

# Gender and Leisure

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The growth of leisure studies as a field of scholarly inquiry has been paralleled by a similar development of women's studies and feminist research. Recently, men's studies has also emerged as a distinctive and identifiable area (Kimmel and Messner, 1995). This has led to heated debate about whether the focus of study should be women, or gender, or men and women, and it has also led to discussions about the terminology that should be used to identify this diverse range of research (e.g., women's studies, gender studies; see Richardson and Robinson, 1994). Whatever terminology is used, however, it is evident that the study of gender has emerged as an important area of academic interest and analysis.

Initially, the growing areas of gender studies and leisure studies developed quite separately from each other, and through the 1960s and 1970s research on leisure generally paid scant attention to the question of gender. However, starting in the early 1980s, awareness of the need to incorporate gender into leisure re-

search began to emerge (e.g., Deem, 1982; Henderson, 1984). At this time, the androcentric nature of earlier research was becoming increasingly evident. For example, leisure activity lists used by researchers tended to focus on "male" activities and to ignore the different life circumstances and leisure experiences of women (Henderson, 1984; Shaw, 1985a). Moreover, work-leisure theories at that time ignored the different relationship that women had to the labor market, and their extensive involvement in family activities and unpaid work in the home (Deem, 1982; Gregory, 1982; Shaw, 1985b).

As a result of the increasing awareness of the importance of gender and the need to understand both women's and men's leisure experiences, a new body of research emerged that examined gender differences in leisure. This research explored gender differences in leisure meanings, leisure participation, leisure time, and leisure interests, as well as in constraints to leisure (e.g., Bialeschki and Henderson, 1986; Jackson and

Henderson, 1995; Shaw, 1985b; Witt and Goodale, 1981). Even in research not focused specifically on differences between men and women, gender was often included as an independent variable in the analyses in recognition that this might be an important factor to take into consideration (e.g., Searle and Jackson, 1985).

Throughout the 1990s, research on gender has progressed from this initial study of differences between women and men to a focus on the influence of societally based gender relations on leisure (see Henderson and Bialeschki, chapter 11 in this volume). This approach is based on the recognition that patriarchal power relations and ideologies about masculinity and femininity do not reside solely at the individual level, but are inextricably linked to broader sociocultural structures. The focus on gender relations means that *gender* is not seen as a fixed or static entity, but that social expectations, ideas about appropriate behaviors, and gender-based power relationships within social institutions are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. Thus, research within this tradition goes beyond the simple analysis of gender differences to understanding the social context, and the changing social context, of women's and men's lives.

The gender relations approach also incorporates the concept of diversity both among women and among men. The emphasis on diversity arose because of evidence of the wide range of different life experiences among women (and men) from different age groups and social classes, as well as from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw and Freysinger, 1996). At the same time, this approach also recognized certain commonalities among people of the same gender due to overarching societal ideologies and structures.

The gender relations perspective, by emphasizing cultural components of gender, has greatly advanced the study of gender and leisure. It has served to emphasize that neither leisure nor gender can be understood in isolation from other aspects of society, and that both need to be considered within particular cultural and historical contexts. This, in turn, suggests that the relationship between gender and leisure is both complex and dynamic. The relationship is not necessarily unidirectional, and it clearly varies within any one society as well as between different societies and historical periods.

While research on leisure and gender, especially research using a gender relations perspective, is a relatively new and evolving area of study, it is possible to identify three main themes that have emerged over the years. The first theme focuses on activity participation, and includes research on the extent to which activities are gender stereotyped as well as on gender

differences in opportunities, experiences, and time for leisure. The second theme revolves around the issue of the gendered nature of leisure constraints, especially constraints relating to societal expectations about appropriate masculine and feminine roles. The third theme explores the gendered outcomes of leisure. Here, emphasis is placed on how leisure and leisure participation may act to reproduce structured gender relations in society through reinforcing (or resisting) dominant cultural attitudes and beliefs about femininity and masculinity. Thus, this third theme examines how leisure affects ideologies and gendered power relations rather than how gender affects leisure.

