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Leisure, Women, and Gender

Edited by
Valeria J. Freysinger
Susan M. Shaw
Karla A. Henderson
M. Deborah Bialeschki

LEISURE, WOMEN, AND GENDER

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EDITED BY

VALERIA J. FREYSINGER, SUSAN M. SHAW, KARLA A. HENDERSON,
AND M. DEBORAH BIALESCHKI



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PREFACE

Leisure, Women, and Gender is part of an ongoing examination that explores and elaborates issues of leisure for girls and women. The book is both an update of *A Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure* (1989) and *Both Gains and Gaps: Feminist Perspectives on Women's Leisure* (1996) and a departure from these earlier works, in its process and structure. Specifically, in this volume, rather than writing *about* the research that others are doing, we invited some of those researchers to talk about how they came to study leisure, women, and gender; what they have learned from their research; and to reflect on directions for future research. Hence, organizationally and structurally it falls in the "middle ground" between a coauthored and an edited book: it mixes writing by the book's editors with the voices of invited scholars, who contribute central and additional perspectives regarding the topics.

We undertook this collaborative project because although recognition of the gendered realities of girls' and women's lives seems to be evident in most Western societies, and literature about women and leisure has grown in the disciplines of leisure sciences/studies, questions can be raised about the changes that have occurred and the new opportunities that are emerging. Has "progress" been made in girls' and women's access to recreation and leisure, are we witnessing a stalled revolution, or is it a bit of both? Further, although women's leisure remains central to this book, in contrast to our previous books, a critical analysis of girls' and women's leisure from the perspective of gender relations is centered. This perspective led to changes in how the subject of women's leisure is thought about and studied, as well as attention to emerging research on the gendered nature of men's leisure lives. Insight into the power that gender (as well as age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, social class, and able-bodiedness) has in shaping the lives of both males and females can help explain the meanings and values of leisure for all individuals and for society more broadly.

Hence, the purpose of this book is to present a critical analysis of the research to date and propose directions for the future study of leisure, women, and gender. Previous analyses that we offered focused primarily on social-psychological perspectives and gender *differences*, with some acknowledgment of broader sociological and cultural analyses. In this book, we purposely structure a broader analysis. The guiding metaphor for this

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book (both conceptually and structurally/organizationally) is the *matryoshka*, the (originally) female Russian “stacking doll” that is constituted of many layered figures. The matryoshka expresses our vision of girls’/women’s lives, in that each figure can be seen as representing individual, social-historical, cultural, or political “selves.”

At the same time, the matryoshka constitutes a complete entity, meaningless without its many bodies and representative of the intersections of the personal, social, historical, cultural, and political. This metaphor can also be extended to a conceptualization of gendered relations that ultimately cannot be understood separately from race, age, class, sexuality, and able-bodiedness. Hence, in this book we explore some of the many practices and contexts of girls’ and women’s lives, and the gendering of *all* of our lives. At the same time, we recognize that the separate sections, chapters/readings, and discussions that comprise the book inevitably intersect in many ways that the organization of this text cannot capture. The book is organized by five sections: background and context; personal lives; lives in social contexts; culture, power and politics; and ways forward. In these sections, the book’s authors, as well as the voices of some of those conducting research on women, gender relations, and leisure are heard. While we frame and provide some context, the research, stories, and critical reflections of various scholars illuminate and provide depth and breadth for each section.

Further, this book is situated unabashedly within a feminist framework. Although some individuals have argued that “feminism is dead” and too many people believe feminist perspectives are no longer needed, we believe that the principles of feminism continue to be relevant. As long as sexism exists, women around the world are oppressed, and patriarchy dominates the world’s cultures, a commitment to feminist issues is vital.

The thesis of this book is that people’s lives (both women’s and men’s) may be enriched through opportunities for leisure. Examining and reflecting on gender relations empowers individuals to work for personal and social changes that will do much to enhance the leisure lives of women and men. We hope this book provides a synthesis of where an understanding of women, gender, and leisure is after the first decade of the twenty-first century, and will provide a framework for future activism as well as future research. Most of the chapters and discussion in the book focus on Western cultures, since this is where research on women, gender, and leisure has been concentrated to date. Nevertheless, we have included discussion on other cultures where possible, and we hope that the text itself will stimulate an interest in research within diverse cultures and around the globe.

