POWER, POLITICS AND POLICY:
CREATING, DEPLOYING AND RESISTING MEANING IN NEW ZEALAND
PUBLIC SPORT POLICY

Joe Piggin

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An enormous thank you must go to Prof. Steve Jackson and Dr. Malcolm Lewis for being consistently superb supervisors. Thank you for your guidance and support throughout. Malcolm, I hope it was not this thesis that inspired you to retire!

Thank you to my friends and colleagues at Otago University for your intellectual stimulation and support over the years. In my undergraduate years (and this is the short list) thank you to Dan, Nic, Pete, Ash, Dean, Rob, Sam, Kim, Jo, Megan, Hannah, Jen, Maz, Susan, Miriam, Sue, and Matt. In the post-graduate years thanks to Tash, Claire, Farah, Mike, Jay, Scott, Paul, Brendan, Chris, Chris, Kyle, Alex for your own unique impact upon me.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues at Unitec including Trev, Jude, Nicki, Tracey, Andy, Sue, Deb, Tracey, Anna, Margaret, Paul, Gray, Dan, Rob, Kat, Nikki, Lesley, Rex, and Sam for your collegiality, support and encouragement.

Thank you to the various reviewers of journal articles produced from this thesis for their generous and constructive feedback. Thank you to all the research participants who took part in this research. Your input has been tremendously appreciated.

Thank you to brothers and sisters Rach, Tess, Olly and Tim for being simultaneously proud of my undertaking of a PhD while having little to no idea what it was about. And of course Dad and Yvonne and Mum and David for all your support.

Thank you to Mikki who helped in many, many ways.
ABSTRACT

All policy involves the transmission of language and ideas and therefore power. Public sport and recreation policy, through which millions of tax dollars are allocated and which disseminates knowledge and understandings about sport and recreation, is one arena where power relations are constantly formed, reformed and challenged. To understand more about the exercise of power in New Zealand sport and recreation policy, this research examines the dissemination and challenge of policies written by Sparc (Sport and Recreation New Zealand), the organisation responsible for public sport and recreation policy in New Zealand.

Three questions were used to understand the exercise of power in New Zealand public policy. These questions included: How is knowledge about sport and recreation produced and disseminated through public policy? How is ‘the truth’ about sport and recreation proclaimed and constructed in public policy? How can individuals affected by sport and recreation policy challenge existing relations of power?

Theoretically, this research draws on Foucauldian conceptions about power, knowledge, truth and the self. Foucault argued that individuals and groups exercise power discursively, by promoting and deploying certain dominant discourses (or understandings) to the exclusion of other (subjugated) knowledges. As such, the way in which individuals within a society understand knowledge, truth and the self is governed by dominant discourses, and is continually formed discursively over time. Discourses are deployed through a variety of means, including the writing, implementation and resistance of public policy.

Methodologically, the thesis merges Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical approaches to studying discourses. Further, it is guided by a critical discourse analysis, which enables the researcher to question the assumptions behind policy discourses. Data is gathered from various sources, including policy documents, public debate over policy, media articulations of policy and interviews with individuals involved in the writing and resistance of public policy.

This research highlights four distinct practices (or techniques) that illustrate how power is exercised in public sport and recreation policy. These techniques include an
analysis of bio-power, techniques used to analyse, control, and define the body; 
governmentality, which dictates the range of possible actions of individuals and citizens; 
games of truth, through which ‘the truth’ is part of a constant discursive debate; and 
parrhesia, a practice through which citizens can lessen the effect of dominant discourses on their lives. These practices are analysed through specific case studies within the discursive terrain of public sport and recreation policy. With each case study both theoretical considerations and practical suggestions for policy making are offered.

Four findings are discussed. Firstly, public policy can discursively and problematically construct understandings of the world through policy goals and measurements. Secondly, the thesis suggests that while public sport and recreation policy is often defended by policy makers as scientific and rational, its writing and implementation is formed by a number of other understandings which cannot be reconciled with the espoused, positivist logic. Thirdly, the thesis suggests that because policy writing is an ongoing process, and because of changing social conditions, ‘the truth’ about particular policies is also susceptible to change. Fourthly, despite protestors of public policy often believing their resistance is in vain, this study suggests that their efforts do appear to influence the subsequent writing of policy.

The research concludes with reflections about the problematic discursive effects of public policy as well as a consideration of the potential for groups and individuals to challenge or resist understandings about sport and recreation which they do not agree with. In turn, it offers recommendations about the future development of sport public policy, as well as a reflection of this particular type of research approach used. Finally, using this research as a pivot point, sites for future research are considered. In particular, an examination of the effect of public policy on individuals’ lived experiences (as distinct from communities or nations) might be of interest, as would an investigation of effects of global discourses about sport, recreation and physical activity on national public policy.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i  
ABSTRACT ii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background: Sport and Recreation New Zealand 1  
Purpose 4  
Research Questions 6  
Thesis Plan 7  
Key concepts / terms 8

## CHAPTER 2: THE NEW ZEALAND SPORT POLICY CONTEXT

What is Policy? 10  
The Discursive Terrain of New Zealand Sport Policy 12  
   Debating Sport Policy 13  
The (Difficult) Birth of Sparc 16  
Uses of Sport in Public Policy 22  
Neo-liberalism and New Zealand 23  
   Neo-liberalism and New Zealand Sport Policy 25  
   Selling the change 29  
   Resistance / Protest 33

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Studying Power Relations 34  
The Various Meanings and Analyses of ‘Discourse’ 38  
A Foucauldian Approach to Discourse 40  
   A Critical Approach to Policy Analysis 44  
   Reconciling ‘Critical’ Analysis and Foucault 48  
   Policy discourse research 48
CHAPTER 4: METHODS

Archaeology  
Genealogy  
Methodological Considerations  
Critical Discourse Analysis  
Uniting Texts and Power Relations  
Data Collection and Analysis  
    Guiding Questions for Analysis  
    Data Collection Techniques  
        Policy Analysis  
        Interviews  
        Observations  
        Media Analysis  
        Reflexive Journal

CHAPTER 5: CLASSIFY, DIVIDE AND CONQUER: SHAPING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DISCOURSE THROUGH NATIONAL SPORT POLICY

Chapter Purpose  
Theoretical Approach: Classifying and Dividing Practices  
Research Approach  
Nationalism as Biopower  
    Constructing the Nation  
Analysis  
    Classifying in National Public Policy  
    Dividing in National Public Policy  
    Conquering: The International Physical Activity Questionnaire  
Discussion  
Conclusion  
Postscript
## CHAPTER 6: PROBLEMS WITH POSITIVISM: TURNING ‘EVIDENCE-BASED’ RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Purpose</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework: Governmentality</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State and Governmentality</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Knowledge in Public Policy</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Informed by Evidence.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Through Market Research</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Positivism</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the Problems: Ignoring the Data</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deference to Sporting Knowledge</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncontrollable understandings</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 7: GAMES OF TRUTH AT THE GAMES OF WOE: A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF TRUTH CONSTRUCTION AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Purpose</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Approach</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games of Truth</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historicising Truth</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Approach</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites of Truth Games</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement Systems</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend their position. (Fairclough, 1989, p. 35)

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (Sparc) is a government-instituted organisation established in 2002. It is “dedicated to getting New Zealanders moving … from supporting elite athletes to getting out into local communities and encouraging people to get active” (Sparc, 2007a). More specifically, Sparc’s mission statement since 2002 has included “being the most active nation, having the most effective sport and physical recreation systems, and having athletes and teams winning consistently in events that matter to New Zealanders” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 6). In attempting to accomplish this mission, Sparc must interact with a wide variety of organisations, most of which have some interest in the sport, recreation or physical activity sectors. Because Sparc has a government mandate to ‘lead’ the sector, exactly how such a mission statement is enacted, measured, understood and challenged is of significant consequence, not only for Sparc but also for the diverse array of stakeholders and citizens affected by Sparc’s policies.¹

All policy involves the transmission of language and ideas and therefore power. In short, policy is both a form and a practice of discourse. The thesis’ fundamental concern is examining how power relations are constructed, negotiated, and resisted in contemporary New Zealand sport and recreation policy. To do so, this thesis utilises Foucauldian lenses to conceptualise the exercise of power and employs a methodology of discourse analysis.

With regard to Sparc’s goals, it is apparent throughout various policy documents that there is a wide variety of societal arenas Sparc aims to affect, including economic, social, health and nationalistic domains. For instance, regarding the ‘social’ value of sport and recreation, a section on Sparc’s website extrapolates the meaning that is derived from sport and recreation. Titled “New Zealand’s unique sporting culture and identity”

¹ As is convention, where I have placed a word in single quotation marks, I am acknowledging and drawing attention to its political, discursive value.
(Seymour, 2007), the article was written by Dallas Seymour, a former national representative rugby player and Sparc employee. Sport, he wrote, “is inherently a part of Kiwi culture. It is something that has bound our nation in times past and, whatever the changes that are occurring in how sport is organised and played today and in the future, it will always bind us” (Seymour, 2007). While part of an evocatively written, seemingly unifying narrative, an alternative reading of the phrase ‘[sport] will always bind us’ might be understood as problematic and limiting, since the act of binding, while unifying, also constrains.

If Sparc considers sport ‘inherent’ to the nation and an inherent part of Kiwi culture, what might this mean for citizens desiring an alternative nation? Further, how might an organisation promote what is supposedly an inherent part of the nation? How does this ‘binding’ process work? How might citizens speak out against supposedly ‘inherent’ parts of a nation and argue for alternate understandings? Perhaps it is best not to ask these questions. Paul Thomas, a columnist for the New Zealand Herald, wrote that anyone who questions sport’s inherent place in society is out of touch with reality (as measured by the number of Maori and Polynesian friends one has):

Our leading rugby teams, including the All Blacks, are models of multiculturalism. One wonders how many of the white, middle-class intelligentsia who disdain rugby and extol the virtues of multiculturalism have as many Maori and Polynesian mates as the average Pakeha rugby player. (Thomas, 2006)

Thomas then makes a provocative assumption about sport as a social good: “Perhaps it’s all part of growing up, and in due course our intelligentsia will appreciate the fundamental democracy of sport and its capacity to draw communities together and uplift the nation” (Thomas, 2006). If sport is indeed a ‘fundamental democracy’, then perhaps it is unnecessary to ask questions about the exercise of power through national sport policy or examine the effects of particular understandings about sport at all.

Such an understanding though, does not go unchallenged in the print media. A 2003 New Zealand Herald editorial questioned the Labour government’s funding of an America’s Cup yachting campaign, and ostensibly spoke on behalf of many New Zealanders;

2 Similarly, in a 2004 speech Sparc CEO Nick Hill hoped and believed that Sparc could “re-establish sport to its rightful place in [the] Kiwi cultural hierarchy” (2004).
New Zealanders understand that [the America’s Cup is now for billionaires]. In a number of polls, a majority have opposed Government spending on a possible challenge to reclaim the America’s Cup. The vote is not sour grapes; it is a recognition that state spending is incompatible with the event’s modern complexion. (New Zealand Herald, 2003)

Similarly, Hubbard, in an article discussing dissenting voices regarding rugby’s place in New Zealand society argued against the idea that liking rugby and being a Kiwi were essentially synonymous:

That is nonsense - and provably so. About one in three New Zealanders - 32% - have little or no interest in rugby … Amid the hype and gush over the World Cup, it is good to remember these statistics. It helps to inure us against the marketing juggernaut that is trying to make rugby-going a patriotic duty. It is precisely the marketing hype, and the ridiculous claim that to be Kiwi is to be a rugby-lover, that adds to the dissidents’ fury. Some - I am one - are not only indifferent to rugby but hostile to it. The current nonsense [regarding the Rugby World Cup] only makes us hate it more. (Hubbard, 2005)

While there are differing views about the worthiness of sport to the nation, this has not stopped Sparc attempting to find reasons why sport and recreation is important. In April 2004, Sparc produced and distributed an application form for a tender for organisations interested in producing literature reviews on the ‘value’ of sport and recreation in New Zealand.³ The literature reviews would focus on four “separate but linkable [modules]” (Sparc, 2004b, p. 4), comprised of ‘health’, ‘economic’, ‘social cohesion’ and ‘strengthening (national) identity’. Sparc sought to answer, “Why invest in sport and recreation, and what is the relative return to society as a whole?” (p. 3).

It is clear there is a wide array of meanings or rationale for treating sport and recreation as matters of public policy concern, from the contribution of the sectors to the nation’s gross domestic product, to being an important tool in ‘stemming the tide’ of obesity-related diseases and improving social cohesion. How these meanings are communicated is important, since Sparc is not only an important gatekeeper in determining what meanings are foregrounded through public policy, but they also decide how a significant amount of funding is distributed to accomplish particular goals. With this in mind, this research investigates how and why particular meanings (or discourses)

³ The tendering process was not ‘public’. Sparc invited submissions from predetermined contacts.
within public sport policy are produced and deployed by policy makers, and how they are challenged and resisted.

One point is important for clarity. While this thesis examines public ‘sport’ policy, the subsequent analysis is far more wide ranging than traditional conceptions of sport as an institutionalised physical activity involving competition between motivated participants (see Coakley, 2007). Indeed, colloquial definitions of ‘sport’ better contextualise the discursive terrain examined here. One such definition comes from Sparc CEO Nick Hill, who once explained … “Sport can be cheering [cyclist] Sarah Ulmer on … providing oranges for your child’s Saturday soccer game … it may even be choosing to walk to the dairy instead of driving” (Hill, 2006c, p. 6). That is, public sport policy extends into the realms of physical recreation and physical activity. Thus, this thesis casts a wide net, rather than limiting its analysis to only ‘sport.’

**Purpose**

Broadly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the workings of power in the implementation of New Zealand national sport and recreation policy. To do so, I draw upon various analytical ‘tools’ offered by Michel Foucault in his examinations of the relationships between power, knowledge, truth and the self. Using this Foucauldian lens, I aim to explicate how particular understandings or discourses about sport and recreation diffuse through, are utilised, and are resisted in national sport and recreation policy. Such a study is worthwhile since, according to Theodoulou (1994), public policy deeply affects the daily lives of every individual in society. From local to international settings, the implementation of public policy has wide ranging effects. Public policy is a site where the ability of citizens to act meaningfully in their lives can be aided or impeded through state-supported organisations. Public policy also opens up opportunities of all sorts to individuals and groups. It is often where policies enable / empower some at the expense / disempowerment of others that dissent and protest occur.

We are all governed by policies and their synonyms: rules, regulations, guidelines, instructions and laws. Of particular interest to analysts of public policy is how

---

4 The majority of this thesis deals with ‘sport’ policy specifically. However, where the discourses being discussed also influence ideas about recreation and physical activity, reference is made to these.
policy ideas are conveyed to us, the citizenry. Thus, one might expect or at least assume
that understanding the mechanics of public policy implementation would be valuable in
order to effect social change through public policy. The often heated public debate about
how public money is spent, coupled with the fact that on occasion such debate is centred
around ideas about what New Zealand should be like (or how it should be viewed by
others) and what sports a New Zealander should have access to, are important questions
for all citizens who have concerns over the spending of public money. Understanding
both the discourses that inform sport and recreation policy and the ways in which its
public policies are argued about and contested will enable a citizenry to be less
constrained than they might otherwise be. This is not to say that protestors of policy (and
policy makers) do not already consider the things that impact on their ability to put across
coherent, cogent points, but instead it is argued here this research might enable more
discursive ‘space’ for conveying one’s understanding of the world and enable citizens to
deconstruct existing, problematic understandings; both of which might allow power
relations to be less dominating than they might otherwise be. In short, knowledge can
empower.

Sport managers, policy makers, policy implementers and citizens might benefit
from the findings presented here, since public sport and recreation policy either directly
(through participation, watching, or organising sport) or indirectly (through paying rates
and taxes) is a sphere of public concern that affects every citizen. As Sam notes, “despite
the value many place on sport and recreation … the process is not well understood by
those most affected by its outcomes” (2004, p. 7). In particular, those wanting to voice
concern or disapproval of how public money is spent would do well to ensure their
messages are crafted in such a way and in such a medium as to be as effective as possible.
Therefore, understanding more about the operation of discourses in the sport and
recreation milieu will be of value to various stakeholder organisations and individuals.
In addition, this study might also serve as a point of comparison and contrast to other
nations whose sport policies are being (and have been) reconfigured within neo-liberal
understandings. The findings might illuminate other ways of understanding the
employment of particular discourses about sport and recreation and the deployment of
certain policies.
To investigate the role of discourse in New Zealand sport and recreation public policy necessitates a focus on the central government agency responsible for distributing both a significant amount of money and communicating through particular discourses which influence the understandings and activities of citizens. This organisation is Sport and Recreation New Zealand (Sparc). Because Sparc is responsible for the distribution of hundreds of millions of (taxpayer) dollars, and because the Sparc marketing campaigns have the ability (or at least purport) to affect the attitudes of all New Zealanders regarding both national sport and recreation priorities, the organisation wields significant power. Specifically, how this power is deployed through the production and dissemination of national policy, along with how dominant understandings are resisted by protestors, is of primary interest. I assume that social understandings are socially constructed. Power is not thought of in a dichotomous fashion of dominant or dominated. Instead, both government bodies and individual citizens can exercise power in different ways to achieve various ends. Thus, to reiterate, this research focuses on the relations between individuals and groups that attempt to use power in particular ways to shape New Zealand sport policy.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this thesis is:

- How is power exercised in the construction and dissemination of New Zealand public sport and recreation policy?

To guide the process of answering this question, a number of other questions are addressed. These include:

- How is knowledge about sport and recreation produced and disseminated through public policy?
- How is ‘the truth’ about sport and recreation proclaimed and constructed in public policy?
- How can individuals affected by sport and recreation policy challenge existing power relations?

---

5 In 2002, Sparc’s income (mainly from Vote funding and lottery grants) was close to $50M (Sparc, 2002a). In 2007, their income was approximately $108M (Sparc, 2007a).
Thesis Plan

This thesis is organised into nine chapters. Following Chapter 1 which outlines the nature, significance and focus of the study, Chapter 2 extrapolates the concept of policy with particular regard to the multifarious definitions of the term. It also presents an overview of sport policy in the New Zealand context and discusses the governing idea of neo-liberalism in a policy context.

Chapter 3 outlines the Foucauldian conception of power relations which is a guiding theme of this research, and discusses how ideas about discourse and discourses inform the research. It also sets up the four research chapters, which examine the most dominant discourses in national sport policy.

Because each study in the thesis utilised a distinct methodology (with some overlap), it is necessary to acknowledge this in each respective research chapter. Chapter 4 then, introduces the Foucauldian ‘tools’ with which the public policy is analysed. Therefore Chapter 4, Methodology, includes information above and beyond that noted within each individual study; in particular there is a section on the link between epistemology and method, an overview of the guiding themes for analysis, and an extrapolation of the primary data gathering techniques.

Chapter 5 examines how Sport and Recreation New Zealand exercise power in order to attempt to fulfil one facet of its mission statement; to become the world’s most active nation. It examines how both bio-power and discourses of nationalism are utilised to promote a particular knowledge about physical activity that marginalises particular groups.

Chapter 6 is concerned with an exploration of the mechanisms used by those involved in writing, promoting and implementing national public policy, and in particular uses Foucault’s notion of governmentality to investigate the construction of sport policy. Specifically, it examines how the episteme of positivism is enacted and managed through Sparc policy.

Chapter 7 explores how different agents in the sport and recreation sector appropriate understandings of ‘the truth’ in national sport policy. Specifically, it
examines how ‘games of truth’ are played in a context of organisational and national crisis.

Instead of examining power at an institutional level, Chapter 8 focuses on individual instances of resistance and perceptions of power in the policy process. It is informed by Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self; those practices which allow individuals to construct ways of understanding public policy (and themselves) without having to be unfairly affected by imposed understandings about sport and recreation. In particular, the idea of parrhesia (or free speech) is investigated as a technology of the self in a sport policy setting.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by offering recommendations for future research, reflections on the research process, and offers proposals to inform future policy.

Aside from utilising different theoretical frameworks, this research also has two distinct focuses. These include the relation of power to knowledge and the relation of power to truth. These foci are borne out in the respective chapters. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with overarching discourses and knowledge about sport and recreation that inform the entire New Zealand policy framework. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on particular discursive battles over what is ‘true’ in the sport and recreation domain. This arrangement is taken from a critical methodology for researching the construction of social understandings. At times the data is derived from broad public policy and at others from personal communications about lived experiences. In all, this research attempts to construct an understanding of the workings of power in such a milieu, and while not necessarily exhaustive of every type of discursive battlefield, battle or battler, does attempt to illuminate the mechanisms present in various relations of power.

**Key concepts / terms**

*Bio-power*: Techniques used to analyse, control, and define the body.

*Discourse*: Forms of knowledge created through language, speech and everyday interactions. Discourse governs the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about.
**Discursive practice:** The enactment of discourse, and therefore the exercise of power. Policy documents and speeches are examples of discursive practices.

**Exercise of power:** Actions of an individual or group that structure the possibility of the actions of others. Power is exercised through discursive practices.

**Games of truth:** Discursive competition through which ‘the truth’ is discursively fought over.

**Governmentality:** Involves the ‘governing’ of a population. The understanding that structures the range of possible actions of individuals and citizens. Foucault explained governmentality as involving apparatuses for the programming of various dimensions of life.

**Parrhesia:** A practice of the self through which citizens can lessen the effect of dominant discourses on their lives.

**Public policy:** Policy written by either central government or an associated, sanctioned agency.

**Technologies of the self / practices of the self:** Practices which allow individuals to construct ways of understanding themselves without having to be unfairly affected by imposed understandings.

**Relations of power:** Those relationships between individuals, or between individuals and groups, through which discourses are enacted. Relations of power of interest for this research include those relations between Sparc, as a state-established institution, and citizens and groups who both affect it and are affected by it.
CHAPTER 2
THE NEW ZEALAND SPORT POLICY CONTEXT

It is not the intention here to trace the entire development of sport as a matter of public policy concern, since numerous authors have provided both local and comparative examples of the development of structured, formalised policy (Bercovitz, 1998, 2000; Green and Houlihan, 2004, 2005, 2006; Murphy and Waddington 1998; Sam, 2003, 2004). Rather, this chapter aims to provide an overview of the recent years of sport and recreation policy production and dissemination within New Zealand. It also explores the various meanings that are deployed by writers of New Zealand public policy, and examines the practical implications of neo-liberalism on sport and recreation policy that seeks to bring a ‘common vision’ to the New Zealand sport sector.

What is Policy?

Since this project focuses specifically on public policy, a working definition of policy is required. Houlihan (1997) acknowledges the ambiguity of the concept of ‘policy’. A working definition here however is borrowed from Jenkins (1978) who describes public policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve” (p. 15). Broadly, one of greatest goals of policy is to bring clarity, order and structure to ‘disordered’ communities.

Numerous policy process models exist. Houlihan (1997) notes that in many countries, these models show clear similarities. The “conceptually discrete stages” (p. 254) usually include pre-cognition position, issue recognition, formulation of policy options, policy selection, policy implementation, and policy evaluation and refinement. This idea does not imply linearity however. Hill (1997) acknowledges that policy continues to evolve within what is conventionally described as the ‘implementation phase’ of policy. As such, it is not only the policy development stage that is of interest in critical examinations of public policy. It is this evolution (or negotiation) of policy that is of interest. While policy within this study certainly includes the text of actual documents,
policy is conceptually inclusive of a far more wide-ranging variety of social practices that different actors enact every day. Underpinning my understanding of policy is Apthorpe’s (1996) contention that reducing policy to writing, then expanding it again through reading, are discursive acts. By linking critical theory with contemporary policy process models, Hill (1997) argues that attempts can be made to uncover “the various influences on policy formulation” (p. 4).

Contemporary public policy thinking holds that how an organisation’s policies and actions are promoted (or marketed) will determine whether the ideas espoused are accepted or rejected. As Stone (2002) notes, “because political reason is a process of persuasion, it is an enterprise of searching for criteria and justifying choices” (p. 382, italics added). It is the formational criteria and the following justification of those criteria that is of interest for this study. In other words, the ways policy makers attempt to influence people and groups are investigated. By conceiving of policy as a narrative, policy documents and policy debates can be read with particular regard to the themes developed and actors affected.

As a cultural practice, public policy is an important site for stakeholders to challenge or resist potentially debilitating assumptions (Chalip, 1996) and decisions (Sam, 2004), particularly since those with policy-making power often ignore or design knowledge at their convenience (Flyvbjerg, 2001). It is in instances of policy production that we can begin to understand how potentially debilitating policy decisions that determine such things as resource distribution, status and power can be challenged and resisted by those unfairly affected. Many scholars locate the site for such activities as discourse (Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1972; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Kress, 1991; Van Dijk, 1985, 1993; Wodak and Meyer, 2001).

This chapter provides a contextualisation that highlights the various appropriations of sport by policy makers in recent history. However, this chapter also serves a second, related function. Fairclough (1995a) argues the wider contextual matrix must be attended to because it shapes discursive practices in important ways and is itself cumulatively shaped by them. Furthermore, Wodak and Meyer (2001) state the context of language is crucial for discourse analysis. As such, this chapter not only provides a
context within which to understand sport policy in New Zealand it also provides a context for the chapters that follow it.

The Discursive Terrain of New Zealand Sport Policy

There are a number of factors which govern how public policy is constructed and implemented. These include access to decision making, availability of resources, and the ideas and language which are used to frame social phenomena as problems that policy can solved (Sam, 2007). This section considers specifically the latter of these factors, which through their discursive nature, can also affect the former two also.

It is appropriate here to note that public policy is influenced by its jargon-laden and esoteric vocabulary. It is assumed here that public policy language is not comprehended by all stakeholders involved in the implementation of a policy. While Parsons (1999) notes the writing of policy “involves creating a plausible story which secures the purposes of the plotter” (p. 15), it is assumed here that any such ‘story’ will not be accessible to every reader. Further to Parsons’ point, policy has a duality of meaning; it is both simple (in a narrative sense) and scheming (in a political sense). Notably, these are not necessarily mutually supportive ideas.

Also, despite how persuasive a policy narrative might be, there is another influence on policy - the extent to which a given policy can be generalised. While all policy generalises about a given population, too much generalising will be problematic for the dissemination of a message. This constraint echoes Stone’s (2002) comment on the production of policy rules: “A rule that is flexible enough to accommodate all situations would have to be so vague that it would not be a rule” (p. 302). Policy makers are faced with a conundrum; should the policy be clear and concise or vague and ambiguous? To write comprehensive but clear policy will limit the readability and practicality of a policy due to its final size, whereas a short policy will not capture all contingencies necessary to account for all possible eventualities.

Also, there is always concern about who can be involved in the production of policy. While this point questions the limits of democratic decision-making, it is an important question for policy makers who desire that policy is produced by representatives of the community it will affect. Who can be involved is a question that all
policy makers address, either consciously or not, which in turn is influenced by governing discourse of the time.

As already discussed, since policy is usually constructed as a narrative, it is not possible to write about competing discourses simultaneously. As many examples from New Zealand sport and recreation documents attest, policy is written and spoken about in a particular way, to the purposeful exclusion of other ways. Since there are numerous stakeholders who understand sport and recreation in various ways, and in the words of a Sparc policy manager policy “is about identifying a desired change or outcome and planning to achieve that”, policy inherently places conceptual limits on how an organisation can and will interact with the stakeholders.

**Debating Sport Policy**

Public discussion and debate about sport policy is often articulated or takes place within mainstream media, which serve to both disseminate various governmental policies as well as critique them. However, it appears various forces also constrain rigorous scrutinising of sport and recreation policy.

Contributing to an elision of scrutiny may be the simplicity of conceptualising New Zealand as ‘a sporting nation’. This removes any need to question such an innate component of New Zealand’s identity; the idea that sport and recreation are inherently ‘good’ is a pervading theme throughout sport and recreation policy. This understanding is certainly informed by what Horrocks (2007) describes as a New Zealand-wide ‘common sense’, or anti-intellectualism. Such a disposition, argued Horrocks, developed in New Zealand as a result of a small population, global isolation, an exodus of ‘intellectuals’, ruralism, a pioneer culture, colonial attitudes, puritanism, and egalitarianism. An instance of such anti-intellectualism arose in 2006 after sociologist Toni Bruce spoke at a conference about the values reflected in a television sport chat show called ‘Sportscafe’. The following quote by Kerre Woodham (a talk-show host and newspaper columnist) is indicative of many responses to Bruce’s analysis:

---

6 While respective New Zealand governments enjoy basking in the success of national representative athletes, issues around human rights in various countries where national teams or athletes compete often leave to politicians in an uncomfortable position; contributing to the former Prime Minister Robert Muldoon’s catch cry of not mixing politics with sport.
Who would have thought it? Who would have thought that when you and I were sitting there, watching Sportscafe all those years ago, that we were participating in a “discourse about gender that privileged new lad masculinity and reinforced the marginalisation of women”?
But that’s exactly what we were doing, if you believe a Waikato University sports sociologist. Dr Toni Bruce, a former sports journalist, made her comments at a Sociological Association conference in Hamilton recently, and unbelievably, she’s not taking the piss. She’s deadly serious.
Sportscafe, with its sexual innuendo and its voiceless, nameless dancers and its camera angles of Eva the Bulgarian’s lips, breasts and buttocks can be seen, if you have the squinty, blinkered vision of Dr Bruce, as the “last bastion where men are safe from the threat of women” and as the “reassertion, if not desperate clinging to values that are culturally perceived to be under threat”.
As the boys might say, get your hand off it, love. Dear me! Surely, even in this day and age there is such a thing as harmless fun … (Woodham, 2006)

Also exemplifying this anti-intellectual attitude regarding the common sense place of sport in New Zealand was the Ministerial Taskforce, which used the following statistics as evidence to support government investment in sport:

… surveys of our national identity have revealed that 95 percent of New Zealanders would derive greater satisfaction from world-class performance by New Zealand sports teams or individuals than from parallel achievements by our artists, scientists or business executives (Graham et al, 2001).

That such a question was even asked in a survey highlights the political nature of ‘opportunity costs’ as they relate to sport funding, and the valuing of one achievement over another. However, the ‘innateness’ of sport does not go unquestioned and resisted. During discussion on Radio Sport (a radio talkback show with a devout following of sports lovers) discussion with a caller named ‘Graham’ about the allocation of resources, host Brendan Telfar provided a rare instance of consideration of other social arenas in need of social assistance:

Graham (a caller to Radio Sport): I would say that if the government spent more money on sport rather than DPB and all these other issues then society would be a lot better.”

Brendan Telfar: You could say ‘well look, why are we spending tens of millions of dollars on preparing shot putters and table tennis players and gymnasts when we don’t have enough hospitals? We have waiting lists in our hospitals. We don’t have enough policemen on our beat.’ And all these other (what are perceived to be) important social areas that governments should be attending to. So it is a juggling act and I guess this is what people like Mallard and Nick Hill have as well, yes they’d love to put more money into it but personally I would have to say
I would prefer to have hospital waiting lists reduced rather than more money going to table tennis players actually to win on the international scene. You might have a different opinion. (Radio Sport, 2006)

Most policy debates about sport and recreation funding such as the one above are fleeting in nature. A similarly brief debate took place in 2004, when Sparc paid $310,000 to Motorsport New Zealand, and anti-obesity campaigners questioned the rationale for such an investment. Fight the Obesity Epidemic group spokeswoman Robyn Toomath said “It's a shame that the car, one of the greatest enemies in terms of the obesity epidemic, is being promoted more heavily by Sparc. It’s a curious use of taxpayer funds” (MacDonald, 2004, p. 20). Sparc CEO Nick Hill defended the payment, saying “International research shows that competitive driving requires a great deal of physical effort. Athletes must have stamina, high physical fitness and strength, be capable of withstanding strong forces on their bodies and a sharply accelerated heart rate” (MacDonald, 2004, p. 20).

It appears these fleeting ‘crisis’ debates emerge regularly and often relate back to the distribution of government money. For instance, when government announcements were made concerning the allocation of tax-payer money to assist Emirates Team New Zealand in contesting for the America’s Cup of yachting, the issue remained (close–to) headline news for a period of around five to ten days before fading and often not being mentioned again. Similarly fleeting media debates emerged over the government spending of NZ$10 million towards a 10 metre high tourism promotion venue shaped like a rugby ball that was placed beside the Eiffel Tower during the 2007 Rugby World Cup. The one exception to these brief debates has been the fierce and prolonged arguments over the proposal to build a new stadium on the Auckland waterfront for the 2011 Rugby World Cup (now rejected) or upgrading of the existing Eden Park stadium. Because any solution would need to be funded by a variety of sources (tax, rates from various city and regional councils and private investment) the argument has endured for well over a year and indeed continues today despite confirmation that Eden Park will be upgraded. The longevity of this debate was fuelled by the fact that any decision would affect numerous sectors, including tourism, transport, and understandings of nationhood, since the
Minister for Sport Trevor Mallard at one point wanted a ‘national’ stadium (Orsman and Oliver, 2006).

There are also occasional academic critiques of the value placed on sport in New Zealand. In 2006, one visiting academic, Lawrence Wenner spoke at a public lecture in Dunedin and suggested daily discussions at all levels of society “fosters the belief that sport is more important culturally than perhaps it is … When we make the game something that is truly significant, we risk losing importance in other spheres [such as family]” (Trevett, 2006). Little is known about the effects of such claims however, and both personal and anecdotal evidence suggests that ‘critical’ research by academics is often ignored or trivialised by some people who are responsible for constructing sport policy.

Sport and Recreation New Zealand are regularly critiqued about funding decisions, particularly around times when new policies are announced relating to issues such as Commonwealth and Olympic Games funding, physical activity in schools and most recently, regarding the lack of morale within the organisation itself.

The (Difficult) Birth of Sparc

In the late 1990s, a number of issues led to scrutiny of the self-proclaimed status of New Zealand as a ‘great little sporting nation’. First, the professionalisation of rugby union at the elite performance level had been the subject of much public debate concerning the organisation of New Zealand sport. Further, there was a media and public outcry at the poor performance of the New Zealand contingent at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Concern and criticisms were also levied against ‘couch potato’ lifestyles that were being blamed for an increasingly sedentary population and the flow-on effects with respect to public health care and public health costs. Finally, there was disquiet amongst many administrators and fans alike criticising what they believed to be an over-emphasis on programmes such as ‘Kiwisport’ and ideas such as ‘fair play’ that were perceived to encourage mediocrity. In an attempt to rectify these and other perceived problems, the 2000 Labour government commissioned a Ministerial taskforce enquiry into the state of sport, fitness and leisure in New Zealand.
In January 2001, the taskforce published ‘Getting Set for an Active Nation’. The report made numerous and wide-ranging recommendations for a change to the New Zealand sport and recreation delivery sector, as well as to national sport and recreation policy. Following its publication, there was significant public discussion about many of the recommendations. These ranged from increasing the school day for 5-12 year olds by half an hour to allow for compulsory sessions of physical education, to greater rationalisation of elite sport and, perhaps most importantly, replacing the existing Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure with a new organisation; Active New Zealand (Graham et al., 2001). The Hillary Commission’s replacement would be the “pivotal national organisation for governance and leadership of recreation and sport” (Graham et al., 2001, p. 67).

On January 30th 2001 (the same day as the report was released), the Hillary Commission posted on its website a press release entitled ‘Hillary Commission welcomes taskforce report’. The press release primarily outlined comments made by the Commission’s chairman, Sir Brian Lochore, enthusiastically supporting the findings of the Graham report. Regarding the performance of the seven-member taskforce, Lochore stated the group had “clearly listened carefully and widely to the views of New Zealanders” (Hillary Commission, 2001). However, twelve weeks later, the Hillary Commission delivered a report to the government’s administration committee denouncing the findings of the taskforce report. Among numerous criticisms, the Hillary Commission argued “those who gave evidence to the taskforce were a disenchanted lot that led the taskforce to make incorrect conclusions about the state of sport, fitness, and leisure in New Zealand” (Sport findings come under fire, 2001, p. 8). Such blatantly contradictory statements within a three-month period indicated a watershed for the existence of the Hillary Commission. The Hillary Commission’s credibility had crumbled, as would their attempted persuasion of the governmental administration committee. The committee agreed with the Graham Report stating there was a “marked need for change” (Graham et

---

7 The publication would become colloquially (and in formal instances, such as on Sparc’s website) referred to as the Graham Report in reference to the taskforce’s chairman, John Graham.
8 The Taskforce’s recommended name ‘Active New Zealand’ did not come to fruition since the name was already a registered trademark of a commercial tourism venture.
9 Both Graham and Lochore are ‘iconic’ former All Blacks.
10 Further irony was present with the Commission being one of the groups that ‘gave evidence’ to the Taskforce.
al., 2001, p. 62). As a result, Sport and Recreation New Zealand (Sparc) replaced the Hillary Commission in 2002.

The change in name, and the rationale for it, is relevant here. Recognised as the first person (followed by his fellow climber and sherpa Tenzing Norgay) to climb Mount Everest, the late Sir Edmund Hillary remains a pre-eminent icon in New Zealand, embodying the values that many in New Zealand want portrayed as part of the national character and identity. In 1987 Hillary lent his name (upon request) to Sparc’s predecessor, the Hillary Commission. However, in 2000, following the crises within national sport policy, the Graham taskforce asserted that a new name was needed for the new organisation. Neil Tonkin, a former employee of the Hillary Commission, and critic of many of Sparc’s policies argued that “most [people] see the decision as expensive, unnecessary, facile and an insult to Sir Edmund” (Tonkin, 2003).

By discarding the name ‘Hillary Commission’ in favour of ‘Sparc’, the new organisation (perhaps unintentionally) also contributed to the dismantling of a historic perception of the kiwi male\footnote{See Phillips (1996), A Man’s Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History.} by removing a collective memory and shared symbol of New Zealand. Sir Edmund Hillary epitomises the ‘official’ ideal for a kiwi male; rugged, determined, a hard worker.\footnote{Michael King (2003) noted that Hillary has earned the uncontested title of “greatest New Zealander, who, through his mountaineering, humanitarian and conservation exploits, remained “reticent, strong, dependable, unboastful and good-humoured” (p. 509).} The removal of Hillary’s name coincided and perhaps serves as a clear marker of the emergence and deployment of neo-liberal discourse. Marketing logic (which travels hand in hand with neo-liberalism) dictates that a change in the structure of a national sport body \emph{must} include a rebranding. Sparc’s website defended its decision to remove Hillary’s name:

The name ‘Hillary Commission’ had become extremely well respected during the past 10 years and we are grateful to Sir Edmund Hillary for his support. However, with the merge of the three organisations, it is important the new organisation goes forward under a new name - Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (Sparc, 2004c)

Officially formed in February 2002 and ‘launched’ in June, Sparc’s plan of “creating fireworks and activity” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 2) did not occur immediately; at least not in the way Sparc representatives would have hoped. Their first strategic plan ‘Our
Vision, Our Direction’, caused widespread discontent in the sport sector. Criticism ranged from a lack of stakeholder consultation during the strategy formation (Jones, 2002) to nonsensical strategic choices (NZPA, 2003). One journalist suggested that “Before … Sparc gets completely out of control it should immediately revisit its objectives or quit” (Maddaford, 2002). A correspondent to the Daily News compared the board of Sparc to “devils, maybe … [or] Little Lucifers” (Brown, 2002).

One of the most outspoken critics of the language that Sparc employed over their first two years was Neil Tonkin, a former programme manager at the Hillary Commission and Hutt City Council member. Speaking as a private citizen, Tonkin referred to the language employed in Sparc policy as “weasel words” and “Sparc-speak” (Tonkin, 2003), and criticised the organisation in magazines, radio interviews, on websites, and through email newsletters. In one radio interview with Sparc CEO Nick Hill, Tonkin said that “I hear a lot of fine words but I don’t hear substance behind it” (Tonkin, 2003).

In its first few months of operation, Sparc faced much criticism for its role in the distribution of its primary resource; money. Sparc’s ability to allocate money has been generally unanimous with two caveats. Firstly, it is commonly assumed that Sparc’s financial contribution to the sport and recreation sector is small relative to other Western nations. Secondly, there is an acknowledgement that there will not be enough money for Sparc to satisfy every stakeholder. Despite these generally accepted bounds, the way in which Sparc allocates its funding has for a long time been a point of contention, annoyance and frustration for those involved in the sector. For instance, the Hockey New Zealand CEO, Ramish Patel, expressed his dismay at hockey not being called a ‘priority sport’:

‘Priority sports’ is an interesting term and to have it labelled there are consequences for sports who are not in those priority sports. We could argue they were priority sports in the past but they weren’t actually put out in the public and named. It’s not about the funding, this is purely about our sport not being a priority. (Patel, 2002)

---

13 A pervading theme of New Zealand government-commissioned funding bodies over the last twenty years is the idea of a ‘common goal’ as an overarching principle. In 1985, the Sports Development Inquiry Committee discussed ‘the deep concern about divisiveness creeping into sport’ and suggested the accreditation of ‘One Voice for Sport’, an organisation that would be the ‘authorized’ voice for sport. Likewise the Ministerial Taskforce bemoaned the absence of a common vision in the New Zealand sport sector.
Thus, the priority sports strategy was not debilitating in the form of removing scarce resources, but instead removed the notion of importance from particular sporting codes.

In defence of many of its strategies, Nick Hill, Sparc’s CEO, remarked that some of the changes instigated would not necessarily be popular:

> We recognise that to succeed we will need to bring with us organisations as diverse as schools, clubs, regional sports trusts, local government and district health boards. That won’t be easy because we will all need to change. (Sparc, 2002a, p. 3)

It eventuated that the ‘diverse range of organisations’ did not find the change process easy, and on many occasions challenged Sparc’s credibility.

Sparc have since produced several other policy documents and discussion papers that have aimed to disseminate policy positions and inform readers and stakeholders of how the organisation’s goals will be implemented. Distinct in Sparc’s policy is the acknowledgement of, and focus on, a vastly heterogeneous stakeholder set. These groups include organisations as diverse as the Department of Corrections and Customs New Zealand (Sparc, 2003a), which have not historically been associated with a public sport and recreation agency.14

When a series of Sparc ‘road shows’ were held around the country to explain and promote the organisation and its strategy, Sparc representatives faced stakeholders who were angered, dismayed and disappointed by the way they had been treated with regard to (a lack of) consultation. Many of those present at the Dunedin meeting, for example, felt that the planning process had been grossly insufficient and voiced their displeasure to the Sparc representatives in attendance (Mayston, 2002). Likewise, a spokesperson for Sport Otago (a regional sports trust that Sparc would describe as a ‘key partner’) was “appalled” (Channel 9, 2002) at parts of the strategy that promoted ‘priority’ sports.

The “priority sports strategy” (Sparc, 2002a) that identified the seven sports (rugby, soccer, cricket, netball, yachting, equestrian and golf) that would receive ‘priority’ treatment, was heavily criticised by numerous groups. One concern was the incomprehension by various sports regarding how Sparc made its decision about which

---

14 Traditionally, colloquially and over-simplistically, sport, and sport policy has been discussed and written about in a dualistic fashion. Mass versus elite sport, amateur versus professional, volunteer versus paid staff are all common sense ways of delineating and describing sport. Even Sparc’s full name presents a seemingly natural opposition between sport and recreation.
sports received ‘priority’ and which did not. An opinion page article by Gordon Brown in The Daily Times captured the difficult circumstances that faced Mark France (the Sparc representative) at the New Plymouth meeting:

Mark France started off by saying the decision to scrap the funds was not based on any sort of consultation. He got that right. But the wisdom of parading such a sentiment so proudly at the start of a two-hour meeting was on a par with going out for a beer with [politician] Winston Peters in the early hours of the morning. After spending much of the two hours adopting the stance of a simple messenger, Mr France finally admitted, under cross examination from David Lee of the New Plymouth Council, that he was indeed one of the officials who suggested the change of policy. The wolves pounced. And rightly so. Mr France had an unenviable job. Defending the indefensible always is. (Brown, 2002)

This criticism continued throughout the road show series. It was apparent that many in the various audiences were suspicious of how the new organisation was using language. Many among the approximately 100 sport organisation representatives present at the Dunedin meeting voiced displeasure, not only at how the policy decisions being promoted had been reached, but also questioned the terms that were being used to explain the policy. Amongst the first was a reporter from the Otago Daily Times, who questioned the Sparc representatives in attendance over the idea that priority sports would not necessarily receive money, but possibly other resources, such as advice from consultants. The reporter argued that ultimately, ‘resources’ equated to ‘money’. The Sparc representative then agreed with that deduction.

