne's view above).

Clearly, such aims are subject to critique – too grandiose, too utopic, too idealistic, impossible to achieve, easy to write and so on.<sup>3</sup> With this caution in mind, and notwithstanding that a 'meaningful' leisure studies is hard, requires breaking down borders, traditions and established hierarchies, I see little reason why leisure studies should not be contributing to debates about pressing social problem and concerns – leisure is not neutral or apolitical, it is constituent of and constitutive of the wider social formation of which it is a part, and the concerns inherent within various instances of leisure are certainly not endemic to leisure. As such, I see a productive, meaningful and socially just leisure studies (in terms of critical scholarship and engaged pedagogic practices) that questions the taken for granted, that is activated by ethical imperatives and concerns (Garbutt & Offord, 2012), that considers relations of freedom, authority, democratic knowledge and responsibility (Stevenson, 2010), and which can do justice to the diverse narratives, issues, histories, experiences and contexts we are likely to encounter in our ('lively', see Lupton, 2016) leisured lives (Giroux, 2010).

In this sense, one would expect, somewhat reworking Denzin (2012), to see a critical and meaningful leisure studies orienting its gaze towards, and contributing to debates about: neoliberalism and the state; the politics of be(long)ing in neoliberal city spaces and rural out-claves; perpetual war; financial crises; the machinations of 'terror'; the logics, ideologies, structures, formations, mechanics and cultural geographies of neoliberalism; active bodies, hard bodies, soft bodies, ageing bodies, female bodies, fat bodies, disposable bodies, pathologised bodies; family, stigma, loss, identity; global capitalism, economic citizenship; raced, classed, gendered and sexual politics; teen suicide, body dissatisfaction and disorders; consuming pleasure(s); the corporate university; the cultural politics of celebrities/fandom; immigrants, border crossings and queer bodies of colour; disability, mental health and well-being; gender-based violence; (post-)colonial oppression; to listen to and hear the voices of oppression and bilingual belongings; the sexualisation of young (pre-school and tweenage) bodies through media and consumption discourses and material expressions of neoliberal play; the obsessive self-surveillance, policing, monitoring and re-shaping of the body via social media sites, dating and rendezvous apps; sexting; the ubiquitous presence and accessibility of online pornography; and, fitpiration, thinspiration, 'Neknominat' (binge-drinking) that suggest a hypervisibility, like never before (see Silk, Millington, Rich, & Bush, 2016), of the (normally, but not exclusively, hyper-feminine) digital/fleshy body, signalling norms, excesses, compartmentalisation, sexualisation, competitiveness (measured in 'likes'), individualisation and post-humanism. This is of course a heavily and necessarily abbreviated list, but with Denzin (2012), this is a (new) language for a (new) beginning, a new way of speaking from the present, confronting, locating and doing a critical leisure studies that responds to the unfolding conjunctures it confronts (Grossberg, 2010).

Building on the critical questions Heather raised, this is, if you like, the point of departure for an interdisciplinary and productive (lively) leisure studies: a just, moral, democratic and pedagogic project that critically appreciates the significance and relevance of leisure as an effective vehicle for critically examining issues in the context of the wider social, economic and political environments. To be meaningful, to be relevant, the pages of this journal need to reflect – and confront – our present. Our present is digital, to understand leisure (and the everyday experiences, structures and forms of aesthetic neoliberal bodies in leisure) necessitates understanding how our (leisured) bodies are digitised cyborg assemblages (see Silk et al., 2016; Lupton, 2016; Redhead, 2016 for contributions to the recent special issue of this journal on re-thinking leisure in a digital present); this in and of itself throws up a multitude of challenges for theorising, for method, for conceptualising leisure. But further, our present is one in which the world (or significant parts thereof) is seemingly intent on consuming itself, a moment over-determined by war, terror, material inequality, social injustice, human rights abuses, a cynicism for all things social and collective and a crippling sociopolitical-economic-militaristic agenda.<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that this present moment is any graver, darker, byzantine or crazier than distinct historical periods and continuities that have characterised human civilisation. But it is to suggest we need a leisure studies of our times: a *just* response to our present that invites us to think

about our multifarious roles, understandings, empirical and theoretical approaches, our responsibilities and obligations as scholars – the possibilities of leisure within our present.

### **Coda: on the possibilities for leisure studies**

For this issue and in addition to Mike Collins' paper, we have selected 11 papers that serve to highlight the possibilities for *Leisure Studies*. Our intention is to provide examples of leisure-related research that exposes methodological, theoretical and pedagogical variation. As with any selection there are omissions and it is not our intention to ignore and/or dismiss other contributions. The selection, when held with our own views, serves to offer a picture at this time of what we think raises useful ideas and practices for the future study of leisure. For example, the second and third papers in this issue detail specific aspects of leisure research methodologies that are vital to moving leisure scholarship in new directions. McEvoy, Enright & Ann MacPhail discuss the intricate nature of ethics during focus group research with young people (aged 15–19) living in the west of Ireland. Their reflexive and candid account offers new, and established, researchers deep insight into familiar dilemmas surrounding the role of the interviewer. Merchant turns to research design and practice adopted by human geography, artistic practice and urban studies to show how mapping human–environment relations might benefit a leisure studies concerned with embodiment, space, community engagement and health.