Although the primary audience for this book is graduate students, researchers, and senior undergraduates, we have written it in a way that also makes it accessible to a wider audience. We explain the terminology

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used and incorporate examples that illustrate concepts and theories. We seek to put together the most current thinking about leisure issues relevant to girls/women and boys/men as we introduce ideas and provide a lens for examining the meanings, experiences, and practices of leisure.

Clearly, many people are responsible for this book—colleagues, mentors, friends, and family—and this holds for every contributing author to this book. We cannot begin to acknowledge all the individuals who, at different times and at different places in our lives, have contributed to this book. The matryoshka may be the most apt metaphor to show how each of us has been influenced by so many others and by the culture and historical moment in which we live.

We foresee that this book will be the last one that we will write together, but we look forward to other scholars continuing to examine these topics as long as gender inequity exists in any culture in the world. Despite the distance we have come and how much our understanding has increased, much work still needs to be done. Hence, this book is both a summary of our understanding about leisure, women, and gender and a call for future explorations of this topic.

SECTION 1

SETTING A CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

CONSTRUCTING A FRAMEWORK

VALERIA J. FREYSINGER, SUSAN M. SHAW, KARLA A. HENDERSON,
AND M. DEBORAH BIALESCHKI

This book is about leisure, women, and gender. All three topics are important individually, but in this book we examine the meanings and importance of their intersections. Leisure is a relatively recent concept in Western cultures, although in Asia, people used symbols for leisure centuries ago (Lui, Yeh, Chick, & Zinn, 2008). Ancient Greek philosophers also discussed the cultural ideal of leisure as early as the first century A.D. This Greek ideal, however, pertained to aristocratic or free males only and shaped the lives of the many female and non-aristocratic others whose labor made this leisure possible. The *study* of leisure, however, is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. Yet until the 1980s, the topic of women and leisure was mostly unexamined. In fact, we maintain that even into the twenty-first century, a focused analysis of leisure, women, and gender remains an important area for exploration.

Many gains have been made in women's lives and in understanding women, gender, and leisure since research on this topic began over 25 years ago. At the same time, gaps are still evident. While many countries have passed laws to make discrimination against women in various aspects of society illegal, one only has to read the daily newspaper or go online to see that such discrimination still exists. Over 20 years ago, Hochschild and Machung (1989) brought attention to the *second shift* that women who worked outside the home faced when they came home and also had predominant responsibility for household labor and childrearing. They coined the term *leisure gap* because of their finding that "just as there is a wage gap between men and women in the workplace, there is a general 'leisure' gap between them at home" (p. 4). This gap continues today, as illustrated by a number of chapters in this volume. However, not only do some differences exist between females and males in the amount of time available for leisure, as Hochschild and Machung suggested, but gaps of various kinds important to leisure also exist *among* women. Women who are poor, for instance, may face different leisure gaps than women gainfully employed in

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professional jobs; most women in England experience life in a much different way than most women in Tanzania. At the same time, women have fought and sought to find leisure in their lives, and the participation of girls and women in various leisure pursuits seems to be increasing universally.

Gender influences everybody's life from the time he or she emerges as a baby into the world until his or her dying days. Children are taught and negotiate an "appropriate" gender identity (both consciously and unconsciously) from the first day forward, through the clothing they wear, the ways they are encouraged (or not) to use their bodies, and the toys they want/are given. Gendered *discourses*, or the ways in which "being female/feminine" and "being male/masculine" are talked about, practiced, and enacted, are both implicit and explicit in people's lives. Gender in all its manifestations (e.g., bodily practices, emotional expression) is also enacted in play, recreation, and leisure, as many chapters in this volume illustrate.

Gender is relational; that is, it is constructed and reconstructed in relation to and interaction with other individuals within the contexts of society, culture, and history. Leisure offers a venue not only for the reproduction, but also for the resistance and transformation of gender (Shaw, 2001). The lives of all men and women are gendered, but beyond this, they are also differentiated by race, class, sexual orientation, age, and cultural background. Hence, while we find commonalities among many women and between women and men, we also find diversity and difference, as well as inequality. We contend that all individuals should have the opportunity to seek meaning, identity, and a high quality of life—however those are defined—and that leisure potentially plays an important role in this regard.

The purpose of this book is to examine these many issues by presenting a critical analysis of research and proposing directions for the future study of leisure, women, and gender. The five sections of the book address background and context, personal lives, lives in social contexts, power, culture, and politics, and ways forward. This first section of the book sets the foundation for subsequent sections by discussing the ideas that inform our discussion of leisure, women, and gender, as well as by acknowledging the assumptions that underlie those ideas. This first chapter starts to do this through a discussion of girls' and women's lives today, the intersection of leisure, gender, and culture, the centrality of gender relations, and different ways of thinking about leisure.

GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S LIVES TODAY

What are some of ways gender makes a difference in girls' and women's lives and leisure? Finding reliable data on girls' and women's lives to answer this question and that document trends, changes, and progress can be a

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challenge. At the United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women, held in China in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action was developed and adopted. An important part of the action plan was to gather longitudinal statistical data from UN member states throughout the world to document and monitor progress (or lack thereof) towards gender equity. The purpose was to use these data to promote social policy and action at national and international levels that would improve women's lives. Since that time, data have been collected every five years on issues ranging from demographic information (births, marriages, divorces, households, etc.) to education and literacy, work and wages, and health. Data are available for each reporting country, grouped according to six geographic regions (Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania). This major undertaking by the UN has been hampered by the lack of availability of gender-based data on some issues from some countries. Nevertheless, based on the most recent statistics available (United Nations, 2006), some, albeit limited, progress towards equity is evident.

One example of progress in the UN report relates to school enrollment. In most of North and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania, girls' rates of enrollment in secondary education (high school) are similar to boys' level of participation. At the post-secondary (tertiary) level, girls' rates of participation tend to be lower than boys' in many countries, but female enrollment has actually increased in a number of Western industrialized nations where enrollment in university programs (undergraduate) is higher for women than for men. According to Paula Dobriansky (2006), Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs at the UN, government programs that provide scholarships and stipends that help poor families send their daughters to school have improved the status of girls' education in countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya, and Mexico.

Of course, these data need to be treated with caution because of the lack of information from some countries and because of the low levels of access to education for either gender in some regions of the world. Illiteracy remains a problem, particularly in parts of Asia and Africa, and when the problem exists, rates of illiteracy are higher for women than for men. Specifically, while it is estimated that one-sixth of the world's population is illiterate, two-thirds of the illiterate are female (Dobriansky, 2006). In some instances it is only the wealthy—and boys from wealthy, upper-class families—who receive adequate education. Yet it is estimated that world-wide “for every year beyond fourth grade that girls attend school, wages rise 20%, child death drops 10%, and family size drops 20%.” Specifically, research in Africa indicates that “agricultural yields” can be increased by more than 20% by investing in women's education (Women's Funding Network, 2009).

The data on other indices of gender equity also provide a mixed picture in terms of the current status of women. Among those countries reporting data on women's economic activity, women's level of participation in the paid labor force tends to be about 50% or less of men's participation level. That is, men are twice as likely to have *paid* jobs. In those countries reporting relatively high rates of female labor force participation, for example in Europe, many more women than men work part time. Further, even among full-time workers, there is a persistent wage gap, with women receiving less income than men. For example, in the United States, which has one of the highest rates of female employment, the latest data (full-time employees only) show women's median annual earnings as a percentage of men's earnings hovers around 78% (IWPR, 2009). While this is up from the 62% that women earned compared to men in the 1960s, a gap still exists. Moreover, a study of the wage gap among college graduates in the U.S. reported that among recent university graduates, women's salaries averaged only 80% of the salaries of their male counterparts, and this gap increased and women dropped further behind in the years following graduation (AAUW, 2007). The authors of this study controlled for a range of factors, including hours of work, occupation, and parenthood. They concluded that, "a large portion of the gender pay gap is not explained by women's choices or characteristics" (AAUW, 2007, p. 2). Similar research with similar findings has been conducted in other countries, such as Canada and the United Kingdom (e.g., Statistics Canada, 2006). Given gender differences in employment and wages, and the feminization of poverty around the world, it is perhaps not surprising then that the World Food Organization reports that 7 out of 10 of the world's hungry are women and girls (Women's Funding Network, 2009).

This income inequity does not affect all women equally, and there is considerable evidence that women of color and women with disabilities face higher rates of income discrimination wherever they live in the world. For example, aboriginal women and visible minority women in Canada have lower incomes than women of white heritage (Statistics Canada, 2006). In the U.S., African American women earn only 69 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men, and Latinas earn only 59 cents in comparison to their male counterparts for each dollar earned by men (NOW, 2009). As a result, the risk of living in poverty is higher for women than for men, and it is particularly high for women of color (Women of Color Policy Network, 2009). Parental status and marital status also influence the risk of poverty among women (but not among men), with single-parent mothers all too often finding it extremely difficult to escape the poverty trap.