Another criticism of the rhetoric employed occurred at the Auckland road show. When questioned about what would differentiate a ‘priority’ sport from a non-priority sport, a Sparc representative replied that if two individuals, one from a priority and one from a non-priority sport, phoned the Sparc office at the same time the ‘priority sport’ call would be answered first. This response did not endear the audience to Sparc.

Shortly after Sparc’s launch this author wrote an ‘opinion page’ article in the Otago Daily Times questioning the rationale behind using the term ‘priority’ in its policy, noting that its predecessor, the Hillary Commission, had used the more euphemistic terms ‘Category A, B, C and D’ to distinguish between the levels of funding received by sports. Also at the time of Sparc’s launch, the author, in conversations with a range of stakeholders in academia and within local sporting clubs heard numerous disparaging
remarks directed towards Sparc staff and the new policies. The conversations focused mainly around Sparc’s two ‘key strategies’; the cessation of the Community Sports Fund, which advocates argued had supported local sport for many years, and the establishment of ‘priority’ sports, seemingly to the detriment of those not made a ‘priority’.

Sparc holds a significant amount of influence, particularly in regard to resource and funding allocation. It is the representatives of Sparc that determine which sport and recreation programmes are funded and how much funding they receive. Sparc’s influence is more than financial however. Upon examination of their policy documents, it becomes clear that Sparc defines what is important to New Zealand and New Zealanders, as seen through references to ‘priorities’ and the ‘targeting of resources’. By their own admission Sparc “invests funds rather than allocates entitlements” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 9). From 2002 to 2006, Sparc’s operating budget was around NZ$264,000,000. Consistent with the neo-liberal political climate, Sparc must justify why it spends its money in the way that it does. One important way of doing this is by producing policy documents.

**Uses of Sport in Public Policy**

Over the last twenty years, a few broad concepts have been used explicitly by Western governments to promote sport. With much similarity to other nations, such as Australia, Canada and England, Sparc uses four main reasons to explain why sport and recreation is a worthwhile arena for public money to be spent. These include social cohesion, strengthened (national) identity, health and economic rationale (Sparc, 2002a). These discourses correlate closely with Chalip’s “legitimations for New Zealand sport policies” (1996, p. 314). He describes health promotion, national prestige, and the salubrious socialization of youth as legitimations that have been used since the nineteenth century.

Importantly, throughout various public policies, sport is not articulated as important in and of itself; it is important because it provides particular measurable

---

15 What exactly constitutes a sport or recreation organisation must first be decided upon by funding bodies. Definitions are important (and political) in this process.

16 This gives the appearance of an ideological shift, symbolising a change from its predecessor, the Hillary Commission. However, the Hillary Commission and the national government of the day utilised similar rhetoric. (see Bolger, 1987). Also of interest is that some shifts in the language used by Sparc served only to baffle and bewilder readers of their strategy, such as having a “Focus on outcomes rather than outputs” (2002a, p. 7).
benefits. This is borne out when considering the ideas of fun and enjoyment (which are often quoted as guiding motivations for participation in sport and recreation), yet receive only cursory or no regard in government policy statements, to the point of virtual exclusion from Sparc’s primary strategic plan.

It is also worth noting that these various reasons do not remain constant throughout the policy process. In Sparc’s promotional campaigns, much effort is taken to espouse the benefits of participation in sport and recreation, such as the use of images of smiling walkers having fun while exercising and New Zealand triathlete Hamish Carter ‘enjoying’ vacuuming at home (as a form of physical activity). Further, the idea of sport as leisure is subordinated since it detracts from the medicalised impetus that sport and recreation currently assume.

It is important to note here that Sparc’s four key investment goals are interrelated and as such discourses about them overlap. For example, it is possible to conceive of the idea of ‘health’ as contributing not only to a sense of individuals feeling ‘fitter or healthier’, but also to a discourse of nationalism (as evidenced through Sparc’s goal of becoming the world’s most active nation). Such overlaps exemplify how particular discourses actively construct understandings of sport in New Zealand.

**Neo-liberalism and New Zealand**

A common articulation of neo-liberalism is as a policy framework, with a move from social welfarism to a focus on ensuring the successful (and minimally opposed) operation of ‘the market’. Larner (2000) argues that neo-liberalism is “both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance” (p. 9). According to numerous political commentators, the neo-liberal agenda is now well engrained in New Zealand political consciousness. Like many others, Kelsey (1993) refers to the year 1984 as the dawning of the free market over Aotearoa / New Zealand. The purported logic for this new age was that an interventionist welfare state had taken away the freedom of New Zealanders to choose their own priorities and control their own lives. Kelsey notes that in an economic sense, this liberal revival positioned the freedom of the individual as paramount, but that this freedom is deceiving; it is freedom ‘from’, rather than freedom ‘to’.
Kelsey (1993) argues that from 1984 through to the mid 1990s, this liberal agenda attempted to change society on many fronts, by not only dismantling the welfare state, but also deregulating the business sector, freeing the labour market, and ‘globalising’ the economy. The Labour Government’s Treasury considered society was made up of interdependent individuals made up at least in part by self-interest and opportunism, and that “government would not abandon its responsibility to the most disadvantaged [in society], but would deliver their needs through the mechanisms of the market” (Kelsey, 1993, p. 78). A change in political vocabulary illustrated this change; words like partnership, accountability, empowerment and liberation all connoted that there was no doubt “about the intrinsic superiority of the marketplace” (p. 79). Of the demise of the welfare state, Kelsey argued that Treasury’s outlook was one in which “only those social policies that fitted the prevailing liberal economic model should be considered” (p. 83). This ideology is also known as liberalisation, deregulation, or Rogernomics, named after the Labour Party’s Minister of Finance in 1984, Roger Douglas, who is credited with implementing the wide-ranging economic reforms.17 It is linked closely with the Western phenomenon epitomised earlier by Reaganism and Thatcherism.

Easton (1997) provides an outline for the ideas that informed these changes, in particular illustrating how the sectors of health, education, broadcasting, the environment, the labour market, cultural policy and science were all impacted. He argues that a few main ideas informed this revolution of New Zealand society. Firstly, the markets were liberalised (or opened up to international competition) and many components of the economy was commercialised (using a business model to organise both economic and non-economic activities). Traditionally considered non-economic activities such as sport and recreation would be affected by this. Secondly, Easton argued “between 1984 and 1991, the public policy objective of equity, in any of its meanings of the 1970s, was increasingly abandoned” (1997, p. 45). That is, by the act judging various policies by their commercial ‘efficiency’, any consideration of equity is suppressed. Lastly, Easton explains that the idea of ‘culture’ is influenced by commercialisation; the idea that

---

17 We conceive here of neo-liberalism as a discourse in a Foucauldian sense. This research does not investigate ‘ideologies’ as much as the “problematisations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the practices [which follow it]” (1985, p. 11). That is, a particular ideology might be believed to a true way of seeing reality, but this is an effect of the discourse – that reality is presented in a particular fashion.
commercialisation can impact on how citizens feel about particular social utilities. Easton’s example of a debate about what type of ‘cultural’ content is screened on television could similarly be compared to sport and recreation as cultural pursuits today (in debates over what sports are important to New Zealanders). Easton argues that early neo-liberal campaigners conceived of commercialisation as “a value-free objective, despite being loaded with values” (p. 59). Put another way, Larner (2000) argues that neo-liberalism policy ideas hold five values as important: the individual; freedom of choice; market security; laissez faire; and minimal government.

**Neo-liberalism and New Zealand Sport Policy**

The impact of neo-liberalism on conceptions of sport and recreation around the world has been noted by various researchers in Western policy settings (Bercovitz, 2000; Green, 2007; Green, 2004b; Green and Houlihan, 2006; McGillivray, 2005) as well as non-Western arenas (Shehu and Mokgwathi, 2007). Since one of the expectations of a neo-liberal agenda for an island nation such as New Zealand is for the country to “abandon its fortress mentality and embrace the global economy” (Kelsey, 1993, p. 110), it is clear many of the practices and principles of neo-liberalism deployed in other countries significantly influence the organisation of the sport and recreation sectors in New Zealand. That ‘the world’ features so prominently in Sparc’s original mission statement testifies to the significance of how sport and recreation is to be understood.

Epitomising a neo-liberal framework, Nick Hill, CEO of Sparc, once lamented the New Zealand tradition of providing ‘entitlements’ to various sporting bodies. The entire sport system was then disparaged because of a ‘legacy’ funding model:

>The approach was flawed in that it focused on the production of outputs as opposed to outcomes. While tying funding to outputs generally provided measurable performance and served the bureaucracy well, it tended to drive perverse and questionable outcomes at the coalface. Compliance was ultimately more important than achieving anything meaningful. (Hill, 2004a)

It was clearly important for Hill to distance Sparc from anything that had been done before, since he described Sparc’s plans as a “revolution” (2004a). It is clear that the sector (in a broad sense) has been influenced by neo-liberal understandings. Neo-liberal economic analyses have reached into the volunteer-based sport and recreation
environment. Volunteers, who are defined in large part by the fact they do not receive monetary payment for their contribution to their respective organisations have not been immune from neo-liberal measurements. Reports published by the Hillary Commission in 1993 and 1998 first attempted to place a value on the contribution made to the New Zealand economy by the physical sports and leisure industry and included information on the unpaid ‘voluntary sector’ component. The Hillary Commission’s first report (completed by Business and Economic Research Limited, BERL), using independent 1991 data calculated the contribution at $671 million, while the 1998 report, using 1996 Census data, provided a smaller estimate of $584 million (Hillary Commission, 1993; 1998).

Further, on International Volunteer Day in December 2005, a press release quoted what the Hon. Trevor Mallard views about volunteers. “Volunteers,” Mallard explained, “aren’t paid because they’re worthless, but because they’re priceless” (Mallard, 2005). The Hillary Commission however disagreed. A price could be placed on volunteers. In 2000, a report entitled The Growing Business of Sport and Leisure included a calculation of the total monetary worth of volunteers through 1997 and 1998. The calculation involved multiplying the total annual hours ‘worked’ by New Zealand volunteers (109.9 million) with the average wage rate ($17.25; the average wage for the cultural and recreational services sector at the time). The total ‘economic worth’ came out at a staggering $1,896,100,000 per annum, after rounding. Since its worth has been quantified, neo-liberal logic dictates that the volunteer ‘industry’ must be managed, measured and assessed in the future also.

However, neo-liberalism cannot be enacted unproblematically. Ideas about ‘the market’ and ideas about ‘the nation’ often sit uneasily side by side. For instance, Hill used the term ‘sovereignty’ to describe the governing of sport in New Zealand:

A lack of contestability existed because funding was rolled over to the same existing organizations each year. This meant the funder had limited options and to an extent lost sovereignty over its capital. In other words, poor performance was of little consequence. (Hill, 2004a)

Conceiving of funding as ‘sovereign’ is an important switch from sport organisations being autonomous entities to being governed by the state. For instance, Hill argued sport organisations needed to “[leverage] their positions in a way that would contribute to a
national mission” (Hill, 2004a). To what extent Sparc might ‘own’ the outcomes of particular sport and recreation endeavours is discursive terrain which is not explicitly covered within Sparc policy documents, but nonetheless has implications for how individuals understand and participate in sport and recreation in New Zealand.

Hill also included in his speech paradoxes typical of neo-liberal logic. While on the one hand he purported that “we’re on track to implementing what could best be described as a holistic philosophy to sport” (2004a), he also appeared to revere the obsessive work ethic of the ‘Weta Workshop’ production team of The Lord of the Rings movie trilogy:

Recently, I was privileged to hear the Managing Director of Weta Workshop, Oscar award-winner Richard Taylor, describe in his inimitably unpretentious style the pressure-cooked environment Weta operated in over this period. To give you an insight, Weta’s studios are just 12 minutes drive from central Wellington. In the five years Weta Workshop had worked on the Lord of the Rings, Taylor had only been into the City … three times. In that same period, he’d taken just two days off work. Given that Taylor’s first child was born over this period, you may appreciate the extent to which these films ironically commanded the lives of those tasked to command and create them. (Hill, 2004a)

Despite such narratives, the neo-liberal agenda has faces some resistance in the New Zealand sport and recreation discourse. Wensing, Bruce and Pope (2004) note “periodic eruptions of resistance to this shift have emerged in response to public perceptions of a devaluation of a historically valued amateur ethos” (p. 203).

Aside from the professionalisation of sports such as rugby, there has been little written about the effect of Rogernomics on sport and recreation in New Zealand. In a ‘sector’ with a long history of volunteerism, perhaps this has been due to the ‘market’ not being attractive enough. Indeed, from a central government perspective, sport is strangely placed as a matter of contemporary public policy. It is strangely placed because of the multifarious meanings that sport holds at any given time. ‘Sport’ today is often used as metonymy to cover the array of meanings that can be derived from it, including professional sport, amateur sport, sport as education, as play, as work, as entertainment, as recreation, as health, along with many other possibilities. As such, how these various meanings are deployed through public policy is of significant import for all those affected by such policy. Further, in the case of sport and recreation policy, the formalised logic of
marketing and public relations is used in order to ironically, disseminate the idea of sport and recreation as a natural, innate and eternal part of what it means to be a New Zealander.

While sport does not hold the pertinence of health, education and employment as an issue of public policy, there is a move in public policy towards framing sport and recreation as contributing positively towards these ends. The importance of sport and recreation for New Zealand’s current ‘governing’ body is apparent in Sparc’s interest in the economic value of sport. For instance, in Sparc’s first strategic planning document, named ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’ (Sparc, 2002a), reference is twice made to the link between sport and recreation and the economy, under the headings “The commercial sport and physical recreation sector” and “Economic” (p. 8-9). Such duplication could be interpreted as serving to reiterate the importance of the fiscal benefits, but upon examination of latter Sparc documents, such as the 2003/4 Statement of Intent, one notices the compression of these into ‘Economic Growth’. This may simply imply a lack of editing of the policy and / or an insight into how important the economic value of sport is considered by those writing the policy.

The commercial sport ‘industry’ s’ size can also be scrutinised. In a textbook chapter entitled ‘The evolution of sport management in New Zealand’, Hindson (2005) argued, overly-simplistically, that these social and economic changes “turned sport into a mass consumption item. Contrasting this assertion is that with the exception of various Super 10, 12 and 14 Rugby Union successes and the occasional success of the New Zealand Warriors, commercial New Zealand sport pales in comparison to other commercial offerings, such as movie-going and other leisure activities. Hindson does go on to argue “that New Zealand sport is still in the developmental stage” (p. 4), but sheds no light on how New Zealand sport has changed aside from a more global prominence of some professional sports. Also, despite Collins and Downey’s (2000a) suggestion that the election of a centre government may limit the “New Right tendencies evident in the

---

18 Few definitions of Sparc do justice to the range of goals the organisation has. While Sparc they do not ‘govern’ all sport, it is clear they have a mandate to distribute funds based on parameters which they set, thus having the ability to influence management and governance practices of sport organisations.

19 One could problematise the term ‘development’, and its assumption about ongoing growth towards a commercial maturation.
National Government of the 1990s” (p. 312), it appears that corporatist conceptions of sport remain at the forefront of government sport policy.

In particular, Sparc’s first policy ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’ was dominated by neo-liberal ideas. The difference between the Taskforce’s recommendations and the subsequent genesis of Sparc and its policies is worthy of some analysis. In Sparc’s first strategic plan ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’, it is stated “[t]he Government has picked up the key Taskforce recommendations” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 5). This is important because one assumes that it would be a complex process to analyse the Taskforce report and make major decisions about which recommendations to include or exclude as part of the confirmation of a strategy. One aspect focused upon here is the rationale for investing in sport, since the motivation for restructuring and investing is based on these purported societal benefits. The taskforce notes that “the market model has not been sufficient to ensure the tangible benefits from recreation and sport can be fully realised” (Graham et al, 2001, p. 36-37).

Further, a portion of the health benefits of sport and recreation were rationalised because; “Cost-effectiveness studies have suggested that promoting physical activity could be the ‘best buy’ in public health” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 9). As such, a significant amount of the rationale was for the state to save money (through health benefits), or for organisations to make money; thus theoretically benefiting society as a whole.

The remaining rationale include ‘strengthening identity’ and ‘social cohesion’, the ideas that sport and recreation both “create a sense of our uniqueness amongst many nations” (p. 8) and makes an “important contribution to social cohesion at the individual, family, community and national levels” (p. 8).

**Selling the Change**

Sparc representatives acknowledge that language plays an important role in the dissemination of public policy. Following significant public disapproval and disappointment of some of Sparc’s policies, Nick Hill, CEO, noted: “The language and the concepts Sparc uses are pretty foreign to the sector … this is a serious change management process, and requires considerable communication” (2003). Those involved
in the new organisation clearly considered both the language they used and how they used it to be of great importance to their success.

Early Sparc policy is laden with references to a change in how government funding for sport and recreation will be allocated. This is signalled in various ways, such as references to ‘funding based on contestability’ and investing in sports that show a ‘return on investment’. Sparc also ‘invests funds rather than allocates entitlements.’ This guiding theme is cited within numerous policy documents, occasionally with Sparc ‘unapologetically’ and ‘unashamedly’ taking such a stance. Those in leadership roles sought to distance Sparc from the activities of its predecessor, the Hillary Commission. Sparc’s ability to determine which sporting codes receive financial ‘investment’ (and how much relative funding they receive) and those which do not has another effect; they also define what is important to New Zealand and New Zealanders, as seen through references to ‘priorities’ and the ‘targeting of resources’. This conflict between an egalitarian sporting nation and a corporatist, rational discourse can be explicated from the following exchange between Sparc CEO Nick Hill and a radio interviewer, Murray Deaker:

Deaker: What was the point of naming seven [sports] and in doing so making them more important than others? Can’t that be perceived as a negative message to those who miss out, that they’re not as important?

Hill: Well the first thing I should say is we think those sports are very important we think that all sport, all activity, is important. But … everything is measured at the end of the day and you need to set some stakes in the ground and say what’s important. And we can argue about them and so on but at the end of the day we’re saying we’re making these judgements and these are our judgements so by setting out some priorities like that we are actually helping to force a debate about what’s important.

Further to this, Hill simultaneously trivialises the process of debate around the contentious issue of designating some sports as priorities whilst describing Sparc as a promulgator of public discussion. This simultaneous dismissal of debate over what is important, contradicts using the public policy decision as a site for espousing values of egalitarianism. This brief exchange offers an insight into the discursive strategies and techniques used by a Sparc representative to espouse the values of the organisation. It also serves as an insightful example of the management of discourse. At once Hill argues
that “all sport … is important”, only to quickly counter this by saying “[Sparc] need to set some stakes in the ground and say what’s important”. While the Sparc board made the decision about which sporting codes would receive priority status, it is ostensibly Sparc that is ‘forcing’ the public debate around which sport should be important. Such ‘forcing’ is an attempt to increase Sparc’s legitimacy, at a time when the organisation was heavily criticised for their funding decisions. The result is that marginalised stakeholders (those that do not receive the status of ‘priority’), cannot mount a constructive argument against the policy because of the contradictory discourse. On one hand, ‘stakes have been set in the ground’, while on the other, they are given the opportunity to ‘debate what’s important’ thus giving the impression that individuals and groups can effect change.

Sparc acknowledge this ‘market’ mindset shift in their latest Statement of Intent 2006-2009 (Sparc, 2006a) when describing the “competitive sport and physical recreation market (p. 9).” Since, as Sparc note, “members, participants and funding providers now demand more from sport and physical recreation services” (p. 9), it seems only logical to promote “greater professionalism (p. 9).” Paradoxically however, on the same page, Sparc laments the fact that sport and recreation organisations are “seeing each other as competitors” as this “limits Sparc’s opportunity to influence at the grass roots level.” Such a contradiction is not easily reconciled. On one hand the sport and recreation “market” is now more “competitive” and needs “greater professionalism”, yet on the other hand sport organisations thinking of each other as competitors limits Sparc’s influence. This discursive quandary is understandable, particularly for an organisation that is at once trying to achieve goals of greater social cohesion while working towards an inclusive, innovative economy.

One of Sparc’s driving principles, outlined in their first strategic plan is the notion of “investing funds, rather than just allocating entitlements” (2002a, p. 10). Such rhetoric, conveyed as a change from the previous “fragmented structures that lacked integration, coordination and leadership” (p. 4), does not diverge significantly from that of the early 1990’s, when the New Zealand prime minister, the Rt Hon Jim Bolger told a forum of national sports and leisure leaders that new policy was more than “just spending money. We are investing in New Zealand’s future” (p. 4). Bolger argued that there are more benefits to be had from sport than simply a fit and healthy population. The parallels
between the rhetoric of Bolger and that of Sparc are clear. While the explanation of the guiding philosophy is unoriginal, the enactment of it was.

Regarding the development and implementation of policy, Collins and Downey (2000b) note that “successive Labour governments have sought to establish and implement direct influence via programmes and agencies, and up until the 1990 National government, succeeding National governments have sought to curtail or reduce commitment to those initiatives” (p. 211). Collins and Downey (2000b) also note “By the 1978 election, recreation and sport policies were included in the manifestos of both main political parties and it was significant that community development was the rationale adopted for government involvement” (p. 212). Collins (2007) further argues that “as our society becomes increasingly complex and the relationships in it more interdependent, governmental influence is likely to continue to increase” (p. 226).

That sport organisations need to behave more like businesses in terms of their management and governance has been a dominating logic within sport policy for more than two decades. It is clear that aside from attempting to instigate programmes and fund organisations that promote healthy, active lives, Sparc places significant emphasis on their image in doing so. The ‘selling’ of the Sparc brand pervades much of the activity of the organisation. For instance, Sparc sponsored a television series called ‘The Chosen Ones’, which revered past New Zealand sporting ‘greats’. As such, it was not sufficient for the population to be aware of and engaged in sport and physical recreation, but it was also important that the agency be acknowledged for its contribution. In 2007, Sparc’s marketing manager elaborated:

When I started year a year and a half ago, the brief was fairly clear. The board was relatively unhappy with the recognition Sparc was receiving, or not, for its investment in high performance sport and its investment in the participation side of the business. They were unhappy for a number of reasons. With lack of recognition comes anonymity, with anonymity comes (putting words in their mouths) a lack of strength, and the whole reason why Sparc was keen to build its profile with regard to those two parts of the business was about leveraging resource. So ultimately [it was] about securing more money for sport and rec.

Thus, words such as ‘recognition’, ‘anonymity’ and ‘profile’, are by the marketing manager’s admission of central concern for Sparc. While it is not argued that this was the sole reason for investing in marketing and communications, it does illustrate the
relatively large concern held by the Sparc board for ensuring its discourses are disseminated and understood. It was clear that a significant level of thought, funding and time is put into ensuring Sparc’s credibility in the sector.

**Resistance / Protest**

Perhaps a quote that sums up the change in understandings in New Zealand sport policy more succinctly than any other was that given by John Wells, at Sparc’s opening ceremony. To various heads of national governing bodies, and various other stakeholders in attendance Wells remarked; “This new body will be business-like and use business terms - something most of you won’t be used to” (Wells, 2002).20 It is apparent that Sparc faced much and varied criticism from those involved in the sector. While these criticisms were often attributed to ‘teething problems’ and an inherent part of ‘change management’, this thesis proceeds to investigate how and why such changes have taken place, and what resistance is offered to defend against change which might unfairly dominate particular groups.

As Sam (2003) notes public sport and recreation policy is not only informed by a singular ideology. Sport policy is:

- increasingly formulated by the various interests around it, including athletes, educators, sports administrators, civil service advisors, and ministers (none of whom could be said to ascribe to a single, determinable ideology). Rather, these agents likely adhere to particular dominant ideas about sport, within wider ideological undercurrents. (2003, p. 192).

The multitude of different understandings that exist in the sport, recreation, and physical activity milieu make it a fertile site to examine how power relations are formed and continue over time.

---

20 The usage here of ‘you’, instead of ‘we / us’ is important. This is understood as cementing the audience’s and Sparc’s unequal hierarchical position.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Studying Power Relations

Understandings of sport and recreation in New Zealand are at various times taken for granted by the public, contested both through mass media publicly and a variety of avenues privately, inscribed and reified through public policy, and enacted and resisted by citizens. This thesis seeks to expand the understanding of one aspect of this multi-faceted terrain; how power relations are constructed and contested through public sport policy. To do this, this thesis employs various analytical ‘tools’ of Michel Foucault.

A Foucauldian-informed analysis of power relations necessitates an articulation of what is meant by the term ‘power’. Foucault began to define what he meant by power by first defining what it was not:

By power, I do not mean ‘power’ as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation, which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire body (1978, p. 92).

It is apparent that while Foucault excludes certain conceptions of power (such as a group of institutions ensuring the subservience of citizens) from his definition, some are nonetheless embraced by various actors within the New Zealand sport delivery system. For instance, it is common for citizens and various organisations that interact with government agencies to consider themselves subordinated by a ‘system of domination exerted by one group over another’, thus aligning more with a Gramscian, hegemonic understanding of power than a Foucauldian one (see Pringle, 2005; Olssen, 1999). With this in mind, although Foucault often discussed the idea of ‘resistance’ to power with regard to combating oppressive power structures, he did not do so in line with a Gramscian worldview, in which an actor is either dominator or dominated:

One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on the one side and ‘dominated’ on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies. (Foucault, 1980f, p. 142)
There is also a tendency in Gramscian analyses to treat power in a negative, oppressive sense. Power, for Foucault however, is important as it ‘produces’. Not only are power and resistance to power situated in the same place, Foucault contends, but they rely on each other. Thus, Foucault did not separate the locus of power from resistance: “Resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real … It exists all the more by being in the same place as power” (1980f, p. 142). Such resistance Foucault warned, should not be comprehended as the term colloquially implies. Nor should it be understood as the struggle of ‘the emancipator’. This is because Foucault argues that no-one is ever ‘outside’ of power. Instead, there is always struggle between various modes of power (or forces). Thus, Foucault conceived of power existing in multiple forms:

> It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations … as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses [relations of power]. (1978, p. 92-93)

This explanation also does not sit easily with the logic of public policy making, which most often prescribes a particular way of seeing the world and attempts to construct specific relationships and behaviour in accordance with its goals. Intuitively understandings of public policy assume and value stability of values or behaviour (at least for a certain period), rather than ‘ceaseless’ struggle and confrontations about ideas, understandings and practices. However, it is this disjuncture that makes public policy an arena ripe for analysis, because while some individuals and groups are interested in changing values, understandings and behaviour, others are not, or at least are not interested in being instructed by a particular policy. Thus, power relations, at their core, relate to conduct. They involve and dictate how one is to conduct oneself and others (in this case through public policy). The exercise of power, Foucault argues, involves both leading others and leading oneself. “[It] is a ‘conduct of conducts’ and a management of possibilities” (1994n, p. 341).

This latter definition of how power is exercised is also a useful one to define public policy. While Foucault’s writings on power have been employed in large part to analyse how power is exerted over the bodies of individuals, the theoretical concepts offer much to investigations of a policy landscape. In order to do so, this thesis follows Foucault’s guidelines for studying relations of power. Since “power relations are rooted
in the whole network of the social” (1994n, p. 345), he offered five ‘points’ that should be established in order to understand the flow of power. What follows is a brief description of each point, with some general considerations that inform this research:

a) The system of differentiations that permits one to act upon the actions of others:

The Ministerial Taskforce that reviewed and recommended changes to the organisation of sport, fitness and leisure delivery in New Zealand was sanctioned by the New Zealand government and, as such, granted legitimacy to Sparc as the organisation that emerged following the report. Important differentiations are also visible when determining who can speak on behalf of the ‘entire’ sport and recreation sector. While there is no specific accreditation that one receives in order to become an expert on sport and recreation policy, there are factors which influence one’s likelihood of being consulted and included in a policy process. For instance, the former head of the Hillary Commission, Sir Brian Lochore, and the head of the 2000 Ministerial Taskforce, John Graham, were both former All Blacks, thus being granted significant respect in the sporting environ. As such, there is a certain amount of status and assumed knowledge that comes from participation in sport at an elite level.

Regarding the distribution of resources, and at an organisational level, there is a wide array of institutions that are granted legitimacy, status and funding as a result of being ‘recognised’ by Sparc. Indeed, the management of such differentiations is the site for much of this research.

b) The types of objectives pursued by those who act upon the actions of others:

As Sam (2004) noted, Sparc’s mandate for unity and strength is unabashedly paternalistic. Many of Sparc’s early policy documents exhibit both a yearning for a legendary sporting past and traditional recreational lifestyles, with the rejection of previous ways of ‘running’ sport and recreation. Sparc made it clear very early in the promotion of their policies that their organisation would be central in determining the collective future of sport and recreation in New Zealand. The specific objectives pursued by Sparc form a large part of this thesis, since it is these goals that are discursively produced and susceptible to resistance.
c) Instruments used to exercise power:

Regarding how Sparc’s statutory power is exercised, the threat of withholding resources in the form of funds has ostensibly been the greatest determinant in the way in which many athletes, organisations and citizens understand the relationship. Sparc policy however, utilises formal policy documents which contain neo-liberal discourses of ‘investment’ and ‘partnership’ in order to interact with their stakeholders.

Policy documents are not the sole means for Sparc disseminating particular ideas. It is apparent that relationships with media representatives and a focus on advertising and ‘public relations’ is employed in order to disseminate Sparc’s understandings about sport and recreation.

d) Forms of institutionalisation:

The state, Foucault argues, has as its function to take “everything under its wing, to be the global overseer, the principle of regulation and to a certain extent also, the distributor of all power relations in a given social ensemble” (1994n, p. 344). It is clear nationalistic conceptions of sport and recreation are deployed by the state via Sparc in a quest to unite the populous. However, there are also other conceptions at play, such as those in educational and corporate settings (with an increasing concern about childhood obesity and ‘workplace wellness’ respectively).

e) The degree of rationalisation:

Sparc are heavily informed by the positivist notion of determinism. Therefore, policies include an elaborate array of measurement systems required to test the worth of specific policies. In many instances, Sparc policy describes ‘evidence-based’ practices, which in turn contribute to investment practices. However, as with all of these points, there are disputes about the appropriateness of particular types of knowledge used to construct sport policy.

Related to this point, researchers have examined sport policy in many ways, though often through a positivist lens. Utilising a Foucauldian approach to examine public policy based on positivist assumptions aims to illuminate understandings and investigate disjunctures which are not easily reconciled through ‘evidence-based policy.’ While only referred to in a cursory fashion here, these points are discussed throughout the
different chapters. Foucault argued that due to a raft of arenas through which power is exercised:

there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse ... We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (1980d, p. 93)

Thus, policy makers must speak the truth (through a discourse) about the issues which they are responsible for. Since truth is produced through discourse, the chapter moves now to an explication of how discourses are used to speak ‘the truth’.

**The Various Meanings and Analyses of ‘Discourse’**

Despite often disagreeing about the specific uses and effects of discourse, there is a general acknowledgment in academia that discourses are relate to language in use – created through text, speech, imagery and everyday interactions. The term is used to inform a range of social phenomena. For instance, Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2002b) give a long list of various types of sites and phenomenon used in an analysis of discourse, from “conversations between female British Asian food servers and male cargo handlers in the staff cafeteria of a large airport … [to] the policy documents guiding American security policy in the Cold War” (p. 2).

Because of the broadness of the term ‘discourse,’ and the divergent interests of different researchers, it is standard practice for any researcher investigating it to define the parameters of ‘discourse’ for each study. Thus, in order to guide the thesis, I distinguish here between different interests of analysing discourse. Taylor (2002) differentiates between four different approaches. Firstly, if conceived as static phenomena, the ‘patterns’ of discourse can be analysed. This approach to examining discourse investigates language as generally unchanging, transparent and explicit. Linguistic and semantic analyses are examples of such an approach. Secondly, language can be conceived of as a ‘process,’ where interactions between various actors are examined rather than the language itself. In these first two approaches, there is not an explicit analysis of power relations between the people who are using discourse. Thus
these approaches favour a definition of discourse as speech acts, or language. Departing from these linguistic approaches, thirdly, an analyst can examine how discourse is used to construct a particular social setting, acknowledging that language contributes to how we see and understand the world. Fourthly, one can examine discourse to “draw attention to the all-enveloping nature of discourse as a fluid, shifting medium in which meaning is created and contested” (Taylor, 2002, p. 8). That is, discourses are understandings of the world that are located in particular settings. By both limiting and producing how a particular topic can be thought about and reasoned about, discourse play a powerful role. Such an approach conceives of discourse as situated in a particular place and a particular time, and that attaining ‘complete’ and unbiased data is impossible. This links with the post-modern ontological assumptions of this type of discourse analysis. That is, it assumes that there are multiple realities which could explain any ostensible stable social phenomenon. Regarding a methodology for such analysis, this approach utilises a post-positivist process, acknowledging that any data gathered will be partial, situated and relative. Indeed, this is exactly what the researcher is interested in investigating – how partial, situated and relative knowledge contributes to the lives of individuals. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from a post-positivist project do not aim to be generalizable, but inform particular discourses in particular settings. Importantly, such an approach assumes the researcher will likely be within a particular discourse as well. Thus self-reflection is an important part of a research methodology.

By narrowing the focus of this investigation to this fourth approach, we conceive of discourse here in various domains or levels. For example, Wetherell et al. (2002a) explain that social scientists can focus on the study of social interaction, the building block of social life. On another level, investigations focus on the construction of identity, and the making of sense. Thirdly, one might focus on the order and pattern of discourse regarding the organisation of power. As such, discourse is first described at a textual level. Then, discursive practices are linked to the production of texts. Lastly, power relations can be studied to understand how discursive practices are produced. It is clear that these analyses are not mutually exclusive and rely on assumptions about other domains as any analysis takes place.
The various distinct projects within this thesis traverse all of these three levels. As such, this general understanding of differing levels of analysis is employed to a large extent in this thesis. For example, in Chapter 5, ‘Classify, Divide and Conquer: Shaping Physical Activity Discourse Through National Sport Policy’, the analysis uses a text as a foundation for a specific analysis of relations of power in the sport policy milieu. In Chapter 7 ‘Games of Truth’ however, there is a significant analysis of the discursive strategies and tactics used at a textual level to link with how truth is established, defended and resisted.

It is also important to distinguish between the idea of discourse as a noun (such as text on a page) or a verb (a conversation between two people), and discourse as a ruling ideology. Throughout this thesis, both understandings of the term are employed. While others have used a small ‘d’ and a capital ‘D’ to distinguish between discourse as text and discourse as ideology respectively (Gee, 2001), it is expected that in this thesis the context of the term will sufficiently allude to the definition.

**A Foucauldian Approach to Discourse**

Discourse constructs, according to Foucault (1972). That is, discourses actively produce what we know. Discourses govern the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about, reasoned about, as well as influencing how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as a discourse ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write and conduct oneself, it also rules out, limits and restricts other ways of talking and conducting oneself.

At one point, Foucault explains the growing conception of discourse; “instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings…” (1972, p. 90). He explained that research into discourse can take place at number of levels; “sometimes … the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (1972, p. 90). The idea of ‘the statement’ was essential in understanding power relations, Foucault argued, because the statement is essential to its existence. Foucault did not believe in neutral, independent statements. Instead, a statement is always part of a series or a whole, and always plays a
role among other statements, supporting and being supported by them (1972). Further, Foucault noted the term discourse is used and abused:

in many different senses, in the most general, and most vaguest way, it denoted a group of verbal performances, and by discourse, then, I meant that that which was produced … by the group of signs. But I also meant a group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences or propositions. Lastly – and it is this meaning that was finally used … discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence … and can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation. (p. 120-1)

After explaining what it is not, Foucault attempted to define discourse specifically. A discourse is “a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation … it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined” (1972, p. 131). For example, physical activity discourse, like the discourse of madness for Foucault has been:

constituted by all that has been said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own. (Foucault, 1972, p. 35)

While Gramscian researchers conceive of power being distributed in a binary, dominator – dominated, hegemonic arrangement, Foucault argues that discourse can both limit and produce the objects of our knowledge.

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it … There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite to it, another discourse that runs counter to it (Foucault, 1978, p. 101).

Foucault argued that nothing has any meaning outside of discourse, in that the way we think and talk about any object or notion is based on the discourse that we are operating in. “Discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined” (1972, p. 60).

Discourses are not stable. Each one undergoes constant change as new utterances are added to it. According to Foucault (1991), a number of criteria influence the shaping of a discourse. Criteria of formation differentiate discourses. “The history of mathematics does not follow the same model as the history of biology, which itself does not share the
same model as psychopathology” (1991, p. 55). Foucault argued that what individualises a discourse is the existence of a set of rules of formation for all its objects, its operations, its concepts, and its theoretical options and that none of these factors are necessarily linear and unproblematic. Internal to discourses are constant tensions and contradictions. Foucault argued that criteria of transformation are a threshold which, once transgressed opens up new possibilities for a discourse to expand, change, retract or decline. Criteria of transformation define the:

set of conditions which must have been jointly fulfilled at a precise moment in time, for it to have been possible for [a discourse’s] objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options to have been formed, which internal modifications it was capable of, and the threshold of new rules of formation came into effect. (1991, p. 55)

Thirdly criteria of correlation indicate to what extent a discursive formation can be related to other types of discourse and in the non-discursive context in which it functions. For instance, in a study such as this, there are numerous discourses at work which, while situated closely and possibly affect either sport and recreation discourse and policy discourses, are nonetheless largely independent of them. Conversely, there will be discourses which correlate significantly.

Returning briefly to the concept of the ‘statement’, Foucault argued a number of factors structured or linked together groups of statements into a discourse. Using the example of nineteenth century doctors, Foucault explains that certain people become qualified to speak about a particular thing, and these people often have a particular prestige or status. Likewise, sport policy is surrounded by discourses of corporatism, fitness and nationalism. In terms of who is qualified to offer knowledge, sport and recreation policy draws on a wide range of ‘experts’ in fields such as marketing, policy studies, exercise physiology, psychology, and so on.

Foucault also argued for a description of the “institutional sites” (1972, p. 57) in which discourse operates. In sport and recreation discourse, these sites are numerous. First and foremost, policy documents allow a discourse to be formally articulated. Mainstream newspapers, the internet and television news shows then aid in diffusing a discourse. As well as these sites, schools, universities, workplaces, sports fields, fitness centres and athletic training facilities allow for further dissemination of a discourse about
sport and recreation. These are all places “where certain truths of a general kind, concerning the human body [are made possible] … and which provides elements for diagnosis” (1972, p. 57).

Of particular use for this study is Foucault’s conception of discursive practices (discussed briefly above), as a “body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function” (1972, p. 129). Another articulation Foucault offered of discursive practices, emphasised the object of study, a particular viewpoint one brings to a discursive setting and acceptable ways of behaving within a setting:

Discursive practices are characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate exclusions and choices. (Foucault, 1977, p. 199)

Discursive practices abound in the making, distribution, implementation and debate of public policy. Foucault (1971) writes “in every society the production of discourse is controlled, organised, redistributed, by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events …” (p. 216). Thus, examining the practices of agents involved in these policy settings is of interest since it is these practices which contribute to both the conduct of citizens and the conduct of conduct by policy makers.

Of course, research investigating discourses has various limitations. Various attacks have been levied on the assumptions of ‘reality’ being constructed through language and that different discourses represent different realities. The question becomes, who chooses the discourse that should be used to minimise domination? This line of thinking suggests that favouring one interpretation over another will merely result in another discursive battle. The response to this would be that yes, the assumption that new or different discourses will continuously vie for existence and its own dominance means that discursive battles will continue, but this should not stop one from attempting to minimise unfair domination in a particular instance.
Also, according to Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi and Lee (2005), Foucauldian notions of discursive power exercised by those who control the means of policy expression and discussion are difficult to accommodate in comparative analysis if one holds the hard-line view that discourse is language specific. However, Henry et al. argue that we do work across language communities on the notion of nearest approximations most of the time. Since there appears to be a homogenising of sport policy discourses around international sport, the findings here might be worthwhile to compare with other policy situations.

Also, with any conclusions which attempt to minimise domination in a study of discourse, one must be cautious of omitting authority totally. Discourse analysts do not necessarily argue for a totally level playing field, whereby all citizens or groups have the same amount of decision making power, although they do advocate ensuring that decision making in a particularly fair (or fairer) manner, which usually becomes evident through research conclusions.

A Critical Approach to Policy Analysis

While all policy analysts have a desire (either stated or latent) to improve the effectiveness of policy, either incrementally or radically, these have historically been considered either positivist or post-positivist analyses. (Danziger, 1995; DeLeon, 1998). As DeLeon (1998) points out, neither of these main approaches are necessarily useful on their own. That is, most people would find it virtually worthless to write public policy without doing some form of quantitative research and similarly impossible to deconstruct a policy using only a positivist methodology. Whereas positivist policy analysts have traditionally clung to the idea that “knowledge would replace politics” (Torgerson, 1986, p. 34), postpositivists acknowledge and examine the crucial role that language and argumentation play in the framing of policy problems and in the assumptions, facts, and criteria that generate potential solutions (Danziger, 1995). Danziger writes that ‘objective’ policy analysis (and analysts) cannot be unbiased or objective:

Because standards of judgment, canons of evidence, and normative measures are prescribed by his or her professional community, the potential for professional scientific objectivity, political neutrality, or substantive change are, by definition, curtailed significantly … the givens of any field of activity, are constructed socially and politically … (Danziger, 1995, p. 436-437)
DeLeon (1998) argues that the research problem should determine the research approach. That is, if the policy terrain is inherently political then its analysis must be undertaken with a methodology that acknowledges and accommodates this. Thus, here we utilise Foucauldian ‘tools’ to analyse policy.

Foucauldian lenses have traditionally been applied to ‘the body’ and the forces which act upon it. The rationale for applying Foucauldian lens to public policy in this instance revolves around Foucault’s area of interest. Foucauldian inspired research is not interested in the body specifically; rather it is interested in examining relations of power that ultimately affect (and are affected by) the body and the self. Since public policy is ultimately concerned with matters such as governance, allocation of scarce resources, and defining and changing various social practices (as well as being one itself), it is assumed its effects on individuals and groups is significant.

Foucault explained that his goal was to “criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent” (1974, p. 171). Since this project adopts a critical perspective to question how and why various discourses have influenced our understanding of sport, and how these discourses are deployed, it is not difficult to see how public policy provides an avenue for conducting such an investigation. Public policy is important because it affects people’s everyday lived experiences and opportunities. As Stone (2002) argues, “every conceivable policy instrument or solution has broad effects on values such as equity, democracy, or liberty” (p. xiii). Likewise, Forester (1993) argues that “public policy itself, by patterning social interaction, could … be seen to shape not only the distribution of ‘who gets what’, but the more subtle constitution of ways we learn about and can attend to our concerns, interests and needs” (p. i).

Forester (1993) advocates that a critical approach to analysing public policy can assist in understanding the workings of power since “neither incremental-based or utilitarian [approaches] help us to understand how policy making and policy implementation reshape the lived worlds of actors, restructure social worlds in ways that alter actors’ opportunities, capacities to act, and self conceptions” (p. 12). Therefore, a fundamental tenet of the theoretical underpinning is that language and discourse can be used both as a site to unfairly dominate, as well as lessen the dominating effects upon
individuals and groups. Forester’s articulation echoes Foucault (1988a) who argued that people and groups are not only constrained by dominant discourses but can be active in crafting different ways of knowing, performing, and, at times, challenging instances of domination.