In this chapter, the contributions of research within each of these three themes to our understanding of the relationship between gender and leisure are examined. I will argue that most of the empirical research, particularly in North America, has focused on the first two themes, and that more attention needs to be directed towards the implications of the third theme. It is also evident that much of the research has focused on women's rather than men's experiences of leisure, and that the gendered nature of men's leisure also deserves greater attention.

## The Gendered Basis of Leisure Participation

One approach to understanding the impact of gender on leisure behavior has been to examine gender differences in activity participation or in leisure time. Activity participation studies and time-use surveys have documented the higher participation rates of men in sports and physical activities, and the higher involvement of women in arts and cultural activities. But in many cases these studies have not shown any overall differences between men and women with regard to participation in free-time or recreational activities (e.g., Altermatt and McCreedy, 1993; Kinsley and Graves, 1983).

On the other hand, studies which have used different techniques, and particularly studies which have focused on individuals' attitudes and reported subjective experiences, reveal a very different picture. When connotative definitions of leisure are used rather than activity definitions, time-budget analysis shows married women to have significantly less leisure time than married men (Shaw, 1985b). Similarly, studies which ask about time stress, lack of time for leisure, or the feeling of being constantly rushed have consistently shown women to be more likely than men to report experiencing this kind of time crunch (e.g., Firestone and Shelton, 1994; Frederick, 1995; Robinson, 1990).

In addition, life-cycle factors affect both men's and women's time use, and women who are mothers of young children, especially if they are employed, are clearly the group most disadvantaged in terms of time stress and opportunities for leisure for themselves (Frederick, 1995; Zuzanek and Smale, 1995). Qualitative studies exploring women's lives have also revealed the stress experienced because of lack of time, and particularly the difficulties that employed women face in coping with the "second shift" or the double day of paid and unpaid work (Deem, 1986; Hochschild, 1989; Shank, 1986).

Together these studies suggest that activity categorization in traditional time-use and survey research may be problematic because of overestimating women's leisure and failing to take the social context of women's lives into account. For example, a mother taking her young children to the playground or to the swimming pool may well experience this as "work" or "childcare" rather than "leisure." Studies that take account of these subjective experiences and contexts clearly indicate that gender does, in fact, affect not only the availability of time and opportunities for leisure, but also ways in which these are perceived and experienced.

Recognition of the limitations of examining leisure simply by looking at activity participation, combined with a move away from research on gender differences, has led to a greater focus by researchers on the social context of women's (and to a limited extent, men's) lives. The concept of gender relations implies the need to look at how people's lives are gendered and how they are affected by gender-based relations and gender-related ideologies in society as a whole. Thus, specific gender differences represent just one aspect of gender in our society.

Most of the research on the gendered nature of women's lives has focused on women's roles within the family. The holistic nature of many women's lives, and the difficulty of separating work from leisure, has been widely commented on (e.g., Allison and Duncan, 1987; Green, Hebron and Woodward, 1990; Gregory, 1982; Shaw, 1997). For women who are mothers, the ethic of care and responsibility for others often takes precedence over personal leisure needs. This helps to explain why family leisure activities can be experienced as "work" rather than as leisure by many mothers (Shaw, 1992); that is, family-related work includes the emotional work of creating leisure experiences and situations for other family members (Hunter and Whitson, 1992), as well as the more obvious work of household tasks. Thus, paid work, unpaid work, and emotional or interpersonal work can occur at the expense of women's own leisure.

Another approach to understanding the gendered nature of leisure has been through the study of culturally determined expectations and attitudes. This approach focuses on how gender-related ideologies affect the kinds of activities deemed to be appropriate for females or for males during leisure time. There is some research which suggests that individual gender role attitudes are as important as, if not more important than, gender itself in determining leisure behavior (Samdahl, 1992). However, the main focus of this approach has been on the macrolevel societal-ideological context which can also be seen to affect men's and women's leisure participation, rather than on the microlevel context.

Particular attention has been directed towards sports activities, and researchers have investigated the extent to which specific sports are seen to be gendered. In 1967 Methany argued that sports can be clearly dichotomized into those thought to be appropriate for males and those thought to be appropriate for females. According to Methany, "male" sports, such as football, rugby, hockey, wrestling, and boxing, are those that typically involve strength, face-to-face competition, and bodily contact. "Female" sports, on the other hand, such as gymnastics, figure skating, and synchronized swimming, are characterized by their lack of body contact and by their aesthetic nature.