Another ongoing gender equity issue is that of health. Women, on average, have higher life expectancy than men, but women have higher

rates of disability (perhaps because they live longer) and higher rates of hospitalization (United Nations, 2006). For women, reproductive health is a major concern. Many women, however, do not receive adequate reproductive or prenatal care (United Nations, 2006), which puts their reproductive choice, their health, and the health of their children at risk. While reproductive medical technologies that are available in some parts of the world may be seen as progress and a boon to women's health, some note that "women's health is put at risk with inadequately studied pharmaceuticals and technologies, women's bodies are increasingly medicalized in these biomedical processes, and women are under increasing pressures to produce particular types of children, whether they be of a particular sex or ability" (Jesudason, 2006). In parts of Africa, there remains a tragic HIV/AIDS epidemic, despite the fact that medications and treatments have successfully stemmed the tide of this disease in the West. Moreover, in parts of Africa with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS, women have higher rates of infection and higher death rates due to AIDS or AIDS-related complications than men. Another ongoing problem in all parts of the world is violence against women, particularly partner violence, family violence, human trafficking, and war-zone violence. Physical and sexual assault and abuse are associated with a range of health-related problems. For example, violence against women is one factor that helps to explain why women are more likely than men to struggle with mental health issues (Statistics Canada, 2006).

It is evident from the comparative statistical data that progress towards gender equity is painstakingly slow. Moreover, these problems are much more severe for some women compared to others, based on race, class, ability/disability, societal norms, values, and ideologies. Women who live in the "majority world" (i.e., the non-Western world, or the less wealthy parts of the world where most of the world's population lives) often face a multitude of challenges, although these are not always well understood because of the lack of research and data. This is not to say that women in the "minority" (or Western, industrialized, wealthy) world no longer face equity issues. Despite some progress, women in these more privileged nations still face the wage gap, work-related problems, fear of violence, and expectations about responsibilities for household labor and childcare. One issue that has been given particular attention over the years, as noted previously, is that of *work-life balance* (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). In particular, evidence of the increasingly high levels of time stress, role overload, and work-family conflict, especially among employed mothers and/or women who care for other dependent family members, continues to be found (Bedini, this volume; Zuzanek, 2004). This is related to increasing hours of paid work, changing work cultures, and the increasing

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responsibilities of parenthood (Harrington, this volume; Lyonette & Clark, 2009; Shaw, 2008). Employed women with children have always worked a *double shift* (Hochschild & Machung, 1989), but now both components of that double workload appear to be increasing. While large numbers of women have entered the work force in recent decades, there has been comparatively little change in the gendered distribution of household and family responsibilities. At the same time, governmental social policies have not kept pace with the need for social and community services (such as maternity, parental, and family leave), and the provision of affordable and accessible childcare. These services are lacking not only in the parts of the world with fewer economic resources, but also in many wealthier nations, such as the United States.

Linked to the lack of “women-friendly” policies or policies that promote gender equity, is the lack of women with political power. The UN data show that women are underrepresented in national or state governments throughout the world (United Nations, 2006). Looking at each UN-defined region, the average percentage of parliamentary seats held by women (among reporting countries or areas) is 33% in South America (based on 11 countries or areas reporting), 21% in Europe (40 countries), 20% in Asia (41 countries), 17% in North America (21 countries), 13% in Africa (49 countries), and 6% in Oceania (13 countries or areas). The states with the highest representation of women in parliament are Sweden at 45%, and Denmark and Finland at 38%. Nine countries or areas reported zero representation of women, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga. Countries around the world also evidence many contradictions in the political status of girls and women. For example, in India where Indira Gandhi became an influential leader in the later 20th century, female infants “were routinely killed or starved because they were deemed less valuable than boys” (Jesudason, 2006). Thus it is clear that global gender equity at the political level, as well as at the economic and social levels, remains an elusive goal.

This brief overview of some of the gender equity issues that national and international agencies and researchers are continuing to document clearly has relevance for the discussion of leisure, women, and gender that we are engaging in through this book. The notion of *leisure in society* (Coalter, 1999) highlights the *embeddedness* of leisure and the impossibility of separating leisure from the personal, social, cultural, economic, and political components of everyday life. Access to work, education, and healthcare, as well as freedom from poverty, racism, heterosexism, ageism, and ableism, and the violence and stress these engender, all affect opportunities and choices, including opportunities for leisure, as a number of chapters in this volume present (Anderson; Howard, this volume). Continuing inequities

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based on gender indicate the importance of a gender-based analysis of leisure, and also one that is sensitive to diversity and inequities among girls and women, and boys and men.