It is both more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict which critical discourse analysts are interested in. Thus, it is both times of conflict and ‘common sense’ that critical researchers use as sites for investigation, since the “connections between the use of language and the exercise of power are often not clear to people, yet appear on closer examination to be vitally important to the workings of power” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 54). Texts are an important source of evidence for “grounding claims about social structures, relations, and processes” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 209).

Chalip (1996) argues critical policy analyses are useful because they furnish interpretations and critiques that can be used by undervalued or excluded stakeholders to challenge debilitating policy assumptions. For example, by challenging dominant understandings within policy, their might be opportunities to access resources previously considered inaccessible, such as status, funding, or access to policy decision making. By understanding how those who write and speak for national sport policy manage contradictions and challenges, relations of power can be pliable for change. The problem for undervalued and excluded stakeholders is to address how to make resistance to debilitating policies and practices effective.

In order to explicate the discourses of national sport and recreation policy production, and examine how such discourses contribute to people making sense of sport and recreation policy, this research employs a constructivist framework. Schram (1993) argues such an approach is beneficial because:

more so than conventional approaches, a post-modern policy analysis offers the opportunity to interrogate assumptions about identity embedded in the analysis and making of public policy, thereby enabling us to rethink and resist questionable distinctions that privilege some identities at the expense of others. (p. 249)

By taking a ‘policy as discourse’ approach (Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi and Lee, 2005), this study rejects an assumption of an underlying, objective reality and analyses instead the construction and implications of socially constructed realities. “Policy discourse is thus
seen as defining rather than simply responding to a problem” (Henry et al. 2005, p. 489). In order to gain an insight into how subjects and social phenomenon such as public policy are constructed discursively, this approach focuses on the use of power and the construction of truth and knowledge and the relationships between these.

Importantly, while the term ‘critical’ in ‘critical discourse analysis’ brings with it connotations of ‘critical theory’ and its assumptions of emancipating society, this research maintains a trajectory of constructing public policy with a ‘minimum of domination’, as distinct from the idea that everyone will be freed from the negative effects of policy. In regard to public policy, Forester (1993) defines critical theory as a research framework that “confronts us with the challenge to assess the vulnerabilities of our basic capacities to act with one another, to act meaningfully together, and to protect and nourish forms of social cooperation” (p. 4). With this in mind a fundamental tenet of this approach is that language and discourse can be used both as a site to unfairly dominate, as well as lessen the effects of domination.

It is important here to note that those in positions of power do not always mean for these inequalities to exist. As Gee (2001) points out, we “always assume, unless absolutely proven otherwise, that everyone has ‘good reasons’ and makes ‘deep sense’ in terms of their own socio-culturally-specific ways of talking, listening, writing, reading, acting interacting, valuing, believing and feeling” (p. 79). Likewise Stone (2002) argues that “even though a political fight involves conflicting interpretations of various concepts, people aspire to convince others that their interpretation best fulfils the spirit of the larger concept to which everyone is presumed to subscribe” (p. 37). The assumption of ‘good reasons’ and ‘deep sense’ is foundational to discourse analysis explained by Fairclough (2001) who reiterates Bourdieu’s understanding of the power of discourse: “it is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know” (p. 41). Fairclough similarly states “ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible” (1989, p. 85).  

21 Fairclough notes when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be ideology, this in itself is an ideological

---

21 While Fairclough (2001) argues that a critical framework has gowned out of concerns of struggles over power and “emphasises forms of power which depend upon consent rather than coercion” (p. 232), this study considers that while there are hegemonic elements within a milieu such as sport and leisure, relations of power are not restricted to such an explanation.
effect, for ideology is only truly effective when it is disguised (p. 107). Of course, as Gee notes (2001), we are all members of multiple cultures and discourses. Thus, the analytic task is finding how and why discourses have the effect they do.

Reconciling ‘Critical’ Analysis and Foucault

While this research employs a ‘critical’ lens for its analysis, it does not align with traditional critical theorists, in particular those from the Frankfurt School. Exemplified by Horkheimer, these theorists aimed “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer 1982, p. 244). Contrasted with this, as has been noted, a Foucauldian approach does not make such claims. A Foucauldian approach might attempt to minimize or replace dominating discourses but ‘emancipation’ is not total and long-lasting. Instead, discourses are ceaselessly reinvented and replaced by others, and while not particularly inspirational, a Foucauldian researcher might reply to a traditional critical theorist that ‘there is no escape.’ However, the two traditions are not diametrically opposed. Hoy and McCarthy (1994) argue for a “continuum [of critical theory]” (p. 144) in order to avoid conceiving of Frankfurt School critical theorists as mutually exclusive.

For this research the term ‘critical’ is used in a broad sense – thereby attempting to encapsulate the idea that the researcher is ‘critiquing’ dominant social structures with a view to improving (or changing) understandings and structures in which individuals exist. Finally, and following the discussion above, while ‘critical discourse analysis’ is employed as a research methodology along with Foucault’s genealogy and archeology, it is used in order to acknowledge the nature and range of texts that would be analysed.

Policy Discourse Research

There is an array of research investigating discourses within the realms of physical activity and physical education, sport and recreation both internationally and in New Zealand. What follows is a brief overview and consideration regarding the relevance of these studies to this thesis.

Physical activity public policy has been examined with regard to the effects of neo-liberal discourse. Bercovitz (1998, 2000) problematised the seemingly taken-for-granted nature of an ‘Active Living’ (physical activity) policy in Canada and argued that
the ‘Active Living’ initiative represents a government-driven attempt to redefine physical fitness, in order to resolve a set of social issues and concerns related to physical activity and sport. Examination of the problematic nature of sporting discourse has taken place on both sides of elite / mass participation conceptual divide. Bercovitz (2000) for example, suggested ‘Active Living’ contained hidden political agendas and provided a vehicle for “the rapid retreat of the welfare state” (p. 19).

Burrows and Wright (2001) critically examined the assumptions about ‘childhood’ and ‘child development’ that inform curriculum construction in New Zealand physical education. While not specifically dealing with resistance or protest, they concluded that “the sheer embeddedess of developmental understandings in our everyday practices means any attempts to practice parenting, teaching, learning differently will necessarily require the generation of alternative conceptions of what development entails” (p. 179). It is apparent many of the aforementioned studies have as an interest ‘alternative’ voices, though many do not explicitly examine opportunities for the enactment of these voices.

Regarding sport policy analysis specifically, Johnson (1982) argued there are three types of policies that national governments could implement; integrative, symbolic and instrumental. As argued in this thesis, Johnson noted that domestic sports policy is significant because it can modify and reinforce citizen values and beliefs. However, Johnson only mentions ‘opposition’ to sport policy in a central government sense, the idea of debate framed by an opposition political party, as distinct from other, wide-ranging stakeholders. Also of interest for the current study is Johnson’s assertion that governments will find it increasingly necessary to limit the ‘autonomy’ of sport. One may consider that Sparc’s ability to control funding for sporting organisations is a form of control, but it is argued here that sport organisations are not without a level of influence. That is, sport organisations can seek alternative sources of funding and resist the ‘umbrella’ of a central government agency.

Further, one could also argue that with many sport and recreation organisations receiving little or no funding from Sparc, ‘control’ in a financial sense is non-existent. However, not only does it appear that many sports that do not receive substantial funding lament their limited cash flow, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many organisations
have accepted Sparc’s policies and have changed their respective policies (and cultures) to meet Sparc’s governing practises.

Harvey, Thibault and Rail (1995) investigated the extent to which the Canadian federal government has adopted a neo-corporatist political approach to manage the number of interest groups in both fitness and amateur sport. Also adopting a discursive policy analysis, the researchers concluded that pluralism within public policy was ultimately replaced with neo-corporatism (or neo-liberalism). From many Sparc policy documents (2002a, 2003c, 2004a), it is apparent the management of the number of interest groups is a concern in the New Zealand policy context.

Green (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007) investigated elite sport policy as a site for discursive contest. Green (2004a) investigated the shift in English policy discourse specifically, examining the extent to which current discourses surrounding rational and performance-oriented sport policy come to construct our experiences of sport at all levels. Green wondered “whether we are in danger of losing sight of ‘other’ meanings attached to sporting activities” (p. 380). Further, Green (2004b) utilised a discourse analytical approach to illustrate how elite sport policy in England and Canada constructed a social world in which surrounding opportunities for ‘alternative voices’ are limited. A distinction between Green’s work and the present study is that since Sparc’s inception, the structure of power relations has been the focus of debate, as evidenced in a struggle over funds for a sport organisation, and/or arguments over decision-making power.

In their analysis of elite policy change in swimming and track and field in Canada and the United Kingdom, Green and Houlihan (2005) argued policy change is a complex process. They sought to gain insight through one facet; an advocacy coalition framework. The researchers offered advice on how to assist in policy change, since both nations have recently experienced discursive shifts, noting that although in Canada a traditional focus on elite sport priorities has declined, in the UK there is a renewed shift towards elite sport objectives from both governing parties. From cursory perusals it appears that despite receiving significant media attention for their elite sport policies, Sparc also has a large focus on mass participation / physical activity objectives. To suggest one objective is necessarily dominating the other in New Zealand at this point is impossible. However, it
is clear that discursive debates around the comparative worth of each objective continues to draw significant attention from academia and the public alike.

Recent research has also been undertaken into the inherent problems of disseminating sport and recreation policy. Green and Houlihan (2006) researched Australian and UK government (and governmental) activities directed at shaping, channelling, and guiding the conduct of national sporting organisations (NSOs). They argued that power relations in the sport sector affect “the capacities and liberties of NSOs to act in ways that might diverge from the ‘desired directions’ of government” (p. 67). This study follows in a very similar vein, but extends the analysis by also investigating the potential for some stakeholders to determine other ways of operating.

The Australian policy context, to which New Zealand is often compared anecdotally, was given consideration by Stewart, Nicholson, Smith and Westerbeek (2004) who described the diverse range categories and practices with which policy makers are faced, from elite competitive sport to spontaneous sport and exercise sport. Stewart et al argue that policy makers often take a broad view of sport without making their intentions clear and surmise Australian sport policy, like other policy contexts, are neither routine, rational and linear as policy models tend to imply. Despite this messiness Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) note that governments are paying increasing attention to the governance structures of sport and recreation organisations, since these various Western governments contribute significant sums of money to sport and recreation organisations.

In one of two rare exceptions to analyses of Western sport policy, Whorton and Wagner (1985) present an overview of government-supported values within the sport system of Nicaragua. These included: a means to help integrate the society; a desire to gain widespread participation in sport; an emphasis on local organisation; a desire to engender a collective mentality; and an intention of using sport to distract the people from the problems facing Nicaragua (present around 1985). Shehu and Mokgwathi (2007) encouraged physical education scholars to adopt a critical stance towards national sport and recreation policies as they are texts bound to specific meaning and learning, with potential to impact on roles and subjectivities.

Despite not dealing specifically with public policy, Bishop and Jaworski (2003) offer an analysis of the construction of nationalism in British newspapers during an
international soccer competition in 2000. Of importance here is the idea that while public policy makers actively attempt to construct or contribute to a particular national identity, there are also many other sites where identity is both contested and mediated.

In the other major study of discourse and sport policy, and investigating the New Zealand context specifically, Sam (2003) examined the ‘ideas’ that are promoted when debate over national public sport policy takes place. ‘Ideas’ such as ‘efficiency’, ‘competitiveness’ and ‘leadership’ are often espoused as inherently positive values, but upon closer inspection, are surrounded by contradictions and paradoxes which lead to tensions and struggles when considering the allocation of resources. In a further investigation of the precursor to Sparc, the New Zealand government’s Ministerial Taskforce Inquiry into Sport Fitness and Leisure, Sam and Jackson (2004) argued that an emphasis on ‘rationalisation’ and ‘integration’ raises a variety of paradoxes which may on the one hand create opportunities for some previously marginalised groups to voice issues and problems, while on the other, may amplify the influence of powerful groups. Sam (2005) also suggested that while institutions such as taskforces in sport, fitness and leisure “profess objective rationality, they are by nature profoundly political and are responsible for satisfying several contradictory roles at once: to consult and to co-opt, to explore and to delimit, to report and to persuade” (p. 93). This idea about rationality, with regard to its underlying epistemology of positivism is further investigated in the present study.

In another study, Sam (2006) considered how certain practices can shape how New Zealand sport policy is constructed. Sam argues that despite the Ministerial Taskforce “giving the impression that it had voiced the shared beliefs, mutual understandings, and common interpretations of the problems in New Zealand sport” (p. 383), these beliefs do not necessarily manifest in successful and popular policies, since institutional constraints significantly limit the agency of those involved in its production. The discursive manoeuvres that Sparc representatives utilise follow on from Sam’s analysis in this thesis.

While the aforementioned studies differed in their specific theoretical approaches, the assumptions about, and interest in the contested nature of public policy was readily apparent. This current research follows in the same vein.
CHAPTER 4
METHODS

This chapter consists of three distinct parts. Firstly, it conveys the two Foucauldian-inspired methods that ‘govern’ the investigation; archaeology and genealogy. Secondly, the chapter provides an overview of the research methodology by situating the data collection within a general framework of critical discourse analysis. That is, various texts or ‘discourses’ (with a small d) are examined to understand relations of power through ‘Discourses’ (with a capital D). Thirdly, the chapter articulates the specific data collection techniques that are employed and explains further the processes of policy analysis, interviews, observations and media analysis, and a research journal.

An array of policy terrains is examined within this thesis. Foucault offers a methodological “box of tools” (1977a) which allows a researcher to understand the construction of social phenomenon and allow individuals to interact with the world around them. While this chapter deals specifically with theoretical consideration and generally with methodological considerations, more specific extrapolation of the various theoretical frameworks is offered in each respective chapter.

Aside from examining the emergence of discourses, the authorities that delimit them and what the discourses consist of, Foucault believed the analysis of discourses was incomplete: “But what relations exist between them? Why this enumeration rather than another?” (1972, p. 47). Despite Michel Foucault once stating “do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same” (1972, p. 17), this project regards him as a theorist interested in understanding “the relations we have to truth through scientific discourse … the relationships we have to others … and the relationships between truth, power and self” (Foucault, 1988c, p. 15). To understand the operation of relationships between these three themes, Foucault offered two techniques; archaeology and genealogy. Both archaeology and genealogy are employed throughout the four main research studies, and are discussed here with regard to their applicability to the research questions.
Archaeology

Foucault argued that discourses within society change over time. Foucault’s interest was in identifying the birth and growth of discourses and the conditions which gave impetus to them. The process of changing discourses could be seen to include instances when “the scales or guidelines have been displaced … the information system has been modified … [and] the lexicon of signs and their decipherment has been entirely reconstituted” (1972, p. 37).

Foucault argued that society does not ‘develop’ through various discourses; “it would be quite wrong to see discourse as a place where previously established objects are laid one after another like words on a page” (1972, p. 47). Neither does a new object (or social practice) “await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity” (p. 49). In the same vein, Foucault noted that it is not easy to say something ‘new’. For a new discourse to become established, it does so in an environment in which the conditions “are many and imposing … under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations” (p. 49). Also imperative are particular relations between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns and systems of norms, as well as a discursive system of relations that enables a discourse to appear. It is these discursive relations that “offer a discourse objects of which it can speak” (p. 51).

Ultimately, Foucault hoped he “would show with precise examples that in analysing discourse themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice” (p. 54). In order to do this, Foucault suggested archaeology. Archaeology aimed to show how “ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed …” (1970, xxii). Foucault (1972) argued that an archaeology should show “how the prohibitions, exclusions, limitations, values, freedoms, and transgressions … all its manifestations, verbal or otherwise, are linked to a discursive practice” (p. 213).

In order to undertake archaeological analysis of sport and recreation policy discourse, some remarks are required in order to delimit the study. Firstly, it is clear that the discourses of sport and recreation are far larger and more expansive than that
discussed solely within the public policy process. Further, there would be inherent limitations even if one tries to limit an examination to only the discourses related to the sport policy milieu. Foucault remarked the analysis of statements and discursive formations is “based on the principle that everything is not said … statements are always in deficit; on the basis of the grammar and the wealth of vocabulary available … relatively few things are said” (1972, p. 134). As such, any archaeological, discursive analysis must take into consideration what is excluded from mainstream policy discourse.

Of course, Foucault’s research was not limited to a specific set of public policy and discourse. Thus, this research is informed by Scheurich’s (1997) linkage of archaeology with public policy. He argues, in a similar fashion to Foucault, that ‘policy archaeology’ posits that social problems are social constructions, and critically examines the social construction process, how the social problem was made manifest, nameable, and describable (Scheurich, 1997). The focus of policy archaeology is to investigate the “constitutive grid of conditions, assumptions, forces which make the emergence of a social problem, and its strands and traces, possible” (p. 97). It examines “the existence of a particular social problem and looks … closely and carefully at its emergence” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 6). The goal is to search for the primary patterns or social regularities that shape what is accepted as a problem and what is not. It asks what the larger social function of the problem-policy axis is (Scheurich, 1997, p. 12). Similarly, Bacchi (2000) explained how analysing policy can allow researchers to understand the ways in which language in policy, and more broadly discourse, sets limits upon what can be said (2000, p. 48).

Following Scheurich’s explanation, this particular policy archaeology approach addresses various dimensions, or arenas. These include 1) an analysis of the social construction of the problem, 2) how policy choices are shaped by social regularities, 3) an examination of a discourse’s ability to define solutions, and 4) an analysis of the legitimisation process and effect of the new discourse. Thus, for this research, archaeology is conceived of an investigation of how policy problems come to exist.
Genealogy

Genealogy, as distinct from archaeology, attempts to understand how policy problems are solved, through an articulation of the relationships between truth, knowledge, and power. It is “a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of subject …” (Foucault, 1980e, p. 118). Foucault explains:

a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from subjugation, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. It is based on a reactivation of local knowledges … in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power … If we were to characterise it in two terms, then ‘archaeology’ would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and ‘genealogy’ would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of these descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjugated knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play. (1980d, p. 85)

Despite various institutions attempting to purport that particular ways of knowing, particular objects and particular power relationships are stable and natural, genealogy attempts to show the often hidden workings of power in the creation of the social world. That is, the plurality of ideas and thoughts possible at any one moment are contested by numerous groups, not only the state. Specifically, genealogy examines power relations in the construction of particular understandings of truth and knowledge, in two ways, through descent and convergence. The study of descent examines how bodies are constructed; how they are “totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction” (Foucault, 1977b, p. 148), while ‘convergence’ examines the process of actors’ ability to influence their own lives by the conversion of historical power.

Markula and Pringle (2006) explain that Foucault’s position on the workings of power is such that powerful individuals, groups and nations “do not arrive at their position because they have power, but they become influential due to the contingent workings … and tactical usages of ‘discourses’” (p. 34). As such, genealogy focuses on how power is used and what the results are. It is here, again, that the idea of resistance is important, since power can only be exerted upon individuals who are free to respond in a variety of ways to the exercise of power. Thus, whether individuals or groups buy into a particular discourse or whether a discourse is resisted is of interest for genealogists.
Eschewing a pretence of perfect solutions to social problems, the goal of genealogy is not to try to “dissolve [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games [of truth] with as little domination as possible.” (1994h, p. 298)

The ‘management techniques’ that Foucault refers to will be a topic of investigation throughout this thesis, with particular regard to how both the individual and community ‘body’ is shaped through public policy, as well as how individuals and groups attempt to convert power through their own practices, understandings, and resistances.

The investigation deals with both an analysis of the construction of a public policy discourse for sport and recreation and the effects of discourses on those involved in the sector and how technologies of the self are used to affect relations of power. Following Foucault’s strategies for understanding relations of power, both archaeology and genealogy are utilised throughout this research since they “alternate and support each other” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p.105).

Finally, though importantly, Foucault explained his approach to research was not governed by positivistic assumptions about controlling and examining all ‘data’ on a given subject (1980a). While not examined here, other discourses are nonetheless lived “and assure the permanence and functioning of an institution” (1980a, p. 38). With this in mind, a key assumption underlying this study was that the entire corpus of sport and recreation policy rhetoric could never be covered. Just as policy makers might be unaware of various discourses at work by others involved in sport and recreation, stakeholders are rarely granted access to meetings, discussions, conflicts, confrontations and editing processes that contribute to final articulation of a policy. Thus, what is analysed is parts of the sphere of ‘public’ policy production.

**Methodological Considerations**

A Foucauldian research approach automatically renders the research as interested in the discursive construction of social practices. This is at odds with research used to construct contemporary public policy, which is often defended on the grounds of being
transparent and rational. Foucauldian-informed research makes no such claims. Since relations of power are not often transparent, Foucault suggests the analysis of power:

should not concern itself with power at the level of conscious intention or decision … it should refrain from posing a labyrinthine and unanswerable question: Who then has power and what has he in mind? … Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of ongoing subjugation … which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc. (1980d, p. 97)

This approach acknowledges that the construction of particular understandings through a research project are themselves informed heavily by the discourses surrounding such a project, concerning the type of study, the length, the way it is written (academic discourse), and the appropriateness of political conclusions that are drawn and recommendations that are suggested.

For a study such as this, where power relations are central to the research, the theoretical framework and methodology are intimately linked. To address the research questions, from a pragmatic viewpoint this thesis in informed by a variety of methodological practices commonly used by critical discourse analysts. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is situated firmly in a view of the world that questions how society is created and maintained through cultural practices. Of course, power relations are of prime importance in critically based studies.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been described in many ways, most of which are articulate, evocative descriptions of a research methodology that has emerged in many disciplines over the past twenty years. On the matter of the overarching goal of CDA, van Dijk, argues that “discourse plays a crucial role in the ideological formulation of problems, in their communicative reproductions, in the social and political decision procedures, and in the institutional management and representation of such issues” (1985, p. 7). Couched in a constructionist worldview, CDA acknowledges Foucault’s idea that since we only have “a knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse, not the things, that produce knowledge” (Hall, 2002, p. 73). This explains why critical discourse analysts often analyse the perspectives and situations of those who are disadvantaged and investigate the language use of those with the ability to change a situation; “those who are
responsible for the existence of inequalities … also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions” (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p, 14).

Weiss and Wodak (2003) similarly point out that one of the aims of CDA is to ‘demystify’ discourses by deciphering ideologies” (p. 14). Fairclough (1995a) states that CDA is concerned with semiosis, or meaning making through language, body language, visual images, or any other way of signifying. It is the emancipating potential of discourse, that undervalued, excluded, and marginalised stakeholders can utilise to disrupt a dominating discourse. Taylor (2001) explains that the aim is not to generalise about language, but “to understand and make explicit the potential social implications which follow from the way it is used” (p. 316). Thus, both the research method and theoretical foundations of critical discourse analysis are intimately entwined.

With regard to examining discourses Billig et al. (1988) note that often ideologies are not straightforward but instead are ‘dilemmatic’. It is the nature of common sense that it contains contrary themes, such as maxims, ideas, and sayings that, for example, contain and praise both caution and risk taking, or both firmness and mercy. Billig (1997) explains that investigators utilising this discursive perspective aim to see how themes of ideology are “instantiated in ordinary talk, and how speakers are part of, and continuing, the ideological history of those discursive themes” (p. 218). Therefore, it is the place of the researcher to explain these themes, as (further to the idea of the critical nature of the research) ‘critical’ encompasses embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and focusing on self-reflection as scholars doing research (Wodak and Meyer, 2001).

**Uniting Texts and Power Relations**

Critical discourse analysis tries to unite at least three different levels of analysis: the text; the discursive practices (that is, the processes of writing / speaking and reading / hearing) that create and interpret that text; and the larger social context that bears upon it. In so doing, CDA aims to show how these levels are interrelated, thus attempting to draw out the exercise of power through language.

The exercise of power, according to van Dijk, usually presupposes mind management, involving the influence of knowledge, beliefs, understanding, plans,
attitudes, ideologies, norms and values. He argues that the management of modes of access is geared towards the ‘public mind’, or ‘social cognition’. Numerous authors argue that the collective representations we share as a society in terms of arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking and arguing, inferring and learning, among others, together define what we understand by social cognition (Farr and Moscovici, 1984; Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Wyer and Srull, 1984). Although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions (and discursive practices) are social because they are shared by group members, monitor social action and interaction, and because they underlie the social and cultural organisation of society as a whole (Resnick et al., 1991).

Social cognitions (and discursive practices) allow us to link power relations with particular texts. They explain the production as well as the understanding and influence of dominant text and talk. Van Dijk notes that the control of knowledge shapes our interpretation of the world, as well as our discourse and other actions. This is why a critical analysis of those forms of text and talk is relevant, that essentially aim to construct and disseminate such knowledge (van Dijk, 1993). These interpretations are also known as cultural models: presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world and how one behaves within it (Holland and Quinn, 1987). It is these cultural models that link the personal with the social, and individual actions with the social order (van Dijk, 1993). At the same time, this analysis of both discursive and cognitive structures must in turn be embedded in a broader social, political or cultural theory of the contexts, institutions, groups and overall power relations that enable or result from such symbolic structures (van Dijk, 1993).

Public policy, from conception to implementation, with its subtleties, contradictions and conflicts is a sphere in which relations of power determine resource allocation and decision-making power. New Zealand sport and recreation policy, not unlike other areas of social policy, is a site where struggles of power occur frequently, if not constantly. Many of these struggles are over the production of meaning (or semiosis), and how this meaning relates to the distribution of scarce and valued resources. Significant problems for those in policy making positions include how to distribute resources (not merely physical resources, but also those such as the granting of
legitimacy and status), and in particular how to justify to stakeholders vying for these resources that the decisions are the ‘correct’ or ‘best’ ones. The pre-eminent vehicle for doing so is through official policy documents. By influencing others through discourse, those in powerful positions can maintain particular power structures.

Fairclough (1995a) sums up the relevance of texts (such as policy documents) in the (re)production of dominance when he wrote that any text is always simultaneously constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, as well as constituted by them. Important here is the idea that a discursive event is shaped by contexts, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them. Discourse is viewed as constitutive because it is through discourse that social realities are articulated and shaped. People’s perceptions of the world, their knowledge and understanding of social situations, their interpersonal roles, their identities, as well as relationships between interacting groups of people are all constituted (or constructed) through discourse (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Similarly, Freedon (1996) argues it is ideologies that enable meaningful political worlds (or discourses) to be constructed [as] they produce identifiable sets of meaning or conceptual considerations.

Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter broadly outlines the range of texts that were utilised throughout the research. Please note that because the data collection techniques varied for each of the following research projects (Chapters 5-8) the specific sources of data and research approaches are described in detail in each of the subsequent chapters. CDA, like all research, faces numerous challenges to be successful. These include the researcher addressing issues of incorporating text, context and discourse, the selection of texts, deciding how to analyze the data, making a highly subjective analysis persuasive, and determining the best way to write it up (Hardy and Phillips, 2000). This section addresses these particular issues. Cameron (2002) describes CDA as an approach that necessitates examining actual examples closely and paying attention not only to their content but also their form. For this study, the sites of analysis include a variety of Sparc policy documents, speeches, media interviews and other associated texts. Fairclough (2001)
describes these various sites as ‘genres’, “the diverse ways of acting, of producing social life” (p. 235).

Much of Sparc’s policy documents are easily accessible, as indeed Sparc might want it to be. On Sparc’s website there is a list of available policy documents, as well as a plethora of other information. This is an extremely valuable site for analysing the deployment of discourse. It is here that Sparc representatives have the ability to put across their ideas exactly as they wish to, planned and edited, and uninterrupted, something that is not always possible at other sites of investigation.22 Policy documents form the foundation for conflict, contradictions and challenges to arise, and it is in the public sphere that these challenges are often played out. It is important to note here that this project specifically focuses on the public management of conflict, challenges and contradictions. Any private management of challenges to dominant discourses are not easily accessible, by the fact that they are indeed private. As a result, the focus here is primarily on public displays of deployment and challenge, along with the rare occasions the author is privileged to witness private negotiation.

As well as policy documents, policy press releases, media presentations, interviews, and other propaganda mediums are used to attempt to influence stakeholders. The places where meanings are appropriated and managed are of significant import to those they write / speak for, and those who challenge policy. Increasingly, electronic media are being used for the articulation and dissemination of opinions regarding policy in New Zealand sport and leisure. Particularly, Radio Sport, a national talk back radio station devoted to all things sport (where the devotion to sport is epitomised by a policy of every hour reading the latest sports news before regular news) has a large following in New Zealand. The internet, and in particular large commercial sites such as www.stuff.co.nz and www.tvnz.co.nz add to the accessibility of information from sources that would have traditionally been restricted to daily newspapers. This is not meant to automatically dismiss lesser known websites and sources, though it is acknowledged that it is unlikely that Sparc representatives would partake in the deployment of policy on lesser known sites. These sites are also the textual terrain on which protestors battle

22 It is worth noting variations in preparation of various texts. For example, policy documents can be groomed before public scrutiny, read and reread several times before being ‘released’. During television and radio interviews and conversations, there is less time to prepare responses to questions.
dominant discourses. Magazines are important traditional forms of information dissemination. These sites are also important for people who wish to challenge Sparc policy. Letters to the editors of magazines and newspapers and phone calls to talk back radio stations are avenues for people and groups to voice their concerns in a public arena. As well as these sites, interviews with those involved with the public policy process were used.

Data was collected from these aforementioned sites of deployment and challenge and was critically analysed adapting the guiding questions posed by Gee (2001), and Phillips and Hardy (2002). In addressing exactly what texts to focus on for the research, once again Phillips and Hardy (2002) provide useful guidelines for decision-making. Considerations included deciding what texts were the most important in constructing the object of analysis, which texts are available for analysis, and what texts are produced by the most powerful actors. Throughout the study, when different sites for research appeared which included discursively relevant information, these were included where appropriate. Likewise, at a methodological tactical level, the study employs Carabine’s (2001) genealogical analysis process. Carabine encourages the analyst to question themes, look for interrelationships between discourses, identify the discursive strategies employed, look for absences and silences within the discourse, examine resistances and counter-discourses, and analyse the effects of the discourse (2001).

In choosing the particular site for the research, I reflected upon the questions encouraged by Phillips and Hardy (2002). These include:

- Does the research site have characteristics that make it likely to produce useful results?
- Are research sites sufficiently similar/ different along theoretical dimensions to allow comparative analysis?
- Is the research site likely to produce ‘meaningful’ findings?
- Has a good source of discursive data presented itself?
- Has a ‘crisis’ occurred that will reveal insight into discursive activity?

After addressing these questions of site selection, this research followed Fairclough’s (1989) themes to guide the discourse analysis. It is important to note here that not all of the following questions were specifically addressed in the study. Some questions were of

---

23 Much contemporary popular media rely on the same sources for information. Therefore, not only is the same information often dispersed is made available simultaneously to various regions and cultures.
more concern than others, though all the questions assisted in developing an analytical framework.

**Guiding questions for analysis**

- How are words used to show ideology? In what ways are things classified? What aspects of speech are over-worded? How are synonyms, antonyms and hyponyms used to construct ideology?
- How are words chosen to develop a relationship with the reader, such as in terms of the formality of vocabulary? Is euphemism used? What is the effect of metaphor?
- What grammatical processes and participants are found? Are actors (agents) inanimate or animate, and if the latter, what kinds of individuals? Who is the affected and beneficiary?
- What kinds of entity are shown as having existence or being in a certain state or entering into a relationship?
- How are passives and nominalization used? Do they delete agency and is there an ideological function? How do sentences form; are they declarative, interrogative, imperative, pseudo-suggestive, and what is the position of its subjects?
- What thematic structure is present within texts?
- Who is represented as asking questions, making requests, giving undertakings of various kinds, or giving orders?

Further to these questions, Gee (2001) considers numerous questions to focus the analysis on. These include:

- What cultural models are relevant here? What must I, as an analyst, assume people feel, value and believe, consciously or not, in order to talk, write, and or act/interact this way?
- How consistent are the cultural models here? Are there competing or conflicting cultural models at play? Whose interests are the cultural models representing?
- What sorts of texts, media, experiences, interactions and or institutions could have given rise to these cultural models?
- How are relevant cultural models helping to reproduce, transform, or create, social, cultural institutional or political relationships? What discourses are these cultural models helping to reproduce, transform or create?
Data Collection Techniques

Policy Analysis

Analysing policy documents encompassed elements of both archaeology and genealogy, since these documents were both the culmination of understandings about sport and recreation over time, and because they informed the discursive environment and continually reshaped it throughout the research process. Public policy about sport and recreation in New Zealand was examined (utilising the aforementioned guiding questions) over a period of approximately six years, from January 2002 to December 2007. In the main, the policy examined was that produced by Sport and Recreation New Zealand. Sparc’s policy database was readily available for access on their internet site. Policy from other organisations, such as the New Zealand Olympic Committee and the New Zealand Government, is referenced where appropriate.

While some comparative examination of other nations’ sport policy (including that of Australia, the UK, and Canada) was undertaken, this was supplementary rather than the core of the policy analysis. Also, a variety of policy documents of various other organisations (such as NSO’s and RST’s) and while these were useful in contextualising the socio-political milieu, were not specifically examined to address the research questions.

Interviews

The individual interviews were conducted using the general interview guide approach described by Patton (1990). Patton argued that this particular method is advantageous because the interviewee is aware of the issues to be explored before the interview takes place. The participants received an information sheet regarding the nature of the investigation prior to the interview’s commencement (see Appendix 1) and an informed consent form (see Appendix 2). Also known as semi-structured or guided interviews, the interviews consisted of a set of predetermined questions around which the interviews were focused (see Appendix 3, 4 & 5). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for certain questions to be asked as well as the opportunity to delve

24 It should be noted that throughout each chapter, a short methods section elucidates the research process that was undertaken for each specific study.
further into areas where rich information may be found. By serving as reminders, the main purpose of the questions is to keep the investigator on track.

Following Pringle and Markula’s (2005) example, while the subject matter was of great significance, also important in the interview was “what was not being said” (p. 480, italics added), as well as how particular things were said, such as the use of euphemism and the way in which different actors are defined and positioned. The themes developed through the interviews were also linked back to other ways in which management of sport and recreation discourse was exhibited. In framing the broad interview questions, the researcher needed to consider how one should talk about public policy. How should it be questioned? How should it be defended?

Observations

While public policy discourse is the main concern of this thesis, it is considered important to remain aware of the overall discourse and the effects on it by various other power relations in an informal way. That is, since the discourse (and resistance to it) is played out at sporting events, through strategy launches, through conversations with other citizens involved in the sport and recreation industry, personal, social observations had a significant effect on the personal knowledge that I attained throughout the research process. The analysis of various experiences in the sport and recreation sectors was done through self-reflection, attempting to understand the discourses which inform those with whom I had interacted.

Media Analysis

The media analysis utilised throughout this study proved to be the most fickle and problematic form of data collection. Due to the wide range of media through which national sport policy discourse is disseminated, specific tactics were employed regarding how best to gather data that could often be fleeting by its very nature. For instance, in the beginning stages of the research, national newspapers were scanned on a daily basis for items regarding national sport policy. With the developments in the content and range of electronic databases such as ‘NewsText Plus’ for New Zealand mainstream media, this process was made more efficient. NewText Plus, holds copies of most major New
Zealand newspapers, though was limited partially in that it did not hold letters to the editor, the traditional site for readers (both private citizens and organisational representatives) to express themselves with an opinion.

Recent shifts in technology and policy however, has allowed for a virtually exponential increase in the amount of dialogue between traditional newspapers and their readers. With the advent and popularity of online newspaper sites, which encourage readers to email in their opinions (a significantly more accessible way writing a hard copy of the letter), the range of opinions which become ‘public’ has increased greatly in the past four years. A common feature on sites such as www.stuff.co.nz, which has a “Your Say” section beneath various ‘topical stories’. It should be noted however that these comments are still mediated. The Stuff website explains that “We want comments that are pithy and punchy, short and smart” (www.stuff.co.nz). As well as this condition, only “a selection of readers’ responses are published in the ‘Your Say section’ of Stuff” (www.stuff.co.nz).

Any analysis of strategies and effects of public policy should examine the sites of deployment for their productive quality, since different sites will be more or less effective in disseminating a particular discourse. Weblogs for instance, are freely available to those with a basic understanding of internet technology, and in a sense, are in the public sphere. However, due to the ubiquity of blog sites, their ‘reach’ is generally limited. Despite the supposed demise of mainstream newspapers by various media commentators, they are still relatively strong in disseminating messages, particularly because of their intertextual nature with other media vehicles including television news shows and mainstream talkback radio shows, which often virtually replicate press releases sent by organisations such as Sparc. These sites offer the largest reach, and thus the largest effect on the practices of policy dissemination and resistance.

**Reflexive Journal**

A reflexive journal served as a reminder throughout the research process of various topics, themes, or thoughts that might require future attention. This journal was kept at various times at both a hard copy format and on computer, particularly since much policy discourse is available through electronic means. The journal took the form of a
diary updated regularly by the researcher throughout the research process. It also included schedules, logistics, and a section for reflection on experiences pertaining to the research.
CHAPTER 5

CLASSIFY, DIVIDE AND CONQUER: SHAPING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DISCOURSE THROUGH NATIONAL SPORT POLICY

Policy makers are often in positions where their articulations of policy can reinforce, alter or maintain particular conceptions about not only their specific subject matter which they are dealing with (such as sport and physical activity) but also in terms of certain conceptions of social reality. For instance, when Sparc set a goal of becoming the most active nation in the world (Sparc, 2002a), this might lead one to assume that all other nations in the world would not only be measured against a standardised scale, but also that all these nations have an interest in being measured against such a goal. Such assumptions mean an organisation such as Sparc is in a relatively powerful position to determine what is important to measure, how a particular thing should be measured, and what the implications of such a measurement are, with regard to future policy plans and intervention. As such, one might ask, who is counted in such measurements, is such a measurement important to others, and just how is such a goal measured?

Throughout New Zealand’s political history, sport, physical recreation and physical activity have been valued for a variety of reasons, many of which have contributed an iconic image of New Zealand’s citizens as rugged, capable, physically hardened people. Jock Phillips (1987) wrote that as New Zealand was a relatively young nation in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the physical and disciplined nature of rugby union assisted in promoting the values essential for work, family and military service. In the 1930s there emerged a different rationale for central government promoting sport and recreation; the 1935 Labour government took a particular interest in programmes focused on recreational activities that would “help disperse post-depression gloom and apathy” (Church, 1990, p. 5). During World War 2, Bill Parry, the Minister of Internal Affairs had a more pressing reason for promoting physical activity; “The instinct of self preservation should induce people to make themselves as fit as possible for sudden action” (p. 5).

25 An alternate version of this chapter was published by the authors Piggin, Jackson and Lewis, in New Zealand Sociology (2007), Vol. 22(2).
Throughout the past fifteen years however, the medical, economic and social implications of sedentary lifestyles and an increasingly overweight and obese population have contributed to government policies which seek to reinforce the image of New Zealand as a nation of active people. For instance, as well as the government money already directed to sport, recreation and health ($165 million over four years 2005-06 to 2008-09 specifically for programmes and promotions to become the world’s most active nation), the 2006 Labour government budget included an additional $76.1 million to fight the ‘obesity epidemic’. Regarding the allocation of this funding, Health Minister Pete Hodgson explained that “the problem is only getting worse. If we take no action we face the very real possibility that the current generation of New Zealand children will be the first to die younger than their parents” (Johnston, 2006). The problem of physical inactivity in New Zealand is also framed such that it is receiving significant attention in the private business sector, where ‘corporate wellness’ schemes are increasing in prevalence. While the rationale for such schemes is often framed in terms of improving ‘work-life balance’ of employees, their logic is also heavily informed by the desire to increase productivity and profit. Other elements within the social climate have added to widespread concern about the physical capabilities of the New Zealand population. In the sporting realm (often conflated with physical activity) there was a media and public outcry at the poor performance of the New Zealand contingent at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Former Olympic gold medallist John Walker attributed this result to the belief that “schools are telling kids it is alright to lose” (Coffee, 2000, p. 4). There was much public debate that New Zealanders were not as ‘competitive’ as they should be. Thus, there is a range of social arenas where citizens are expected to consider and use their bodies in particular ways.

In 2001, a Ministerial Taskforce concluded that sport, fitness and leisure could counter obesity, as well as lead to positive economic and social effects for the nation. The Taskforce’s report explained that these ‘sectors’ had “been virtually ignored by successive governments” (Graham, Collins, Devoy, Mackay, Palmer, Simmonds and Turner, 2001, p. 9). Following the publication of the report, the Labour government established Sport and Recreation New Zealand (Sparc), replacing the Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure which had existed since 1987.
According to its website Sparc is “dedicated to getting New Zealanders moving” (Sparc, 2007a). Officially launched in June 2002, Sparc produced and distributed its first strategy document named ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’ which explained how its budget of nearly $NZ42 million dollars in its first year of operation (rising to more than $NZ70 million dollars in 2006) would be spent. To suggest that Sparc merely allocates this budget to various organisations and programmes trivialises the significant power Sparc has within the sport and recreation sector. Throughout its five year existence Sparc has explicitly dissociated the organisation from being merely a ‘funding body’. Instead Sparc is positioned as an investor; “… going forward, funding decisions will be made on the likelihood of achieving a return on that investment. Sparc will assess returns against its mission” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 10). The idea of measuring this ‘return’ is clearly important. Summing up Sparc’s philosophy, CEO Nick Hill once said “everything is measured at the end of the day” (Hill, 2002a).

One of Sparc’s most conspicuous goals which forms part of their mission statement is “being the most active nation” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 6). Of paramount importance is not only the notion of nationalism, but of being a ‘world leader’. The emergence of an emphasis on international comparisons of physical activity rates can be seen in the 2002 restructuring of the Hillary Commission (Sparc’s predecessor) to Sparc. Juxtaposing the Hillary Commission’s mission statement with Sparc’s reveals this discursive shift, which was explained by Sparc chair John Wells as “a whole new way of doing business” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 3). That is, the Hillary Commission had as its three goals: “to increase the number of people involved in sport and physical leisure activities, help people succeed and achieve their potential, [and] improve the way sport and physical leisure services are delivered” (Hillary Commission, 2000, p. 5, italics added). Compared with Sparc’s mission statement it is clear that while there is a thematic continuity with regard to the ideas of activity, sporting success and delivery ‘systems’, there is a discontinuity regarding how the themes are articulated;

“By 2006 be recognised as world leading in our approach to sport and physical recreation, as measured by:

Being the most active nation
Having the most effective sport and physical recreation systems
Having athletes and teams winning consistently in events that matter to New Zealanders.” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 6, italics added)
This construal of overarching goals in line with what might be conceived as part of a wider neo-liberal agenda in New Zealand has significant implications when considering how such an objective is measured and how government funding is distributed.

**Chapter Purpose**

This chapter aims to draw attention to the role of public policy in shaping power relations discursively, and highlight how these power relations can be debilitating for particular groups in a public policy setting. These aims shall be accomplished by analysing the construction and implementation of a New Zealand physical activity policy which compares physical activity rates around the world. Utilising Foucauldian theorising, we show how classifying and dividing practices construct a view of New Zealand and the world which automatically and problematically favours particular nationalistic conceptions. The chapter concludes that Sparc’s use of the term ‘international standards’ is inherently problematic when comparing rates of physical activity, and such a policy serves to dominate by default over other nations.

What follows is an analysis of the discursive shaping of the ‘most active nation’ goal. The chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, it explains Foucault’s conception of classifying practices, dividing practices and the process of subjectivisation through bio-power. Secondly, it discusses the research approach. Then, the ideas of classifying and dividing practice are applied to Sparc policy, problematising how the aforementioned practices are used in constructing public policy. Finally, a discussion addresses some of the effects of articulating a physical activity policy in such a way.