There is evidence of continued gender stereotyping today (Helgeson, 1994), and that this continues to affect views about socially appropriate sports activities for each gender (Holland and Andre, 1994; Kane, 1988; Koivula, 1995). While some girls and women have entered the "male domain" of football, rugby, and hockey, opportunities for females in these sports are greatly limited, as is financial support and public recognition (Theberge, 1994). Some men also participate in "female" sports, such as figure skating, but again, opportunities are limited and social pressure or social stigma can affect participation and interest.

Other leisure activities are stereotyped too, though little research has been directed toward understanding the gendered nature of passive leisure, such as reading books and magazines, watching movies, or participating in hobbies and crafts. For example, while anecdotal evidence about "women's movies" suggests that these products are thought to be gendered, and are sometimes marketed as gendered products, the extent to which participation (i.e., watching movies) is gendered, and why it is gendered, clearly deserves more attention from leisure researchers. Similarly, the division of popular magazines into "men's" and "women's" magazines, affecting the display and marketing of these products as well, is a topic for further research. To what extent is readership actually dichotomized by gender?

Do women have no interest in topics covered in men's magazines and vice versa? Are stereotyped marketing strategies a *response* to different interests, or do they *create* these segmented market needs and interests?

Recently, emphasis on gender relations and on understanding the "postmodern society" has led researchers to look more closely at the issue of diversity. One of the problems of a gender difference approach is that it locates all men in the same category, and similarly fails to differentiate among women. While emphasis at the microlevel social context means that the different experiences of individual women should be taken into consideration, this does not necessarily ensure that diversity is a central construct or issue.

Taking diversity into account means recognizing that individual experiences and contexts vary. However, it also means that there may be identifiable groups who share some commonality of experience, and that shared as well as separate experience may be important in understanding leisure. Thus, cultural background may influence leisure participation, and at the same time gender attitudes within a particular culture may also be a significant factor. Research has shown, for example, that women immigrants from India have different attitudes toward leisure compared to White Anglo-Canadian women, and that their leisure behavior and participation are intimately associated with their attitudes towards gender roles, marriage, parenting, and the family (Tirone and Shaw, 1997). Age and social class also influence leisure behavior and have differential effects on women and men. Again, it is evident that the effect of age and class is due, in part, to different attitudes to such factors as expected family roles of men and women, as well as to attitudes toward paid employment and unpaid work (Freysinger, 1995). In addition, recent research has begun to explore the leisure experiences and participation of women who are lesbians to understand how the social context of their lives as women influences their leisure (Bialeschki, Pearce and Elliott, 1994). Thus, if research is to advance our understanding of gender, it needs to take both differences and commonalities into account.

It is evident from this brief review that understanding the impact of gender on leisure participation is not a simple matter of examining participation, activities, or time use. Instead, there is a need to examine both the microlevel and macrolevel social contexts of people's lives and the gendered nature of these social contexts. It is important to look at how these contexts affect not only activities and time, but also attitudes, experiences, and meanings. Moreover, while there are similarities among women and among men because

of the location within the patriarchal order, there is also considerable diversity due to cultural backgrounds and other factors.

Researchers have begun to explore these issues, but a quick perusal of the research completed to date shows that it almost always focuses on women's lives. The gendered nature of men's leisure experiences and leisure participation, and the diversity among men in different social and cultural circumstances, remain largely unexplored territory. Perhaps it is time to explore not only why women's leisure revolves so closely around the family, but why men's is less family-centered. Do variations in gender role attitudes among men affect their leisure and family participation? Are changing attitudes and expectations about fathering affecting men's leisure experiences and choices? Does men's different relationship to the world of paid work affect their leisure differentially? To what extent do men's perceptions, experiences, and meanings of leisure vary, and what accounts for such variations? Moving beyond gender difference research raises more (and more complex) questions, but does not negate the need to explore the interplay between men's and women's lives and the effects of changing power relations on leisure.