THE INTERSECTION OF LEISURE, GENDER, AND CULTURE

The challenges that women and girls face with regard to everyday life and leisure are experienced at different levels. On an individual level, women and girls (and men and boys) can face discrimination and harassment in the workplace, at school, in the community, and in leisure. Racism, sexism, and heterosexism, as well as negative attitudes to disability, can prevent or limit participation in leisure and can also limit the freedom of individuals for self-expression and positive identity development through leisure. Boys who are interested in activities that do not fit their culture's traditional, dominant definitions of masculinity may be particularly likely to be stigmatized by others (Johnson, Kivel & Johnson; Schmalz, this volume). Opportunities for girls in so-called "masculine" activities increased in Western societies in particular in recent years, through the enactment of Title IX in the United States and human rights legislation in other countries. Yet, opportunities remain unequal (Paule-Koba, this volume), and there is evidence of an increasing problem for girls related to the pressures to conform to a particular "feminine" image that idealizes very low body weights and/or a sexualized appearance at least among some populations/cultures in some countries (Shannon, this volume). These issues cause some children and teens to turn away from desired activity and/or to feel uncomfortable about their participation (James, 2000). For women, difficulties associated with work and family responsibilities, health, stress, and economic resources can limit leisure participation, especially among those who are caring for young children or other dependent family members (Frisby; Sullivan, this volume). There is evidence, too, that the movement towards *involved fatherhood* (Kay, 2009a; Shaw, 2008) and men's increased participation in childcare activities, has increased the time stress and lack of leisure for some men as well (Duxbury & Higgins, 2009).

Given these various challenges, it is clearly important to understand the individual leisure experiences, meanings, and challenges for girls, boys, women, and men in different life situations. Understanding these experiences can be an important stimulus for change. Nevertheless, there are limits to a focus on experience and change at an individual level only. The influence of social contexts and cultural factors also need to be taken into account. Sometimes individual-level understanding tends to locate the problem *within* the individual and tends to encourage the individual to

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adapt to the “system.” This is evident in the growing “self-help” book industry, which has been highly lucrative in North America and elsewhere. For researchers, though, seeking to bring about societal as well as individual change, an understanding of different social and interactional contexts is also needed, as well as an understanding of broader societal influences, ideologies, and discourses.

Many of the challenges that individuals face in terms of their leisure arise out of, or are shaped by, life contexts. Social interactions at home, at work, or at school may be supportive and helpful, enhancing opportunities for leisure and self-development, or they may be difficult, stressful, and constraining. Most likely, they are a complex mix of both positive and negative interactions and meanings (Trussell, this volume). Community relationships also affect individuals and families in terms of acceptance and inclusion and/or rejection and social isolation. There may or may not be community support for women from diverse backgrounds who face challenges at home or in their everyday lives (Shinew & Stodolska, this volume). And there may or may not be neighborhood-based opportunities for leisure, relaxation, and social engagement. In any case, the importance of social context suggests the need to better understand the variety of interpersonal interactions and negotiations that occur in different leisure settings.

Consideration of societal contexts is also central to researchers concerned about understanding leisure meanings and leisure practices and working towards gender equity within the leisure sphere. By bringing together notions of power, culture, ideologies, and discourse, a broad perspective on the politics of leisure is possible, which provides additional insight into ways in which inequities in leisure are reproduced and resisted at various levels (Dionigi; Gibson, Jordan, & Berdychevsky; Roster, this volume). One approach for feminist researchers is through a focus on patriarchy and the role that patriarchal beliefs and relations of power play in the perpetuation of inequalities linked to education, work, income, health, and human rights (Fullagar, this volume). This approach points to the devaluation of women and of the feminine in patriarchal societies. At the same time, researchers face the challenge of recognizing diversity within patriarchal oppression (Giles, this volume). That is, other axes of power also need to be incorporated into the analysis, including power relations associated with race, class, cultural background, sexual orientation, ability/disability, and age.