**Theoretical Approach: Classifying and Dividing Practices**

Foucault explained that his research focused on three facets which serve to construct our social reality; scientific classification, dividing practices and subjectivation. These practices allow a researcher to analyse how certain ways of understanding come into existence and change throughout the history of human thought. Firstly, Foucault explained classifying practices arose out of peoples’ curiosity in the seventeenth century; “if not to discover the sciences of life, as least to give them a hitherto unsuspected scope and precision” (1970, p. 125). During this time, institutions developed to sustain this
curiosity, such as botanical gardens and natural history collections that examined the structure of plant life. In the same way, organisations such as Sparc, the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation are constructed to satisfy the curiosity surrounding the ideas of ‘health’ and ‘fitness’. The importance of such organisations “does not lie essentially in what they make it possible to see, but in what they hide and in what, by this process of obliteration, they allow to emerge…” (Foucault, 1970, p. 137).

Following this process of classifying, dividing practices allow one to distinguish what is normal from what is abnormal, who is fit from who is unfit, as well as any number of deviations from a particular norm. For Foucault, dividing practices are an important part of cementing a particular discourse as legitimate while excluding another as illegitimate. These dividing practices are techniques whereby “the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the ‘good boys’” (2002, p. 326). Such divisions are commonly used in discourses of health, fitness and physical activity today. For instance, body mass index (BMI) calculations are used to ascertain whether one is a ‘normal’ weight, ‘underweight’, ‘overweight’, or ‘obese’. Foucault explains that:

“The judges of normality are present everywhere. We’re in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge … It is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements.” (Foucault, 1979, p. 304)

Organisations such as Sparc encourage a population to meet expectations of normality by encouraging participation in a certain number of minutes of physical exercise every day. These practices serve to maintain a particular way of understanding the body and how it can (or should) be used.

**Research Approach**

While there is a multitude of sources and texts available for analysing a given policy discourse, we direct our analysis toward official Sparc policy which relates specifically to the goal of ‘being the world’s most active nation’. In particular, we consider here that claims to knowledge about physical activity in public policy serve a
significant discursive function. Such claims are at the heart of any analysis of discourse, as statements of ‘fact’ in public policy both influences the legitimacy of particular claims and impacts on the perceptions and behaviour of citizens.

A variety of texts were used in this research. The sites used to investigate the shaping and dissemination of the physical activity discourse primarily include, but were not confined to, Sparc policy documents spanning from June 2002 (Sparc’s official launch) to June 2006 (the end date for Sparc’s original mission statement). The criteria employed for selecting texts within this time frame was based on a consideration of whether they articulated or informed Sparc’s mission to be the ‘most active nation’.

Three factors were taken into account while collecting the data. Firstly, the context of the various articulations of the mission was noted with regard to whom the audience for the message would likely be. Secondly, the various utterances were also considered in relation to their chronological distance from the end point of the mission. Thirdly, various annual reports and statements of intent were examined with regard to the possibility of a change to the mission statement. While the focus in this chapter is on formal written policy, it is acknowledged that numerous other texts such as interviews, speeches, advertisements and images are all important sites for the transmission of Sparc’s policy.

Three reasons make these particular sites compelling. Firstly, ‘being the most active nation’ comprised one of Sparc’s three overarching policy goals, and as such has guided much of Sparc’s subsequent policy, planning and operations. Secondly, the generally enduring nature of such an objective (a mission statement) allows the discursive strategies employed by Sparc to be investigated over a four year period. Thirdly, it is through policy documents that Sparc representatives have the ability to put across their ideas planned, edited and uninterrupted, something that is not always possible at other sites of investigation. Along with Sparc policy, other sources also proved valuable to establish an understanding about the development of the physical activity discourse studied here. These included the International Physical Activity Questionnaire and World Health Organisation sources, particularly since these were essential to Sparc’s measurement of their stated goals.
Nationalism as Bio-power

Foucault explained that dividing and classifying practices are employed by institutions to make subjects out of a citizenry. Individuals are subjected “to someone else by control and dependence, and [are] tied to [their] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (2002, p. 331). Foucault argues that “the health and physical well-being of populations comes to figure as a political objective that the ‘police’ of the social body must ensure…” (1980, p. 95). This policing of the social body is concerned with the preservation and conservation of the labour force, and traced the beginnings of measurement “demographic estimates … the calculation of the pyramid of ages, different life expectancies and levels of mortality” (p. 95).

Foucault’s concept of bio-power is useful here, since it allows for an explanation of why certain discourses of physical activity emerge while others do not. Foucault defined bio-power as the technologies used to analyse, control, and define human bodies. He argued that “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” were constructed by various institutions (1980, p. 140). By promoting self-regulating subjects, Foucault argued that bio-power assists capitalistic goals of production (through labour) and consumption (through purchasing goods and services to maintain a particularly constituted body). Thus, the governing of a population is made easier, whether is it in the interests of a specific government or various corporate enterprises. It is here that we consider ‘nationalism’ as a technology of bio-power brought into existence through neo-liberal discourses, and employed by the New Zealand government (through Sparc) to subjectivise; to encourage the population to understand physical activity and the nation in a particular way and behave accordingly.

An example of such encouragement was demonstrated by Sparc introducing and promoting ‘Push Play Nation’. While this study did not focus on Sparc’s physical activity promotional campaign and its effect on individual bodies, it is notable that in 2005, 2006 and 2007, Sparc have held ‘Push Play Nation’. Each year Sparc vigorously promoted physical activity over a three week period culminating in Push Play Day at the end of that period. Through a variety of media, including advertisements on television, billboards, in print media, buses and the radio and internet, as well as selling ‘Push Play’ branded drink bottles and hats, and running competitions with mountain bikes as prizes, Sparc
encouraged ‘us’ as a nation to become more physically active, though omitted reference
to becoming ‘the world’s most active nation,’ instead promoting a ‘most active region’
competition. The campaign did not necessarily stimulate significant change to the
nation’s activity levels. While the Waitomo District Council won the competition with
5.53 percent of the region’s population registering with the Push Play programme for the
month, 30 of the 52 districts and city councils failed to exceed the 1 percent registration
mark, and only five councils registered above 2 percent. Further, some of Sparc’s
communication with the public reflected a message antithetical with ‘being the most
active nation.’ In one instance, a message on the Sparc website remarked “Only 64% of
New Zealanders do enough physical activity to gain health benefits, and around 21% of
us are obese” (Sparc, 2006b). This disjuncture between aiming to be the world’s most
active nation’ while lamenting that many of New Zealand’s population is insufficiently
active is not easily reconciled.

Constructing the Nation

What follows is an explication of nationalism with regard to the shaping of a
national consciousness, and how nationalism is utilised through public policy as a form of
bio-power.

One place that the nation is actively constructed is through public policy.
Kedourie (1960) notes that the “nationalism doctrine holds that humanity is naturally
divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be
ascertained, and that the only legitimate self government is national self government” (p.
12). By framing individuals as belonging to a nation, nationalism is a view of the world
which consists of nations and one’s place within it is inevitable and natural. In other
words, nationalism is a ‘common sense’; a world without nations being “an unimaginable
impossibility” (Bishop & Jawoski, 2003, p. 247).

When examining nationalism in public policy it is also useful to consider
Higson’s (1998) conception of a nation as both inward and outward looking. That is,
nations have at once an internal history which is defined specifically by a unique
development over time, as well as being defined out of difference; an understanding of
‘us’ and ‘them’. Thus, Finlayson (2003) argues that the idea of the ‘people as one nation’
becomes a kind of elite. When people are part of the nation, Finlayson contends they share in something that makes them feel ‘chosen’. These shared identifications are reinforced, according to Smith (1986), by the production of myths, collective memories, persistent traditions and shared symbols. With regard to the construction of shared identifications in New Zealand public policy, this study utilises Billig’s idea of banal nationalism as a site for producing and reproducing the nation; “ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced” (1995, p. 6). Distinct from ‘hot’ nationalism, which is epitomised by “a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion” (p. 8), Billig argues that banal nationalism has as its metaphor “a flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (p. 8). As such, public policy provides an intriguing site where such a banal construction of the nation may take place.

National physical activity policy is utilised as a technique of bio-power to impart a particular way of viewing the world and interacting with it. For example, Sparc’s rationale for investment in physical activity policies is most often not couched in terms of intrinsic benefits such as enjoyment and healthiness of citizens, but with regard to ideas of the population’s collective physical health as having a positive effect on the nation’s economy. We posit here that the ‘health’ of a nation is a form of bio-power, albeit a form of power which is exercised in a banal fashion. It should be noted there were instances however, of this banal nationalism being utilised as ‘hot nationalism. In November 2005, a press release explained that Trevor Mallard was joyous at the release of statistics that inferred New Zealand was a more active nation than Australia:

I’m right behind any trans-Tasman battle that ends in victory for New Zealanders. We have had a spectacular run recently that has also seen us triumphant in the netball, hockey and the league … Being a more active nation than Australia is something we can all be very proud of and means we are well on the way to becoming the most active nation. Let’s keep it up and celebrate our win by continuing to be involved this Friday on Push Play Day. (Mallard, 2005)

This press release however, is a rare case of any outwardly jingoistic sentiment concerning New Zealand’s relative physical activity status.

Murphy and Waddington (1998) argue that governments of all persuasions around the world share the ideology that sport is inherently good for health, and therefore, worthy of investment or support. Over the decade since this comment, the link between
sport and health has been further cemented, to the extent that the terms ‘sport’ and ‘health’ have achieved a colloquial synonymy. The teleological value of fitness is expressed by Petersen & Lupton (1996), who argue “the new public health is at its core a moral enterprise” (p. xii). The rationale of improving fitness is well-engrained in the national psyche of numerous nation states. Murphy and Waddington (1998) explain that:

What is particularly striking about this ideology is its near universal acceptance across a range of societies for, in developing and developed countries, in capitalist and communist societies, in East and West, there is a broad consensus that ‘sport is good for you’ (p. 194).

As a concern for physical wellbeing, the discourse of fitness and its associated synonyms (fit, healthy, active) has a significant bearing on national sport and recreation policy. In a banal fashion, this was articulated through the purported health costs to the nation of physical inactivity. Sparc policy espouses that “an increase in physical activity would result in considerable reduction to the $9.6B expected to be spent on health in 2003/04” (Sparc, 2003c, p. 5). Physical health therefore becomes more than just an individual’s responsibility; it is the nation’s. In fact the individual benefits of health are often marginalized when compared with the benefits of a healthy nation.26

Analysis

Classifying in National Public Policy: Decreasing the Number of Nations in the World

Policy writers hold a powerful position in classifying what is, and what is not health. With their ability to craft statements, definitions, images, and narratives about New Zealanders, policy writers can impart a particular understanding of the nation upon individuals and groups that read and are influenced by the policy. It is through examining policy that one can see what understandings emerge as areas for concern, measurement and attention. When Sparc originally compared physical activity rates around the world in a document named ‘Sport Facts’, a statistical chart showed New Zealand’s adult physical

26 The two discourses of nationalism and fitness are problematic however. For instance, Sparc’s 2005 Statement of Intent proclaims New Zealand to be a sporting nation; “physical activity and sport lie at the heart of New Zealand’s identity” while simultaneously dispelling this idea when discussing the ‘nation’s’ health at a population level; “… however, almost 60 percent of New Zealanders do not meet the recommended level of at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a day” (Sparc, 2004a, p. 6).
activity rate was 68 percent (Sparc, 2003d). A cursory perusal of the chart would indicate New Zealand was the second most active nation in the world in 2003, ostensibly comparing well with other nations, behind only Finland with 70 percent. However, a further reading of this chart reveals its limitations. For instance, all of the six countries included in the comparison (New Zealand, Australia, U.S.A, Canada, United Kingdom and Finland) are developed, highly Westernised nations. As such, this measurement is limited to the extent that it conveys a narrow portrayal of global physical activity rates. No nations from Africa, South America, the Pacific region (excluding New Zealand) or Asia are included in the measurement, many of which have divergent economic, political and cultural conditions. Sparc does note the countries listed are “similarly developed countries” (Sparc, 2003d, p. 24) yet still utilises the statistics to aid in contextualising the ‘most active nation’ goal. The effect of this juxtaposition of physical activity rates serves most importantly to generalise across all nations.

As well as a limited range of nations used in Sparc’s original analysis, the chart is particularly important in defining the boundaries of the physical activity ‘problem’. Indeed, a number of meanings can be derived from the chart. These include; a) since other countries also struggle with physical inactivity, the problem is ‘global’; b) New Zealand seems close to being the most active nation on the list, and therefore, in the world; c) other nations have a desire to be compared; and d) other nations can be compared. Such assumptions that emerge from the construction of the table serve to delineate ways of thinking about and becoming the world’s most active nation.

A reading of Sparc’s explanation of measuring physical activity rates illustrates little concern for alternative understandings of physical activity in non-Western countries. For instance, the chart’s associated text notes “by international standards New Zealand appears to be a physically active nation” (Sparc, 2003d, p. 24). A section entitled ‘Issues with Measurement of Physical Activity’ bears this out further. The issues are framed around variations in questionnaire design, including concerns around what is defined as physical activity and whether the interviews are “conducted by telephone” (Sparc, 2003d, p. 25). These issues further narrow readers’ conceptions of the idea of measuring physical activity. Cementing this conception is the use of the phrase “by international standards” (Sparc Facts, 2003d, p. 24). Such an articulation has the discursive effect of promoting
Westernised conceptions of physical activity rates as the standard to be attained, despite anecdotal evidence which suggests that physical activity rates in developing nations are higher than developed countries. For example, it is commonly considered that people who live in developing nations work for more hours each week, their work is more labour intensive, and daily life is more likely to involve more exertion than populations in developed nations. Thus, as a classifying practice, producing charts of physical activity rates around the world serves to classify all nations as being affected by, and interested in, the problem of physical inactivity.

**Dividing in National Public Policy: Constructing a Global Physical Activity Discourse**

It should be noted that while this section on the construction of a physical activity discourse follows the former on the practice of classifying, this is not to imply a distinct, linear chronology. It is argued here that social practices of classifying and dividing have taken and continue to take place at the same time, at times reinforcing one another, while also being negotiated throughout by policy writers.

As a dividing practice, the discourse of positivist, scientific measurement is well ingrained in Western societies. Regarding physical activity in particular, the growing significance of obesity has meant scientific measurements of health and fitness are ubiquitous in Westernised nations. Thus, to have a physical activity rate measurement applied to the whole nation (and ostensibly, to every nation) is not surprising. However, combining this scientific discourse with the explicit goal of being the ‘most active nation’ is novel to the extent that no other nation has attempted this in the past. While successive New Zealand governments have taken much pride in the nation’s sporting performances, and have used such performances as an exemplar of the strength of the nation, the comparison of national physical activity rates is only a very recent phenomenon. In a Sparc document called *Trends in Participation in Sport and Active Leisure 1997 - 2001*, there was no reference to comparing physical activity rates between countries (Sparc, 2004d). That is, the discourse of international physical activity rate comparison did not exist in official policy as recently as 2001.
It is important here to distinguish between the colloquial usage of ‘world’s most’ and the use of the term in a policy document. Firstly, in its colloquial sense, ‘being the world’s most active nation’ could be understood solely as a rousing, emotive goal with no pretense of statistical measurement. For instance, in the lead up to Sparc’s official launch event, CEO Nick Hill stated these goals were not necessarily being imposed by Sparc, but belonged to the nation; “New Zealanders want to win, we want to be healthy and we want to be known as the most active nation in the world” (Hill, 2002b). However, as a Crown agency, Sparc is heavily influenced by ideas such as rationalisation (Sam, 2003; Sam and Jackson, 2004). This is exemplified by references to “setting priorities” and “target[ing] funding and resources” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 10). As such, there is an expectation that achievements are quantified through statistics and rankings. In a press release Nick Hill once commented that “We’re asking others to be accountable, and so we need to set a high standard for ourselves too” (Hill, 2002b, p. 1). As such, ‘being the world’s most active nation’ transforms the non-specific rhetoric of the Hillary Commission into an ostensibly measurable objective. By making the goal a measurable one, Sparc’s policy echoes Foucault’s explanation of the essence of dividing practices. Populations appear as “the bearer of new variables … between the more or less utilizable, more or less amenable to profitable investment, those with greater or lesser prospects of survival, death and illness, and with more or less capacity to be usefully trained” (2002, p. 95-6). New Zealand citizens automatically become bearers of these new physical activity variables, by which they are measured and assessed.

**Conquering: Sparc’s Use of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire**

From this context of the classifying and dividing practices of national public policy, we now problematize Sparc’s discursive strategies used to instigate and cement a discursive dominance over nations from this original framing. Sparc’s original tool for measuring progress to become the world’s most active nation was the New Zealand Health Survey (Sparc, 2003c, p. 14). However, this would only serve as a temporary measurement until Sparc could “Establish the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) baseline” (Sparc, 2003c, p. 14). From 2003 onwards, Sparc documents make numerous references to the central measurement tool being the IPAQ,
with policy documents from this point on articulating the mission as New Zealand being “the most active nation as measured by the International Physical Activity Questionnaire” (Sparc, 2005, p. 13). It is important to note here that the IPAQ researchers had no previous formal affiliation with Sparc specifically.

The IPAQ researchers explained the purpose of the questionnaire was to “provide a set of well-developed instruments that can be used internationally to obtain comparable estimates of physical activity” (IPAQ, 2005a). According to the international research group undertaking the project, the rationale was based on the fact that “the public health burden of a sedentary lifestyle has been recognized globally, but until recently, the prevalence and impact of the problem has not been studied in a uniform and systematic fashion” (IPAQ, 2005b). The resounding discourse employed by the IPAQ researchers is thus couched in the realm of public health spending (an economic ‘burden’) and identifies the problem of ‘sedentary lifestyles.’ To be clear, it is apparent the IPAQ researchers do not purport the questionnaire to be applicable to every nation, and highlight this limitation in an explanation on ‘cultural adaptation’. They note that “in developing countries, occupational activities and transportation may involve more activity than in more developed countries” (IPAQ, 2005c). The implication is that since developing countries ‘may’ have higher rates of physical activity, results would not be comparable to populations with ‘sedentary lifestyles’. It is here that Sparc’s use of the term ‘world’s most’ becomes limited to the point of being immeasurable; since the IPAQ researchers themselves are assuming that physical activity rates may be higher in developing nations than developed nations, then Sparc’s use of the IPAQ to make its grand declaration of world dominance is inherently flawed.

Various other sources bear this out. World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics from the 2003 World Health Survey indicate that the physical activity prevalence in some sub-Saharan nations would surpass New Zealand’s physical activity prevalence. Among those aged 18 to 69 in Ethiopia for instance, those classified as ‘inactive’ made up only

---

27 Since historically, comparisons of physical activity rates between countries have not been measures, and no empirical measurement system has been available to compare physical activity rates, the construction of the IPAQ makes the discourse possible.

28 The countries originally involved in the IPAQ study included Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Czech Republic, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America.
12.7 percent, while those who were minimally active constituted only 11 percent (WHO, 2004a). These relatively low rates of inactivity, implying high rates of physical activity, were similar for Kenya; 9.8 and 12.1 percent respectively (WHO, 2004b) and Malawi; 11.4 and 18.1 percent respectively (WHO, 2004c). These WHO measurements employed the same scales as the IPAQ, thus suggesting that rates of physical activity are far higher in these nations than in many developed nations. Consequently, the notion of ‘international standards’ of physical activity is paradoxical in a policy setting. That is, for a Westernised, sedentary population, the physical activity ‘standard’ which might be considered a goal may indeed be physical activity rates of developing nations.

Sparc’s statistics are juxtaposed too, with nations that face major long term health threats such as Swaziland (52.3 percent and 9 percent respectively) and Namibia (39.8 percent and 20.4 percent). The specific disparities between developing and developed nations at the time Sparc launched its goals can be seen in a WHO description of health risks in developing nations around the world:

The need to view such risks in their local context is obvious when analysing perceptions of risk in [developing] countries, especially when risk factors are considered alongside life-threatening diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS. There are also other daily threats, such as poverty, food insecurity and lack of income. In addition, families may face many other important ‘external’ risks, such as political instability, violence, natural disasters and wars. (WHO, 2002, p. 50)29

Thus, the notion of measuring physical activity rates in various developing nations pales in comparison to other health concerns. Despite policy documents that purport to measure a range of socio-geographic nations, Sparc policy elides comparison with countries in which physical inactivity is not perceived as a major health risk due to an acutely disparate set of conditions. The World Health Organisation describe this disparity as “the global gap between the haves and the have-nots” (WHO, 2002, p. 7).

We argue here that policies related to measuring rates of physical activity are only currently in the discursive domain of developed countries. As such, inferring that a nation could hold the title of ‘world’s most active nation’ illustrates an instance of dominance by default over many developing nations which are excluded from measurement. Asante

---

29 The author appreciates that the WHO also communicate through particular discourses, which could also be the subject of a discourse analysis.
(2006) refers to Europeans maintaining both a “chauvinistic nationalism,” since they are “so different from the rest of the world that they define issues, ideas, civilisation and how one approaches reality” (p. 5) and a “ruthless culturalism; the promotion of the European-American political ideal as the most correct form of human society” which is defended by “numerous machinations of science, politics, statistics and literature” (p. 6). Asante also argues ruthless culturalists maintain their hegemonic imposition by creating symbolic, economic and cultural domination in most sectors of society. For the present study, considered mainly in terms of the ‘banality’ of the transmission of nationalism, the term ruthless may seem overly bombastic. However, it may be an apt description of a reading of the policy by those being discursively dominated. The writing of banal, nationalistic policy at once actively attempts to construct a sense of where New Zealand sits in the imagined world ranking of physical activity statistics, and constructs a view that this construction is both normal and valuable.

In Sparc’s 2006 Annual Report, by which time Sparc’s mission proclaimed that it aimed to be ‘the world’s most active nation’, a “Statement of Service Performance” (Sparc, 2006c) reported on the result of Sparc’s four year mission. The report espoused the outcome measure had been “partially achieved” (2006d, p. 7), and that “preliminary results from the International Physical Activity Questionnaire show New Zealand is among the top three active nations along with the Czech Republic and the United States” (p. 7). Sparc also offered statistics around physical activity promotion which seemingly detract from Sparc’s apparent (partial) success in their goal. As recently as Sparc’s Statement of Intent 2006-2009, Nick Hill stated that “at least half the adult population is insufficiently active to protect health” (Sparc, 2006c, p. 7) while three months later Sparc’s mission of being the most active nation is reported as being “partially achieved” (Sparc, 2006d, p. 7). The idea of a nation in which the majority of adults do not meet recommended levels of physical activity, yet is also “among the top three most active nations” (Sparc, 2006d, p. 7) highlights a discursive disparity which is not reconciled within Sparc’s policy.
Discussion

Foucault insisted that power never achieves what it sets out to accomplish. He believed there is not a single dominating discourse that authorises truth. Thus, despite Sparc’s attempts at constructing both the nation and the world in terms of a particular physical activity discourse, this understanding is not given free reign over citizens’ consciousness. This is because of the multitude of other discourses governing conceptions of the world, not only regarding ‘physical activity’, but also other understandings of a nation’s place in the globalised world, such as discourses concerning living standards, gross domestic product, safety (with regard to the discourse of terrorism) and traditional discourses of New Zealand as a ‘clean and green’ nation.

Regarding the dissemination of such a problematic discourse, Sparc’s policy is debilitating for particular groups (or entire nations) inasmuch as the usage of this phrase in various mainstream media, promotions and policy documents, without a limiting caveat, serves to insinuate that all nations know about, are interested in and are involved in such a measurement. While we propose that this dominance by default exists in New Zealand’s physical activity policy, it is not necessarily borne out of a conscious decision by policy writers. We consider it is useful here to consider Stone’s (2002) assertion that “people aspire to convince others that their interpretation best fulfils the spirit of the larger concept to which everyone is presumed to subscribe” (p. 37). With this in mind however, it is still possible to follow Chalip’s (1996) lead and analyse, challenge and resist debilitating policy assumptions, or, as Foucault suggested, encourage power relations to be formed with a minimum of domination.

Regarding measuring physical rates in countries without a history of doing so, namely developing nations, one might consider the ethical limitations of undertaking such research. In comparative instances such as these, policy makers might consider the basis for framing a country as the world’s most active nation when others face many far greater health risks than the onset of diseases linked with overweight and obesity.

The discursive production of ‘the world’ has implications beyond the issue of international physical activity comparisons. Any type of public policy that employs ostensibly measurable goals can be questioned, namely with regard to who is included, who is excluded, and what assumptions and values lie beneath particular policy positions.
Future research might investigate various articulations of ‘the world’ in public health policy, as well as critique the underlying assumptions of public health programmes that purport to measure various factors around the world. Also, the implementation, measurement and effects on citizens of these subjectivising policies would be worthy of further inquiry.

Further analysis of Sparc’s policy might question at which point such a policy would be resisted by groups that are excluded from participation (through measurement) while being discursively included by the colloquial dissemination of the goals. It is posited here that due to the ‘default’ nature of the policy (that is, those populations excluded from measurement are both non-participants and most likely unknowing of the policy), any resistance attempting to question the validity and legitimacy of Sparc’s measurement practices is currently limited to analyses such as this current study.

**Conclusion**

The potential for public policy to define reality is significant, as demonstrated in the case of discursively constructing ‘the world’. There is certainly scope for policy managers to consider further the implications, although banal, of the meanings which are created and perpetuated throughout their policy. Of course, Sparc policy managers do not have sole control over the discourses they use. The neo-liberal operating environment would certainly impact on the range of available articulations of the policy, particularly with regard with being able to measure something. The following chapter specifically addresses the compulsion to be able to partake in measurement, and investigates the discursive manoeuvrings that occur when ‘evidence-based’ practices are questioned.

**Postscript**

In an interview that took place with Sparc’s policy manager after the end of the four year planning process, the feasibility of continuing with such a policy was discussed. The policy manager focused not on comparing a singular image of a nation, but on dividing up ‘New Zealand’ into various nationalities, other than ‘New Zealanders’:

We have a whole wave of a population coming through that have a whole range of different expectations and different things that drive and motivate them. There’s also problems with some of our immigrant populations, such as Pacific
and Asian. There’s all these targets that you have to look at and think, well we can’t put our feet up yet, just because we’ve ticked that mission.

Sparc’s marketing and communications manager articulated a very similar message regarding the problematic nature of measuring physical activity rates around the world, and also promoted looking within the nation at sub-populations, rather than externally.

So you can say, hand on heart, I think it was secondish that we came, but what it’s saying is that while New Zealand is compared to those other 18 countries and clearly in the top two percent, [New Zealand is] still not adequately active enough under probably US surgeon general general lines, and the World Health [Organisation], but it is comparable to those other 17 countries that we are being measured against. So there is not a sense that we can rest on our laurels, and I think if you start analysing those numbers, that older men saved our bacon in terms of that result, and you’ve still got a whole raft that doesn’t fit into that demographic, females obviously, Maori, Pacific, younger males. [There are] declining levels of [physical activity] in children and burgeoning rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes so we are not going to sit back and waiting for that [to continue], which is why the government has announced its Mission On [physical activity] campaign.

The interest of the respondents to focus attention within the nation, rather than using the language and themes highlights the problematic, uncontrollable nature of the ‘most active nation’ goal. Sparc’s latest strategic planning documents reflect this, with an emphasis not only on not making the specifically measurable goals, but also focusing within the nation. In particular, Sparc’s new mission statement articulates their role as one not related explicitly with people. Instead, it is the environment that is their new target: “to foster an environment where more New Zealanders will be physically active in sport and recreation” (Sparc, 2007a, p. 5, italics added).
CHAPTER 6
PROBLEMS WITH POSITIVISM: TURNING ‘EVIDENCED-BASED’ RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

This chapter examines how policy makers come to ‘know’ about sport and recreation. An analysis of the production of such knowledge is important, since what we ‘know’ about sport and recreation informs not only policies which aim to solve certain ‘problems’, but contributes to where resources such as taxes and public rates are distributed, as well as where the attention of the populace is focused. While this is not to say that an organisation such as Sparc is the sole arbiter of ways of knowing about sport in New Zealand, the understandings Sparc use to inform how resources such as money and status are allocated to particular policy goals have significant effects for organisations and ideas that are excluded or marginalised from prominence.

Around much of the Western world, neo-liberal policies promote physical health that is derived from participation in physical activity, sport and physical recreation. State supported agencies such as Sport England, Sport Canada, and the Australian Sports Commission all promote various societal and individual benefits that are derived from government funding of sport. New Zealand is no different in this regard. With its central position in the minds of many New Zealanders, sport is a part of New Zealand culture that most people have had experience with, and an opinion about. Central government funding to implement national sport and recreation policy has increased in recent years for various reasons, including the impact of national health concerns linked with obesity and the commercial prominence of sporting events such as the America’s Cup and the Rugby World Cup. As such, sport and recreation are discursive arenas where ideas about their respective significance (from intrinsic, personal values to nationalistic and economic values) find a formalised and legitimised grounding through the production and dissemination of national public policy.

In part, this chapter develops from and builds on recent explorations of the rhetoric of the national sport policy process (Sam, 2003, Sam 2005; Chalip 1995). Also, against the background of research by Sam and Jackson (2004), Green (2004) and Green and Houlihan (2006) that investigate public policy rhetoric in New Zealand, England,
Australia and the United Kingdom, this chapter focuses on the epistemological fields that inform ideologies and ideas used in national sport and recreation policy.

In particular, Green and Houlihan (2006) assert that “along with this intensification of interest [in sport as a site to impose public policy], has come innovation in the forms of intervention in sport policy” (p. 65). By comparison, this current chapter extends Green and Houlihan’s findings inasmuch as it investigates how such intervention is constructed by exploring how policy makers and marketers inform policy and promotional campaigns. Newman (2001) notes such an investigation examines how “social activity is regulated and through which actors – [where] citizens, workers, institutions – are constituted as self-disciplining subjects” (Newman, 2001, p. 20).

Chapter Purpose

This chapter presents findings from an examination of the sources of knowledge that contribute to the discursive construction of New Zealand public policy. It considers the nexus between the taken-for-granted naturalness of sport and recreation in New Zealand society with the need by policy makers to prove that sport and recreation is worthy of significant government investment. As such, it examines how knowledge about both sport and recreation is actively produced and managed by public policy makers and marketers. Foucault’s conception of governmentality is used as a guiding theme to investigate where policy makers derive their knowledge from.

Various Sport and Recreation New Zealand policies, along with interviews with senior Sparc managers were analysed to understand conceptions of the sources of knowledge that inform New Zealand sport and recreation policy. The paper examines the practices employed by policy makers to manage discourses drawn from a positivist episteme, with those understandings that detract from it. It is argued here that despite espousing the notion of ‘evidence-based’ practices, policy makers employ a number of discursive tactics to eschew drawing on such knowledge to legitimise such policy. It argues that despite the assumption of coherent, ‘rational’ policies, Sparc representatives demonstrate a range of epistemological fields from which knowledge about sport and recreation is gathered and disseminated.
Theoretical Approach: Governmentality

Foucault used the term governmentality to describe the regulation of individuals, or this ‘conduct of conduct’. Governmentality involves:

the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security … [and including] a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses … [and] a whole complex of knowledges (Foucault, 1994, p. 219-220).

Foucault believed that the sixteenth century contained multiple and intense issues surrounding the ideas of how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, and how to become the best possible governor (Foucault, 1994). This chapter focuses on one portion of the art of government, namely the articulation of apparent sources of knowledge which inform national sport and recreation policy. Two sources of knowledge are investigated. Specifically, positivist tendencies are analysed in relation to the justification of policy choices and the inherent problems with their implementation. Foucault conceived that any population generally agrees with the sources of knowledge used by, in this case, policy makers. A population will be “aware vis-a-vis the government of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it” (Foucault, 1979, p. 18). As such this study aims to juxtapose some of the conflicting epistemological fields that are used to inform the public about sport and recreation policy. Rose and Miller (1992) assert that various forms of power are used by governments, but not to impose constraints on a population. Instead, such governing power involves ensuring citizens believe in “a kind of regulated freedom” (p. 174).

The State and Governmentality

New Zealand sport and recreation policy is an example of neo-liberalism in action, and exemplifies a post-welfare state citizenship regime. By investigating neo-liberal agendas from the perspective of governmentality, one can explicate the coherence, contradictions and inconsistencies which might otherwise go unquestioned. Rose explains this process further:
Governmentality consists of a multiplicity of interlocking (although not necessarily synergistic) apparatuses for the programming of various dimensions of life which form a ‘force field’ through which we are urged, incited, encouraged, exhorted and motivated to act (Rose, 1990, p. xxii).

Through a viewpoint of governmentality, one can begin to question the impact of such understandings on the lives of citizens, because even though neo-liberalism promotes less government, it does not necessarily promote less governance. While the term ‘governmentality’ might be easily conflated with ‘the government’, Foucault argues the two are not the same, because of the diffuse sources of power in society. Thus, since governmentality is the act of structuring the range of possible actions of citizens, it provides a lens with which to analyse the production (and resistance) of meanings within public policy. In turn, this will enable us to understand how things are said, who can say them, and from what points of view, in order to obtain various results. These various sources of knowledge are applied in different settings; that is, they can transcend discourses. They allow an organisation such as Sparc to appropriate various discourses to assist the mobilization of various agendas.

It would be limiting to suggest that dominant understandings about the importance of sport only emanate from and are controlled by central government. Foucault argues that relations of power extend beyond the limits of the state for two reasons; “first of all because the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations” (1980e). Further, while Sparc, as legitimised by virtue of New Zealand’s Sport and Recreation Act 2002, has a certain amount of legitimate power, this power is not enacted unproblematically. Due to the forces of neo-liberalism, Sparc must defend their ability to wield this power by articulating and reinforcing a particular type of knowledge about sport in order to legitimise the distribution of millions of dollars in funds to sport and recreation organisations and programmes each year. Lupton (1995) explains that the state is important in relations of power, but “so too are the myriad of institutions, sites, social groups and interconnections at the local level, whose concerns and activities may support, but often conflict with, the imperatives of the state” (1995, p. 9). It is the epistemological
fields that Sparc representatives use to impact various institutions, sites and social groups that are of interest for this study.

While Sparc is a Crown agency, and might ostensibly represent ‘the state’, such a conception limits the significance of power exerted by other institutions (such as sponsors and international governing bodies) and other governing ‘lifestyle’ discourses (or other ways of constructing one’s body aside from a standard healthy way). In any case, a Foucauldian approach does not assume that “the sovereignty of the state … is given at the outset” (1978, p. 92). While Sparc is clearly instituted by the state, we use Foucault’s conception of power as a process which, “through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses [struggles]; as the support which force relations find in one another; as the strategies in which they take effect … in the various social hegemonies” (Foucault, 1978, p. 92-93). Furthermore, throughout this study there is no attempt to find the one source of power. Foucault argues that:

power is not sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable (p. 93).

Regarding the place(s) of power, Foucault reiterates that power is not ‘solely’ organised and governed by the state; “One impoverishes the question of power if one poses it simply in terms of legislation and constitution, in terms solely of the state and the state apparatus. Power is quite different from and more complicated, dense and pervasive than a set of laws or a state apparatus” (1980, p. 158). With that in mind however, the state is still an important component of the study. Following Foucault, this paper posits that power relations have been progressively “elaborated, rationalised, and centralised in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions” (Foucault, 1994, p. 345).

One way of ‘governing’ is through the use of population statistics, which Foucault argues alters previous, traditional family models of conceiving of societies. When considered as a ‘population’, the family is eliminated in favour of the ‘economy’:

Whereas statistics had previously worked within the administrative frame and thus in terms of the functioning of sovereignty, it now gradually reveals that population has its own regularities, its own rate of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, etc; statistics show also that the domain of population involves
phenomena that are irreducible to those of the family, such as epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, ascending spirals of labour and wealth; lastly it shows that, through its shifts, customs, activities, etc. (1994l, p. 215, 216)

Foucault argues that the act of government make possible a study of populations; “it is the tactics of government that make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on” (1994l, p. 221). Hence a significant amount of resources can be (and is) directed to measuring, scrutinising and encouraging individuals to behave in particular ways, as members of a particular population.

Competing ideas about how different sources of knowledge impact on policy have been researched in various spheres. In a study of university policy discourses, Chan (2005) examined how complex, competing forces affect individuals engaged in the policy process. Likewise, Naughton (2005) argued that despite a pretence to evidence-based policies informing the British criminal justice system, which evidence is chosen and which is rejected is contingent upon governing ideologies. Naughton conceives of evidence-based policies as “a key technique of governmentality” (p. 55). As such, if citizens:

produce ‘evidence’ that serves to support the government’s reform agendas we will ourselves have turned the ideological corner and be allowed to participate in the policy making processes. If we do not, we will continue to be labelled as anti-government ideologues and remain on the margins of political decision-making! (Naughton, p. 66)

Chan and Garrick (2003) examine the discourse of knowledge management in organisations, or ‘KM’, with its assumptions that tacit knowledge can be converted into explicit knowledge, and that explicit knowledge can be reproduced and shared. They problematise the taken-for-granted understandings of how evidence is gathered, employed and deployed through organisational or institutional practices. In a similar vein, this study focuses on the dominant episteme of positivism with its assumptions of determinism that informs sport and recreation policy.
Sources of Knowledge in Public Policy

With neo-liberal ideology promoting transparency through the public policy process, there is an expectation of state-supported institutions to explain where such knowledge emanates from. While discourses are not produced by individual organisations, these organisations play a significant role in the dissemination of social practices (such as activity programmes and funding elite athletes) through dominant epistemologies (such as a positivist framework). To understand more about the various epistemologies that arise within an ostensibly cogent, linear policy framework, we investigate here the epistemologies of Sparc representatives, since claims of knowledge are instrumental in reinforcing and maintaining particular discourses. Following Foucault’s idea that power and knowledge are symbiotic and reciprocating, we focus on the state provider of sport funds, Sparc, to illustrate how knowledge is utilised for the purposes of distributing money to, and ideas about, sport and recreation. Thus, this chapter aims to explicate the ability of Sparc to ‘govern’ over the sport and recreation sector.

Firstly, this chapter argues Sparc policy writers go to great lengths to ‘prove’ the worth of their policies through positivist research practices. Secondly, the chapter juxtaposes this knowledge with the understandings embodied by Sparc managers which influence both the articulation and dissemination of such knowledge through public policy. Thirdly, and perhaps the most problematic for coherent sport policy, is an analysis of knowledge which cannot be controlled by Sparc representatives. This includes occasions whereby dominant understandings are challenged and cannot be defended due to the limitations of particular ways of understanding sport and recreation. Such instances provide critics of Sparc’s policies with opportunities to overcome potentially debilitating understandings.

While various sources of knowledge exist, we dwell here on a particularly powerful source; positivism, in order to understand how various understandings are treated and used when forming national sport policy. Generally, this chapter parallels Foucault’s search for “the relation between power and knowledge, the articulation of each on the other … the constant articulation … there is of power on knowledge and of
knowledge on power” (1980b, p. 51). If indeed Sparc is a powerful institution in defining the importance of sport and recreation for the nation, then one will expect this exercise of power to create and cause the emergence of “new objects of knowledge and new bodies of information to accumulate” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 51). It is assumed that through both examining policy documents and interviewing Sparc representatives, these sources of knowledge are borne out.

**Research Approach**

Data was gathered using a multi-method approach. Policy analysis of major Sparc policy documents was undertaken to find the major sources of knowledge. Since policy by its very nature defines social phenomenon and social problems in a specific way, the assumptions of such definitions were problematised, particularly surrounding the source of such knowledge.

Data was also gathered from two semi-structured interviews with senior Sparc managers. One was a senior policy manager, and the other a senior marketing and communications manager. One had been employed by Sparc for around eighteen months and the other, a year. These respondents were assured anonymity. Each participant received an information sheet regarding the nature of the investigation prior to the interview’s commencement (see Appendix 3). Also known as semi-structured or guided interviews, the interviews consisted of a set of predetermined questions around which the interviews were focused (see Appendix 4). By interviewing these individuals, I sought to understand how each person sourced their knowledge and considered the relations of power in the policy process. The interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes and were recorded and transcribed. In instances where clarity was needed, the transcripts were emailed back to the respondents with follow up questions included.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for certain questions to be asked as well as the opportunity to delve further into areas where rich information might be found. It is important to note here that we consider those involved with making policy decisions about the distribution of funds and resources are not solely vehicles for the dissemination of policy, but also speak of their own conception of what is knowable or unknown concerning sport and recreation policy.
Analysis

Policy Informed by Evidence

Foucault acknowledged that scientific discourse governs many realms of society. His research questioned “what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures” (1980c, p. 112). Today, the desire to prove true the existence or efficiency of a policy outcome by employing statistics underpins much thinking about public policy in general and sport policy in particular. Positivism pervades many facets of national sport and recreation policy, and is often articulated as ‘evidence-based policy’ or EDP (Milewa & Barry, 2005; Naughton, 2005). One might assume that all Sparc policy is couched in a positivist episteme, since a wide breadth and depth of traditionally scientific measurements infiltrates virtually every policy document distributed by the organisation. For instance, progress towards ‘being the most active nation’ utilised statistics on the number of New Zealanders sufficiently active, the number of referrals to a Green Prescription exercise programme, and how many ‘Activator’ activity cards were distributed during a promotional campaign (Sparc, 2006a).

The logic of ‘return on investment’ commonly informs policy makers about which sports, recreation activities or programmes are worth supporting and which are not. It is apparent that if ‘facts’ could be gathered about a particular social problem, sound policies will result. For instance, Sparc’s 2006 -2009 Statement of Intent (2006a) is replete with references to how statistical data can be gathered and utilised. This idea of attaining factual information pervades the document:

- This information is invaluable to SPARC in developing effective and targeted strategies to get New Zealanders to overcome their obstacles to participating in physical activity (p. 8)
- SPARC strives to ensure our policies and programmes are informed by sound evidence (p. 17)
- All proposals must be informed by evidence-based research and sound policy backing (p. 18)
- Development of a co-ordinated research strategy will help build a robust evidence base which is essential to build knowledge and to inform decision making in sport and recreation (p. 21)
- A new stakeholder management system will provide us with a single view of all stakeholder information (p. 25)
Similarly, contemporary understandings of fitness are informed by empirical measurement, such as the minimum number of minutes of physical activity required to be sufficiently active, the amount of body fat that is acceptable or unacceptable for each citizen, and how many physical skills school children can competently complete. This mirrors sport and exercise discourse which has increasingly utilised the discourse of biological science over previous decades, epitomised by sports science programmes at various universities contributing to ensuring that what is ‘known’ about athletic performance is tested and verified.

While nationalism is considered a ‘feel-good factor’ by Sparc, this also has statistical measurements used to prove its existence and worth; “Research shows 95% of New Zealanders get more satisfaction from world-class performances by New Zealand sports teams or individuals than from similar achievements by other Kiwi achievers” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 8), and “New Zealanders’ interest in sport is high with 94% interested and/or involved in sport (Sparc, 2003c, p. 3). That this source of knowledge pervades Sparc policy is understandable given social conditions such as Sparc’s reliance on public money (and thus the necessity of due diligence) and a corporatist approach to ‘investment’ (thus wanting to minimise ‘risks to investment’). What follows is an analysis of how such positivist knowledge is used to at once construct and ‘know’ about sport and recreation policy.

Understanding Through Market Research

It is clear a significant marketing effort (and significant funding) goes towards persuading New Zealanders about particular understandings of sport and recreation. With neo-liberalism firmly entrenched in the New Zealand socio-political realm, government agencies increasingly utilise the logic of ‘the market’ to influence the citizenry about particular ideas. Thus, ‘evidence-based’ market research informs much Sparc policy. Sparc’s marketing manager explained that in order to ‘know’ the target market, Sparc relied on empirical commercial market research:

We poll every month. We use something called ‘continuous monitor’ which measures the effectiveness of our advertising, measures the effectiveness of awareness levels around the brand, it measures whether or not there’s an
appreciation between Push Play and Sparc and the Academy of Sport. The main thing it tells us is whether our ads are working. We can’t spend 3.5 million on a Push Play marketing campaign and not have any idea if it’s being effective. We would be slammed very quickly.