## **Gender as a Constraint on Leisure**

Leisure constraints can, in some ways, be seen as the "flip side" of participation or behavior. That is, women's and men's leisure can also be explained in terms of factors that reduce opportunities for leisure. These factors may prevent, reduce, or modify participation, or may adversely affect the quality or enjoyment of the leisure activities. Different types of constraints, for example intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints (see Jackson and Scott, chapter 18 in this volume), can affect men's and women's behavior in different ways. Most of the empirical research, though, has focused on structural constraints or factors that reduce participation in desired activities (Jackson and Henderson, 1995).

Paralleling research on participation, one approach to constraints research has been to examine gender differences in reported structural constraints. This research has shown, not surprisingly, that women are more constrained than men with regard to household obligations and family commitments (Horna, 1989; Jackson and Henderson, 1995; Searle and Jackson, 1985), and that these constraints are also related to family life cycle (Jackson and Henderson, 1995; Witt and Goodale, 1981). While reported time constraints

do not always correlate directly with activity participation (Kay and Jackson, 1991; Shaw, Bonen and McCabe, 1991), the time constraints of employed mothers are evident whatever methodological approach is taken, and time is the most frequently reported *objective* constraint among women (Harrington, Dawson and Bolla, 1992).

Apart from the question of family and household obligations, gender difference research has revealed few significant differences in reported constraints between women and men (Searle and Jackson, 1985). This may be partly because within-gender differences are greater than between-gender differences (Jackson and Henderson, 1995). For example, economic constraints may be related more directly to social class, income, and single parenthood than they are to gender per se. The lack of gender differences in reported constraints may also relate to expectations and/or desire for certain types of activity. Thus, although there is unequal funding and provision of recreation sports opportunities for women and men, and unequal rates of participation (Hall and Richardson, 1982; Robinson and Godbey, 1993; Statistics Canada, 1994), there is little gender difference in reported lack of facilities and opportunities as constraints (Searle and Jackson, 1985; Shaw et al., 1991).

The research that has moved beyond gender comparisons, and has focused instead on the gendered context of peoples' lives, has provided greater insight into leisure constraints, particularly the constraints faced by women in their everyday lives as workers, mothers, and caregivers. Much of the literature on gender and leisure, in fact, can be seen to focus primarily on the way in which women's leisure is constrained, even though such literature does not explicitly incorporate a constraints framework (Shaw, 1994). Where a constraints framework has been used, researchers have not always attempted to categorize constraints as intrapersonal, structural, or interpersonal varieties, perhaps because of the overlap and the difficulty of clearly distinguishing these categories (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993).

The research on constraints to women's leisure has revealed a number of constraints, not typically included in previous surveys, some of which are unique to women or primarily affect women. One constraint that has been shown to significantly affect the leisure lives of women is the ethic of care. When conceptualized as a constraint, the ethic of care is clearly linked to societal expectations about women's role expectations in the family. But it goes beyond the idea of constraints stemming from the time that women direct to household labor and family responsibilities, to include ways in which such responsibilities are internalized.

Thus the ethic of care comes into play as a constraint when women neglect their own leisure in order to provide for the needs—including physical, social, and emotional needs—of children, spouses, or friends (Henderson and Allen, 1991). According to Harrington et al. (1992), the ethic of care is the major *subjective* constraint that reduces women's enjoyment of leisure.

The ethic of care is linked conceptually and empirically to the concept of lack of sense of entitlement, a constraint which is also thought to disproportionately, if not exclusively, affect women (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1991). Research by Green et al. (1990) has described how some women feel and act as if they do not have a right to leisure for themselves. Moreover, this lack of entitlement is thought to be associated with the ideology of familism, which places emphasis on women's role as family caregiver.

Other constraints on women that have been linked to broader power-based gender relations, as well as ideologies about femininity and appropriate gender roles, are body image and fear of violence. Research has consistently shown women to have high levels of fear of violence (Statistics Canada, 1993), and this fear affects the quality of life that women experience in general, as well as their participation in and enjoyment of leisure (Whyte and Shaw, 1994). Body image, also, is an issue that has concerned many social psychologists and health specialists, because of its impact on young women's health and self-esteem (e.g., Garfinkel, Garner and Goldbloom, 1987). As a constraint on leisure, low body image, along with low self-esteem and lack of confidence, may reduce participation in particular activities, such as swimming or aerobics. It may also reduce enjoyment of these and other activities where the social context of the activity includes an overt emphasis on women's appearance, clothing, weight loss, or body shape (Frederick and Shaw, 1995).