A related approach is working to unmask culturally constructed ideologies of domination, inferiorization, and oppression. This includes understanding how ideologies associated with sexism, racism, heterosexism, and other “isms” are perpetuated and how these dominant ideas influence behaviors, attitudes, and access to resources. A way to do this is to explore

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how societal ideologies influence leisure policies, and how these policies, in turn, affect opportunities and participation, i.e., how ideologies influence leisure. Another way is through analysis of different media (e.g., television, movies, video games, fashion shows, newspapers, magazines) to document the ways in which media representations reinforce and/or challenge dominant beliefs about femininity or masculinity (Delamere & Dixon, this volume). That is, the focus is on the various different and contradictory ways in which leisure practices (such as watching television or playing video games) can influence societal ideologies or beliefs.

The idea of discourse is central here too, since discourse, or the ways in which everyday issues are talked about, practiced, and enacted, have a powerful influence on the conceptualizations and beliefs that come to be associated with those issues. Sherryl Kleinman's chapter on "Why Sexist Language Matters" provides a compelling argument for the need to become aware of the political and ideological power of everyday language and how the words that we use are not trivial, but have potentially damaging and/or empowering consequences. This understanding of language and everyday discourse can help to link our personal experiences of leisure and leisure activities with social and interactional contexts, and such understanding can also show how these experiences relate to societal ideologies and culturally based systems of belief.

Our point here is not to value one type of research over another but rather to emphasize the wide range of research approaches, issues, topics and perspectives that make up the body of feminist research on leisure (Aitchison, this volume). Clearly, research about personal lives, social contexts, power, culture, and politics can make distinct contributions to understanding but must also be considered as a whole. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to separate these three areas of concern. What can be seen to tie these different approaches together is a gender-relations approach that recognizes that notions about gender are constructed and reconstructed, reproduced and resisted at all levels of social life. Further, challenges at one level of practice can and do have repercussions for other levels (Sullivan, 2004). Thus, through this book we sought to not only present research using different approaches and focus on different topics, but to illustrate the interconnections within the growing body of research on women, gender, and leisure. At the same time, the research presented is, in multiple ways, a *select* and thus incomplete representation of research in this area.

GENDER RELATIONS

Discussing girls and women and their leisure in the twenty-first century requires that the notion of *gender relations* be central to the discussion.

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Some research, focusing solely on women, has been partially effective in making women's lives visible and calling attention to the androcentric nature of traditional history. The concept of gender relations, however, allows for an understanding of the constructed and reconstructed lives of both males and females within the broader context of culture and history. The study of gender relations provides an analysis of relationships of power, of how and why gendered discourses advantage/empower some and disadvantage/disempower others. Gender is relational in that it is produced, reproduced, and sometimes contested/resisted and transformed in everyday interactions with individual others, society, and culture. Gender relations are based on cultural distinctions that have been made of biological sex, and these distinctions may constrain or enable leisure for women and men.

When biological sex is perceived at birth as female or male, numerous social and cultural expectations are immediately put onto the child. One's biological sex leads to a lifetime of relationships and expectations, opportunities and constraints, based on gender. That is, gender is an ongoing process rather than an inborn biological trait. People learn and transform gender, they *do* or *perform* gender, in every context of their lives. Both women and men begin *doing* gender very early and continue with those performances throughout life. While some males and females resist dominant gender ideologies, gender remains a *practice* that shapes everyone's lives (Kimmel, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1991). At the macro level, gender is evident as a set of structured power relations that are enacted through law, legislation, and policy. At the micro level, gender relations are produced and reproduced by the everyday activities, interactions, and practices of individuals (Scraton & Watson, this volume).

Gender scholarship addresses the complexity and fluidity of the practices and discourses, the expectations, roles, and behavior that we enact in being female and male. Further, as Deem (1986) suggested, "gender is emphatically not 'a woman's problem!'" (p. 30). Put in another way, gender is a discourse that shapes everyone's life and that we all contribute to, negotiate, accommodate, and transform.

Gender theory may focus on gender roles, identities, relations, socialization, or whatever the yardstick for the measurement or conceptualization of gender happens to be. The relationship of gender to leisure is interactive. In other words, leisure may provide a way for women or men to embody and/or resist the discourses of gender. In terms of the former, gender is enacted in an individual's leisure when, for example, expectations of femininity and motherhood prevail or masculinity and physical strength are emphasized and considered the norm. When and how this occurs is the focus of a number of the chapters of this book.

NOTIONS OF LEISURE

Leisure studies is a contemporary area of inquiry, although, as noted previously, the concept of leisure was addressed originally by ancient Eastern, as well as early Greek, philosophers. Leisure is thought about and studied in a number of different ways. These various notions of leisure reflect larger ideological differences among those who conduct research on this subject. In addition, understandings of leisure occur in the larger context of knowledge production across fields of study. While we feel that it is important to briefly address the different notions of leisure here, the scholarship presented in the remainder of this book perhaps more powerfully illustrates the diverse and fluid thinking about leisure.