Speaking about how marketing campaigns are constructed, he explained there was a standard process for gathering data and understanding the market:

We ran a campaign two years ago called ‘The Activator’ … That campaign was very much a research-driven campaign. I’m not a big fan of concept testing for advertising, but in ‘social marketing’ I’m a big fan of it because I’m not the target market. I’m extremely active and I don’t come from the same background as the people we are targeting in the ads.

Such knowledge, it was explained, could not be gathered from the manager’s own perceptions, since he was ‘not the target market’. The reliance on attaining measurable, ‘researched’ and ‘tested’ information to infer Sparc’s progress towards their goal was also utilised to measure Sparc’s image in the eyes of its stakeholders and its relationship with the Minister for Sport:

We have levels of satisfaction which we measure in terms of our relationship with the Minister [of Sport]. We have a stakeholder survey – that’s where that figure comes from in terms of how our partners or stakeholders view us … We have a brand essence evaluation which goes out every six months … We do a lot of measurement around media, [newspaper] clippings, and positive, neutral and negative stories. And we have been averaging between 80 and 99% positive or neutral stories for 2 years, which is unheard of for a funder…

Thus, empirical evidence both contributes to the formation of Sparc policy and is deployed throughout it. However, there are numerous occasions when a reliance on empirical research does not reconcile with other ways of knowing. As such, while Sparc relies on an assumption that evidence reflects a measurable reality, the organisation also actively ‘manages’ and simultaneously produces the understandings of sport and recreation.

30 Interestingly, the journalist who had criticised Sparc publicly recounted this story of Sparc’s measurement systems: “I went into a coffee bar one day and the chairman of the board of Sparc had 500 clippings in front of him. Obviously he had been provided with the week’s clippings. He was sorting them out into positive and negative, like goodies and baddies, and he looked at me like I was the devil, [as if to say] ‘Look at all these clippings I’ve got from you.’”
Problems with Positivism

It is apparent that Sparc relies on being ‘informed’ and that any information gathered is sound. However, this knowledge is always under threat, not only from critics but from the Sparc representatives themselves. In the following extract from a radio interview following the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the interviewer asked Nick Hill (CEO, Sparc) about proof of economic benefit for a nation:

Interviewer: Is there a correlation between doing well internationally and the economic health of the country? Are there any studies to back that up?
Hill: There’s studies to show, um, I think the Economist [magazine] did something - I remember reading around the Athens Games that showed the correlation between the overall medal haul, the size a country and its overall GDP, and showed a positive correlation with those two factors. So is sporting success going to improve [the economy]? Intuitively I think there is value in that but it would be hard to prove it.

Deference to intuition does not reflect Sparc’s purported reliance on evidence-based research. This lack of empirical information was common throughout interviews with the general managers of Sparc. It appeared that often, attaining sound information was not possible. In particular, statistically derived knowledge became problematic when one attempts to infer causality (something Sparc policy is replete with). Regarding the measurement techniques which purported to demonstrate how active New Zealand is (as discussed in Chapter 5), it was apparent to the policy manager that positivist, statistical measurements could not ‘prove’ the effectiveness of a particular policy. As such, there exists a paradox; at once a reliance on positivism to infer causality, and an acknowledgement that such measurement is inherently limited. The policy manager explained:

To say if [a plan is] being effective or not, we monitor that. We have a ‘continuous monitor’ survey done, every week there is something like 1600 phone calls made, that checks it on all sorts of things: ‘Have you seen the ads? Do you recognise the logo? Do you know what it means? Has it changed your behaviour? What level of exercise are you doing?’ But while we can show trends and improvement, and we can show that these trends are happening post the launch of Push Play, who is to say that all of that change is attributable to Push Play?

By asking “who is to say that all of that change is attributable to Push Play?” the policy manager acknowledged that Sparc is not omniscient. Further, the policy manager
explained that analysis of such statistics is conducted from a particularly limited perspective due to being in a ‘shell’:

So we make the strategic setting decisions every Monday. So your team, they’re the implementers, they’re the doers, so they might know of research that needs to inform this thinking, because they are the experts out there involved with the sector. We aren’t. We sit here in kind of a shell, getting information from them to do analysis and strategic thinking. They propose, and they feedback to the sectors. Neither of us can do our jobs alone, but we bring the critical thinking to it and the challenge.

The policy manager’s candidness highlighted the problematic notion of at once trying to understand a particular group, and indeed espouse ‘evidence-based’ research, while acknowledging that such measurement is inherently flawed. The policy manager explained that change in trends might be attributable to “Hamish Carter, [who] has just won the Olympics” inspiring children to become involved in triathlons, or “all those specific have-a-go triathlons that have had a huge impact on New Zealanders”. The policy manager further stated “whether it is our [impact] or their [impact], it is hard to make the connection, so it’s a challenge.”

Extrapolating the problematic nature of these statistical measurements further, recent advertisements produced by Sparc have shown Hamish Carter partake in vacuuming a home, and being encouraged by cyclist Sarah Ulmer that such activity counts towards being physically active. Thus, one might consider if Sparc can include vacuuming and other ‘incidental’ physical activity undertaken by citizens, one might further question the legitimacy of statistics that are used to measure the goal of being the ‘most active nation.’ At its extreme, one might consider the physical activity levels of those living in third world poverty where simply getting up in the morning or walking several kilometres to obtain fresh water might greatly exceed comparative levels of activity in New Zealand and other ‘developed’ nations (see Piggin, Jackson and Lewis, 2007).

During a radio interview, Nick Hill both utilised and questioned positivist understandings of sport and recreation. Hill was asked whether the strategies were based on measuring sports participation in New Zealand:

How you measure participation is very hard, and I would place a great deal of scepticism on the numbers because of all the incentives that are based around
filling in participation numbers for funding purposes. The other issue of participation is what do you count? [Officially] touch rugby has something like 300,000 [participants] but with other figures its down around 100,000. It depends on whether a sport is affiliated or not, and whether you count pay-for-play. It gets very hard to agree on numbers, at the end of the day we have to exercise judgement. That’s all we’re doing here. (Hill, 2002a)

By referring to the use of ‘judgement, Hill negates the validity of participation statistics because of potentially unscrupulous sport administrators who may have artificially increased the participant count to secure more funding for their sport. The irony that the priority sport strategy was in a large part based around sports “having high participation from New Zealanders” (Sparc, 2002a, p. 11), and therefore would require some type of measurement, escaped the speaker on this occasion. That Hill is in a position where he is leading an organisation that seeks to give “sound policy advice for Government” (p. 12) in an environment where ‘it gets very hard to agree on numbers’ is an important disjuncture. Acknowledging that various stakeholders measure phenomenon (which affect the level of funding they receive) in different ways serves to problematise the espoused ‘hard-nosed’ attitude to sports funding.

Managing Problems: Ignoring the Data

While the reliance on ‘evidence-based’ and ‘sound’ policies is a popular rhetorical tool for persuading an audience of an organisation’s ‘forthrightness’, at times such knowledge is discarded in favour of values held by the policy makers themselves. Perhaps one of the most illuminating comments made by the marketing manager was in relation to what values should be espoused by an organisation such as Sparc. The marketing manager unwittingly revealed how knowledge about sport (in the form of marketing) can be produced, contrary to claims of ‘evidence-based’ policy spoken about to earlier:

We polled Kiwis on their views of winning a few months ago, trying to get our heads around the reaction coming out of the Commonwealth Games. They want us to invest in everything, and they want results, but it’s also alright if Kiwis just get over there and do their best. So we’re fucked essentially, do you know what I mean? So how do you win all that? So we just can’t buy into that, we would just come across as complete woofters if we said we agree. We don’t. That kind of message just stuffs your head.
That this empirical evidence was eschewed when it did not meet with the marketing team’s cognition is perhaps the most intriguing example of knowledge ‘management by Sparc’. Such a practice has significant implications when regarding the ‘fair’ distribution of government funding to sports and recreation organisations.

The marketing manager’s catchphrase of ‘saying one thing and saying it well’ could not be reconciled with survey results that show different citizens believe different conceptions of success exist. Problematically for any diverse audience, marketing techniques such as the construction of brand essence statements and being told an organisation ‘will not compromise’ narrows the range of discursive possibilities in an arena which Sparc themselves attest has numerous meanings for the people involved. Further, although Sparc discuss some of these various meanings at length in press releases, this multitude of meanings is often narrowed to ‘New Zealanders love to win.’ The purported reliance on being informed by statistical proof is problematic both in terms of such understanding that is acknowledged to be incomplete, and on other occasions, purposefully ignored.

Deference to Sporting Knowledge

There is no formal accreditation procedure, qualification or registration in order to become a sport and recreation ‘expert’. However, holding knowledge ‘about’ sport is commonly considered an important aspect of policy making. Such knowledge is usually derived from having excelled at a particular sport, represented the nation or having coached at a national level.31 That ‘sports people’ can ‘know’ about sport at a deeper level than external consultants is a common belief and area of concern for people affected by policy decisions. This was epitomised by a response from Nick Hill to a question from Lindsay (a caller) during a 2003 radio interview:

Lindsay: One of the points about the implementation of the [Taskforce] report is the people that are doing it … I’d like to ask Nick about the new people he’s brought into the Sparc management. What skills do they bring to the new practice and what can they bring to make our sport better?

31 Shaw and Hoeber (2003) note that other powerful sources of knowledge are drawn upon by people in powerful positions in the sports sector. In particular, merely being a man is “somehow understood to be more ‘natural’ and therefore accepted over women’s access to such positions” (p. 348).
Nick Hill: We’ve brought in a lot of people with a strong sporting background and sports administrations background. Someone who is quite well known that works for us is Don Tricker [national softball coach]. We’ve brought in John Limner from U.K Sport who’s helping in the high performance side. Moving across into the sport development area we have Stephanie Green who used to work for the Hillary Commission who’s been working in Australia on volunteer legislation, and with Netball Australia. We have a woman Annemarie Desmond who is a Kiwi who has also worked in Australia for a number of years … Dallas Seymour [a former elite rugby player] comes into work to advise us on Maori issues … A policy person also from the Ministry of Health, Debbie Mateo the [elite] netballer, who has got a policy degree. We have Mike McHugh who worked for the Australian Institute of Sport who is advising us on coaching. You’ll see that’s a diverse group of people with a lot of skills that are extremely relevant (italics added).

Thus, the embodiment of ‘sporting’ knowledge is commonly held as vital to a policy maker’s legitimacy in the sector. In particular, having elite sporting experience is considered especially worthwhile, epitomised by the Ministerial Taskforce into sport, fitness and leisure in 2001, that included four elite sportspeople out of the seven in total. It included a former All Black captain, a former world champion squash player, a former Black Ferns rugby captain, and a former New Zealand cricket captain (Graham et al. 2001). This emphasis on a sporting background continued through the formation of Sport and Recreation New Zealand. A cursory perusal of Sparc’s first strategic plan, ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’ revealed examples of how Sparc’s staff were indeed ‘sportspeople’:

I have been involved in sport as long as I can remember … I have been fortunate to have played sport to a reasonably high level - Peter Goldsmith, General manager, Sport Development. (Sparc, 2002a, p. 14)

I’ve spent most of my sporting life in ‘wet sports’, and started competitive swimming at an early age. A highlight for me was competing at the 1984 Olympics, and winning a bronze for New Zealand at the 1986 Commonwealth Games - Katie Sadlier, General manager, New Zealand Academy of Sport. (Sparc, 2002a, p. 15)

I think my experience of physical recreation is fairly typical of many New Zealanders. I was very keen on sport and very active, until I had children - Mark France, General manager, Physical Recreation. (Sparc, 2002a, p. 16)

While one might suggest such espousal of sport and recreation experience as merely a standard profile of an employee on an organisation’s website, such information has added import when considered in relation to the legitimacy of the organisation. It is clear
that there is a specific focus on these individual’s intimate knowledge within the sector, with the aim of adding to the legitimacy of the institution. However, paradoxically, a lack of sport-specific knowledge was considered important at the Board levels, according to Sparc’s Chair, John Wells:

When directors have a lot of industry expertise you run the risk that they start to second guess management. If you have people who are there because [of their sport-specific knowledge] they will exercise that and that takes them into the detail of what management’s dealing with. If you talk with a professional everyone is going to have their own view on what the right approach is. I think it’s better to have a board that will ask intelligent outsider questions (Wells, 2005).  

It was clear that there was a conceptual contest over the ability to ‘know’ within the sector. On occasion, this sporting knowledge was conceptualised in an even more discursively stronger way by various Sparc representatives, to the extent that one could ‘know’ what is ‘natural’ for a particular nation-state. By conceiving of a particular sport as ‘natural’ lends enormous power to it, particularly granting the sport a legitimate status in the future. Nick Hill alluded to this type of natural embodiment of knowledge. Hill’s rationale for arguing why rugby union will ‘always’ have a ‘priority’ status was articulated in the following way; “Rugby has to be there. It’s at the heart of who we are” (Hill, 2006b). By Hill at once defining what reality is on the assumption that it is natural is perhaps the most powerful form of knowledge; if it is ‘natural’ it need not be, nor should it be, questioned.

**Uncontrollable Understandings**

There have been various occasions throughout the public debate surrounding Sparc policy when even the policy writers and representatives of Sparc cannot reconcile the disjunctures and contradictions inherent within the policy. Nick Hill, Sparc’s pre-eminent spokesperson from 2002 to 2006 did not unquestionably support the ideas promoted by Sparc. When ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’, Sparc’s first policy document, was released, Hill did acknowledge problems with the process. However, he argued these were mainly procedural problems, with the implication that a particular policy could have been written more cogently. Hill noted that Sparc “could have communicated better, and

32 Conversely, an absence of sport-specific knowledge is often cause for criticism (see Chapter 8).
consulted more on how we [introduced the policy]” (2003b). One radio interview discussion demonstrates this:

Deaker: I feel there is insufficient interest or attention being taken to the role played by secondary schools in particular, but all schools in our sport … I’m going to suggest to you that school sport is not relevant to what you’re trying to do because you haven’t given it much space.

Hill: Murray look … I think you both have exposed an aspect of the report and the way we presented it that definitely needs strengthening because it hides a lot of what we’re actually wanting to do and planning to do, let me say … in the future presentations we do we’ll be giving education much more space.33

At other times, it was clear that Sparc representatives were ill-equipped to deal with the understandings that could not be reconciled with the people they were communicating with. At some of these early meetings it was apparent the understandings held by various Sparc spokespeople did not parallel those held by various stakeholders involved. At a public meeting in Auckland concerning the priority sports strategy, a Sparc representative was asked how Sparc would treat various sports differently. Many in the audience were stunned when the Sparc representative responded by using an example that if a priority sport and a non-priority sport phoned the Sparc office at the same time, the priority sport phone call would be answered first (Ferkins, personal communication, 2006).

That the discourse cannot always be controlled was also demonstrated through the marketing manager of Sparc defending the use of medal targets in various competitions. The marketing manager at once defended the use of ‘binary’ understandings of the success of a policy while at the same time criticising the media for explaining success or failure in such a way. For example, the marketing manager took time to explain that elite sport must be understood in a ‘binary’ fashion:

You’ll see a medal tally or target come out again before Beijing. The Board is not resiling from that. There’s nowhere to run and hide in high performance sport. It’s based on winning … The brand essence that underpins the Academy of Sport is “Live to Win”. Absolutely single minded. That is the only benchmark of success for the funder.

33 Chalip noted a similar omission that occurred in 1985, during a sport development inquiry; “Several organized interest groups obtained a direct voice in the final report … Full chapters were devoted to industry, coaches, women, the disabled, and ethnic sport. Interestingly, one key stakeholder group was not provided for: athletes!” (1996, p. 317).
However, while such an understanding was used by the policy makers, the marketing manager also explained that exactly the same understandings were troublesome when used by the media:

Apollo [Olympic Games] could have been a disaster if we hadn’t picked up three medals in the last three days. I was getting calls from very senior people from here, very concerned with the way the medal count was rolling out, and typically New Zealand tends to come home in both the Olympic and Commonwealth Games so typically there’s a massive media build in the lead up to the games. TV is guilty of it as much as anybody else because they have to secure ratings, then there’s a period of competition and we’ll win the odd medal, then they’ll be a lull. And that’s when the media go to town on Sparc and anyone else that might be involved in funding sport, the government generally. They say ‘this is looking like the worst result ever’, and then the great big binary options come in, ‘good – bad’, ‘hero – baddie’, ‘winner – loser’, all that shit that the media love because it’s very easy for the media to get their heads around. It’s not particularly considered but it makes for an easy headline.

The irony that Sparc at once promotes an ‘absolutely single minded … winning’ culture while also lambasting ‘the media’ for their ‘simplistic’ and ‘not particularly considered’ descriptions of results (‘great big binary options’ / ‘winner - loser’). highlights the problematic desire to both control the understandings of sports performances and the frustrations of not being able to. That such duplicity of understanding exists contributes to the reason for the problematic dissemination of ‘common vision’ policy.

In the following quotation, the marketing manager applies this logic to a sense of national identity, attempting to shape the expectations of the New Zealand citizenry regarding how much satisfaction or ‘return’ should be expected from an investment.

It’s about managing expectations about how long it takes an athlete to become a world champion … In the case of the lead up to Athens ironically it was to manage expectations around what our medal count could be, because we did some polling before Athens which said that New Zealanders have unrealistic expectations that ‘we were going to clean up’, so depending on what our polling tells us going into a pinnacle event, and our view on the lie of the land from an elite sport perspective will determine the key messages within the campaign.

In the case of the Athens Olympic Games, the marketing campaign was influenced by an idea that ‘we were going to [win a lot] and therefore the Sparc marketing campaign countered this optimism by encouraging the public to not expect gold medals (presumably because of Sparc’s low expectations). As such, the marketing manager
attempted to manage this conflicting ideas that New Zealand was simultaneously a nation of winners, and also that this could not be reflected in a Olympic Games medal tally, Sparc’s measure of success. Such a contradiction of policy rhetoric regarding a single-minded focus on winning is another instance of an incoherent discourse.

It is clear that contradictions exist even within the explanation of policy understandings, despite attempts to clearly explain the logic of marketing. If indeed the New Zealand public are fickle and lack understanding of the dynamics of elite sport in New Zealand, this does not bode well for writing coherent policy. It is clear Sparc actively attempts to narrow the conception of what constitutes success (in elite athletics at least). Regarding this particular sector, Sparc operates within a larger discourse also, that of a global, competitive milieu, reiterated on numerous occasions by both Sparc high performance policy and the organisation’s spokespeople. Foucault noted that within power relations there will always be ambiguity, components of the discourse that lack coherence.

Discussion

Foucault (1984a) explained that individual discourses, despite appearing unified and linear, lack ‘internal coherence’; “There can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy” (p. 102). However, Foucault also noted that despite “irregularity in the use of words, several incompatible propositions, a set of meanings that do not adjust to one another, concepts that cannot be systemised together” (1972,p. 166), people regard it as a “duty to find, at a deeper level, a principle of cohesion that organises the discourse and restores it to a hidden unity … to overcome these contradictions, and to find the point at which they will be able to be mastered” (1972, p. 166). Therefore, for Sparc, there is a desire for every activity that it partakes in to subscribe coherently to purportedly underlying truths, which is not always possible. Thus, the compromises, contradictions and inconsistencies that surround national sport policy cannot always be successfully managed.

In a 2004 speech Nick Hill jokingly encouraged his audience to “Please note, I had a full head of hair before starting this process and I’m considering offering a counselling service for fellow CEOs in the sector who’re charged with turning funding
regimes on their heads.” Hill and Sparc in general certainly faced much criticism in their first few years, and the rhetoric regarding being ‘charged’ with a task does not imply much choice in the matter. However, it was apparent Hill juxtaposed this by indicating the practice of a self-ethics;

Because for me, this is what it’s all about. This is why I get up in the morning and choose to work in one of the highest profile sectors in New Zealand; a sector which everyone has an opinion on – namely, sport; the people who play it, the people who run it, and the people who watch it.

To what extent did the senior Sparc managers critically problematise the discourse within which they were situated? It seems they did reflect on their position. Whether this was necessarily critical reflection is another matter. For instance, the marketing manager removed himself from some of the marketing because he was not in the target market. From a Foucauldian perspective, this seemingly critical analysis of the situation may in fact reinforce the governing discourse of science; the idea that the manager let the discourse conduct his operations within it. Similarly, he explained that “When I started here a year and a half ago, the brief was fairly clear …” This seems to indicate the individuals become part of a discourse, submitting themselves to it. This sentiment was reiterated by the policy manager, who explained that she passed on the discourse to her staff when she arrived at Sparc;

There was a bit of terminology being used here that was contradictory a lot so I was trying to just help at the very nuts and bolts level … [staff] tended to confuse strategy and framework and pathways and so on. So the nature of policy work as I try and explain it is that there are two types. So what I tried to do here was distinguish it for them.

The extent to which employees submit to an overarching ‘official’ discourse is certainly governed by other relations of power, regarding job security, status and remuneration. This is not to say that technologies of the self do not exist within the production of national sport and recreation policy, though it is considered here that due to the nature of the positions (senior management), and considering the nature of the interview, the official ‘party line’ would be followed. Further, the ability to identify such practices was limited considering the relatively short time and nature of the relationship that had developed. As an ‘academic’ questioning their roles and the policies they helped produce,
it is understandable that one might remain coy about their own practices of freedom within their roles.

Perhaps the most problematic finding from the analysis of understandings of Sparc was the espousal of a particular type of knowledge (positivist, quantitative knowledge) that was on occasions adhered to through the development of policy while on another, eschewed in favour of a globally competitive understanding of what many citizens are concerned with regarding elite sport. The idea that Sparc is ‘unashamedly about winning’ appears to be followed throughout marketing campaigns despite many people not desiring such an ‘uncompromising’ vision of success from New Zealand athletes. By Sparc representatives both attempting to ‘know’ about the market, then dismissing the market’s understandings as inappropriate is problematic for an organisation that relies on, and purports to represent, New Zealand’s interests. Such discursive domination does not bode well for ‘having a strategy that everyone agrees to’, nor one that is fair for all concerned.

Numerous other considerations stem from this study. For beliefs to be marketed effectively by Sparc, a number of existing understandings must be managed. Firstly, if sport and recreation are considered intrinsically good, one might ask why marketing logic needs to be focused on it. Secondly, if indeed a positivist logic is used to legitimise sport and recreation, one might wonder what process exists for managing dissenting opinions, since any business espousing the logic of ‘branding’ often goes to great lengths to cement a ‘brand image’ and if possible, eliminate dissenting views. Considering policy logic has moved from, according to Sparc, allocation to investment principles, and taking into account the need to justify choices in a highly politicised environment, where generally, funds are scarce in comparison to the multitude of organisations competing for them, it is likely disparate views would need to be managed. Thirdly, since Sparc proclaim to be wise and sound investors of government money, there might be concerns from the citizenry over how one might attain the ‘expert’ knowledge to be able to make such choices. That is, what special knowledge is needed in choosing where to invest money? Defending against criticism, or the resistance of resistance, is an important function of quasi-governmental organisations, and as such, much effort is put into both minimising
the effect of image ‘crises’, and the prevention of resistance. Foucault promoted caution in the analysis of such ‘operations’, since:

an important part of the mechanisms put into operation by an institution are designed to ensure its own preservation … [This] brings with it the risk of deciphering functions that are essentially reproductive, especially in power relations within institutions. (1983p. 343)

**Conclusion**

Often policy makers are criticised by citizens for not knowing what the ‘reality’ of a particular social problem is. As Foucault notes, “it has been a tradition for humanism to assume that once someone gains power he ceases to know. Power makes men mad, and those who govern are blind” (1980b, p. 51). By positing that all realities are constructed, the chapter sought to illuminate ways in which reality is constructed by those in positions of relative significance in a policy-setting sense.

As mentioned, Sparc representatives are not in sole control of the discourse they use. Operating within a wider neo-liberal climate shapes, encourages and constrains how the ‘success’ of particular policies is defined and measured, and as a result, how Sparc representatives can talk about sport and recreation. It is understandable that policy makers will find it difficult to reconcile central government objectives, the needs of many community stakeholders, and their own personal ways of thinking about and talking about public policy.

A positivist episteme is utilised and adhered to on many occasions by Sparc policy makers. However, it is clear a number of discursive practices are employed to manage various meanings through Sparc policy and language. Specifically, on occasions, evidence-based justifications could be ignored by policy makers who seek to placate criticism and maintain control of various understandings in the sport and recreation sector. One might argue that by contributing to the construction of understandings about sport and recreation, and drawing on sources of knowledge in particular ways, public agencies such as Sparc “reinstate the state in the collective body in a new way … limiting the forms and possibilities of resistance” (Rose, 1999, p. 147).

Foucault, while speaking of Marxism, offered an insight into what questions might be asked in a genealogy. These are appropriate to repeat here;
What types of knowledges do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand … which speaking, discoursing subjects – which subjects of experience and knowledge – do you want to ‘diminish’ when you say: ‘I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist’? (1980d, p. 85)

The effects of organised scientific / corporatist discourse, firstly and perhaps foremost, is that it directly excludes other ways of understanding. Foucault aimed to illuminate these knowledges; to bring to the fore “historical contents that have been buried and disguised in the functional coherence of formal systemization [since] only the historical contents allow us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematising thought is designed to mask” (1980b, p. 81).

The extent to which the diminishing of particular understandings within sport policy discourse is beneficial is of course contingent upon one’s place within the system. It is clear, however, that these ‘scientific’ understandings do not go unchallenged. While this chapter outlined how knowledge is ‘constructed’ by senior policy makers within Sparc and explicated the contradicting policy terrain which is discursively negotiated, the following two chapters present recent research on the contestation of meaning in national sport policy. It offers insight into the contradictions and challenges that marginalised or subordinated stakeholders face when trying to construct different understandings of sport policy.
CHAPTER 7
GAMES OF TRUTH AT THE GAMES OF WOE: A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS
OF TRUTH CONSTRUCTION AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

… it's not a matter of a battle ‘on behalf’ but of a battle about the status of truth
and the economic and political role it plays. (Foucault, 2002a, p. 132)

This chapter aims to draw attention to how an ostensibly positive goal of
transparency can hinder the successful implementation of national sport policy. While the
idea of ‘transparency’ insinuates a positive, ethical practice and status, this chapter argues
that individuals and groups involved in being ‘transparent’ face numerous difficulties
since the practice of transparency necessitates decisions about what ideas to foreground
and omit. As such, an organisation such as Sparc which governs decision-making and
public policy implementation must determine the implications for when organisations
‘fail’ according to particular measurement of transparency. This chapter does this by
exploring the reactions of various groups to New Zealand’s perceived under-performance
at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, based on a Sparc policy decision to
publish ‘medal targets’. In essence, the chapter examines both the construction of
transparency and its effects.

In the lead up to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, Sparc collated a tally of
medal targets from the participating national sporting bodies.34 This was done primarily
to measure the return on Sparc’s monetary investment. Forty-six medals in total were
expected from the New Zealand team. 35 By the end of the event, the medal tally was only
31. Although highlights included Nick Willis winning a gold medal in the 1500m final,
and the New Zealand netball team, the Silver Ferns, beating Australia to win a gold
medal, there were also perceived poor performances, such as the men’s and women’s
hockey teams, neither of which won a medal in their events. Many New Zealand athletes
and teams finished fourth (32 in total), which lead one New Zealand Herald reader to

34 However, as shall be examined throughout this chapter, exactly who set and claimed responsibility for
specific medal targets / predictions was a matter of much debate.
35 The specific medal target changed over time. According to Sparc’s 2003 Statement of Intent, “40 or more
medals” was the goal (2003c, p. 16). On December 11, 2005, this had increased to 46 medals (Cleaver,
2005), while after the Games the performance was compared against a goal of 45 medals in the official
Sparc review (Sparc, 2006e).
write to the paper and suggest the event “should be renamed the Comingfourth Games” (Sullivan, 2006).

After the Commonwealth Games ended, Minister for Sport Trevor Mallard received much criticism for his assessment of the New Zealand team. To the ire of many of those competing, Mallard announced the athletes needed more “mental toughness” (Dominion Post, 28 March). This point was refuted by fourth-placed New Zealand long jumper Chantel Brunner, who was within a centimetre of a silver medal. “I think everyone goes out there and gives it one hundred percent, and when you’re talking about the kinds of margins you had in my competition, the difference between second and sixth or seventh was five or six centimetres, so …” (McNeal, 2006).

While there were numerous reasons offered for the Games not being perceived as a success for the New Zealand team, many people questioned Sparc’s method for measuring success. Instead, many criticised the way in which success was measured. For instance, Romanos wrote that “the numbers game is pointless” (2006), and Crawford argued that “medal targets are the wrong measure for sporting success” (2006).

Chapter Purpose

This chapter explores how the idea of ‘transparency’ is utilised within debate around national sport policy. Foucault’s concept of ‘games of truth’ was employed as a framework to explore how Sparc representatives, along with various stakeholders competed for versions of the truth about medal targets at the Commonwealth Games. The analysis suggests that while ostensibly appealing and helpful as a mechanism to justify organisational goals, transparency can expose inherent contradictions and disrupt the goals of the organisation espousing it. The findings highlight the difficulty of a Crown entity such as Sparc promoting coherent policies when the rules of the games of truth change depending on the audience and setting. The chapter concludes by highlighting implications for setting policy in the public sector and avenues for future research.

The chapter is organised into four parts. The first section provides the theoretical grounding of the study, with a discussion of how Foucault’s concept of ‘games of truth’ applies to sport policy discourse. Secondly is a contextualisation of the idea of transparency as it relates to the setting of New Zealand sport policy. The third section
provides an analysis of debate surrounding the Commonwealth Games medal target policy. The final section concludes and provides thoughts for future research regarding policy concerns for both writers and readers of policy.

Theoretical Approach

This chapter builds on the growing attention given to sport policy analysis (see Chalip (1995), Sam, (2004, 2005, 2006), and Green (2004), Henry, Amara, Al Tauqi and Lee, (2005). In particular it follows the Knight, McNeill and Donnelly’s (2005) analysis of the effect of discourse surrounding a nation’s performance at elite sports events. Knight et al. argue that “disappointment … in such events is socially problematic, and this makes the representation of disappointment discursively complex” (p. 47). Where Knight et al. focused on mediated understandings of the audience’s ‘disappointment’ in relation to their national team’s performance, the current study focuses on the debate over the construction and management of a medal target policy.

This chapter is informed by two theoretical strands. Broadly, and similar to other chapters, this research utilises ‘policy as discourse’ literature to focus this particular inquiry into public policy (see Ball, 1993; Taylor, 1997; Bacchi, 2000; Sam and Jackson, 2004; Knight and MacNeill, 2005). By conceiving of policy as discourse, the writing of policy is seen as a struggle over the production of meaning, and examines how this meaning relates to the distribution of scarce resources. As Bacchi (2000) articulated, such an approach emphasises the ways in which language, and more broadly discourse, “sets limits upon what can be said” (p. 48). This approach assumes these limits are not fixed however, as Ball mentions that policy debates are set “within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of circumstances that we cannot, or perhaps do not think about” (1993, p. 15).

Games of Truth

This chapter also employs Foucault’s understanding of the process through which truth is socially constructed. Foucault explains ‘truth’ as a “system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” (2002b, p. 133). This is linked to the idea that knowledge is a social construction as well;
the social world does not “pre-exist … [but is] exists under the positive conditions of a complex set of relations” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). The construction of the formations of discourse “is not an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions … [but] … a space of multiple dissensions” (p. 166). To broadly illustrate what Foucault means by the terms ‘games’ and ‘truth’, ‘games’ is a departure from its colloquial sense;

When I say “game”, I mean a set of rules by which truth is produced. It is not a game in the sense of an amusement; it is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing. (Foucault, 1984, p. 297)

The point of investigating ‘truth games’ is not to discover true things but to understand the rules that those involved in a search for the truth obey (Foucault, 1984). Thus, attention is specifically drawn towards ‘rules’ and ‘procedures’ which ultimately contribute to a victorious ‘truth’. Foucault assumes that while some groups may use power relations more effectively than others, relations of power are never fixed. Even after a particular ‘truth’ has been constructed and asserted, there is always space to offer alternate perspectives or resist in other ways.

Considering the idea of game further, Foucault (1998) argues that language (as is used to debate public policy), “never deceives or reveals … [but] is played” (p. 84). That is, actors involved in the construction of policy, and who are affected by it, contribute to debate through various milieu, such as newspapers and television and radio interviews, attempting to win the position as speaker of the truth. Foucault argues however, that the policy ‘playing field’ is not level. Different actors have differing access to power in various circumstances, and as such, “[r]elations of power, also, they are played; it is these games of power that one must study in terms of tactics and strategy, in terms of order and of chance, in terms of stakes and objective” (in Davidson 1997, p. 4). Peters (2004) articulates that a focus on games of truth emphasises how the human subject constitutes itself by strategically entering into such games and playing them to their best advantage. Instead of a social milieu which is totally free (an impossibility according to Foucault), the best possible outcome attainable in a battle over truth is a milieu in which everyone understands the procedures for debating (or the rules of the game), as well as the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, that allows these games of power to be played with a
minimum of domination (Foucault, 1988a). By giving attention to human agency in the
production of truth, Foucault argues there is room for interested groups to construct their
own truths, in opposition to “centralising powers which are linked to the institution and
functioning of an organised scientific discourse” (1980a, p 84).

**Historicising truth**

Foucault ‘historicises’ truth. He situates truth within particular discourse, within
particular times, and rejects the idea that any society moves further and further towards
an essential truth. Instead, societies change their understandings about what is true.
Foucault’s argues that various forms of truth-telling are dependent on the institutional and
discursive practices. That is, truth is not stable and uniform, measured in the same way
across cultures and time. Instead, truth is constructed by a combination of conditions.
Foucault explains these various conditions through which truth is established:

> In societies like ours, the ‘political economy’ of truth is characterized by five
> important traits. ‘Truth’ is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the
> institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political
> incitement; … it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and
> consumption; … it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not
> exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses; … lastly, it is the
> issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation. (2002b, p. 131)

In order to demonstrate the linkage of these conditions with the current study, a brief
outline shall be articulated highlighting the construction of truth in public sport policy.

**a) Truth is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it**

With regard to the form of scientific discourse and the type of institutions that
produce it, Sparc is heavily influenced by sport science, the idea of having elite athletes’
performances based on scientifically-generated principles of producing elite athletes. This
is evidenced by Sparc’s high performance department, the New Zealand Academy of
Sport, which has as one of its guiding principles the idea of being “evidence based”
(Sparc, 2006g, p. 6). As such Sparc will “use results *analysis* and *data mining* to identify
athletes and teams with genuine ability” (p. 6, italics added). The metaphor of ‘mining’
for data implies that if an organisation undertakes this symbolically difficult task, the
activity will yield measurable results, such as gold medals. Sparc follows here a long
tradition of positivist scientific criteria on which to base policy. Curiously, another guiding principle includes being ‘innovative’, something that at first reading would imply a divergence from traditional ways of establishing truth. However, the associated description of ‘innovative’ reinforces the positivist tradition by joining other institutions which support their form of inquiry; “Sparc will encourage organisations within and outside the sport sector (e.g. industry, research institutions, universities) to assist high performance sport through the sharing of their knowledge and expertise” (p. 6, italics added).

b) Truth is subject to constant economic and political incitement

The demand for truth is considered here to be synonymous with the idea of transparency in national sport policy. Truth (or transparency) is demanded of organisations and athletes who are funded by Sparc. The idea of transparency is part of the neo-liberal rationalisation project that national policy makers have enveloped the sport and recreation sector with over the past decade. That is, organisations are ‘held to account’ for how they spend money invested in them by Sparc. As such, there is economic interest for telling a particular truth about the ‘return on investment’ of particular programmes. Part of this rationalisation project is to withdraw investment from those programmes that do not meet standards set by Sparc. This ‘truth’ is divergent from a welfare-oriented measure of truth whereby organisations with limited ability are assisted in reaching their goals.

c) Truth is the object of immense diffusion and consumption

Like the previously mentioned examples, the truth about ‘medal targets’ gained much prominence not only leading up to the Commonwealth Games but also in its wake. This was mainly disseminated through mainstream newspapers, radio talkback shows, and television news. The medal target policy was not purposefully, specifically or solely promoted by Sparc; it was instead dispersed with much vigour and swiftness by sports media organisations around the country. Unquestioned consumption of this policy did not eventuate and ultimately lead to the countering of various truth claims around the idea of medal targets. Those with different ideas about the truth of the medal target policy had a relatively accessible right of reply, via the same media vehicles employed to disseminate the policy. Television news shows investigated the opinions of national sport organisation
representatives and athletes while letters to the editor and radio talk show provided ample opportunity for the public to debate the logic and ‘truth’ of medal targets.

An important site for games of truth to be played out is through the articulation and reification of goals and measurement systems in public policy. These goals and systems are situated not only within institutional vehicles such as policy documents, but also in various other domains where the assertion of organisational goals and ideas about measuring are articulated. For example, newspapers are an important site, since their large readership allows for the wide dissemination of messages. These are sites in which policy makers attempt to articulate (or constitute) their roles, which are often in conflict with those who believe policies, programmes and identities should be constructed in different ways. Radio talkback shows and television news articles are similarly important, yet mediated, sites for ideas about sport policy to be disseminated.

d) Truth is produced and transmitted under the control of a few great political and economic apparatuses

Public policy itself is widely considered the legitimate apparatus for distributing resources of central government. Sparc, reliant on the central government for funding and legitimacy, attempts to not only fulfil central government objectives, but is also powerful in its own right, determining precisely what values, programmes and strategies are foregrounded and how relationships are established and maintained in the sector. Mainstream media also play a powerful role in the attention given to particular policies. Media organisations bring into existence the debate around the medal target policy as well as contribute to it.

e) Truth is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation

In regard to high performance sport, truth is fought over by both government bodies as well through a more broad ‘social confrontation’ of various groups and organisations within the sporting realm. For example, testing for drugs and a search for the truth concerning the ‘true’ winners of sports events has in the last 20 years gained prominence as a scientific endeavour in its own right. The allocation of large scale sporting events such as the Olympic Games are increasingly linked to the success of the host cities vying for them, and bring with them both allegations of corrupt practices as well as measures to minimise such practises. With the ease of travel between nations,
arguments over the ‘true’ nationality of athletes are played out in the media and likewise lead to formalised policy which attempts to define what constitutes the truth about one’s nationality. Incitement is not limited to instances of being ‘untruthful’ in a sporting sense. Ideas about ‘who’ we are and ‘what’ we believe in and support are influenced by respective national identities. Some truths concerning sport in New Zealand; that it is inherently good, and that central government money should be devoted to it, are largely unquestioned.

Transparency

Over the past 15 years, the idea of transparency has grown in popularity in governance structures of sports in various countries (cf. Australian Sport Commission, Sport and Recreation New Zealand, Irish Sports Council, Sport England, Singapore Sports Council, Samoan Association of Sports and Olympic Committee). Since Sparc’s inception, the organisation has both expressed themselves as being transparent and have encouraged their stakeholders to be so too. Various documents have encouraged sport and recreation clubs to increase their transparency and espoused transparency. In 2002, Sparc were heavily criticised for a lack of transparency. One critic, Neil Tonkin, lamented, “What makes it all worse is that there is no documented audit trail of how Sparc came to [a policy] decision” (Tonkin, 2002).

Transparency is also espoused by organisations such as the United Nations, with 26,400 references to transparency or ‘transparent’ on their website (United Nations, 2007). Similarly, the New Zealand government had nearly 9,000 references (New Zealand government, 2007). This ubiquity of ‘transparency’ contributes to common sense understandings about what it is, and what its implications are. Specifically, transparency is frequently referred to in documents such as strategic plans, codes of ethics and mission statements connoting both a principle and a practice of both visibility and viewing that members within the organisation adhere to. According to Hood (1991) the doctrine of transparency within governments and their associated agencies played a role in the establishment of new public management, or NPM. As a feature of a wider neo-liberal discourse, Hood explains NPM is among other things, epitomised by “definition of goals,
targets, indicators of success, [which are] preferably expressed in quantitative terms” (1991, p. 4).

As an ostensibly ethical practice, transparency is often mentioned by organisations that are willing to be scrutinised by stakeholders. That is, transparency has at its heart assumptions about ‘openness’ and ‘fairness’. As a metaphor, transparency promotes a type of realism, that something (such as the decision-making process of a policy) can be seen in its entirety. Further, as Palmer (2004) points out, to assert ‘transparency’ is to negate mediation. Transparency, Palmer argues, “assumes both that a medium is indistinct from the object of interest to be viewed … and the process of seeing through the medium does not alter the nature of the object viewed” (2004, p. 4). Of course, discourse analysts argue that any medium is highly influential in the production of policy. As such, inherent in the idea of transparency is an assumption that for stakeholders to be involved in a transparent fashion, information and decision making policies should be made available to them. Furthermore, the process of transparency assumes that stakeholders have a mechanism by which to hold the decision making group accountable (and vice versa).

However, the idea becomes problematic when thinking about policy decisions as contests over alternate social realities, made by actors who have a vested interest both in what information is put forward and how it is presented. Strathern (2000) argues that even though techniques for assessing, auditing and evaluating institutions and programmes are often defended on the grounds of transparency, these techniques are not unproblematic. Strathern believes that on occasions where people are conscious of diverse interests, a purported benevolent or moral visibility is all too easily shown to have a tyrannous side; “there is nothing innocent about making the invisible visible” (2000, p. 309). Explaining this further, Strathern notes a paradox of transparency; “people want to know how to trust one another, to make their trust visible, while (knowing that) the very desire to do so points to the absence of trust” (p. 310).

Transparency is important because although it implies honesty, practical decisions must also be made about deciding what is transparent, how transparent information is presented, and who has access to it, since organisations such as government-appointed sports agencies usually have numerous stakeholders. In New Zealand particularly, with
many sports expecting government funding and legitimacy, sport and recreation policy has the ability and goal of defining the levels of importance of particular pastimes, determining how success is measured, and subsequently what levels of funding organisations have access to.

**Research Approach**

The newspaper ‘editorial opinion’ written by Sparc CEO Nick Hill featured in the New Zealand Herald on Monday April 3, 2006 was used as a starting point around which to construct an analysis of Sparc’s enactment of transparency. There were various reasons for choosing this particular piece. Firstly, the article focuses specifically on transparency. Secondly, it was written at a time of ‘crisis’ for Sparc. The New Zealand team at the Commonwealth Games had won only 31 medals, falling short of an official estimate of 45 medals made by Sparc. As such the medal ‘crisis’ resulted in Sparc representatives having to respond to criticism rather than promote their practices. Also, it is assumed here that such a display of articulating beliefs about a policy is more likely to be discursively relevant to citizens than the actual policy itself. While the policy is likely available to citizens who go to the effort of downloading the document form Sparc’s website, it is considered here that an occasion such as a newspaper defence is a more discursively important interface between an organisation and its various stakeholders. Finally, the nature of the defence (a newspaper article) allowed the author time to craft the response. This is not always possible in television or radio interviews. We assume here that the article was also spared the effect of dilution by editors who may write articles based in part on press releases, choosing only certain phrases or quotes from a press release. It is likely that little or none of Nick Hill’s article was edited.