*Leisure Studies* has a history of connection with geography and spatiality as well as mobility. As Collins' paper points out, there is also a strong thread of the politics and policy of provision. Alongside these directions there is an enduring concern with documenting the experiences of the marginalised, and a concern with developing new theoretical frames to explain the complexities of marginalisation (e.g. see Watson and Scraton (2013) on intersectionality). Additionally, in recent times, *Leisure Studies* has engaged with physical activity, health and wellbeing. This shift reflects an engagement with funding streams and the importance of research that has an impact. The papers in this issue continue to reflect these avenues of critical inquiry. For example, Roos, through a robust ethnography, considers mobility, cultural capital, new global economies and leisure for Indian expatriates working in Brussels. The economy and employment are central to Öner and Klaesson's paper, which is based on a longitudinal survey of Swedish leisure services, and the authors adopt a New Economic Geography framework to help explain their findings. O'Brien, Lloyd and Riot also adopt tenets of geography, but the emphasis is very different in their account of the emotional geographies of leisure time physical activity (LTPA). Working with mothers of young children living in South East Queensland, Australia, the authors contribute further to an existing leisure studies of women's lives.

The journal receives regular submissions concerned with leisure/life satisfaction and serious leisure. We have included two examples here because each one demonstrates new modes of development for these familiar perspectives. Sharaievska & Stodolska expand leisure satisfaction research through a focus on the family, individual family members and the use of social networking sites. Their work is based in the Midwestern U.S.A. and they draw on a sociotechnological model as a theoretical framework. Rossow-Kimball, Lavis & Blackhurst, using an ecological perspective, challenge the limits of serious leisure theory. The authors do this by adopting an Indigenist research framework to explore the ways Canadian Aboriginal intellectually disabled adults, living in a group supportive setting, connect with their culture.

This focus on marginalised members of society is not new to *Leisure Studies*, but we are witnessing important work on previously hidden and/or ignored groups such as Canadian First Nations people. In another example and in relation to physical activity and the body, Elling-Machartzk brings to the fore the body-self narratives of transgender people living in the Netherlands. Elling-Machartzk considers liminality of the transitioning body, and the structures and ideologies that generate stigma, shame and normative notions of 'right' and 'wrong' bodies. Elling-Machartzk demonstrates how physical activity has the potential to contribute positively to feelings of pride. In a very different context, Sanchez & Liamputtong use therapeutic landscape theory to demonstrate the physical, nutritional,

social and psychological benefits (health and well-being) of community gardening for gardeners, aged 50–82 years, living in Australia.

The final two papers in this issue shift attention to the pedagogical dilemmas and uncertainties facing the study of leisure (as mentioned above by Heather and Michael). Both papers address the decline in leisure studies courses in the U.K. Harris takes a critical analysis of the curriculum, arguing that ‘threshold concepts’ offer a means to identify ‘powerful’ and ‘valuable’ knowledge. Fletcher, Carnicelli, Lawrence & Snape look at the broader political landscapes that impact leisure curriculum with Higher Education Institutions, namely neoliberalism. Through funded research, their analysis is from the point of view of the lecturer.

As is clear from our different contributions and the papers within this issue, we are not interested in a neatly defined, fixed and bounded focus for leisure studies; indeed, there is as much tension and opposition among the Editors of this journal, as there is agreement and common ground. Rather, we are far more interested in a leisure studies in contestation and in which debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, political intent, method, interpretation, expression and impact will continue to be held and will not be neatly cleared up or tidied away as a result of this propositional ‘directional’ purview.

We hope we have been able to raise questions and provide a space for thoughtful reflection on the possibilities of leisure studies that can ensure its growth as a critical site of enquiry, and that is *meaningful* to a range of communities. There will be those, perhaps rightly, who will dismiss our ‘possibilities’ for the field. We should be clear; we are not suggesting we leave behind the insights, theoretical development, impacts and histories brought to bear on the study of leisure to date. It would be a grave error and would be remiss were we not grounded within the debates that have informed us. These debates continue to inform our opinions, and the trajectories and possibilities for *Leisure Studies*.

## Notes

1. Dr. Judy White was one of several key people who helped set up the *Leisure Studies Association*.
2. A necessarily truncated list.
3. See, e.g. Adams et al. (2016) and Silk et al. (2017) for a debate around the claims of my academic ‘home’, Physical Cultural Studies.
4. We are penning this Editorial less than one week following into the Presidency of Donald J. Trump.

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