The ethic of care, fear of violence, low body image, and poor self-esteem can all be seen as possible structural constraints (affecting participation) and/or interpersonal constraints (based on interrelationships with other) and/or intrapersonal constraints (reducing the desire to participate in particular activities). Indeed, the gendered nature of leisure constraints has become more evident as the concept of constraints has broadened to encompass interpersonal and intrapersonal as well as structural constraints (see Jackson and Scott, chapter 18 in this volume). Another factor, which has received less attention by researchers, but which may primarily act as an intrapersonal constraint, is that of gender stereotyping of activities. The extent to which leisure participation can be seen as stereotyped was discussed previously, but looking at this idea from a

constraints perspective can add to our understanding of this issue.

The stereotyping of leisure activities, with some activities being considered appropriate for males and others considered appropriate for females, will inevitably affect expressed preferences. Even children as young as two years old have shown preference for "appropriate" gender-typed toys (Martin and Little, 1990), and this preference continues throughout childhood (Fisher-Thompson, Sausa and Wright, 1995). Teenagers and adults, too, typically express greater desire for "gender appropriate" activities than those deemed to be inappropriate. This may partly be an issue of skills (for example, women not having learned to play hockey; men not having learned to sew or to figure skate), but it is also manifested as a matter of activity preference. Cultural variation argues against a narrow biological explanation for such gender-based activity preferences. For example, field hockey is considered a male sport in some parts of the world, but is a female sport in North America. Thus, it would seem to be the stereotyping or the culturally determined views about appropriate activities for each gender that limit or constrain leisure options and leisure participation for both men and women. Individual gender role attitudes (Henderson, Stalnaker and Taylor, 1988; Kane, 1990) are also likely to be related to the degree to which stereotyping of activities affects participation or interest.

The idea of gender stereotyping as a constraint has been suggested in the literature (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991; Jackson, Crawford and Godbey, 1993), but little empirical research has been carried out on this issue. It may be, however, that such stereotyping has a stronger impact on males than on females. This is because of the greater stigma experienced by males if they are seen as "feminine" or "sissy" rather than by females considered to be "tomboys" (Feinman, 1981). Males may also experience higher levels of "constraints into" certain types of participation. For example, males may experience sports as a "compulsory activity," especially when they are young. Organized sports provide a way for boys to "prove their masculinity" to others, and also a way to seek approval from their fathers (Messner, 1994).

The constraints approach, in general, can be seen to provide a different and important perspective that adds to the growing understanding of ways in which gender affects leisure. Like the activity participation perspective, researchers have moved from the study of differences between men and women to studying the broader social context and ways in which gendered life experiences in a patriarchal society influence leisure. Also, like the activity perspective, almost all the research on social context has focused on women's

rather than men's lives. With the exception of research on sports from a men's studies perspective (e.g., Messner and Sabo, 1990), little is known about how gender influences men's leisure activities, experiences or constraints.

## The Gendered Outcomes of Leisure Practice

Research on leisure participation and leisure constraints examines ways in which gender—being male or female, or living in a gendered society—impacts on leisure. In fact, almost all the empirical research on gender and leisure, especially in North America, takes this approach and focuses on the effect of gender on leisure. However, given that gender is dynamic rather than static, and given that gender ideologies and gender relations are constantly being renegotiated, the relationship between leisure and gender is better conceptualized as bidirectional rather than unidirectional. In other words, leisure can also impact on gender, so that leisure participation can be expected to affect attitudes towards masculinity and femininity. Leisure activities, behaviors, and experiences, then, can function to reproduce or reinforce, or alternately to challenge or resist, patriarchal ideologies and dominant gender relations.