An analysis of this article was followed by comparing various statements concerning the medal target with other instances of the defence of the medal policy target. In essence, contradictions and conflicts were sought, since it is contradictions and conflicts that limit the ability of policy and an organisation to be transparent. The texts were analysed by utilising Fairclough’s (1989) and Gee’s (2001) themes and questions of discourse analysis, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. These themes encourage the analyst to question the way words are used to convey ideology through studying the speaker’s /
writer’s use of classification, relationship development, euphemism, metaphor, nominalizations, modality, and presupposition. Common themes were identified and then reduced to a manageable size for analysis.

The themes identified in the article are explicated and analysed with regard to the effect of, and their effect on the idea of transparency. Throughout the analysis, other instances of public debate are drawn upon to both contextualise the issue and add to the analysis. Specifically, the analysis draws on data from other articulations of Sparc policy and various public responses to the policy, including radio interviews, newspaper articles and Sparc’s official marketing campaign in relation to the Commonwealth Games, which ran from the closing months of 2005 to the Commonwealth Games in March 2006.

In all, information is drawn from over a four year period; from June 2002 to August 2006 (the end of Sparc’s four year planning period). In the first instance, overarching policy including annual reports, statements of intent, and strategic plans were analysed. These were then supplemented by other policy documents, including letters to stakeholders, press releases, radio interviews and newspaper extracts. The crescendo of the medal target policy traversed over several weeks of 2006, and as such, it provided an intriguing format to watch the ‘games of truth’ play out.

Analysis

Sites of Truth Games

This analysis section is distinguished by five sites of discursive debate (or themes) that demonstrate how the ideas of transparency are inherently problematic. These are listed below. These ideas will be explored throughout each section of the analysis, at times overlapping one another due to their often inherent connection (such as that between a rationale and goals) as well as their juxtapositions (expressed through the variations of values within each theme). Around each site an analysis is established by linking the discursive sites within the article with other texts that have impacted and were impacted by the Commonwealth Games medal target, and Hill’s article itself.

By referring to Appendix 5, the reader will see Hill’s article has been separated by reference markers (column 1) which divide the original article text into discursive ‘chunks’ (column 2). Next, brief notes convey the assumed discursive position of the
Agency – Group responsible for deciding on measurement

Regarding agency, there was much debate over which group (Sparc, or NSOs) ‘produced’ the medal target. Throughout the debate, Hill and Sparc policy documents had difficulty locating exactly who was responsible for deciding on the measurement, particularly since the ‘target’ was not achieved.

Hill’s article begins with Hill framing the topic of conversation; addressing the criticisms of New Zealand’s perceived poor performance at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. This was caused by a seemingly widespread dissatisfaction of the New Zealand team’s performance by mainstream New Zealand media and the New Zealand public alike. One newspaper headline named the event ‘The Games of Woe’ for New Zealand (Silver Ferns put glow, 2006). The evidence used to prove that the New Zealand team had done poorly was the often-cited ‘medal target’ of 45 medals. The New Zealand team won only 31.

One of the first of various discursive convolutions in the Hill editorial was at once seemingly taking responsibility for the medal target prediction, and at the same time distancing the organisation from it. Soon after implying Sparc was responsible for producing the policy through ‘arriving at’ a target, Hill states that Sparc ‘needs to be open and forthright about its expectations’ (ref 3). Both quotes cement the idea that the ‘responsibility’ of the target was attributable to Sparc. This is contrasted with numerous examples in various media that illustrate Hill’s attempt to remove the Sparc’s agency; ‘the medal targets are established by national sport organisations, not established by Sparc’ (ref 2). Similarly, in a radio interview with Murray Deaker, Hill states: “I should make it clear that they weren’t our numbers”. Seemingly only explanatory, these aforementioned phrases have implications for readers attempting to comprehend who has the power to make decisions about Commonwealth Games policy. While Hill explains
that it was the NSOs who arrived at the individual sports’ targets, an important omission from the article was that Sparc required these targets from each NSO. The externalisation of the decision-making process at this point is the first of numerous discrepancies concerning which organisation was responsible for the policy.

Other sources compounded this confusion over responsibility for the setting of the target. Before the Commonwealth Games took place, Hill asserted “In terms of forecasting, it’s hard enough working [out a medal target], without sticking a colour on” (Cleaver, 2005). On another occasion, the official Sparc review of the Commonwealth Games stated “together with the sports, we set targets by which to measure the success of our investment” (Sparc, 2006f, p. 4, italics added).

Perhaps the clearest articulation of a convoluted notion of agency is one of Hill’s responses in an interview with Sunday Star Times journalist Michael Donaldson, only one week before Hill’s article; “Overall we have to accept we’ve failed in terms of the targets we set, which were reasonable we felt” (Donaldson, 2006, italics added). Similarly, in an interview with Sunday Times reporter Katie Bradford, Hill lamented “Clearly this has been a failure because what we really want is gold medals … I hate failing, it’s awful” (Bradford, 2006, italics added). Then soon after, Hill seemingly contradicts and therefore convolutes comprehension of agency through the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ in regard to the medal target policy; “Why are we counting these things – it’s part of our hard nosed approach to business” (Hill, 2006b).

These various ways of articulating who was responsible for the medal targets (thus, who the target belong to) begin to erode the foundation for Sparc’s purported transparency. It becomes impossible to hold one particular organisation or committee accountable when the explanation of who was responsible changes. Harmon (1995) explained that “To say that someone is accountable … is to say that he or she is liable for sanctions according to an authoritative rule, decision, or criterion enforceable by someone else” (p. 25). Accountability assumes transparency, and since the site for responsibility is not fixed in this case, any attempt to hold one group accountable becomes extremely tenuous.
Measurement System - How was the performance measured?

This section, examining the truth games surrounding the measurement system used in the medal target policy includes an analysis of how various ideas about how a medal target is conceptualised and can impact on a group’s (namely Sparc’s) understanding of the measurement system. Disparate articulations in the debate including ‘target’, ‘prediction’, ‘informed opinion’ and ‘expectation’ all contribute to or detract from a group’s authority depending on the result. The epistemological assumptions of the medal target policy, namely that it was informed by ‘scientific … rational … objective … analysis’ as distinct from ‘simple predictions’ is problematised.

It is argued here that Sparc policy attempts to assert ownership over particular ideas which legitimate their policy. For example, Hill notes that the medal targets were ‘arrived at’ (ref 1), implying there was an inductive process of calculation to come to a conclusive number. This attempt to couch the argument using these terms ultimately adds to the conflation of the policy. It became impossible for Sparc to use particular terms when the final medal count demonstrated that the policy lacked the rationality it purported to have. Hill notes that the ‘targets aren’t simply predictions. They are informed opinions’ (ref 2). In a colloquial sense, there is little distinction between the terms. In a debate over the efficacy of a policy however, words promote ideas that serve to reinforce perceptions of legitimacy. The attempted control of this language failed when, despite Hill making a point to move the framing of the argument away from the idea of ‘simple prediction’, the term ‘prediction’ was mentioned twice in Sparc’s review of the system. On one of these occasions the report lamented “predicting our 2006 medal forecast proved difficult” (Sparc, 2006e, p. 7, italics added).

During a heated radio interview following Sparc’s launch concerning one of Sparc’s controversial policy Hill exclaimed, “That’s all we’re doing here … we’re standing right back and we look at those criteria” (Hill, 2002a, italics added). By framing the intensely political decision in this objective, neutral fashion, Hill attempted to establish the belief in a scientifically objective process, from which decisions cannot be
This was done despite on numerous occasions Hill acknowledging the impact of ‘judgment’ of the decisions. This mixing of epistemologies (neutral positivist versus subjective, judgemental decision maker), served to convolute the explanation of the process and stifle criticism of the decision-making process. While Hill’s use of ‘judgement’ (along with similar anecdotes that appear occasionally in various policy documents could be interpreted as an acknowledgment of the importance of qualitative data and by extension, a disassociation with positivism, such rhetoric is discursively subordinated beneath the assumed scientific rigour of ‘evidence-based’ policy. That is, Sparc policy examined in this research is steadfastly defended as being ‘evidence-based’ when it is apparent it is not so.

Reifying Sparc’s rational discourse, Dave Currie, the Chef de Mission of the Commonwealth Games team, argued against an ‘irrational’ response from the New Zealand public after the performance. “We can't have any knee-jerk reaction. You've got to go back and analyse the results and decide where do we go from here?” (Norquay, 2006a, italics added). This sentiment continued through to Sparc’s official review of the Commonwealth Games performance. Intriguingly, in Sparc’s debrief of the Commonwealth Games performance, the medal target was on different occasions referred to as a target, with a connotation that if it was not met, it would be a failure; an expectation, contributing to an optimistic perception of near certainty; a prediction, less certainty than either a target or expectation; and a forecast, with connotations similar to prediction. It is worthwhile to note that these different words have differing levels of certainty, which also contribute to affect the perceived ability of Sparc to ‘know’ the future, a very powerful ability in a public policy setting. To be seen to not know the future would contribute to a suspicion by readers and stakeholders that Sparc representatives do not understand the sporting milieu. Hill himself alluded to this; “This is a sharp reality check about where we sit in terms of international sport” (ref 6). This conception of a reality check, however, can be seen as a dramatic shift in appraisal of the team’s (and Sparc’s) performance. A journalist brought this purported ability to judge and appraise in question when quoting Hill during the Games.

Responding to Sports Minister Trevor Mallard’s assertions that the New Zealand team lacked mental toughness, Hill said “We were probably more scientific than Trevor … in our analysis” (NZ Herald, 2006, italics added).
In the leadup to the Games, Hill said 40 medals would be a ‘disaster’. Yesterday afternoon, with just 22 medals and only three days of competition left, he was eating his words. ‘Disaster’ probably too harsh. What it is, is a real reality check’ (Welham, 2006).

Importantly, the journalist in this instance regards Hill’s appraisal as ‘official’, despite Sparc’s predictive ability being limited. By retaining the ability to define a situation, Hill (and Sparc) retains the power to know, be active agents in the process and control how

the team’s result should be conceived. Sparc’s review of the Games also alluded to how much Sparc ‘knew’ in comparison to the national sport organisations themselves:

Sports predicted 45 medals. Sparc projected 46 medals based on the ‘actual’ results of New Zealand athletes and teams (relative to other Commonwealth countries) at international events in the previous 15 months. (Sparc, 2006e, p. 6)

That sports had ‘predicted’ 45 medals, and yet Sparc ‘projected’ one more highlights a subtle yet important difference in how understanding elite sporting performances are considered, and conveys the idea that Sparc both knows ‘better’ than national governing sporting bodies, and has the final ‘say’ on predictions.

Role: What role did Sparc have?

Convolutions of role relates to the problems inherent in various constructions of Sparc’s raison d’etre with regard to the New Zealand team. Whether Sparc was ‘investing’, ‘helping’ or had a ‘responsibility’ to be involved with the medal target process has significant implications for other stakeholders, most notably the athletes. This section deals with the various discourses used to explain and legitimise Sparc’s reasons for being involved in the medal target policy. The three divergent ideas identified in the article relate to Sparc’s ideas of ‘investing’, ‘helping’ and having a ‘responsibility’ to be involved. These ideas inform many of Hill’s other comments surrounding the medal target. Sparc’s guiding philosophy regarding investment pervades most of Sparc’s policy statements and press releases, and often decry thinking of funding as ‘entitlement’.

However, this idea quickly becomes convoluted when other ideas are also referred to, namely regarding Sparc either being responsible for particular outcomes, or using the discursively problematic term ‘help’. Early in the article, Hill attempts to articulate the locus of accountability in the funding process; “let’s be clear … that recipients of funding
are accountable for performance” (ref 3). This idea of athletes being responsible for their performance seemingly absolves Sparc of blame for the performance of the overall team in Melbourne, and is in line with a colloquial understand that indeed athletes are the masters of their own destiny.

One can juxtapose the remarks above with another later in the article which conveys the idea that Sparc is actually responsible for any success: because of a pre-determined mandate; ‘It is our responsibility at Sparc to see that [winning in international events is] achieved’ (ref 11). That is, two disparate messages are given; athletes are accountable for their performance, but Sparc is responsible for ensuring athletes win. This ambiguity displaces the location of blame; instead of Sparc being forthright, the effect is the opposite.

This convolution is further borne out through Sparc’s public promotional campaigns before, during and after the Commonwealth Games. The campaign consisted of print advertisements in magazines, on buses, in bus shelters, and on Sparc’s website (see Appendix 7 & 8). The advertisements were relatively simple, consisting of various Commonwealth Games athletes in various athletic poses with what appeared to be a stream of ‘golden’ sweat running down their brows. The header, in bold, gold letters, asked “Where do Gold medals come from?” In similarly bold letters further down the sheet, the question is seemingly answered; “Find out at www.sparc.org.nz” (see appendix 1). Those who went to the website were directed to the ‘Commonwealth Games’ section, where the torrid training regimes of various New Zealand athletes were described. Overwhelmingly however, Sparc, discursively situated themselves through the campaign as being responsible for the gold medals that result.

This understanding was confirmed by Sparc’s marketing manager. When asked if the public might construe that Sparc was indeed the source of the gold medals, the marketing manager replied “Absolutely. Totally. I hope it is … We run that campaign, we spend about $500,000 on marketing alone. And then there is [public relations] support that goes around it...” The logic of one’s organisation claiming to be the cause of international sporting success can be understood by the marketing manager’s explanation for undertaking such marketing ventures:
When I started a year and a half ago - The brief was fairly clear. The board was relatively unhappy with the recognition Sparc was receiving or not for its investment in high performance sport and its investment in the participation side of the business or Push Play, unhappy for a number of reasons. With lack of recognition comes anonymity, with anonymity comes a lack of strength, and the whole reason why Sparc was keen to build its profile with regard to those two parts of the business was about leveraging resource. So ultimately about securing more money for sport and recreation … You take those two parts, profile and credibility and typically over time you’ll get recognition of success and it’s a pretty basic equation. With recognition of success comes strength in the brand and with strength in the brand comes the ability to leverage [more money].

Of course, since the New Zealand team (according to Sparc’s policy) failed at the Commonwealth Games, Sparc was faced with producing articles such as this one by Hill, to manoeuvre through the difficult discursive terrain of being intimately connected with a failing team, and it’s follow on effects, supposedly a ‘weaker brand’.

In the lead up to the Commonwealth Games Hill’s was asked what would happen to Sparc if the medal target was not met. Hill asserted that “hard questions would be asked” (Cleaver, 2006). In the Games aftermath, Sparc’s official review of the Commonwealth Games focused specifically on “New Zealand’s performance” (Sparc, 2006e, p. 2). This further discursively placed the emphasis on the athletes’ performances rather than the system. Further, rather than questioning the appropriateness of setting medal targets, the review instead asked “Why forecast?” (2006e, p. 4) and referred to Sparc as a ‘wise investor’ (2006e, p. 4), thereby reifying the logic of medal targets.

There were numerous terms used throughout Hill’s article (and other Sparc literature) which displace the site of roles in the medal target policy. For example, Sparc utilised the managerial language of ‘investment’ (ref 3) to explain its role. Keeping in line with a popular Sparc discourse of managerialism, the logic of ‘investment’ assumes that there is a certain amount of risk associated with any investment. That is, while there is a possibility for a ‘return on investment’ (a ubiquitous phrase used by Sparc), one would also accept that there may not be. However, conversely the investment is used “to help the NSOs achieve those targets” (ref 3, italics added). The idea of ‘help’ insinuates that Sparc is inherently influential in the outcome of the medal target; if not enough ‘help’ is provided (one of the stated reasons for the establishment of Sparc and the New Zealand Academy of Sport), then ‘rationally’ the responsibility (and blame) shifts backs to Sparc.
Sparc’s governing idea of ‘investment’ is also problematic when one considers the wide array of ‘investors’ in an athlete’s performance, including the athlete’s own financial contribution, that of sponsors, family members and other supporters, workplaces giving paid time off, funding from other grants, et cetera. While no specific calculations have been made here, it is assumed Sparc’s relative financial contribution to any gold medal would pale in comparison to other non-governmental sources.

One other understanding evident from Hill’s article is the idea of ‘expectation’ about meeting particular Sparc goals. In a similar vein to Sparc inferring a major part in the athletes’ success, it is considered discursively problematic here to ‘expect’ elite athletes to meet goals imposed by an organisation whose relative contribution is likely to be limited.

As a result, Sparc’s role shifts between that of helper (or assistant) and investor, to an overseeing organisation with ‘expectations’. The effect is that when the location of accountability (and therefore blame) is not fixed, it allows an organisation (such as Sparc) facing criticism of policies to shift the location of the argument.

Goals - What counts as success?

An examination of the articulation of ‘goals’ relates to the disparities of different outcomes desired from the New Zealand team at the Commonwealth Games. The dichotomy between winning medals being important and ‘trying one’s best’ is analysed to highlight discursive contradictions. Specifically, this section deals with divergent understandings of what constitutes success of the medal target policy, particularly after the medal target was not met. The interpretation of success regarding the medal target has implications for the perceived legitimacy of respective agents involved in the process of determining the medal target.

It is important to note here that during and after the Commonwealth Games there was significant public debate about the values that could (or should) be attributed to the athletes’ performances. This contestation over the goals of an organisation such as Sparc sport was best demonstrated by two letters to the editor following the Commonwealth Games. The letters highlight that understandings (or discourses) about sport performance measurement, and sport itself, are often fundamentally incongruous:
Life is not all about winning – it’s about contributing, caring, living life with passion and fully. Being the best you can be is far more rewarding than having to win to feel significant. (Sorensen-Tyrer, 2006)

It’s time we stopped being so damn PC [politically correct] in New Zealand and get it right. It is about winning and winning at all costs. (Hosking, 2006)

With this in mind, one way Hill articulates Sparc’s measurement is ‘expectation’ (ref 3). Conceptually, the term ‘expectation’ brings with it the idea that a smaller medal tally would be a failure, an idea promoted by Hill before the Games. The term ‘fail’ was questioned by numerous critics of the policy. For example, Rob Crawford, former New Zealand Orienteering president criticised Hill’s contradictory use of the term ‘fail’;

In the Sunday Star Times, Hill is quoted as saying “We need to front up; a fourth is a failure”, yet in the next breath he states (decathlete) “Brent Newdick’s fourth is a fantastic result” (Crawford, 2006, p. B11).

Further rhetorical contradiction is also present in Hill’s article, when Hill states that the team’s result ‘is very disappointing’ (ref 6), while conversely, in his conclusion to the article he ‘is extremely proud of the New Zealand team’ (ref 11). Conceptually, it is difficult to reconcile the disjuncture of being both ‘very disappointed’ and ‘proud’.

Hill’s explanation for setting medal targets is in large part informed by an idea of ‘necessity’. For example, in Hill’s introduction to his article, he asks ‘Why was it necessary to establish medal expectations?’ (ref 1). One of the resonating reasons which legitimates this argument is the idea of international best practice; “Australia and England began establishing medal targets as early as the 1980s” (ref 5). Later in the article, Hill again cites New Zealand’s closest sporting rival as an example of how to measure success; “For more than 20 years, the Australian Institute of Sport has focused relentlessly on its objective of winning medals. Sparc, meanwhile, is just four years into the process” (ref 7). Hill also bombastically reifies the idea of medal targets during an interview with a New Zealand Herald journalist, who wrote the following after talking with Hill; “Medal targets were common among all teams, Hill said, a view reinforced during discussions with his Australian and English counterparts in recent days” (Norquay, 2006b, italics added). These assertions have the subtle but powerful effect of automatically legitimising the policy, despite not being verified officially in any Sparc literature.
While Hill offers various reasons for the inclusion of a medal count; for accountability (ref 3), as a performance goal (ref 4), and due to a Government mandate (ref 10), another articulation of the policy’s purpose is seen in Hill’s explanation in another newspaper article. Here he rejected others’ views of a better measure of success in elite sport; the achievement of personal best performances. Hill explained:

There’s going to be debate around the whole concept of medal targets but we need to decide whether we’re in the business of winning gold, or whether we’re just happy with people performing well and getting personal bests. (Hill, in Cleaver, 2006)\(^{37}\)

This particular vision was not common. Joseph Romanos cited New Zealand swimming coach Jan Cameron, who argued that ‘personal bests’ were indeed a better measure of success than medal counts. “If athletes perform up to their best, what more can you ask?” (Romanos, 2006a). In a similar vein to the New Zealand Olympic Committee earlier, the game of truth on this occasion is played in an indirect fashion; mitigated in part by the expectations placed on a national swimming coach who not only seeks to enhance her athletes’ performances, but might also be conscious of being a spokesperson for an NSO that receives Sparc funding.

Both overtly and subtly, Hill marginalises other ways of understanding success in sport. Remarks such as ‘necessity’ and situated as being ‘in business’ contrast to being ‘just happy with … personal bests.’ Particular ways of measuring ‘accountability’ are not only foregrounded but other possibilities are disparaged, bolstering the legitimacy of Sparc’s policy, (though also potentially damaging relationships with various stakeholders).

Hill makes one other remark in defence of the medal target policy; “Further, I believe you need the tension in the system that setting targets provides” (March 26, 2006). While Hill does not elaborate on this reason, this comment implies Sparc structures the New Zealand sport ‘system’ to serve its goals. The inference is that without this ‘tension’, the sector would not operate effectively. This contributes to a paternalist,

\(^{37}\) Prior to resigning from Sparc in December 2007, Hill candidly explained his reasoning for medal targets: “If you don’t make some sort of target you guys [the media] and everyone else will - so in many ways I think it’s important we have an accurate reflection of what we should expect” (Hill, in Cleaver, 2007). That Hill feels Sparc should be the sole arbiter of determining what should be counted as success is a peculiar logic to employ, but it does parallel the marketing manager’s reasoning for investing in marketing; that the visibility of Sparc is paramount.
omnipotent view of the sector, positing Sparc as an ‘overseer’ of the way the system should operate.

Claims to knowledge serve an important discursive function. The more one ‘knows’, the more one can impart upon others, thus influencing perceptions of success. On most occasions throughout the article Hill speaks in both a declarative and imperative fashion. Problematically, Hill’s reference to Sparc’s Commonwealth Games debrief following the event is framed in a way that the knowledge gained will improve the functioning of the elite sporting system, despite contradictory evidence being found in the failed medal target. Put another way, even though it appears Sparc’s policy failed, there remains an assumption that by holding a ‘debrief’, these knowledge gaps will be filled, despite a reasonable assumption that at the next sporting event of this type, a different set of factors will present itself (which was also inferred by Hill).

**Voice: What is the position of the speaker?**

This section examines how various ‘voices’ affect the discursive position of the speaker. Hill is the only speaker in the article, and his position, tone and formality shift throughout. At times he positions himself as a CEO of Sparc, whereas at others he presents himself solely as a New Zealand sports fan, and as a member of the New Zealand team. All of Hill’s inflections attempt to infer a specific relationship with the reader. The distinct range of positions Hill assumes throughout his article contribute to a range of voices that are at once the most subtle and the most influential in the shaping the debate around transparency in national sporting policy.

Importantly, at the outset of the article Hill does not make explicit to whom he is writing the response. Hill frames the debate by stating ‘much has been made of Sport and Recreation New Zealand’s (Sparc) decision to publicise medal targets’ (ref 1). Leaving nameless the individuals and groups responsible for ‘making much’ of Sparc’s decision serves to delete the agency and legitimacy of the groups. By not having a name, the protesting groups are left faceless, against the named organisations such as ‘Sparc’, ‘national sport organisations’, and the ‘New Zealand Olympic Committee’ and ‘the New Zealand Government’ mentioned throughout. Further to this, another discursive strategy is at play; ‘much has been made’ subtly evokes connotations that ‘too much has been
made’ of the medal target debate by these nameless protestors. Concurrently, Sparc simultaneously ‘establish[s]’, ‘invest[s]’, are ‘open and forthright’ and ‘take … a constructive approach’, all seemingly positive behaviours. Hill’s ability to define the parameters of the legitimacy and rationality of the various voices in the debate has a powerful discursive effect; marginalising protestors while framing Sparc as rational and transparent.

Another important way of gaining legitimacy for a particular view is by using inclusive collective pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘our’, while omitting whom one is referring too. Hill employs this tactic to describe and disseminate Sparc’s idea of transparency to include various groups (NSOs, sports fans, citizens). Below is an explanation of the context of Hill’s employment of various collective pronouns, along with the author’s interpretation of the position being taken by Hill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun example</th>
<th>Interpretation of speaker’s position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘…we need to establish goals…’ (ref 4)</td>
<td>As Sparc policy maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…we as a nation…’ (ref 5) ‘As a team … we didn’t meet our expectations.’ (ref 6)</td>
<td>As a spokesperson for the nation As unabashed member of the New Zealand Commonwealth Games team. Possibility of inherently including NZOC and NSOs through pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…a sharp reality check about where we sit.’ (ref 6)</td>
<td>As a member of the team, as a Sparc policy maker, and speaking on behalf of sporting organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘We witnessed the emergence of some promising New Zealand talent.’ (ref 6) ‘And let’s not forget the netball team’s gritty gold-medal performance…’ (ref 6)</td>
<td>As a spectator and New Zealand sports fan As a spectator and New Zealand sports fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…we need to look at the here and now.’ (ref 6) ‘We therefore must continue to take a long term view…’ (ref 7) ‘…we noted a lack of depth…’ (ref 8) ‘I want to make clear that I am extremely proud’ (ref 11)</td>
<td>As Sparc policy maker (and possibly speaking on behalf of NZOC and NSOs) As Sparc policy maker (and possibly speaking on behalf of NZOC and NSOs) As Sparc policy maker (and possibly speaking on behalf of NZOC and NSOs) As a private citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quirk et al. (1985) discuss how the term ‘we’ can be used in numerous ways to imply numerous meanings. Utilizing this framework, it becomes apparent the variety of ways that Hill employs the term ‘we’ becomes apparent, including “inclusive authorial: used in serious [policy] writing and seeks to involve the reader in a joint enterprise; rhetorical: to symbolise a collective such as the ‘the nation’; to refer to the hearer (= you): used for giving instructions; to refer to a third person (= s/he): speaking on behalf of another person or group” (p. 350-351). According to Bull and Fetzer (2006), the meaning of pronouns is context dependent and retrievable only by inference, and therefore is less determinate than proper nouns. Furthermore, the context can shift as the status of the participants shifts in interaction. Bazzanella (2002) argues that the context is crucial in understanding pronoun usage, and in an analysis of pronoun usage, summed up the problem of comprehension and context by asking: “who are we?” (p. 244).

Inigo-Mora (2004) argues a speaker’s main purpose for using collective personal pronouns “is to get as many people as possible to agree with her/his opinion, and this will be easier if the listener feels that s/he is in the same ideological-political category” (p. 46). However, a result of the wide range of collective pronoun usage in this case is that the opposite of transparency results. That is, identities are blurred through the fluctuating articulation of different voices. On some occasions, Hill does mark his perspective (eg: ‘we as a nation’, ‘I want to make it clear that I am extremely proud’ – ref 5 & 11). However, on other occasions, Hill’s perspective changes and he relies on the assumptions of the reader to distinguish between the various perspectives. For example, within the following phrase, Hill may represent numerous people or organisations; ‘As a team in Melbourne, we didn’t meet our expectations’ (ref 6). The reader is left to decipher which ‘we’ Hill refers to: the athletes only, Sparc only, or Sparc plus the NZOC and NSOs. At an event such as the Commonwealth Games, the NZOC and NSOs would certainly be as much members of the ‘team’ as the CEO of Sparc. Pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘our’ in this case do not make this distinction. Since these other organisations are involved in
Sparc’s policy a reader must either read those organisations ‘into’ the context, or exclude them.

Maier (1996) states that “in order to reach common discursive ground, [a speaker] must adopt a kind of idealized identity involving … simplification” (p. 36). However, in the present study, because of the myriad of stakeholder groups referred to in Hill’s article as well as the various voices, Maier’s ‘idealized identity’ cannot be realised. This affects the reader’s perception of ‘agency’, and on numerous occasions it remains unclear whether other organisations (such as the NZOC or NSOs) are part of Hill’s collective pronouns. While it is likely on some occasions knowledgeable readers will understand which group a particular pronoun refers to, Hill’s ubiquitous use of pronouns to sympathise with disparate groups negates any ostensible distinction between them. Such fluctuation blurs the ‘voice’ being used and as such, also blurs the purported transparency that Sparc vocally promotes.

Compounding the confusion over the origin of the voice is that Hill also refers to Sparc by name on ten occasions throughout the article. In the main, these references inform the reader that Sparc is proactive, as opposed to being either acted upon or being reactive to a situation. For example, comments such as ‘Sparc’s decision’, ‘Sparc arrive[d] at’, ‘Sparc then provides the investment’, ‘Sparc invests’, ‘Sparc needs to be open’, ‘Sparc invested’, ‘Sparc… will now commence’, ‘Sparc… [will] see…’ add to Sparc’s legitimacy as central to the organisation of New Zealand high performance sport.

The variations in Hill’s discursive position are influential to the extent that they (like the other convolutions) destabilise the location of the argument and imply the possibility that Hill is speaking on behalf of all organisations in the sector. That is, using collective pronouns serves to legitimate Sparc’s actions by assuming other organisations support the actions.

It could appear from the article, due to Hill’s employment of various ‘voices’ (leader, public official, member of the New Zealand team, private citizen), that the medal target policy was supported by other organisations involved with the New Zealand team. However, one organisation intimately involved in the selection and management of the Commonwealth Games team, The New Zealand Olympic Committee, did not endorse the notion of transparency through counting medals. Barry Maister, the secretary general of
the NZOC attempted to distance the NZOC from the target, arguing in the post-Games media debate that medals were not necessary. In a diplomatic tone, Maister stated;

The NZOC believes that the athletes in all sports were committed to excelling. We did not set medal targets but believed that all athletes, on their day, had a realistic chance of medalling. (Maister, 2006, italics added)

Sparc’s review of the Games however, noted that “It was agreed with the NZOC that Sparc would make public a medal forecast prior to the Games in Melbourne” (Sparc, 2006e, p. 5).

While the NZOC did not make any statements endorsing the medal target before the Commonwealth Games, the mention of the NZOC joining Sparc in ‘[commencing] the post-Games debrief process’ (ref 9) conflates these disparate measures of success. From reading Hill’s article, it is likely that readers would assume that every organisation involved (Sparc, the various NSOs and the NZOC) endorsed the medal target. It is this conflict between at once being ‘transparent’ about targets, while leaving the mechanics of the goals opaque, that leaves Sparc policy open to criticism and even ridicule, evidenced by journalist Joseph Romanos’ sarcastic and disparaging review of Sparc’s medal target policy;

Nick Hill … said anything less than 40 medals would be of concern. Well, New Zealand won just 31 medals, so Hill and his mates must be suicidal. Sparc have been backtracking furiously. They now claim the team target of 46 medals was not theirs but dictated by the individual sports. That’s disingenuous. The reason individual sports nominated a medal target publicly was because they were forced to do so by Sparc, in its mission for public accountability. The sports were uncomfortable doing it, and Sparc should be honest enough to say so. (Romanos, 2006b)

Romanos highlights here one of the most debated ideas around the notion of medal targets; to what extent does Sparc govern the practices of national sport organisations and athletes?

Discussion

Foucault argues “we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth” (Foucault 1980d, p. 93,
italics in original). Regarding the games of truth played here, it is clear Hill firmly believes he is correct in his assertions. To that end, the author does not believe these convolutions are due to Hill’s inability to communicate effectively. Indeed, Hill is typically articulate in radio and television interviews.

Research on the construction of national identity often assumes a monoglossic, clear articulation of particular visions of the nation or national identity by particular stakeholders within the sector, and concentrated on conflicts and contradiction between stakeholder groups. For example, various researchers explain that New Zealand’s construction of identity in relation to major sports events has revealed key stereotypes of New Zealand character which include strength, team spirit, hard work and perseverance as well as a laid back attitude, resourcefulness and a willingness to give anything a go (Silk, 2001; Wensing et al., 2004). This chapter showed how such traditional straightforward conceptions are constructed problematically through debate and argument within various media. Specifically, this chapter proposes that debates about national sport policy have inherent conditions which lead to convoluted and ambiguous understandings of reality. Inherent contradictions disrupt any attempt at developing a unified understanding of sport, recreation and physical activity. As such, it might be overly simplistic to suggest, as Wensing et al. do, that:

The way sport is organised and valued by the government has changed: a clear priority is to have New Zealanders not only participating but winning in sport. This is an apparent about-face by the government which, since the 1970s, has emphasised the benefits of participation in sport for everyone, including the instillation of character-building values and traits such as hard work and fairness. Sports organisations are concerned that being a good sport or trying your best, long-held New Zealand values, may no longer be acceptable in an environment where funding and support is determined by on-field performance. (2004, p. 205)

The idea of an ‘about-face’ assumes a simple dichotomy with regard to investing in sport and recreation, and may be overly alarmist with regard to the future of sport in New Zealand. It is clear from the analysis here that a range of discourses are at work in the construction of sport policy. Wensing et al. (2004) also cite and seem to agree with Grant and Stothart (2000), who argued, a “sport for all ideal will struggle to survive in a system that reflects and celebrates a professional ethos where winning is the dominant characteristic” (p. 268, italics added). It is posited here that ‘winning’ is only one of
various competing discourses, and to suggest that the current structure of the sport and recreation sector has ‘winning’ is a dominant characteristic might do a disservice to range of organisations and institutions, located either within or outside of a central government mandate.

Regarding policy priorities in UK sports Green (2004) asks: “Is there room, then, for alternative voices within this context of discursive activity that privileges elite performance?” (p. 382). We argue here that while specific policy documents might prioritise specific ideas and discourses around sport and recreation, the way policy is spoken about, debated and framed in various media and by policy representatives themselves, means a homogenous discourse is not likely. That is, despite assertions to the contrary by policy makers, alternative voices come from policy makers themselves.

Foucault notes that “the history of ideas usually credits the discourse that it analyses with coherence” (1972, p. 166). The numerous instances of confounding, seemingly contradictory evidence used to support the medal target policy demonstrates an inherent facet of discourse; contradiction. Foucault argues that contradiction, or “multiple dissentions” (1972, p. 168) exist:

far from being an appearance or accident of discourse, far from being that from which it must be freed if its truth is at last to be revealed, constitutes the very law of its essence: it is on the basis of such a contradiction that discourse emerges, and it is in order both to translate it and overcome it that discourse begins to speak; it is in order to escape that contradiction, whereas contradiction is ceaselessly reborn through discourse, that discourse endlessly pursues itself and endlessly begins again. (1972, p. 168)

Further, Foucault (1979b) argues that the operations of a discourse cannot be serially connected, its concepts may be incompatible, and its theoretical options are often mutually exclusive. As such, the seemingly contradictory statements by Nick Hill and Sparc, along with the associated contradictory policy statements are not necessarily signs of a poorly managed discourse, but are features internal to it.

The irony in this case is that by attempting to quell criticism on ‘uncompromising’ policies, comments by Sparc representatives are in themselves flexible and context dependent. That is, various grammatical processes, agents and terms are framed in different ways at different times. In a time of a perceived crisis of confidence for Sparc, these flexible discourses serve to convolute understandings of Sparc’s agency, roles,
goals and measurement systems. This, in turn, serves to disenfranchise stakeholders and members of the New Zealand public about Sparc’s ability and legitimacy.

Knight et al. (2005) argued that there were mediated understandings of under-performance in the Olympic Games by the New Zealand team by noting:

Not only was the New Zealand narrative more normatively oriented with respect to both the attribution of blame and nostalgia for a lost past, it also articulated these to a broader sense of decline in collective moral values and the institutions responsible for inculcating these values. (p. 47)

This particular conception of New Zealand’s lost sporting history is continued through Sparc’s post-Games report, which notes that “talent alone is no longer enough to win” (Sparc, 2006d). Similarly, the reference to the moral values is echoed in Trevor Mallard’s outburst about the lack of mental toughness of New Zealand athletes (a statement for which he later apologised). This nostalgia of and yearning for a lost past are combined with a continuing drive to instigate a new order of policy and practice that sees the values and language of professionalism and corporatism as instrumental in the construction of the nationalistic conceptions of sporting success. In any case, whether or not New Zealand citizens felt similarly about the decline of collective moral values following the Melbourne performance is unclear.

Numerically measurable goals are typically used by publicly accountable organisations. Such measurable goals are often underpinned by the idea that numbers are objective and scientific. Because the act of counting seems like a scientific process, counters hold significant power by the mere virtue of using numbers. All counting is political because a group decides what to count and how to count it. Funding, legitimacy, status and perceptions of national pride (or national shame) are all affected by who can use numbers to suit particular agendas. Of course, the argument that Sparc is unable to ‘coherently’ manage the mixture of epistemologies is itself holding Sparc’s policy against a positivist yardstick of coherence and rationality. However, positivism is only employed within this thesis insofar as to illustrate that even positivist policy is bound to be incoherent, inconsistent and incapable of living up to its promises of objectivity and neutrality. The recommendation here then, is to suggest to policy makers that policy is written with a ‘minimum of domination.’ Of course, such discursive domination may also
be an inherent part of policy power relations. Thus, there is no end point, but as Foucault might argue, a ceaseless discursive struggle.

It is readily apparent that problems arise from the multifarious stakeholders involved in policy decisions. How these differences are managed is clearly of great import if stakeholders agree to be governed by particular conceptions of reality. This is perhaps the most discursively influential idea surrounding the publication of medal targets. To compare the result of the Commonwealth Games with Sparc’s stated intentions, despite Nick Hill’s assertion that ‘there will always be debate around medal counts’, it is argued here that measuring success based on a medal targets contributes to damaging a ‘common vision’ and national identity rather than promoting it.

Conclusion

A pervading theme of New Zealand government-sanctioned sport funding bodies over the last twenty years is the idea of a ‘common goal’ as an overarching principle. It is argued here that due to the inherent nature of contradiction in sport policy discourse, ‘one voice’ or one truth, is inherently unachievable. Further, it is argued that developing an appreciation of the influence of the various convolutions on communication with stakeholder groups would aid policy makers in forming future policy.

This chapter conceives of transparency as a rhetorical act; transparency requires choices about how to portray the measurement, explanation and defence of policy choices. It is argued here that while transparency is ostensibly appealing, and used to justify organisational goals, its enactment can expose inherent discursive contradictions. These contradictions in turn can undermine transparency’s supposed benefits. This chapter argues that the idea of transparency is inherently problematic in the implementation and defence of national sport policy. As such, organisations are hindered in achieving their organisational goals, despite using an idea that has connotations of ethics and fairness.

While on the one hand, rhetoric surrounding the medal target policy focused on its ‘necessity’, there is potential for policies which allow organisations (and athletes) to develop their own measurements of success. If power is only exercised on free
individuals, as Foucault asserts, then despite the imposition of medal targets, there will be
discursive space to manoeuvre and promote other understandings of success.

This chapter brings to an end the explication of various discourses brought into
existence and played out through national sport policy. The following chapters provide
analysis pertaining to how the examination of discourses can aid both citizens and
stakeholders to construct understandings of sport which are enacted with a minimum of
domination.

Postscript
The government’s 2004/05 financial review of Sport and Recreation New Zealand
included the following remark:

We recommend that Sparc reassess the way sporting groups are funded, and
review the effectiveness of its sporting and training programmes. Sparc have set
themselves high goals which they failed to achieve at the Commonwealth Games.
We think it is inappropriate to blame the athletes or the individual sports as they
are not responsible for the Sparc decision-making process which resulted in
funding. Sparc must reassess the indicators of success against which they provide
funding. (Government Administration Committee, 2006, p. 4)
Sparc’s review of the Games stating: “Sparc remains committed to the concept of
providing a medal forecast, but the data and approach used to set the target for Melbourne
in 2006 needs to be improved” (Sparc, 2006e). However, recent newspaper articles
suggest that medal targets “may go but pressure [is] on to perform” (Cleaver, 2007).
CHAPTER 8
DISCOURSE OF DISSENT

“… to understand what power relations are about … we should investigate the forms of resistance.” (Foucault, 1982, p. 211)

This chapter investigates who can protest public policy, what they protest about and what the results of such protest are, since acts of protest can help us understand the extent to which marginalised understandings of sport and recreation are attended to by public policy makers. Public dissent and protest of public policy is an important area to study. Peters and Cmiel argue that the public sphere “is the site where the citizenry debates matters of concern and discursively formulates core values” (1991, p. 199). Chalip (1995) agrees, arguing that as a cultural practice, public policy is an important avenue for stakeholders to challenge or resist potentially debilitating assumptions with regard to the allocation of public money to achieve particular economic and social ends in New Zealand. The rationale for investing in high performance sport and the benefits of physical activity are by now colloquially ubiquitous, but this is not to say that these understandings go unchallenged. Public protest of national sport policy are common in New Zealand, particularly during times of major policy changes, major funding decisions or significant events. This chapter investigates how policy stakeholders understand acts of complaint as resistance of national sport policy. Complaints directed toward Sparc are examined here since such protest both reflects perceptions of the organisation’s effectiveness and, in turn, affects the legitimacy of the organisation in the eyes of others.

There is a wealth of literature surrounding alternative voices and resistance which attempt to disrupt common discourses in the sport and recreation realm. Recent research has been conducted surrounding masculinities (Pringle & Markula, 2005), definitions of physical activity (Bercovitz, 1998, Bercovitz, 2000), the shifting of resources to elite sporting priorities (Green, 2004), physical education and development curricula (Burrows and Wright, 2001) and media constructions of elite performances (Knight, MacNeil & Donnelly, 2005). This chapter builds on these analyses by exploring what effects individuals who attempt to challenge a governing body, and a governing discourse, have through public protest. While other analyses within this thesis have either involved or related in part to understandings of
resistance or protest to various degrees, this study focuses explicitly on how relations of power are tested within a policy setting. It examines the ability of people without formal or bureaucratic power necessarily, to impact on understandings of sport and recreation.

It is clear that Sparc at once makes an overt effort to structure institutional arrangements and understanding in ways that agree with a ‘common vision’, while also espousing openness to dissenting points of view. As such, while attempting to enforce neo-liberal understandings onto the sport sector, those constructing policy must contend with stakeholders who disagree with the direction of Sparc for any number of reasons, and who convey these disagreements in a wide variety of ways. Despite many reasons for protest and challenge, and in order to ring-fence this study, the analysis confines itself to examining the contested understandings of policy ideas, and specifically, how protestors have taken issue with the construction of policy language. It follows Pringle and Markula’s (2006) suggestion that as sport researchers “we ought to focus on how individual athletes, coaches or managers might problematise the codes of sport and then identify what specific practices develop based on the initial problematisation” (p. 140).

**Chapter Purpose**

This chapter presents findings from an examination of the public protest of New Zealand sport policy. Specifically, it investigates the techniques used by citizens involved in sport and recreation in New Zealand to protest and resist perceived debilitating policy conceptions espoused by Sparc. Following on from the previous chapter that explored how games of truth are played by Sparc, this chapter examines how protest of a particular ‘truth’ is possible. The voices of dissent that exist in public protest are examined; inasmuch as such protest is broadcast via public media. This includes mass media debate including: newspapers, radio debates and public websites.

In effect, this chapter analyses competing views of the same ‘historical fabric’, since this is where Foucault argues that domination can be exposed. This chapter addresses four aspects of resistance. Firstly, the chapter introduces the concept of parrhesia (a practice used to tell truth to people in power). Foucault (1999) explored this idea of speaking truth to power throughout history. Using Foucault’s analytical framework, the chapter begins by asking who is able to take part in parrhesia in a policy setting. Secondly, it examines which truths are debated in parrhesiastic games.
Here the chapter demonstrates that aside from protesting the actual policies, protestors are adept at critiquing the language, or discourse of policy, thus becoming discourse analysts themselves. Thirdly, it examines the consequences of partaking in parrhesia, and finally it considers the link between truth-telling and the exercise of power as it relates to current Sparc policy. We argue that while protestors often consider their protests are ineffectual, change can and does result from parrhesia in a public policy setting.