“Traditional” Ways of Studying Leisure

Free time, discretionary activity or recreation, and individual experience have been the ways leisure has been traditionally defined in industrialized societies (particularly North American societies). These notions of leisure are useful in documenting differences between groups of individuals, but they also *may* essentialize, dichotomize, de-contextualize, and de-politicize leisure. They arose out of the push for empiricism, objectivity, and quantification in research, policy, and practice.

For example, *leisure as time* refers to discretionary periods in one’s life that are available to do whatever one wishes. Leisure is the time beyond that needed to do work or daily maintenance activities. ‘Leisure’ was initially defined simply as “free time” that typically meant non-work (non-paid labor) time. However, some feminists have objected to the definition of leisure as non-work time because it assumes that all work is paid work. Some women, as well as some men, are not part of the workforce, so considering leisure only as the opposite of paid work negates important unpaid activity such as maintaining a household, childrearing, community volunteer activities, and personal care. Further, only examining leisure as a particular type of time leaves out individuals’ experience of time (e.g., freedom and a sense of a lack of entitlement to, or guilt about, free time), meanings they associate with time, opportunities available, and the perceived and actual amount of time available—all factors that affect whether individuals even perceive the time as leisure as well as their enjoyment of it.

When leisure has been studied as *activity*, it typically has focused on *what* recreation pursuits or “play” are done by various individuals (and groups of individuals) during free time and *how frequently*. In the sense of activity, “recreation” and “leisure” often have been used interchangeably. It is assumed that this activity generally is pursued for its own sake and for

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fun, and it is also assumed that such activity is positive and beneficial for the individual and/or society. As with time, leisure as activity is relatively easy to measure because it is quantifiable. However, in defining “leisure” as activity, it is often assumed that time is available for activity participation, that these types of opportunities exist for everyone, and that all consider the same activities to be leisure. As studies of gender and leisure (including several chapters in this volume) have shown, none of these assumptions is necessarily so.

In reaction to the limitations of definitions of leisure as time and activity, leisure as individual experience, as perception and state of mind, became a common way to conceptualize leisure. In this definition, importance was placed on the perception of freedom of choice as a prerequisite for leisure. Leisure as experience suggested that what a person did or when a person did it was not what mattered. What mattered was how an individual felt about an experience. Leisure from a state-of-mind perspective is defined by the *perception of free choice*, that something is done for its own sake, and a sense of control (Henderson et al., 2001). Wimbush and Talbot (1988) described, however, that for women all leisure is a *relative* freedom because of how gender is constructed. The same might be said for some men as well because *choice* is framed by more than gender. While quantitative scales and methods (e.g., Experience Sampling Method) have been developed to assess leisure as perception or state of mind, qualitative research methods seem to be a more useful approach, as evidenced by a number of chapters in this volume. This research highlights the often positive experiences and emotions of leisure—enjoyment and pleasure, satisfaction, relatedness, and improved mental health, to name a few (Hutchinson; Parry, this volume). Further, qualitative research has highlighted that separating individuals from the contexts of their lives tells only part of the story about leisure, women, and gender.

Leisure as/in Context

Definitions of leisure as free time, discretionary activity, and experience focus primarily on the individual. These definitions of leisure often separate leisure from other contexts of human activity, and they are how leisure is commonly studied in the U.S. (Coalter, 1999). Coalter noted that leisure is *in* society and therefore connotes a greater social-cultural context than suggested by some of the more personal-individual definitions of leisure as free time, activity, or state of mind. More recently, and particularly outside of North America, leisure as experience in context, a social construction (i.e., as legitimated pleasure), and/or discursive practice have been given attention.

For example, one area that has received attention is the physical environment (the places and spaces) and cultural contexts that give leisure importance. According to Tuan (1977), the concept of space has absolute and relative dimensions with concrete boundaries. Place is perceptually and socially produced by individuals. Thus, spaces become places when they mean something significant. The physical place may be less important, however, than the meanings that people attach to places in their minds as they participate in leisure. Wearing (1998) described how women may experience public spaces in different ways than men and the ways in which that experience impacts women's leisure. Skeggs (1999) explored how gay bars are leisure places for the enactment of gender but are used and experienced by gay women and men, and straight women, in different ways—that is, gender intersects with other identities in shaping the meanings of space. Others have found that because people's homes represent many aspects of their lives, they may or may not be viewed as places for leisure, and this perspective may be truer for women if they do not have a "room of their own" for leisure (Hilbrecht, this volume). That is, leisure is constructed as individuals interact with ever-changing social situations and cultural contexts.