The impact of leisure on gender is both individual and collective. At the individual level, leisure experiences, self-expression, and the development of self-identity though leisure often involve the expression of attitudes and beliefs about femininity and masculinity. This expression leads to attitudinal reinforcement and internalization. In addition, interactions with others during leisure, including interactions with people of the same as well as the opposite gender, also reflect, reinforce, and sometimes challenge ideas about appropriate behaviors for women and men. These microlevel outcomes of leisure, though, also have broader societal implications. This is because individual attitudes and beliefs function collectively in the construction and reconstruction of gender ideologies and gender relations in the broader society.

One example of the reproduction of femininity through leisure is participation in the currently popular pursuit of aerobics. Aerobics classes and the atmosphere generated in these classes often promote the importance of physical appearance and the need for women to fit the societal ideal of the slim body image (Shaw, 1991). Thus, although aerobics participation for women may provide fitness and fun, another outcome of such participation may also be the reinforcement of women's concerns about their body image and the

value society places on women's weight, shape, and appearance (Frederick and Shaw, 1995). In these ways, the very act of participation can be seen to be reinforcing traditional ideas about femininity. Of course, aerobics instructors, classes, and the atmosphere within such classes vary, so different classes may have different impacts on participants in terms of attitude reinforcement or change. Without more research looking at the specific ideologies associated with different activities in different settings and different social contexts, it is difficult to determine the gendered outcome of women's participation. However, it is evident that aerobics and other fitness activities are not gender neutral since they do, overtly or covertly, carry messages to participants about appropriate ways of acting.

Similar arguments can be made about the reinforcement or reproduction of masculinity through men's leisure activities, and perhaps especially through men's sports. Messner's (1994) research reveals ways in which organized sports for boys both reflect dominant concepts of masculinity and encourage boys to define themselves in these traditional ways. The rule-bound, competitive, and hierarchical world of organized sports, with its emphasis on conditional self-worth, is described by Messner and Sabo (1990) as a "gendering institution," and one which has a significant impact on both the individual development of masculine identities and the broader gender order.

Aerobics and sports are just two examples of ways in which leisure affects the construction of gender. However, many other leisure activities can be expected to affect ideas about gender as well, including common everyday activities like television watching, and infrequent occasions like celebrations and holidays. Much has been written about the sexism inherent in many television programs and commercials (e.g., Lovdal, 1989; Signorielli, 1989), but less is known about the impact of this leisure activity on individual and collective views of masculinity and femininity. Also, with the exception of Bella's (1992) book, *The Christmas Imperative*, there is a dearth of literature on the gendered nature of holidays and special occasions. Wedding showers and baby showers for women have traditionally focused on and emphasized the role of women as homemakers and caregivers. The male "stag night," on the other hand, promotes the idea of men as sexual predators and marriage as a loss of sexual freedom for men. While many women and men today reject these traditional forms of celebration, such events do continue, and the impact of traditional or nontraditional forms of celebration on participants' views of self or of gender are not known.

A related area worthy of further study is the reproduction of men's and women's sexuality through

leisure. The image of men as sexual aggressors and women as sexual objects is frequently reinforced through various leisure outlets, including pornography, movies, and magazines as well as television. Psychologists have examined the impact of pornography on male aggression and violence against women (e.g., Malamuth and Donnerstein, 1984), but there has been less emphasis on the impact of the leisure use of pornography on men's and women's views of masculinity and femininity.

Leisure activities, of course, do not always function to reproduce dominant views. Indeed, because leisure is often freely chosen and self-determined, the potential for resistance to dominant ideologies is probably greater in this area of life compared to work, employment, or household labor. Wearing (1990) has studied ways in which young mothers use leisure to claim their right to independent, freely chosen activities. She has also explored ways in which young women sometimes develop leisure identities that challenge traditional views (Wearing, 1992). Moreover, according to Freysinger and Flannery (1992), self-determined leisure is more likely than affiliative leisure to lead to resistance and women's empowerment.

The distinction between the reproduction of and the resistance to dominant gender relations is sometimes difficult to determine. For example, in a research paper on elite women bodybuilders, Guthrie and Castelnovo (1992) discuss whether the women involved can be characterized as resisting dominant discourses on feminine beauty, or whether their actions represent compliance. Similarly, male cheerleaders may initially be seen to be challenging dominant views of appropriate masculine behaviors, but a close examination of the activities they perform, such as lifting and throwing, and the distinction drawn between male and female cheerleading moves, suggests that this activity may act to reinforce rather than to challenge traditional conceptualizations (Davis, 1990).