**Theoretical Approach: Technologies of the Self**

After much analysis of the workings of power and truth in institutions, and analysis of how individuals become subjectivised by governing discourses, Foucault began examining the way in which individuals could operate within structures of dominance. Such an approach consists

... of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies ... (p. 329)

Through such analyses, as Hofmeyr (2006) notes, “A reconceptualized self appeared on the scene: exit self, the product; enter self, the creator” (p. 216). Foucault studied the Greek and Greco-Roman cultures to analyse how citizens could structure their own lives and care for themselves. Specifically, he examined how this care of oneself would involve “struggle against the forms of subjection—against the submission of subjectivity” (1994n, p. 331-332). To be clear, Foucault was arguing not against particular institutions, or groups, but rather the techniques or forms of power that are employed by various groups which limit the opportunities for individuals to fashion their own meanings and construct their own lives.

Foucault conceives of ‘the self’ in these latter studies as one that might be able to oppose dominant power structures and discourses and fashion their own. Individuals, Foucault argued “are much freer than they feel ... people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have built up at a certain moment during history, and this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed” (1988c, p. 10). Foucault argued, that by utilising technologies (or ‘practices’) of the self to ‘care’ for oneself, an individual could construct an understanding of their own life which is less dominated by problematic, stifling, or constraining understandings. Foucault
considers these technologies as “procedures … suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self mastery and self knowledge” (1988b, p. 87). Through these procedures, people can be freer, because they are relating to themselves in a way that is not overly governed by the self’s relationship with truth/knowledge and power (1984a). Regarding the relations of power that technologies of the self confront, Foucault argues:

The problem is not trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18)

The process however, is not straightforward. Since power is everywhere (and assuming wherever there is power, there is resistance), there is a danger that resistance is continuously applied to every new form or practice, meaning that practices of the self always become problematised. In fact, Foucault argued that individuals neither invented nor was in total control of forming him or herself. “They are patterns … which are proposed, suggested and imposed by his culture, his society and his social group” (1988b). Nevertheless, Foucault argued that technologies of the self:

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (1988b, p. 18)

Further, the practice is not necessarily simple to enact. How technologies of the self are actually employed by individuals is not a simple process. Foucault asks “what should one do with oneself? How should one govern oneself by performing actions in which one is oneself the object of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they deploy, and the subject that acts?” (1994, p. 87). The important point is that it is the individual who governs themselves in the case; “in its different forms [technologies of the self are] dominated by the principle that says one must ‘take care of oneself’” (1986, p. 43). The practices of the self that Foucault reviewed included a wide array of understandings about how the self could be cultivated. These included the study of philosophy, the practice being laborious in the sense that it takes time spent on exercises; practical tasks and other various activities (correlated with medical thought and practice), that includes at once forms of
examination and codified exercises, self-examination, and a questioning of current representations; examining them, monitoring them, sorting them. By engaging in practices of the self, “the chief objective one should set for oneself is to be sought within oneself” (1986, p. 65).

While much recent research (Chapman, 1997; Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 2001; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003, Pringle and Markula, 2005) has addressed the construction of the self in sporting contexts, little attention has been directed towards citizens attempting to engage in such technologies in a specifically public arena. Thus here we focus on ways in which citizens can attempt to construct ‘the rules of the game’ so as to minimise domination, utilising a specific technology of the self; parrhesia. From this point, I proceed with a discussion of how various ways of knowing about sport and recreation might be publicised, through the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, and consider parrhesia as a practice of the self that might minimise domination.

The Insurrection of Subjugated Knowledges

While there is an expansive array of literature on various forms of resistance by critical and constructionist scholars such as Gramsci and Bordieu, this research is informed by Foucault’s conception of the relationship between resistance and power. While Foucault’s early theorizing has been criticised for subordinating the idea of agency to overarching discourses, his later writing focusing more on an individual’s possibilities of affecting their own situations and circumstances; “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Foucault did not assume that humans are powerless in the face of dominant discourses, and towards the end of his life dwelt on how active humans could be in determining the structure of their own lives:

Perhaps I’ve insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself in the technology of the self. (1988, p. 19)

Foucault’s conception of the way in which power arrives at a particular point is not due to an organisation or group having power already; rather people and organisations become influential because of the workings and tactical usages of discourses. There is no set group responsible for producing or controlling dominant
discourses. As such, instead of power relations resulting in a subordinated, oppressed group, there is always space for resistance within policy settings.

Studying both the production and effects of public policy discourse at its outer reaches, at its extremities, is important, since according to Foucault, there are “…polymorphous techniques of subjugation” (Foucault, 1980, p. 96). Thus, the question becomes, how does public policy institute forms of domination and subjugation? Foucault argues that “to live in a society is to live in such a way that action upon other actions is possible, and in fact ongoing” (1982, p. 343). Foucault believes that a way of knowing should not be accepted at face value; that truth games should be analysed to show how human beings understand themselves. This could be accomplished through technologies of the self, which would help individuals to “change themselves in their singular being” (1984a, p. 10).

Assuming marginalised ways of understanding exist within sport public policy, it is likely there are multiple avenues that might bring them into existence. Also, it is assumed that this study could not do justice to the range of knowledges that exist around sport and recreation. As such, this chapter limits itself to an analysis of knowledges that directly confront the scientific and corporatist discourses which marginalise them. In particular, scientific discourses were an important component of Foucault’s study; he explained that discursive struggles are waged against them:

We are concerned … with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society. … It is against the effects of the power of a discourse that is considered to be scientific that the genealogy must wage its struggle. (1980d, p. 84)

Subjugated knowledges, according to Foucault are “blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory” (1980d, p. 81). Foucault delineates such knowledges into two strands. Firstly, he refers to “the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation” (1980d, p. 81). Secondly, such knowledges include a “whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated; naïve knowledges, located low down the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition of scientificity” (p. 82).

One might wonder to what extent understandings in national sport and recreation policy are located ‘low down’ the hierarchy, since, ostensibly, ideas of
transparency and accountability construct a world view that no matter one’s status in
the sport and recreation delivery system, one might be able to have input into the
delivery system. However, it became apparent early in this study that many people felt
uncomfortable about communicating with Sparc, for fear that their organisation might
lose favour or funding for offering alternative, dissenting views. Thus, relations of
power were not framed with a minimum of domination when Sparc was first
legitimised through the Sport and Recreation Act of 2002. Investigating the modes of
critique offered by those ‘low down’ in the policy sphere is useful, since, as Foucault
asserted, “it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges … that
criticism performs its work” (1980d, p. 81).

Entwined in such criticism is the possibility of what Foucault calls the
‘strategic reversibility of power relations’:

the ways in which the terms of governmental practice can be turned around
into focuses of resistance, or the way in which the conduct of conduct is
interwoven with the history of dissenting ‘counter-conducts.’ (Foucault, 1991)

That individuals affected by problematic policy might have an opportunity to provoke
change or at least minimise the domination by such policy is an optimistic outlook,
considering much of the policy considered here tends to govern the population in its
entirety. Sparc’s rhetoric of ‘Our Vision, Our Direction’ as a governing slogan, and
the espousal that ‘sport is in the blood of all New Zealanders,’ tend to assume that the
populous will agree with both the espoused benefits of sport and recreation, and the
mechanisms by which these are delivered to citizens. Nick Hill summed this up when
discussing Sparc’s first strategic document: “You need a strategy that everyone agrees
to” (Hill, 2002a). The following year however, it seems Hill had experienced that
criticism of the document was a normal component of setting and implementing sport
policy “We’ve got lots of critics. It’s the nature of the business we’re in” (Hill,
2003b). Hill’s latter comment parallels Foucault’s explanation of political existence:
“the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the
‘agonism’ between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent
political task inherent in all social existence” (1994n, p. 343). This ‘agonism’ is
considered a “relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle,
less face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent
provocation” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 222). As such, one assumes that there is
a general permanence, if not between the specific actors involved in disputes over
public policy, then at least in the theme of power and resistance; this analysis to what extent individuals have the capacity to construct their own understandings of sport and recreation. Any criticism is local according to Foucault, not in terms of geography, but in terms of the locus of the production of ideas:

I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought. (1980d, p. 81)

Foucault noted that power relations do not operate in merely a binary fashion. There are numerous styles of criticism and sites where power is undermined, challenged, and reproduced. Criticism, in the case of this project, refers to discursive practices that attempt to construct the social world in an alternative way. By examining individual instances of resistance, this study follows Foucault’s conception of a technique to understand how power operates; specifically in terms of micropolitics of a discourse, since power and resistance “is not a naked fact, an institutional right, nor a structure which holds out or is smashed; it is elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 224). Regarding the practice of resistance, Foucault argues that instead of a massive, single protest movement, there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case; resistance that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition. (1978, p. 96)

Thus, resistance to the power relations of Sparc and their stakeholders is exhibited in many, various forms. Specifically, the practice examined here is parrhesia.

**Parrhesia as a Practice of the Self**

By analysing how the ‘truth-teller’s’ role was variously problematised in Greek philosophy, Foucault asks questions such as “Who is able to tell the truth, [and] what are the moral, the ethical, and the spiritual conditions which entitle someone to present himself as, and to be considered as, a truth-teller?” (1999). Specifically, Foucault uses the term parrhesia to describe one type of truth-telling, borrowed from Greek writing in the 5th Century BC, where an individual speaks truth to power. He

---

38 While Foucault’s analysis conceived of a ‘truth’, considered here, the term is taken to indicate one’s truth, such as a truth contained within subjugated knowledges.
places various conditions on this type of truth speech. It must be associated with a level of frankness devoid of overly-rhetorical devices. Secondly, “the ‘parrhesiastic game’ presupposes that the truth-teller is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others” (1999). Thirdly, there is a level of danger associated with such speech, such as punishment, or in the case of many instances of parrhesia analysed by Foucault, death. Fourthly, the speech is a criticism, and framed in terms of one who has limited access to power criticising one who has significant access with to a governing authority. Fifthly, parrhesia is considered a duty, possibly to speak for others who do not have the opportunity to do so, or as a chosen representative of a group. All of these conditions are met in certain instances of criticism of public sport policy, as will be explored later. In examining parrheisa, Foucault was interested in “the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity … who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power” (1999).

Out of all the above mentioned conditions of parrhesia, most importantly for this research however, is the assumption that any protestor speaking ‘truth to power’ will have the perception of potential negative consequences (for either themselves or an organisation they represent) as a result of their protest. To that end, there is a level of ‘frankness’ about the criticism offered, with the critic putting him or her in a perceived position of disadvantage for doing so. To speak out publicly against a government agenda that explicitly promotes a ‘common vision’ requires significant conviction in one’s beliefs. While one might not be killed for speaking out (as Foucault notes would occur if, in earlier times, one once spoke out against the king), there may be implications for job prospects, relationships and funding.

As well as this, a citizen must have the time, resources and ability to leverage such criticism. Even so, Foucault states that points of resistance to dominating power relations are usually “mobile and transitory” (1978, p. 96). Thus we conceive of parrhesia here as a practice of the self in a similar vein to Foucault’s explanation of parrhesia as a philosophical inquiry; “[It] is not primarily a concept or theme, but a practice which tries to shape the specific relations individuals have to themselves” (Foucault, 1999).

**Research Approach**
To place some boundaries on this study, public resistance and protest manifested through discursive practices examined here is taken to include utterances which attempt to contradict assumptions or logic supporting Sparc policy. Resistance, considered here, is examined through letters to the editor, radio interviews and internet communications. Certainly, resistance to policy may also take place at the site of consumption of sport and recreation, such as a coach encouraging an athlete to take performance enhancing drugs, or a parent yelling abusive comments from a sideline. As such, the public policy discourse examined here is only one way of understanding meanings surrounding sport and recreation. Numerous other values and actors affect the enactment of sport policy.

A number of factors highlight the transitory nature of sport and recreation policy protest. For instance, any citizen wishing to protest sport and recreation policy is often dependent on having sympathetic media who will transmit the message to the public. With this in mind, in order to ring-fence the study, public protest was investigated from June 2002 to January 2007. Data was gathered concurrently from a variety of sources. The process involved firstly selecting and analysing a range of what was considered public protest and / or resistance to Sparc policy. This public protest includes analysis of oral debates and written criticism; namely protest which was visible in newspapers, magazines, the radio and the internet. Specifically, newspapers included the New Zealand Herald, the Dominion Post, and the Sunday Star Times and magazines including the New Zealand Listener and a range of sport-specific magazines. The radio sources used included the main Radio Sport and Newstalk ZB. Internet sites included www.sportsfreak.co.nz and www.houseofhoncho.com, and websites that had been identified as particularly critical of Sparc policy. Online forums were also browsed to contextualise how various sport and recreation oriented citizens thought about Sparc throughout the period. While much effort was taken to keep abreast of public protest concerning Sparc’s policies, it is accepted that not all public debate was ‘collected’ or recoverable. Also, although non-public forms of resistance would also be worthy of investigation, it was beyond the scope of this study.

Semi-structured interviews were held with three individuals who were actively involved in the protest of Sparc policy. It should be noted that one of the protestors criticised Sparc’s early policy during 2002 and 2003, while another predominantly publicly protested during 2006 and 2007. The third, a journalist, criticised the
organisation’s dealings over the course of the research period. Interviews were also held with two Sparc employees involved in the setting and dissemination of public policy. The interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes and were recorded and transcribed. In instances where clarity was sought, the transcriptions were emailed back to the respondents with follow up questions included. The participants received an information sheet regarding the nature of the investigation prior to the start of the interviews (see Appendix 1). All participants were given an informed consent form to sign before the interviews were conducted (see Appendix 2). Also known as semi-structured or guided interviews, the interviews consisted of a set of predetermined questions around which the interviews were focused (see Appendix 3 and 4). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for certain questions to be asked as well as the opportunity to delve further into areas where rich information may be found. Since the protest was ‘public’, it is neither possible nor desired to hide the respondent’s identities in this case, and thus they shall be referred to by name throughout the analysis.

Sparc documents such as annual reports and statements of intent were also read and reflected upon throughout the research. Specific policy that was protested was analysed in order for the researcher to become familiar with the issues which gave rise to the protest. It should be noted here that these sources are not exhaustive.

Analysis

The Parrhesiastic Context; A Climate of Fear

“Who is able to tell the truth?” (Foucault, 1999)

Despite callers to talk-back radio (such as Radio Sport) being candid about the topics which they discuss, there was a widely held belief that speaking against Sparc policies was inappropriate. Resistance through publicly speaking out was not necessarily beneficial and could be detrimental to either their enjoyment of sport and recreation or to the financial status of respective organisations. This was also reinforced by the interview respondents and others in the sports sector. During one of Nick Hill’s first radio interviews representing Sparc (Hill, 2002a), one caller, Dan, along with Neil Tonkin (a former Hillary Commission employee), insinuated that the level of power Sparc has made it problematic to voice criticism of Sparc’s policy:

Murray Deaker (host): Dan, your question, who’s it for?
Dan: Ah, yeah Murray … I’m involved in a number of sports at a regional and national level, and I’m not going to name them for reasons that I’ll tell ya, and that’s just because Sparc’s created a real culture of fear. You feel threatened to speak out.
Deaker: Why do you feel threatened to speak out?
Dan: Well they hold the purse strings … you felt like you could [speak out] under the old Hillary Commission, but here there’s a real clear message coming through even Regional Sports Trusts: ‘shut your mouth and be happy with what you’ve got.’
Deaker: Have you been told that?
Dan: Not in so many words, but it’s coming through. ‘Play by the rules or you’ll get your fingers burnt’.
Deaker: Nick, that’s a severe criticism.
Hill: I just completely reject it Murray. It’s nonsense. We have never made any decision [based on] whether people have spoken out against us or not.
Neil Tonkin: I’d only reiterate what dozens of people have said to me before and that is that they’re genuinely scared, that they’re afraid both in terms of their organisations and the effects it’ll have on them. Plus New Zealand is a very, very small place.

The action of a caller remaining anonymous illustrates these unequal power relations. That Dan would not disclose which sports he was involved in might either signal a level of paranoia about the reach of national policy makers, or indicate a sentiment common to many in the sport or recreation sectors. Shrouding the caller’s identity also has a rhetorical effect, since it reinforces the perception of Sparc as an organisation irrational and intolerant of divergent views.

The following year, Neil Tonkin, a former Hillary Commission employee, alleged there was still a “climate of fear” (similar to Dan’s ‘culture of fear’) around the act of criticising Sparc policy, and suggested that it was difficult to speak up about Sparc’s policies. Similarly, journalist and sports writer Joseph Romanos echoed this sentiment regarding protest of the 2006 Commonwealth Games medal count, explaining that sports were ‘uncomfortable’ partaking in the process but unwilling to say anything publicly.39 Demonstrating this unease, an anonymous national sport organisation CEO was quoted in a newspaper article concerning a mistake in the allocation of high performance grants by saying “We know Sparc are useless, and this latest stuff-up shows as much, but what can you do? We can’t all afford to go public like [swimmer Dean Kent] did” (Ford, 2007a).

39 One might question the need for sporting organisations to criticise Sparc publicly (through the mainstream media). However, it is understandable given that sport is considered a public good, and therefore organisations might want to make perceived injustices known to both their stakeholders and the wider New Zealand public.
The reference to Dean Kent is important, since it highlights how criticism is considered by both protestors and Sparc. Kent complained by criticising the funding process after $10,000 he had expected from a Sparc ‘Performance Enhancement Grant’ (PEG) was not delivered due to an administrative mistake (Ford, 2007b). A similarly rare instance of an athlete speaking out was that of Jason Stewart, a track runner who had competed at the Olympic Games in 2004. Because he had received no funding to assist his training, Stewart publicly criticised the national governing body, Athletics New Zealand, and Sparc. In a full page article in the Dominion Post, entitled “No Sparc” (Millmow, 2007), Stewart was quoted at length regarding his criticisms:

Basically Sparc is saying, ‘You are competing in a tough event, but too bad we want to get world champions in synchronised gymnastics or tiddlywinks’ … The thing that makes me laugh about Sparc is that they have this policy of supporting ‘sports that matter to New Zealanders like rugby, netball and cricket. But New Zealanders are crying out for the next John Walker or the next Peter Snell … I was fifth at the Commonwealth Games against some of the strongest runners from Kenya and I don’t get a cent. I used to sit back when I was younger and take it on the chin, but it’s ridiculous and it’s about time people knew the truth.

Stewart further explained his quest to let the ‘truth’ be known on an athletics message board:

While I don’t think this article is ‘career threatening’ by any means … I obviously am going to take a fair amount of heat for it - to what degree I don’t know yet. As somebody directly affected by the policies (right or wrong is not the question) that determine who gets this money, I have the right to bring those policies into question, not just for my benefit, but also for my friends and my sport. (Stewart, 2006)

Stewart’s actions do have a parrhesiastic quality, particularly with regard to the negative consequences of doing so. The potential repercussion of speaking out was articulated by another poster on the online forum. ‘Fatboy’ explained that public protest would be harmful:

My advice: When frustrated, don’t put it in writing or in a public domain. You will regret it at some stage … My point surrounds the financial leverage JS could obtain & not destroying personal brand in public domain. (Fatboy, 2006)

---

40 In another instance of dissent, Greg Ford of the Sunday Star Times utilised New Zealand’s Official Information Act to show that Sparc “unwittingly forgot to process the payments on time last year, an embarrassing gaffe which the agency’s high performance senior adviser Martin Toomey took responsibility for” (Ford, 2007b).
The idea of conforming to Sparc’s agenda (‘play by the rules’) is considered here as ethically problematic. One might wonder if it is best to speak publicly if it appears there is an unfair practice, or to maintain one’s ‘personal brand’. To what truth should a potential protestor attend to? When public protestor Neil Tonkin spoke to Murray Deaker concerning Sparc’s power he also gave examples of others in the sector warning him of the effects of his public protests. He was told by numerous others in the sector that he was “committing professional suicide” by criticising Sparc publicly.

The claims that Sparc ‘burns fingers’, that it might be responsible for ‘career suicide’, and that it has ‘created a climate of fear’ are serious allegations. While Nick Hill rejected the idea that Sparc had created a climate of fear, and in particular, said Sparc ‘have never made any decision [based on] whether people have spoken out against us or not’, official Sparc policy indicates otherwise. For instance, the criteria that athletes who receive a PEGs high performance grant are expected to obey include the following condition:

PEGs may be withdrawn immediately if … in the opinion of Sparc / NZ Academy of Sport, a recipient is involved in or carries out any action, statement, or conduct, which brings Sparc, NZ Academy of Sport, the NSO or sport in general into disrepute. (Sparc, 2007c)41

Despite evidence of repercussions for criticising Sparc policy, none of the instances of protest referred to specific policy as an instance of an institutional wall of silence. Instead, they most often deferred to the idea of a ‘climate of fear’. Another example was Rob Crawford, a former president of Orienteering New Zealand:

How can they [speak out]? What positive outcome would it generate? For any stakeholder to offer criticism? I don’t think anyone’s going to stand up to criticise Sparc … Sporting organisations are not going to criticise Sparc, certainly not publicly, some of them would be loathed to criticise them privately. People aren’t prepared to criticise Sparc if they’re receiving funding from them which is a shame.

This sentiment was common. Joseph Romanos, a journalist and sports writer, who interacts with numerous athletes and organisations, similarly explained why Sparc’s market research might portray the organisation in a flattering light:

They would have received a lot more criticism, except the people don’t criticise them in case they get their funding cut, by getting offside with Sparc. Up until very recently I had nothing but bad feedback from Sparc. From NSOs

41 Also, other documents, such as an information sheet for Project-based High Performance Investment 2006-07, contains “conditions of investment: If Sparc approves an investment, it may impose conditions as part of the investment agreement” (Sparc, 2006f, p. 5)
who were too scared to say anything in public in case Sparc cut their funding further, so anything they’re getting is from people who want to say good things about them. I wonder if they’ve heard what Squash have to say about them or Hockey or Basketball because those sports will say nothing rather than criticise them because if they criticise them … it will be ‘fuck ya, we won’t give you any money then’. Therefore the [publicity Sparc is] getting in public is very positive because no one who has got anything negative to say wants to go on the record.

While there is no evidence to suggest that this perceived threat publicly criticising Sparc actually led to a funding cut to particular sports, the fact that the sentiment has made its way into the discourse of the protestor is illustrative of the problematic regard in which Sparc is held by many stakeholders.

This climate of fear was apparent as recounted by Romanos when he saw the chair of Sparc in a café after Romanos had criticised Sparc:

I went into a coffee bar one day and the chairman of the board of Sparc had 500 clippings in front of him. Obviously he had been provided with the week’s clippings. He was sorting them out into positive and negative, like goodies and baddies, and he looked at me like I was the devil [as if to say] - ‘Look at all these clippings I’ve got from you.’

That Sparc measure their positive, neutral and negative publicity (Sparc were averaging between 80 and 99 percent positive or neutral stories for a year and a half according to the Sparc marketing manager) is an indication that dissenting views would not necessarily be welcomed.

There are a variety of vehicles and media through which public protest can be enacted. Much media attention can be generated by complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman, “if you think you have been treated unfairly by a central or local government agency” (Office of the Ombudsman, 2007). In a less formal fashion, a complaint can be directed through telephone calls to a radio station and letters to the editor of various newspapers. Similarly, journalists can criticize through investigative articles concerning the distribution of public money, as can radio station hosts who interview spokespeople of a funding agency.

However, simply because there are a variety of means through which to protest policy, such protest might be accessible only for few people and groups, for reasons such as the fear of losing funds, or the perceived futility of undertaking protest. To address Foucault’s suggestion that “the problem is in fact to find out where resistance is going to organise” (1988, p. 12), it is assumed there is at once an array of power relations occurring at a local, private level, and a multitude of ways of publicly
protesting policy. Public protest is only one form, since the exercise of power and its resistance are not necessarily always ‘public’. Thus, we assume here that while all public protest is resistance, not all resistance is public. Further, to delineate protest from resistance here, we conceive of verbal and written protest as but one type of resistance. It is assumed there will be many forms of resistance to public policy, such as ignoring it and attempting to not be affected by it, as well as a range of other strategies.

It is also assumed that the practical realities of resisting may well be problematic for at least four reasons. In the first instance, any potential protestors must become aware that he or she is potentially being marginalised or excluded through the deployment of a particular discourse. Secondly, having become aware of inequalities or injustice, any citizen must cross the threshold of being sufficiently able to mobilise their concerns. Any number of obstacles may prevent this from happening, since dominant discourses are often structured to ensure their continuity. Thirdly, it is acknowledged here that for many individuals and groups, any potential protest is such a burden as to seem not worth the time, effort, potential humiliation or embarrassment that may ensue from it. And lastly, while it is assumed any citizen can publicly protest policy, it is also recognised a number of pragmatic limitations to the ‘public’ space. Considered here, ‘public’ is limited to mainstream newspaper articles and letters, radio interviews and articles and television articles.

Also, it should be noted that the practice of aggrieved stakeholders not speaking publicly paralleled the feelings of numerous others spoken to informally throughout the research process. However, some stakeholders found a way to overcome this perceived barrier to remaining silent by shifting the tactics of their protest. In particular, voicing one’s concerns anonymously over the internet has been particularly popular in publicising protest of sport and recreation policy. Such a strategy however, is not parrhesiastic, since one might assume that anonymous protestors need not fear any negative repercussions.

Parrhesiastic Protestors of Public Policy - Their Own Discourse Analysis

“About what topics is it important to tell the truth?” (Foucault, 1999)

Despite the espousal of a climate of fear, from its inception Sparc was heavily criticised by a number of people and organisations for not understanding the ‘true’
nature of sport and recreation. That is, criticism was not solely based around the amount of funds that were allocated to (or withheld from) any particular sport or athlete (although that did occur). It was frequently based around the questioning of the discourse used, which often manifested in criticism of the process used to determine policy and the way the policy was explained. The following newspaper headlines give an indication of various media organisations either criticising the policies directly or reporting on public meetings held by Sparc at which various sport and recreation groups were present:

- Sparc support for south queried (Burgess, 2002)
- Sparks fly as Sparc chooses elite (Tutty, 2002)
- Sparcs fly as load falls on volunteers (Brown, 2002)
- Mayor fumes over sports fund axeing (Bloomberg, 2002)
- Anger at sport funding cuts (Bird, 2002)
- Soccer: Questions over Sparc’s priorities (NZPA, 2002)
- Call for rethink on sports funding (Bruce, 2002)
- Sports clubs big losers in SPARC move (Arnold, 2002)
- Hockey stunned by decision not to consider it a priority sport (Gray, 2002)
- Sparc policy slammed (Beaumont, 2002)
- Bombshell cuts sport staff (Catherall, 2002)
- Recreation ‘left out in the cold’ (Pinker, 2002)

Although these various newspaper headlines highlight a range of groups’ dissatisfaction with Sparc, many people involved in the sport and recreation sector felt that it was unwise to speak out against Sparc’s policies. A variety of practices are used to resist the seemingly oppressive understandings that Sparc constructs through policy and media releases. However, there seemed to be a threshold, a ‘level of annoyance’ at which point resistance becomes concerted, and when the protest became parrhesiastic.\textsuperscript{42} Crawford explained his threshold:

> What inspired me to write that article [criticising Sparc’s operations] was a sense of annoyance with Sparc in trying to rewrite recent history because that medal target was definitely set by them. For them to come out and say that was set by the individual sports was a rewrite of recent history. So I got rather annoyed at that and a couple of other statements they made, they were running and ducking for cover because suddenly we’ve got a negative result [at the Commonwealth Games] …

A few weeks after the research interview with Crawford, he submitted a letter to the editor of a mainstream newspaper, reiterating his concerns about the problematic

\textsuperscript{42} It was apparent that successful submissions to mainstream newspapers (perhaps the most public mode of resistance), could only take place if the gatekeepers involved in mainstream media allowed it; journalists need to be “half interested” according to Crawford.
construction of ‘history’ by Nick Hill. This time it was with regard to the allocation of high performance grants:

Dear Sir, Sparc CEO Nick Hill states in your newspaper last Sunday that ‘before Sparc’s introduction of the PEG programme, the level of investment … didn’t allow for significant direct financial support of top-tier athletes’. Mr Hill needs a history lesson. The New Zealand Sports Foundation (responsible for the funding of NZ high performance sport before Sparc was conceived in 2002) for many years provided personal grants to top athletes on a similar basis to the current PEG programme. (Crawford, 2007).

It was apparent that both the protestors of Sparc policy and those who wrote and promoted it were actively engaged in critiquing the meanings of the terminology that was used. In fact, for the protestors, attacking the language was a particularly popular site for protest. From Sparc’s inception the organisation was met with significant, prolonged and wide ranging criticism about the use of language from many people involved in the sport and recreation sector.

The Priority Sports Strategy (part of Sparc’s first strategic plan) was a popular site for protest. The organisation launched its first strategic planning document in May 2002, at a time when national representative teams and athletes had not been performing to the expected level. Two year earlier, New Zealand had won only one gold medal at the Olympic Games, the All Blacks failed to secure the rugby World Cup, and the national netball team, the Silver Ferns, had recently lost in the final of the World Championships. With the 2004 Olympic Games only two years away, those at Sparc wanted to have “athletes and teams winning consistently in events that matter to New Zealanders” (Sparc, 2002, p. 6). One of the most vocal critics of the priority sport strategy was Neil Tonkin, who protested Sparc’s policies in a number of ways, including submissions to weblog sites, via radio interviews with the Sparc CEO, and articles in newspapers and national magazines.43 Tonkin’s criticisms revolved around a number of issues. However, a common theme was a criticism of the language used by Sparc. Regarding Sparc’s priority sports strategy, Tonkin exclaimed in an article that:

Athletics, Cycling and Swimming were told Sparc would concentrate additional resources on them so they could be ‘rejuvenated and established on a sustainable basis.’ I haven’t met anyone who knows what this means. (Tonkin, 2002)

---

43 Tonkin also employed other, less public means, such as group email lists to interested recipients.
In one freelance ‘report’ written by Tonkin, a long and consistent assault was levied at the specific language used by Sparc, in particular language which conveyed a seemingly vague and overbearing corporatist tone. Tonkin referred to this as ‘Sparc-speak’. For instance, Tonkin translated quotes from the first strategic plan. In one case Tonkin interpreted this phrase “Sparc … will deliver the messages to each community by way of a call to action” to “Do what we tell you” (Tonkin, 2002). Similarly, Tonkin sarcastically translated “A common strategic vision, a sense of shared purpose, quality relationships and communication, and effective processes for managing an annual integrated work programme will help to ensure that the activities of both organisations are reinforcing” to read “We’re working with other government agencies” (Tonkin, 2002). The sarcastic tone of much of Tonkin’s protests implies a resistance to the positioning of power by Sparc.

Tonkin’s cynical parodies in a wide array of media, including radio interviews (such as Radio Sport), magazines articles (in the New Zealand Listener), website articles and group email dispersals of the use of managerial language exemplifies a disjuncture between the language of contemporary sport policy and a colloquial way of communicating. While each domain has a specific way of communicating, Tonkin’s critique offered an insight into how restrictive and potentially disheartening particular discourses could be. Similarly, a Garrick Tremain cartoon parodying this expansion in the number of meanings derived from sport and recreation appeared in newspapers around New Zealand, showing the Minister of Sport Trevor Mallard handing over $5 million to “truly needy” yachtsmen. Behind Mallard a coach and a group of young children holding various sporting equipment, looked on disappointedly (Tremain, 2003). Mallard’s justification for the funding was to bolster trade and tourism opportunities for New Zealand (Wallace, 2003).

Tonkin gained a significant amount of media coverage during this period, and received a reaction from Stephen Franks. Franks, an MP and member of the (right wing) Act political party, also began criticising the terminology Sparc used. An Act press release agreed with the sentiment of the climate of fear discussed earlier and also surmised Sparc vocabulary usage in a derogatory (though not parrhesiastic) fashion:

44 The cartoon featured around the time the New Zealand government was considering contributing five million dollars to a 2007 Americas Cup campaign.
Sports bodies, local councils and regional sports trusts throughout the country are so afraid that Sparc will put its foot on the funding pipeline, that they will not speak out, leaving Neil Tonkin to criticise the body for them… Mr Tonkin is wrong in only one thing: he calls Sparc’s language ‘corporate speak’ when, in fact, it is not … Sparc has shown itself to be a classic Government poodle, yapping in bureaucratese. (Franks, 2003)45

In an interview following much of this protest, Tonkin concluded that the early Sparc policy documents were “essentially worthless” because of the corporatist language employed. This criticism continued more than four years later, when Rob Crawford also criticised Sparc’s ability to communicate their values coherently. ‘Nimble’, a term that has become popular in Sparc press releases since 2005, was one such term that exemplified the vocabulary used:

What does [nimble] mean? What it means on the one hand you’re trying to give long term certainty of funding to organisations and on the other hand you’re going to be nimble and quick. That’s a direct conflict.46

As well as this, in a large editorial column in the Sunday Star Times following the Commonwealth Games, Crawford conducted a discourse analysis of his own on the language used by Nick Hill in particular. Throughout the editorial piece, Crawford examined a number of ways that Sparc policy is articulated, and problematised the ideas of ‘winning’, ‘success’, ‘excellence’ and ‘sustained achievement’ used to defend the Commonwealth Games medal target; “While Australians concentrate on excellence and continued improvement, we are getting hung up on winning” (Crawford, 2006, p. B11). Highlighting contradictions is a foundational method of destabilising another’s argument and legitimacy. By highlighting the hypocritical and unclear nature of Sparc terminology (and by implication the thought processes of those involved in producing the policy), the protestors launch a productive attack on a particular policy. Such criticism is perhaps the most accessible form of protest of dominating practices. The most damning criticism was perhaps provided by Tonkin during an interview for this research. He provided a perspective as to the rationale for Sparc using “Sparc-speak”. “[It was] a completely different paradigm, they didn’t know what the fuck they were talking about.”

45 While Franks’ comment is not necessarily an instant of parrhesia, it reinforces the attention directed to the use of rhetoric in public policy.
46 Sparc’s marketing manager reiterated this understanding: “[We give] organisations three year investments to give them some assurity [sic] of planning.”
The Effect of Public Protest: Is Resistance Futile?

“What are the consequences of … telling the truth?” (Foucault, 1999)

The protest of national sport and recreation policy most often faces discursive ‘gatekeepers’, is fragmented in its structure, irregular in its timing, and is typically a solitary activity. One common sentiment was that there existed a feeling of powerlessness with the way the sector was currently being controlled by Sparc. This is not to say however, that public protest of policy does not have an effect. Foucault argues that power relations are not secure but are subject to change (1994n). We examine here how resistance does succeed within the framework of an ostensibly overbearing hierarchy and summarise the implications on behalf of the protestors. Because of the range of seeming inadequacies of current sport policy the protestors are disillusioned, distrustful and resigned to the idea that despite their protests, nothing changes. Crawford explained:

[There is] a little bit more reticence to challenge what Sparc do. Since Sparc have come in, arrogance is not the right word, but they are certainly forthright in their philosophy and they can make tough decisions if they have to, so that is not encouraging open relationships between them and their stakeholders.

He argued that his role as a protestor was influenced in part because nobody else would do it:

No one has the interest to [publicly] question Sparc’s agenda or philosophy because they say this is the way the landscape is – you have to live within that landscape, no one is going to question whether that landscape is right, and certainly stakeholders, they just have to follow the rules of it.

Crawford not only had reflected on the language used by Sparc but also the underlying relationships that were shaped by Sparc taking a particular stance. Crawford was careful to explain that he did not desire an unachievable utopian state where all the needs of a range of diverse groups are satisfied:

See, the thing with any funding process [is] there will be inequities right, but unfortunately, rather than admit to them and work through a solution to them, they’d rather bury them or not admit to them in the first place which I think is a shame. Any funding process will have inequities but it’s how you manage it that’s important.

Thus, it appeared Crawford had reflected on the possibilities of funding (perhaps aided by his experience in accounting) and acknowledged that there would inevitably be limits on the extent to which all stakeholder groups could be satisfied. His issue
was with the way Sparc spokespeople represented the funding process. In contrast, Neil Tonkin suggested that the organisation could be productive on the condition that the “right people” were involved. As such, even the voices of protest were disparate to the extent of lacking their own coherence.

The protestors were by no means a homogenous group. Common amongst the various protestors is a divergence between hoping to initiate some type of change and a conception of futility. For instance, while Jason Stewart’s complaints about the funding of high performance athletes were hopeful of a positive outcome, others were less so. The reasons for offering dissenting voices in the public domain varied, from “wanting to let people know how incompetent [Sparc] are”, to helping out other elite athletes having problems with funding.

**Sparc’s Response**

“What is the relation between the activity of truth-telling and the exercise of power?” (Foucault, 1999)

At the time of writing, Sparc’s marketing manager articulated an upcoming change in language due to substantial criticism. He acknowledged that one reason for the criticism of Sparc was not the ideas themselves, but *how* the ideas were put across. His explanation was framed in terms of how ‘the media’ had linked Sparc’s original mission statement with seemingly contradictory operations by Sparc. Thus it appears that protest in this case was successful in contributing to the alteration of the policy language:

A lot of the criticism over the last twelve months has been around a controversial part of its mission statement where some of the media have interpreted – about seeing New Zealand winning in events that matter. They have taken that when funding decisions have gone against sports – that those sports don’t matter. And that has been incredibly dogged criticism and you will see in the reframing of the mission and vision statement for the next six years, and you will see that one is gone. You will see that that terminology has changed because it was buying us fairly brutal and almost indefensible scrap from the media. Because the media had chosen to put it that way and it was too tough [for Sparc to combat it].

---

47 During a 2007 speech to sport and recreation stakeholders, Nick Hill apologised for Sparc’s vision up until that point, which he suggested had “too much legal input.” The new vision was “really crisp and clear” (Hill, 2007).
The rationale for this change; because ‘it was buying us fairly brutal and almost indefensible scrap from the media’, demonstrates that not all protest needs to be coherent to force change. In this case, it appeared that the change was occurring because Sparc had not articulated their goals in the most effective way. It appeared that even though (according to the marketing manager) this protest was not necessarily rational, Sparc altered its appropriation of terminology. The policy manager further explained how the senior management team were re-forming the mission:

If you look at our Act - we were debating this the other day - if you’re looking to where narrowness or broadness lies, our purpose is about physical recreation and sport, but if you then look at our functions, the language switches, and this is an interesting switch from a legislative perspective. We’ve got ‘physical recreation’ and ‘sport’ [in one section] but down here it talks about ‘promote the importance of sport and physical activity … for NZ health and wellbeing”… That could be active transport to work, it could be washing a car, doing the vacuuming, you know, different than [physical recreation and sport].

Foucault argued that the effects of power are always at work, affecting the relationships between people and groups. Accordingly, there are “no relations of power without resistance … [and resistance] exists all the more by being in the same place as the power” (Foucault, 1980f, p. 142). One might argue that senior policy and marketing managers are relatively powerful in the development of sport policy. During the interviews, while this relative accessibility to power was acknowledged, often couched as ‘responsibility’, there were also instances of Sparc representatives both needing and wanting to resist particular understandings of sport and recreation, whether these came from citizens, central government, or themselves.

It is clear that even the policy and marketing managers of Sparc monitor and manage their own language. On numerous occasions throughout the interviews with Sparc representatives, the speaker interrupted their own sentence to use the term ‘partner’ instead of the traditional term ‘stakeholder’. The policy manager explained:

It’s very much an interdependency between ourselves and the sector, as partners, so we have been guilty in the past of using the term ‘stakeholders’. We’re consciously trying to step away from that now.

The idea of associating guilt with the use of a term to describe groups with which an organisation interacts highlights the level of attention given to crafting language in a particular fashion. With that in mind however, at another point in the interview the
policy manager used the term ‘stakeholder’ in a casual manner. Pragmatically, ‘trying to step away’ from the use of the term might take considerable effort, since the term ‘stakeholder’ was mentioned twelve times in Sparc’s 2006 Annual Report. Nonetheless, changing problematic words was consciously considered, and it was clear that individuals setting policy also struggle with how to operate within the popular policy discourse.

Foucault argued that resistance is not necessarily only derived from what Gramscian theorists articulate as a dominated, hegemonic group. Resistance is everywhere; “There is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary” (1978, p. 96). Further,

A power relationship … can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable… that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognised and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. (1994n, p. 340)

Although the Sparc representatives are often considered as powerful agents in the sport and recreation discourse, they too are subject to scrutiny when conceiving of ideas that deviate from the norm. For instance, the policy manager interviewed about the use of language seemed to be articulate and candid regarding the potential problems that arise with communication and acknowledged there were different techniques used for different audiences of policy. Her self-reflexive approach to questioning her own language highlights once again that Sparc documents are not always confined to the ‘weasel words’ alleged by Neil Tonkin in earlier criticism of Sparc. The ability to be critical of her own use of language and actively resist some of the ‘jargon’ was evident from her conscious decisions to change the situation:

Our statement of intent, in terms of audiences, is effectively our agreement with our minister, so first and foremost it needs to meet his level of understanding. But it is also a critical document in helping our stakeholders and the broader public understand what we’re about so we have to ensure it’s readable from their perspective as well. Most of the stuff that we produce we try and write to the lowest common denominator of audience … When I say lowest common denominator I mean, when I arrived every programme seemed to have a trademark like Active Movement Active Schools, SportFit, and we threw them into documents, (even documents to the minister) without explanation of what they were. I was new, I kept seeing these things turn up in documents thinking ‘what the hell is that?’ So I’m trying to get people to step away from that use of our own creative jargon, terms, and names. If we want a catch-phrase we make sure that if we put that in a document we actually put an explanation of what the programme is up front and then we can continue to
refer to the catchphrase. For example ‘BMI’ gets written into things. Now even if you write ‘Body Mass Index’ for somebody who doesn’t know anything about it they’re not going to know what it is, or its relevance to our work, so if you’re needing a term like that, [you also should] put an explanation in again. We try and do that all the way through.

While the policy manager attempted to manage the process by simplifying the technical terms, she acknowledged that this was not always possible due to the requirements of concision, and described some language as ‘tougher’ because of the different audience:

The [Statement of Intent] is probably compromised somewhat because of the need to put a huge amount of information in there while maintaining its brevity. So we’re probably actually responsible for putting tougher language in there than we would in some of our other documents. We assume an understanding of [the] government because we wouldn’t put in an explanation of [the] government to our minister, but readers of it might benefit from understanding government more.

This example provides an insight into what discourse might supersede another. In this case, it appeared that a Statement of Intent, while a legally required document, is written in a way to be comprehended by a particular audience. Despite the different ways of framing different documents, the policy manager also intimated that protest of policy would probably be ongoing. Specifically on the allegation of ‘weasel words’:

I think people could still challenge us on that today and no matter what we did we could always face that challenge, people feeling that there are weasel words there.

It was apparent that some of the Sparc staff critically reflected on the use of particular jargon, and as such, the personal criticism by various protestors directed towards Sparc staff may do an injustice to the reflection that does exist at Sparc. Further to this, one might consider if the protestors refrained from personal attacks of the individuals involved, their criticism of the policy decisions might be strengthened. Importantly, it seems in the area of sport policy production and dissemination, those protestors discussed above are both emitters and receivers of discursive knowledge. That is, while types of knowledge are often held predominantly by a particular group, this knowledge is not mutually exclusive.
The Effects of Public Protest: The Toll on the Individual

The personal toll the public protest took on the dissenters varied. One public protestor eventually ceased criticising in part because the stress of the protest was taking a toll on his health. Thus, one might consider the effect of public protest is a technology of the self limited to the extent of the negative impact it may have on other parts of one’s life. Joseph Romanos, however, appeared to not care about personal attacks towards his reporting:

I don’t care. If I did care you would see how vindictive I could be. I’m just a journalist. I’m just looking to write stories. If they do something really stupid then of course you’re going to write about it.