Leisure as part of culture calls for an integrated view of leisure; a view that conceptualizes leisure as occurring, and gaining meaning, in time and space. *Individual preferences* are not independent of social and cultural practices and discourses. People often "choose" activities based on social experiences, what others around them are doing, and the cultural community of their lived experiences (see chapters by Berbarly and Samdahl, this volume). Further, social norms and mores are enacted, negotiated, and sometimes resisted in leisure, and they certainly shape gendered leisure. The symbolic meanings of leisure often come from accommodation to a culture (Tirone & Gahagan, this volume). As discussed by Rojek (1989), leisure time and space are continually made and remade by the actions of people in their social worlds.

The cultural embeddedness of leisure results in further challenges to defining leisure with any degree of consensus. Iwasaki and colleagues (Iwasaki, Nishino, Onda, & Bowling, 2007) described how problematic constructing a notion of leisure is from a global, and particularly linguistic, perspective. These authors asserted that "leisure" is an ethnocentric term used mostly in North American and European thinking that evokes the dominance and intrusion of Western thinking. While not using the term "leisure" may be one way to resolve some misunderstandings, not having a term may also make interpretations of leisure a challenging process.

The Complexity of Leisure

All these notions of leisure suggest the complexity of the construct. Leisure clearly can be thought about and studied in more than one way. The thinking about how leisure should be defined evolves and is disrupted as ways of producing knowledge and dominant discourses change. Certainly, understanding leisure, women, and gender with the traditional approaches of time, activity, and experience, provide particular insights. At the same time, the ideas of multiple identities, the reflexive self, the breakdown of clear divisions between work and leisure, and the ambiguous and contradictory aspects of postmodern existence resonate with many researchers (e.g., Rojek, 1995), including feminist scholars (e.g., Wearing, 1998) who have been critical of traditional definitions of leisure. The various ways of envisioning leisure indicate what is problematic about *essentializing*, or suggesting only one way to think about, leisure (Aitchison, 2000a). Understanding leisure requires “both-and” rather than “either-or” thinking. This is the tension that exists among the variety of definitions and the idea of commonality of experience that is often sought in order to advocate for a group such as women. However, we believe that accounting for the situations and subjectivities of individuals as well as the possibility of shared experiences among individuals continues to be a challenge worth addressing. Hence, how leisure is described socioculturally as well as *in situ* (Henderson, 2006) is important.

Recognizing that definitions of leisure and interpretations of its meanings will always be incomplete and fluid should not stifle putting new ideas forward and continuing to analyze the what, how, and why of leisure. Wrestling with diverse and often ideologically incompatible notions of leisure is only one of the challenges those who study and talk about leisure face, but it is a challenge all the contributors to this book ably meet/explore in their respective chapters.

CONCLUSIONS

Women’s and men’s leisure is not just individual experiences nor merely a social practice, but both of these and more. Understandings of women’s leisure require an examination of gender as relational. The perspective of gender relations also highlights that gender is “not [only] a woman’s problem” (Deem, 1992). That is, gender shapes men’s lives and leisure as well, and different men are affected differently (Hibbins, this volume). In addition, this perspective reminds us that “men can be feminists, too” (Lyons, this volume). The ideologies, discourses, practices, social institutions, and institutionalized sexism that inform and frame leisure must be taken into

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account and explored. Finally, research continues to document the myriad ways that girls and women are disadvantaged worldwide, at the same time that it indicates stark differences among women within any country and between women who live in the “majority world” and those who live in the “minority world” (Kay, this volume).

Feminists seek to illuminate such differences. They advocate for equity and justice and for women (and all people) to have control over their lives. Leisure, at least in Western cultures, can be seen as one area of life that is associated with greater freedom of choice, and thus leisure provides a potential context for empowerment. Leisure has the potential to facilitate self-development, liberation, and change in many aspects of people’s lives. However, as a gendered discursive practice, leisure also has the potential for continued exclusion and oppression, for disempowerment. This complexity of women’s/gendered leisure is illustrated by the other chapters in this section and the diversity of research approaches and topics presented by the contributors to this book.

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