Whether or not the distinction between reproduction and resistance is clear, and whether or not it is appropriate to dichotomize activities in this way, there clearly is a strong argument to be made that leisure does have an effect on gender. That leisure practices can affect both individual and collective conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity is evident, although the nature of this impact and the effects of different kinds of activities in different circumstances and social contexts remain largely an empirical question. The need to explore these gendered outcomes of leisure may be particularly important, given that leisure is less structured than work and that it is characterized by greater degrees of choice and self-expression. Exploring gendered outcomes may also be an

important question to pursue at this point in time when gender relations in many parts of the world is currently contested territory.

## Conclusion

The study of gender and leisure has shown significant progress over the last 15 to 20 years, but considerable challenges remain ahead. One such challenge is to understand cultural and individual diversity without losing sight of the importance of gender as an organizing principle. Another is to understand ways in which gender relations affect men's leisure lives without diverting attention away from the crucial issue of women's lack of leisure. A third is to explore the effects of leisure practice on the social construction of gender, and to incorporate understanding of the two-directional relationship between gender and leisure into our theorizing.

Addressing these challenges to research and theory also has implications for practice. Focus on diversity should enhance our understanding of the needs of women and men in different life situations. At present we know little about the types of social policies, recreation practices, or individual strategies that might address the needs of women living in poverty, of single parents or noncustodial parents, of First Nations communities, of survivors of sexual abuse, of women or men living with AIDS, or of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We do know that leisure practice is closely tied to the conditions of life and the social location of individuals, but finding practical and effective solutions depends on research aimed at understanding the role of leisure in diverse settings.

Research on men's leisure, too, will not only advance theoretical knowledge, but should point to the kinds of changes that can be made to enhance the leisure lives of both women and men. Men, as well as women, face gender-related constraints, and moving towards gender equity will involve changes in men's lives as well as changes for women.

Perhaps the challenge which will have the most dramatic impact on implications for practice is that of

understanding the gendered outcomes of leisure participation. To date, most of the research on gender and leisure has pointed to the need to provide better opportunities for women to enjoy leisure, and to reduce the time stress and other constraints faced by women. While this is clearly an important issue, focusing on leisure outcomes suggests a need to direct attention towards leisure practices themselves. A critical analysis of leisure activities, ranging from high-school proms to basketball tournaments, from video games to pool halls, and from Internet surfing to family vacations, is required. Such analyses need to go beyond the conventional *benefits approach* which focuses narrowly on the positive outcomes of leisure for individuals (see Driver and Bruns, chapter 21 in this volume). Instead, examination of the gendered outcomes of leisure needs to address both negative and positive outcomes, both societal and individual outcomes, and to explore the impact of different types of leisure practice in different social and cultural contexts.

Some of this more critical work on leisure outcomes has already begun among leisure scholars in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. As Coalter (see chapter 31 in this volume) points out, "leisure studies" scholarship in Britain tends to put emphasis on the ideological and cultural context of leisure rather than on individual psychology. Thus, some British sociologists (e.g., Green et al., 1990) have suggested ways in which leisure functions to reproduce unequal gender relations in society. However, more empirical and theoretical research is needed, and such research needs to be applied to North American as well as to other cultural settings. An enhanced understanding of the gendered outcomes of leisure for women and men, for societal meanings of masculinity and femininity, and for the broader gender order in society has a number of implications for practice. These include implications for social action, for societal change, and for professional practice, as well as for individual decision making. Working to change leisure practice could become another way of working towards gender equity in leisure—and a way that complements and enhances existing initiatives.



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The Leisure Imbalance. It's this kind of "cleaning out" that recent research has shown men get significantly more of on a regular basis. According to a 2013 study by Pew Research, men get an average of five hours more leisure time than women per week. Easy as it is to point fingers, this problem has been around far longer than the "Lean-in" phenomenon and it's more complex than women pushing harder for advancement in the workplace. Some would argue there's a double standard when it comes to leisure time for men and women.