Another area of interest when investigating relations of power, was the perception (as explained on numerous occasions throughout interviews with the protestors) that nothing could be done to resist the policy decisions, or that protest was not even listened to by Sparc employees. However, there was still an organised effort to resist and influence understandings of sport, through articles, radio interviews, letters to the editor and weblogs.

Such ambiguity in the understanding of the workings of power in this instance may be due to an appreciation of a view of divergent and multiple relations of power. However, it is likely this was not the case since the statements regarding Sparc were absolute in nature. Another possibility is that the ‘absolute’ statements of Sparc’s inability to listen to criticism is for rhetorical value; the idea of painting Sparc as dictatorial monolith. In any case, this understanding did not echo the actual effects of the protest because of the real changes that came about from the criticism of particular policies.

The reasons for this perceived lack of agency were twofold. Firstly, it was clear from the personal interviews, as well as the radio debates, that this was caused by the perception that Sparc representatives and policy makers were arrogant and lacked understanding of the sector’s needs. The perception of arrogance was informed by instances where the critics had encountered representatives of Sparc, either posturing themselves in an arrogant manner, or speaking in a condescending fashion. The feeling of relative powerlessness was also brought about by the ‘caution’ that was needed when criticising the policy, or by speaking on behalf of others who did not want to speak out on behalf of their own organisations.

It was also apparent however, that at times the ostensible resistance to Sparc did not necessarily question the underlying power dynamics, perhaps instead serving
to reinforce it. Inasmuch as some resistance to particular decisions are made, this protest does not compromise the perceived legitimacy of Sparc or its ability to distribute funds to whom it sees fit. For instance, one might consider that those involved in protesting the allocation of sports funds are concerned with the allocation within the sports system, as distinct from being used in other societal domains, such as education, tourism, policing, et cetera.

Rob Crawford, in his protest of Sparc policy language, gave a useful example of this. While he criticised the relations of power with regard to the ideas of ‘excellence’ versus ‘improvement’ in high performance sport, one could argue he merely preserved the idea of elite sport as valuable, natural and worthwhile of significant amounts of public money, and did not alter the overarching discourses necessarily. Similarly, when Neil Tonkin criticised the construction of Sparc’s goals, such as the goal of becoming the most active nation, the criticism was levied at the specific type of measurement used, not the goal itself. In this particular case he criticised Sparc for setting a goal that it had already (apparently) nearly achieved, since Sparc had measured themselves as being the third most active nation according to one measurement. This illustrates that even within protest, there are variable degrees to which relations of power are challenged. It is useful to remember that simply because ‘protest’ is taking place, it does not necessarily follow that underlying relations of power are transformed.

**Discussion**

In the History of Sexuality, Foucault posits that relations of power “can either mutually support each other like links in a chain, or be isolated from one another due to disjunctions and contradictions” (p. 92). In this research, there appeared to be no common strategy amongst the protestors in terms of their own practices of freedom with regard to criticising public policy. However, this is not to say that the protesters’ criticism did not affect the structure of sport and recreation policy construction. Resistance in this case, while appearing futile, could affect the relations of power. It is likely that protestors do not want to do away with the very public policy they are protesting. For instance, all of the protestors enthusiastically supported New Zealanders doing well on the ‘world stage’, and agreed that an agency such as Sparc was potentially useful. The point here is that the protestors did not necessarily want to radically alter the organisation of New Zealand sport and recreation. All continued to
be involved in the discursive terrain of sport and recreation; rather, their protestations were aimed at changing particular relations of power, and not always the underlying understandings of sport and recreation.

Markula and Pringle (2006) posit that practices of the self are predicated on a critical examination of the way ones life is constructed. In the case examined here, the protestors’ conceptions of the governing of sport and recreation realm appeared to lead some individuals to partake in a kind of policy parrhesia. They did not ‘buy into’ the prescribed way of understanding sport and recreation as disseminated by Sparc and chose to partake in a type of ‘free speech’ which was perceived to have the potential for negative consequences. However, like the dissemination of public policy, such policy parrhesia is not necessarily enacted unproblematically. That is, the effects of speaking out against sport and recreation policy has potential to do harm as well as minimise domination.

Foucault argued that studies of power could only take place “on the basis of daily struggles at the grassroots level ... where the concrete nature of power became visible” (1980, p. 116). By analysing the rationale of individuals involved in the production, dissemination and resistance of public policy, one can see how inherent contradictions are managed and how discourses can be challenged. That resistance was considered futile and yet partaken in by the various protestors highlights the ambiguity of perceptions of power relations.

Of importance here is to consider Foucault’s assertion concerning the analysis of institutional power relations:

one lays oneself open to seeking the explanation and the origin of the [power relations] in the [institutions] ... and finally insofar as institutions act essentially by bringing into play two elements, explicit or tacit regulations of an apparatus, one risks giving to one or the other an exaggerated privilege in the relations of power. (1982, p. 343)

Simply because public protest and defence of Sparc often appear in various media as scandal, it does not necessarily follow that these particular relations of power are foundational to all relationships within the sector. At the time of writing all of the protestors referred to in this chapter are still involved in some fashion in the sport and recreation sector, thus suggesting that while protest was public, and that of the parrhesiast, it did not cause the protestors to remove themselves from the realms of sport and recreation.
It is apparent the sentiment felt by those who protested Sparc policy is one of an overwhelming domination enforced upon the sector. However, this dominance does not conform to the tradition of hegemony (despite protestors occasionally inferring it does). This multitude of simultaneous understandings demonstrates that indeed, the ‘public mind’ is not a place where understandings are simply either agreed with or resisted.

To be clear, this research does not suppose that by examining contradictions inherent in national sport policy that there will eventually be a state of ideal communication. Instead, it is assumed that “contradiction is ceaselessly reborn through discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 168). As such, the goal of policy should not be to narrow the wide variety of meanings and discourses into brand essence statements but to appreciate the multitude of understandings that can be derived from sport and recreation. If, as Foucault writes “in the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power” (Foucault, 1980), it would be valuable to extend the range of possibilities as widely as possible to allow stakeholders to enact their own understandings of sport and recreation.

Pringle (2005) mentions the ambiguous nature of power in a Foucauldian understanding and that researchers should be “wary of drawing categorical conclusions with respect to the diffuse workings of power” (p. 268). However, it is argued here that the sheer diversity of values of those involved in the process was contradictory to Sparc’s common vision for sport and recreation in New Zealand. For policy makers, it might be useful to consider O’Malley (1996), who argued resistance should not be considered as the failure of a policy. Resistance is an engagement with the policy process, and can be conceived of as productive; “an integral part of and contributor to programs regarded as successful, and [may] be incorporated into programs rather than merely acting as an external source of program failure” (O’Malley 1996, p. 313).

Further analyses might even look for power relations where one might not expect to find them and in doing so, demonstrate Foucault’s assertion that “Power is everywhere … because it comes from everywhere” (1978, p. 93). For example, it might be useful to look at Sparc’s own protest and dissent or management of its
relationship with the Minister of Sport and other government departments who set the terms of reference and influence Sparc’s operations.

While not examined here, there are various other strands of analysis that would be of interest to those with a stake in sport policy development and for those affected by it. In particular, perceptions of disillusionment would be an interesting research area, since this chapter focused in the main on those who put in significant effort to policy protest. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of those involved in the sport and recreation industry imagined that the dominant discourse cannot be challenged, particularly within the corporatist paradigm. That is, the running of a business immediately limits the conceptual possibilities to act against the organisation, since it shifts the ‘citizen’ to the ‘consumer’. If citizens increasingly are considered, and consider themselves, as consumers, the modes of resistance might differ significantly.

Generally, this study has dealt with explicit regulations of an apparatus; that is, the espoused Sparc policy. This is not to say however, that there are unspoken relations at work; relations which have significant importance to the relations of power. Whatever the case in regard to implicit relations, it is argued here that the demonstrated examples of protest do have implications for the actual production and dissemination of Sparc policy.

Conclusion

By examining the act of ‘truth-telling’ in public policy this chapter sought to highlight the nature of the often difficult act of speaking ‘truth’ to power. By examining instances of individual protest, the chapter showed how “power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies … [and] permeates their gestures” (Foucault, 1979a, p. 28). It also showed how individuals can use particular gestures to question both espoused and implicit relations of power. By asking who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what affect on the exercise of power, this chapter suggests that protest of public policy is a useful and important (though not unproblematic) way for individuals to have their concerns addressed and to change relations of power. The following chapter summarises this thesis and considers future research opportunities as well as avenues for applying the research.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to problematise, through various Foucauldian lenses, discourses surrounding sport and recreation policy in New Zealand sport policy and the responses to them by stakeholders and citizens. Overall, this research study addressed four questions. The overarching research question of this thesis was; how is power exercised in the construction and dissemination of New Zealand public sport and recreation policy? To guide in the answering of this question, a number of other questions were addressed. These included: How is knowledge about sport and recreation produced and disseminated through public policy? How is ‘the truth’ about sport and recreation proclaimed and constructed in public policy? How can individuals challenge existing relations of power enacted through public sport and recreation public policy?

Using Foucauldian theorising as a guide, various instances of the exercise of power were analysed, specifically through lenses of ‘biopower’, ‘truth games’, ‘parrhesia’, and the overarching notion of ‘governmentality’. These various lenses (or tools) allowed different contexts to be analysed in different, yet related ways.

Specifically, the first of these four analytical chapters (Chapter 5) examined how public policy, in an attempt to contribute to a nation’s identity, discursively constructs the world through particular policy goals and measurements. The chapter concluded that Sparc’s ‘most active nation’ goal defined ‘the world’ in a specific way arguably leading to an inherently flawed policy since its Westernised conception of physical activity trivialised the physical activity rates of other nations. That Sparc policy makers have since changed the policy language in regard to the areas of ‘physical activity’ demonstrates that the discourse is not guaranteed or permanent, and that public policy need not unfairly dominate against particular groups.

The second of the four research chapters (Chapter 6) focused on an analysis of the discursive practices utilised by Sparc representatives with regard to an ostensibly overriding episteme of positivism. While ‘evidence-based’ policies are espoused by both government agencies in general and Sparc specifically, it is clear that policy spokespeople use a number of discursive practices to manoeuvre Sparc away from inherent contradictions within their policy practices. Further, it is clear that Sparc, despite using its legitimate, governmental power in a wide ranging fashion, cannot
control all the discourses of sport and recreation. Sparc’s appreciation of this might assist in the formulation of future policy. For instance, within policy, it might be advantageous to use fewer comments regarding Sparc ‘not compromising’ in achieving their goals.

The third research chapter culminated in a case study of a specific instance of a discursive battle over ‘truth’. By problematising the idea of ‘transparency’ that is commonly espoused through much governmental policy, this chapter concluded that despite claims of transparency, the actual articulation of agency, measurement systems, roles, goals and the type of ‘voice’ used by Sparc representatives was anything but transparent. Through a lens of Foucault’s ‘truth games’, this chapter argued that while ‘transparency’ is an ostensibly ethical, noble and worthwhile practice for an organisation to engage in, its implementation is fraught with contradiction and a lack of cogency which transparency purports to offer, particularly when an organisation also employs the discourse (or logic) of marketing to disseminate its policy.

The fourth research chapter moves from a focus on Sparc policy and its articulation specifically, to the discourses offered by those with dissenting views. Various instances of public protest are examined to understand how those who offer dissenting views understand their actions. It asked who can speak the truth, what can be spoken about, what the consequences of such speech are, and what this means for relations of power. By conceiving of public policy public protest as parrhesia, or ‘free speech’, this chapter considered the effect that such protest has on the individuals involved in the protest and the effect it has on the setting of policy. While various protestors believe much of their efforts are not influential, it is apparent that such actions can contribute to minimising the perceived domination of various public policy decisions.

**Setting Sport Policy Today**

Best (1994) explains that genealogy seeks to “vindicate local, disordered, and fragmentary forms of discourse and struggle to battle the operations of power within modern scientific discourses that attempt to assimilate or disqualify local knowledges” (p. 36). Counter-intuitively in a study such as this, there is room to suggest that it is neo-liberal, corporatist discourses that have long been subjugated by
our ‘young’ nation. For instance, Nick Hill suggests New Zealand might have ‘grown up’:

… the ‘easy’ days of binary options; of right and wrong, up and down, winning and losing, black and white, good and bad, goodies and baddies … all options loved by the news media and fringe groups alike because they’re easily understood, simple and articulate, and they encourage little critical acumen or judgement in their delivery. (Hill, 2004a)

Hill’s comments regarding individuals who challenge what is common are also relevant here:

Traditionally, threats to New Zealand orthodoxy were greeted with contempt for tall poppies who had the audacity to stick their heads up over their parapets. To stand out was to be avoided. To be different was to be damned. (Hill, 2004)

The irony over the previous four years is that various individuals have on many occasions, exclaimed virtually the same sentiment, and have been greeted with, if not contempt, then silence from merely being ignored. By positioning Sparc as the challengers of the orthodoxy, through their clearing the way for rationalised, corporatist processes with an overarching logic of marketing and determinism, Hill unwittingly instigates a new orthodoxy, where ideas surrounding best practice and subordination to practices of transparency and accountability (attempt to) govern practices and conceptions of sport and recreation in New Zealand.

Further, the metaphor of ‘growing up’ implies both the immaturity of a particular way of organising as well as a natural progression. If ‘growing up’ refers solely to perceived unproblematic globalising discourses, and if such an orthodoxy becomes cemented as the dominant discourse, an emerging question is what might happen to those discourses which come to be positioned lower down in the hierarchy of policy knowledges. In short, will they remain ‘fringe’?

One might ask if it is possible to distribute public funds with a minimum of domination when ideas of economic growth and nationalism foreground the rationale for sport and recreation policy. However, it is clear that these ideas cannot be deployed without problems. Sparc’s strategic use of multiple discourses simultaneously attempts to mitigate the divergent expectations of their multifarious stakeholders and the government that legitimises them. By both obeying and constructing governing understandings about what active, healthy, sporting citizens
should be, Sparc policy makers are situated in constantly precarious positions, subjected to criticism from a variety of other (often equally powerful) discourses.

Interestingly, part of the rationale for establishing Sparc was to resist the overarching power of other nations with regard to national sporting prowess and being a healthy nation. While these goals were important to public policy makers at the time, more recently the discourse of ‘the family’ has become increasingly foregrounded in recent Sparc policy. Perhaps in spite of the perception of sport as having inherent, teleological meaning, it is likely the dominant understandings espoused by Sparc will continue to change over time, and reflect Foucault’s explanation of discourses; that they provide individuals with “a possible experience for a period of time” (1984b, p. 943). Further, each discourse exists under conditions that are both diverse and imposing; they “exist under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations” (1972, p. 49).

The sentiments of both protestors and Sparc staff involved in this study suggest that despite attempts to narrow conceptions of sport policy, protest and resistance mean the associated rhetoric of sport policy remains highly contested and criticised. It is argued here that while Sparc place themselves at the heart of formal structures in the New Zealand sport sector, power does not automatically lie there; rather, individual protesters hold significant power by virtue of these people knowing what it is ‘really like’ regarding the understandings of sport.

Foucault posed interesting concerns about what to do after subjugated knowledges have been released. Specifically he highlights that while it is not sufficient to merely acknowledge the existence of subjugated knowledges, that such knowledges must also be managed:

Is it not perhaps the case that these fragments of genealogies are no sooner brought to light, that the particular elements of the knowledge that one seeks to disinter are no sooner accredited and put into circulation, than they run the risk of re-codification, re-colonisation? In fact, those unitary discourses, which first disqualified and then ignored them when they made their appearance, are, it seems, quite ready now to annex them, to take them back within the fold of their own discourse and to invest them with everything this implies in terms of their effects of knowledge and power … And if we want to protect these lately liberated fragments are we not in danger of ourselves constructing, with our own hands, that unitary discourse. (1980d, p. 86)

Since Sparc’s existence is based on a unitary colonising discourse (of a common vision), the benefits of which most citizens are content to espouse, the foundations of
the public sport and recreation policy remain solid. However, while it was apparent
that Sparc policy makers could attempt to discursively manoeuvre through
contradictions that were brought to the fore and instances of domination (such as
exclusion from funding decisions) within the espoused policy, it was also clear that
protestors could construct dissent in a variety of ways. This is not to mention the
‘private’ sites of protest (such as individual actors acting in ways contrary to official
policy) which no doubt exist but were not studied here specifically.

**Reflections on the Research Process**

If indeed the power seeps into the very grain of individuals, then self reflection
is certainly valuable. Therefore, here I provide some of the reflections over the
previous four years of this research. Firstly regarding Sparc, on various occasions, it
was difficult to conceptualise of Sparc as anything other than an omnipotent state
monolith. Then, at times, an organisation of people trying to do their best to
encourage people to be physically active. And at others, an arrogant institution bent
on reinforcing historical masculine understandings of sport. In *The Use of Pleasure*,
Foucault reflected on his process of research and its potential implications by noting:

> There is irony in those efforts one makes to alter one’s way of looking at
things, to change the boundaries of what one knows … Did mine actually
result in a different way of thinking? … The journey rejuvenates things, and
ages the relationship with oneself. I seem to have gained a better perspective
on the way I worked – gropingly, and by means of different or successive
fragments - on this project, whose goal is a history of truth. (1984a, p. 11)

From my own perspective, this project has certainly changed who I am, in regard to
the way in which I consider both the power of various discourses, and the (in)ability
of people involved in the sports delivery sector to affect change.

While one ostensible outcome of a research project such as this perhaps over-
simplistically classifies me as an ‘expert’ in New Zealand sport policy, over the
duration of the study, there has been much time to reflect and change my own
understanding of how policy is made and implemented, with particular regard to other
interests. For instance, as a lecturer teaching courses in sports management, the
organisation of sport, sports marketing at a polytechnic School of Sport, which offers
diploma and degree qualifications for those wanting a ‘career in sport,’ there is
significant opportunity to disseminate particular themes and problems that have been
investigated throughout this project. This thesis has also lead me to problematic parts
of my employment role through the marketing efforts of the School, to the extent I participated in reinforcing the idea that ‘sport’ is an economic industry and that it can become a profession of sorts. Regarding the importance of ‘sport’ as a career, it was interesting to reflect that I would often deploy a discursive tactic whereby upon occasionally being asked about my work, my response changed from “I lecturer at the School of Sport, in sport management and sport marketing”, to “I am a lecturer in marketing and management … (at Unitec) … (at the School of Sport).” My own marginalisation of the idea of being a ‘sport lecturer’ was predicated upon the idea that sport might not be considered by others to be a legitimate and worthy site on which to base a career. Regarding one’s interaction with others, Foucault argued:

what characterises the power we are analysing is that it brings into play relations between individuals (or groups). For let us not deceive ourselves, if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. (Foucault, 1982, p. 217)

As a lecturer involved in examining policy discourse, there is certainly no shortage of topics which can be examined through Foucauldian lenses, since conversations about the organisation and meaning of sport in New Zealand arise on a weekly basis. These often relate to colleagues conducting research for Sparc, colleagues working for Sparc (on the organisation’s board), and/or having Sparc and other organisational representatives speak to classes I organise. As well as this, there are occasions of direct engagement in the policy protest itself, through public meetings and occasional submissions to various newspapers. Through these instances, I have become aware of various potential spaces for engaging in my role in the production and usage of policy.

**Sites for Future Research**

While it was not the aim here to track in detail the flow of discourse throughout the entire policy process, it is useful to make a cursory observation about the flow of discourses through it. There appears to be a significant disjuncture between the rationale for investing in sport and recreation, and the discourses used to promote participation in sport and recreation to an audience. For instance, the majority of the marketing efforts of policy have been concerned with fun, fitness, and health.

It appears the reasons for government investment in the sport and recreation sector differ markedly to those reasons which Sparc promote through marketing.
campaigns. That is, while *the nation* is of primary importance to the formulation of mission and vision statements, throughout the mediated process from policy to promotional campaigns, the ‘importance’ of sport and recreation is moulded and shaped towards distinctly *individual* benefits. For example, Sparc advertisements promote weight loss for feeling better and looking better, which is discursively removed from the logic of saving on public medical costs.

In a similar vein, while elite sporting performances are supported through the logic of enhancing national identity, it seems from anecdotal observations that the experiences of elite athletes whom various policies relate to, are not motivated to bringing glory to the nation as one might be lead to believe through marketing campaigns. Interestingly, it is not uncommon to hear athletes who explain they perform for *themselves*, and their own sense of achievement and success. Examining these disjunctures may yield worthy findings.

Another area of interest which might be a logical extension of this research could be an examination of the micro-politics of public policy implementation. Since public protest was a specific site of analysis here, it might be worthwhile to examine how citizens make sense of policies which construct sport, recreation and physical activity in a particular way through various marketing campaigns. Indeed, one can only imagine what techniques and practices citizens and groups apply when faced with governmental marketing campaigns that encourage healthier, more active lives. How such messages are interpreted and appropriated by individuals (as distinct from typical market research that examines the ‘effectiveness’ of a particular campaign), might yield interesting findings.

Also, while this study did not directly compare the articulation and enactment of discourses with other nations, there appears from a cursory perusal that much of Sparc’s rhetoric is similar to nations such as Australia, Canada and the UK. A comparative analysis with one or more of these nations to understand how various manifestations of neo-liberalism are impacting on sport policy globally might also be fruitful.

**Applying the Research**

Butin (2006) asks, in an educational setting “what do I now do with this knowledge?” (p. 375). Revisiting the aim of a critical discourse analysis such as this, we reflect that “as soon as we know more about the discursive representations and
management of problems and conflicts, we have the design for the key that can disrupt, close, and challenge the mechanisms involved” (van Dijk, 1985, p. 7). Put more succinctly, the aim is to live and experience with a “minimum of domination” (Foucault, 1988a, p. 18). It would be naïve to assume that everyone who reads such research would agree with the findings. In fact, it is predicated on the belief that critical discourse research, since it is questioning power relations, in turn will be viewed critically by some readers. Like the texts they explore, the research is partial, contingent, and situated in its own context. It is also important to acknowledge that by simply presenting research findings, the analyst may inadvertently suggest they are describing ‘facts’ as the research text itself is “implicated in the work of reality-construction” (Taylor, 2001, p. 318). One of Foucault’s comments is useful here:

no one is obliged to find that these confused voices [of dissent or revolt] sing better than the others and speak the truth itself. It is enough that they exist and that they have against them everything that is dead set on shutting them up for there to be a sense in listening to them and in seeing what they mean to say. (1994p, p. 452)

Foucault notes “a prudent silence” (1980d, p. 87) which surrounds studies such as this, leaving them unquestioned. This perhaps, in the case of national sport policy funders, may itself be a discursive tactic, by simply ignoring problematic analyses of policy. Another possibility Foucault argues, is that a silence might reflect a failure to produce any arousal on the part of those espousing dominant discourses. The findings are only as worthwhile as the willingness of a particular audience (such as current policy writers) to treat them as legitimate. Keeping in mind the tenets of critical discourse analysis it would be ironic (though not surprising) for some individuals or groups to marginalise or dismiss this research.

During a recent conversation a national sports organisation representative commenting on the effects of a particular Sparc policy, exclaimed “Sparc own us.” If policies can be structured and enacted to the extent that an organisation such as Sparc might discursively ‘own’ other organisations, it might be useful to consider means of destabilising such understandings. For instance, it might be useful to borrow Butin’s (2006) suggestion and apply it to citizens living in a ‘sports mad’ nation. Our presumed understandings can be “actively and productively undercut by reversing and

48 While ‘shutting up’ dissenting voices might not be a practice in the sport and recreation industry, anecdotal evidence suggests that often representatives of various organisations are ambivalent and apathetic towards such studies.
revealing all too static and uni-directional relations of power” (p. 380). The implication for a public policy context relates to reconsidering how one conceives of the impact of particular governing understandings of sport and recreation, and considering ways in which any domination, intended or not, can be minimised.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Information sheet for participants

Information Sheet for Participants

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read the information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. Participation is voluntary; if you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the aim of the project?

This investigation seeks to address issues regarding communication through public policy. Specifically it seeks to explore how public policy is produced, disseminated and potentially challenged by stakeholders.

What will the participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to volunteer your time to take part in an individual or group interview regarding the above issues. The interview will last approximately one hour. The individual interview will be taped and a typed transcript will be returned to you so you have the opportunity to add and/or change any points you feel may need to be explained further before sending this copy back.

Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

You may withdraw your participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

How will the information be used?

Please note that any personal information obtained from the interview will remain strictly anonymous and your confidentiality will be preserved at all times. Only the researchers involved in the project will have direct access to personal information. No information that can identify the participants individually will be disclosed or published. Upon consent, each participant will be assigned a unique pseudonym and from this point on each individual will be identified by this number or pseudonym only.

A plain language summary of the results will be available upon request. If you have any questions concerning this study, please do not hesitate to call or email either;

Joseph Piggin
Assoc Prof Steve Jackson
Dr Malcolm Lewis

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University’s research policy, any research data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.
Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

PhD Research – Joe Piggin

University of Otago

Informed Consent Form

I ………………………………………….. (please print name) agree to participate in the study being conducted by Joe Piggin at the University of Otago. It is further understood that I have received the following information concerning the study.

1. The study has been explained to me. I understand the explanation that has been given and what my participation will involve.

2. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.

3. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalty.

4. I understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that I will remain anonymous. Within these restrictions, results of the study will be made available at my request.

5. I understand that at my request, I can receive additional explanation of the study at any time.

………………………………………   …………………………..
Signed         Date
Appendix 3: Interview Guides for Sparc representatives

Marketing and Communications

Marketing

For Sparc, what is the process from idea generation to finished message?

How do you choose the language to write marketing messages? Colloquial language vs, formal language… etc? How is this process managed?

Target marketing - Examination of the audiences of marketing? Following this, assuming that you are trying to speak to a wide range of stakeholders in the sport and recreation sector, how does this affect the writing of marketing campaigns?

Discussion of “measurement” in marketing. Why is marketing measured? How is it measured?

Public relations practices / The media

To what extent do the media affect the success of the dissemination of your various marketing efforts?

To what extent do you have a positive relationship with the media, in terms of public relations?

What is your own control over various media – such as website, radio talk show slots?

Is it possible to generalise about how the mainstream news agencies relate to Sparc?

How do you think the various media treat Sparc policy? Eg: The various media seemed to articulate policies such as the ‘school time physical activity’ policy and the Commonwealth Games medal prediction in particular ways including “forcing schools to make students more physically active” and the ‘medal target’.

Much media attention is focused on critics of policy (such as not enough funding, sports losing funding). To what extent are there instances of individuals in the media and groups publicly congratulating Sparc)?

Policy

For Sparc, what is the process from idea generation to policy writing?

How do you choose the language to write policy? Colloquial language vs, formal language… etc? How is this process managed?

Examination of the audiences of policy? Following this, assuming that you are trying to speak to a wide range of stakeholders in the sport sector, how does this affect the writing of policy?
How do policy writers decide what type of terms / language to use when addressing a diverse range of stakeholders. That is, are communications techniques (policy, interviews about policy) standardised or changed depending on the audience?

Discussion of processes of “measurement” and “accountability” in planning.

Assuming that you are trying to speak to a wide range of stakeholders in the sport sector, how does this affect the language you choose to write your statements of intent, your strategic plans (essentially the “targeting” of policy).

Who do you expect to read your policy? / Who do you write the policy for?

What reading age do you assume the readers have? (keeping in mind some organisations write policies very simplistically for their audiences.

Are there words often contested when writing policy? For example, I have heard lately that ‘best practise’ as a guiding term not being used as much, because it implies a control over what originally autonomous organisations like local sports clubs actually do.

To what extent is the policy considered as giving orders, vs. making suggestions, vs giving options?

Potentially conflicting ideas: Partnership vs leadership? Do any of your stakeholders want more of a stake in the policy processes? What do you consider the difference between a leader and a partner in the industry.

**Challenge to policy:**

Who challenges Sparc policy and programmes?

What are the main types of challenge Sparc has to policy or programmes?

Does this affect the relationship you have with these people afterwards? Does the organisation become more cautious around them?

To what extent are partners who at one stage may have been unconvinced by Sparc’s operating principles changed their minds?

To what extent were the beginning challenges that Sparc faced (such as the priority sports, the community sports fund) been forgotten by stakeholders or ‘partners’?

To what extent does reiterating misconstrued policy affect the buy-in of various stakeholders?

**Strategic Planning**

For Sparc, what is the process from idea generation to a strategic plan?
How do you choose the language of plans? Colloquial language vs, formal language… etc? How is this process managed?

Examination of the audiences of plan? Following this, assuming that you are trying to speak to a wide range of stakeholders in the sport sector, how does this affect the writing of statements of intent, strategic plans?

How do policy writers decide what type of terms / language to use when addressing a diverse range of stakeholders. That is, are communications techniques (policy, interviews about policy) standardised or changed it depending on the audience?

Discussion of processes of “measurement” and “accountability” in planning.
Appendix 4: Interview guide for Protestors

What do you understand as philosophy of Sparc?

With your experience in the sector, how do you perceive Sparc over the last four years? What examples can you use to support this?

Since it seems that you have official and unofficial roles, can you describe the difference between resistance to Sparc policy as a private citizen versus as a member and representative of a national sporting body?

Regarding anonymity, others have spoken about not wanting Sparc to know who was complaining. How do you feel about this?

Can we discuss the language of policy, since it seems in your criticisms, you question how Sparc’s policies are actually put across?

What type of analysis do you undertake to establish criticisms of Sparc’s policy statements?

Discussion of use ‘weasel words’ in policy.

How is Sparc represented in the media. How have you been able to protest Sparc policy publicly?

Discussion of the aim of resistance through various media: articles, blog sites.

How has protest affected you personally? Is there a personal toll?

Media

What do you consider is the extent of journalist buy in with Sparc’s mission?

Can you explain your relationship with Sparc as a media representative?

Can you explain the use of media research practices - Eg: Sparc and Official Information Act,

What do think the media’s role is in accountability / transparency of Sparc?

What do you think is media’s role in promoting nationalism and questioning it?

To what extent do you echo Sparc policy jargon versus questioning it?

What other thought do you have about questioning public policy in an area such as sport and recreation?
## Appendix 5: Discourse analysis of Sparc CEO Nick Hill’s newspaper article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Description / perspective</th>
<th>Interpretation – linkage with other discursive practices</th>
<th>Discursive devices</th>
<th>Explanation – Linkage with power relations at a macro level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In the build-up to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games and, to a larger extent, in the wake of the New Zealand team’s overall performance at the Games, much has been made of Sport and Recreation New Zealand’s (Sparc) decision to publicise medal targets. Why was it necessary to establish medal expectations, and how did Sparc arrive at the target of 46 medals?</td>
<td>Introduction. Voice of Sparc policy maker.</td>
<td>Contextualisation of issue. Transparency as objective and inevitable. Euphemism: There was significant criticism of the medal target policy. Policy framed as imperative / necessity. Question reinforces medal target as imperative.</td>
<td>The result is ‘transparency’ is problematic and must be defended. Convolution of agency (A): Sparc seemingly taking responsibility for deciding what target would be.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>First, and most important, medal targets are established by national sports organisations, not by Sparc. Well in advance of every major competition, the high performance directors of each of the NSOs establish medal targets and expectations for their individuals and teams. These targets aren’t simply predictions, either. They are informed opinions based on world rankings, past performance, an analysis of the competition and a host of additional relevant factors.</td>
<td>Defence of measurement techniques. Voice of rational policy maker.</td>
<td>Euphemism: An attempt to clarify the ‘misinformation’ in part brought about by Sparc communication. Elision: No mention of Sparc policy that medal targets are a condition of funding for NSOs. Rationality: ‘Targets aren’t simple predictions’ Speaker implies scientific approach, as opposed to long-range estimations. Euphemism: ‘Informed opinions’ described as ‘predictions’ on numerous other occasions.</td>
<td>Convolution of agency (A): ‘Sparc arriving at’ and ‘targets are established by national sport organisations’ distances Sparc from medal count and debases purported accountability. Convolution of measurement system (MS): Notion of ‘establishing’ and ‘analysis’ implies rigorous, scientific process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sparc then provides the investment, in dollars and in resources, to help the NSOs achieve those targets. Having said that, let’s be clear that Sparc invests in high performance sport with the understanding that recipients of funding are accountable for performance. Setting medal targets is one form of that accountability and, as a</td>
<td>Attempted clarification of roles in process. Voice of a organisational restricted by a Government mandate</td>
<td>Repetition: Further emphasising targets belong to NSO’s. Explication of role: Sparc is ‘provider’ and ‘helper.’ Use of synonyms: ‘Prediction’ vs. ‘target’ vs. ‘expectations.’</td>
<td>Convolution of role (R): Sparc ‘provides’ ‘invests’ and ‘helps’ but are not ‘accountable.’ Convolution of measurement system (MS): Discursive strategy of Sparc using investment rather than allocation – a consistent strategy of using investment discourse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>public entity, Sparc needs to be open and forthright about its expectations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>organisations, sponsors, families and athlete’s own contribution.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equally important, however, is the point that sport at the elite level is a competition. And when New Zealand teams compete against other countries, we need to establish goals for performance.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice of an overseer of elite sport around the world.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Truism / tautology: ‘Elite sport is a competition’ reinforces legitimacy of medal target policy.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition: Reinforcing ‘need’ for targets through ‘performance goals’.”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convolution of goals (G): Use of collective pronouns conflates disparate goals. NZOC does not set medal targets.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convolution (V)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uncertainty of who ‘we’ is. Possible readings include Sparc, the nation, the athletes, or members of the public.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Australia and England began establishing medal targets as early as the 1980s. In the sporting world, it’s the primary way we as a nation can quantitatively benchmark ourselves against the rest of the world.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking as an overseer of elite sport around the world.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Legitimacy: Assumption that New Zealand policy is more than twenty years behind industry practise.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationality: ‘Quantitatively benchmark’ reinforces scientific ‘analysis’ rhetoric.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rationality: ‘Rest of the world’ positions New Zealand as having equal interest in despite conflicting with stated ideals of olympism.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convolution of measurement system (MS). On another occasion Hill argued necessity of medal targets because “You need the tension in the system.”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Construction of ‘the world’. Assumption that ‘the world’ is equally interested in medal targets reifies policies.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convolution of role (R): ‘Reality check’ cements accountability discourse as way of measuring truth.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convolution of goals (G): ‘Quantitative benchmark’ and ‘reality check’ cements accountability discourse as reality, despite relativity, as explained by NZOC.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a team in Melbourne, we didn’t meet our expectations. This is a sharp reality check about where we sit in terms of international sport and, overall, it is very disappointing. Having said that, there were some positive results. We witnessed the emergence of some promising New Zealand talent. Among the names of the future are Nick Willis, Andrea Hewitt, Brent Newdick, Charlotte Harrison, Kate McIlroy, Shelley Kitchen and James Dolphin, among others. Progress was also apparent in the blue riband sports of swimming, athletics and triathlon. And let’s not forget the netball team’s gritty gold-medal performance, defeating Australia on their home court. While this is</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice of a member of the New Zealand team.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal perspective: Discursively unites CEO of Sparc and New Zealand athletes.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shift in voice: Rhetoric changed from ‘quantitative benchmark’ to ‘reality check’ and where we sit’. Tone becomes informal. Urgency: ‘here and now’</strong></td>
<td><strong>Metaphor: ‘bar has risen’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convolution of voice (V): Talking at once as a sports fan and as a CEO. Also, collective pronoun use debases reader from context.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convolution of role (R): ‘Reality check’ cements accountability discourse as way of measuring truth.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convolution of goals (G): ‘Quantitative benchmark’ and ‘reality check’ cements accountability discourse as reality, despite relativity, as explained by NZOC.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>For more than 20 years, the Australian Institute of Sport has focused relentlessly on its objective of winning medals. Sparc, meanwhile, is just four years into the process. We therefore must continue to take a long-term view and a constructive approach to improving our methods and our programmes. In that vein, a significant number of positive underlying changes are now in place.</td>
<td>Speaking as a planner, leader of an organisation responsible for ensuring elite success.</td>
<td>Reification, repetition: Comparison with Australia’s objectives already made. Since Australia is perceived to be successful in winning medals, they are used as ‘best practice’, despite Sparc promoting idea of being 'nimble and flexible’ in their statement of intent because they cannot compete with ‘seemingly endless resources’. Truisms: ‘continue to take … a constructive approach’ reinforces Sparc’s policies</td>
<td>By linking New Zealand’s system inherently with Australia’s, the speaker bolsters legitimacy of Sparc’s policy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Most recently, Sparc invested approximately $24.7 million over the past 24 months in the high-performance programmes of the sports that made up the New Zealand team competing at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. Despite this investment, we noted a lack of depth at the top in key sports. At the Games, it was apparent that most of the top countries had three or four athletes competing to be the best. New Zealand too often over relied on one or two key individuals. But this is not about assigning blame or making excuses.</td>
<td>Speaking as distributor of funds. Placing blame on selection procedures of other nations influencing success of medal target.</td>
<td>Similar to reference 3, omission of other ‘investors’ in the system. Euphemism: Previous would champions in New Zealand team who did not perform to expectations framed as ‘individuals’. Empowerment: Sparc automatically remove responsibility of New Zealand performance through use of ‘despite’. Further, speaker assumes the authority to place blame or to refrain from placing blame.</td>
<td>Convolution of role (R): Assumption that Sparc’s ‘investment’ accounts for majority of funding, allowing Sparc to determine measures of success. Convolution of agency (A): Sparc had faced much direct criticism for act of counting. ‘Not assigning blame’ gives Sparc inherently gives Sparc ability to if needed, elevating their status and power.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>It's about benchmarking ourselves against the best. With all this in mind, Sparc, together with the New Zealand Olympic Committee and the individual sports, will now commence the post-Games debrief process, just as it does after every major international event. The debrief will consider the performance of teams and individuals prior to</td>
<td>Speaking as member of the debrief party. Speaking as mouthpiece of New Zealanders.</td>
<td>Contradiction: Debriefs are inherently concerned with finding ‘causes of a problem’ (who or what is ‘blamed’). Or who is ‘excused’. Empowerment: Sparc leading the debrief – externalising ‘cause’ of team’s ‘failure’. Rationality: Portrayal of transparency as an inherent practice of Sparc.</td>
<td>Convolution of goals (G): NZOC did not promote medal targets Convolution of agency (A): Sparc leading debrief contributes to Sparc as being the leader within the sector, displacing partner discourse. Seeming omission between Sparc leading change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and during the Games, factors that assisted or detracted from these performances and what can be improved upon for future competition.

10 There is no doubt that New Zealanders believe winning in international events is important. It offers social, economic and health benefits: it helps to create a strong sense of national identity, pride and social cohesion; it creates a healthy image for marketing New Zealand goods, services and experiences abroad; it helps to attract high-profile sports events to New Zealand and the associated economic gains; and it encourages New Zealanders to be active. The New Zealand Government recognises the public good in these outcomes and invests in high-performance programmes as a means to achieve them. It is our responsibility at Sparc to see that those goals are achieved.

Speaking as a public official.

Truism: ‘No doubt’ constructs policy as unanimous, despite much criticism

Defence: Linking Sparc policy with wider social goals.

Legitimacy: Speaker defends policy by co-opting various government rationale, such as ‘health benefits’, despite no research in Sparc’s to back up this claim.

Repetition: Economic benefits mentioned twice. Also, the speaker repeatedly states that it is Sparc’s responsibility that these goals are achieved further convolutes the process.

Convolution of voice (V): Official policy rhetoric defending policy through ‘public good’. Omission of consequences if New Zealand team is a ‘failure’.

Convolution of role (R): Simultaneously demanding accountability and stating Sparc are responsible

Convolution (A): It is our responsibility at Sparc to see that those goals are achieved.

11 Finally, I want to make clear that I am extremely proud of the New Zealand team. I was personally heartened by the number of athletes who performed beyond expectations in Melbourne.

The fact that many of our competitors did the same speaks to the challenge we face to continue to improve and win in the events and sports that matter to New Zealanders.

Speaking from personal opinion.

Speaking as Sparc leader.

Personal opinion mixed with official rhetoric.

‘Fact’: attempt to cement reality.

Disconnection between events that matter to NZers but do not have similar meaning to other nations. Discursive grapple of articulating multifarious meanings of Commonwealth Games.

**Appendix 6: Reproduced article from New Zealand Herald, April 3, 2006**

**Nick Hill: Setting medal targets one measure of accountability**

In the build-up to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games and, to a larger extent, in the wake of the New Zealand team's overall performance at the Games, much has been made of Sport and Recreation New Zealand's (Sparc) decision to publicise medal targets.

Why was it necessary to establish medal expectations, and how did Sparc arrive at the target of 46 medals?

First, and most important, medal targets are established by national sports organisations, not by Sparc. Well in advance of every major competition, the high performance directors of each of the NSOs establish medal targets and expectations for their individuals and teams.

These targets aren't simply predictions, either. They are informed opinions based on world rankings, past performance, an analysis of the competition and a host of additional relevant factors.

Sparc then provides the investment, in dollars and in resources, to help the NSOs achieve those targets.

Having said that, let's be clear that Sparc invests in high performance sport with the understanding that recipients of funding are accountable for performance. Setting medal targets is one form of that accountability and, as a public entity, Sparc needs to be open and forthright about its expectations.

Equally important, however, is the point that sport at the elite level is a competition. And when New Zealand teams compete against other countries, we need to establish goals for performance.

Australia and England began establishing medal targets as early as the 1980s. In the sporting world, it's the primary way we as a nation can quantitatively benchmark ourselves against the rest of the world.

As a team in Melbourne, we didn't meet our expectations. This is a sharp reality check about where we sit in terms of international sport and, overall, it is very disappointing.

Having said that, there were some positive results. We witnessed the emergence of some promising New Zealand talent.

Among the names of the future are Nick Willis, Andrea Hewitt, Brent Newdick, Charlotte Harrison, Kate McIlroy, Shelley Kitchen and James Dolphin, among others. Progress was also apparent in the blue riband sports of swimming, athletics and triathlon.

And let's not forget the netball team's gritty gold-medal performance, defeating Australia on their home court.
While this is heartening, we need to look at the here and now. Internationally, the bar has risen. For more than 20 years, the Australian Institute of Sport has focused relentlessly on its objective of winning medals. Sparc, meanwhile, is just four years into the process.

We therefore must continue to take a long-term view and a constructive approach to improving our methods and our programmes.

In that vein, a significant number of positive underlying changes are now in place. Most recently, Sparc invested approximately $24.7 million over the past 24 months in the high-performance programmes of the sports that made up the New Zealand team competing at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Despite this investment, we noted a lack of depth at the top in key sports.

At the Games, it was apparent that most of the top countries had three or four athletes competing to be the best. New Zealand too often over relied on one or two key individuals. But this is not about assigning blame or making excuses. It's about benchmarking ourselves against the best.

With all this in mind, Sparc, together with the New Zealand Olympic Committee and the individual sports, will now commence the post-Games debrief process, just as it does after every major international event.

The debrief will consider the performance of teams and individuals prior to and during the Games, factors that assisted or detracted from these performances and what can be improved upon for future competition. There is no doubt that New Zealanders believe winning in international events is important.

It offers social, economic and health benefits: it helps to create a strong sense of national identity, pride and social cohesion; it creates a healthy image for marketing New Zealand goods, services and experiences abroad; it helps to attract high-profile sports events to New Zealand and the associated economic gains; and it encourages New Zealanders to be active.

The New Zealand Government recognises the public good in these outcomes and invests in high-performance programmes as a means to achieve them. It is our responsibility at Sparc to see that those goals are achieved.

Finally, I want to make clear that I am extremely proud of the New Zealand team. I was personally heartened by the number of athletes who performed beyond expectations in Melbourne.

The fact that many of our competitors did the same speaks to the challenge we face to continue to improve and win in the events and sports that matter to New Zealanders.

* Nick Hill is chief executive of Sparc.
Appendix 7: Sparc advertisement: Where do Gold medals come from? VO2 Max magazine, November, 2005 (Sparc, 2006e).