

versely, those families in which the mothers worked and/or volunteered part-time outside of the home and in which fathers were more willing to assume responsibility for the care of the home and of children, were more likely to be "healthy." Betty Friedan, Marilyn French, Gloria Steinam and others told us this a long time ago—so what makes this book unique and what is its relevance to leisure researchers?

The book is unique because the authors used a combination of Experience Sampling Method and interviews to capture the thoughts, emotions and feelings of European-American, working and middle-upper class mothers, fathers and adolescents within the context of their work and leisure during a one-week period in 1987. Its central value is that it is an historical text which documents the lives of one segment of American life during one social/historical/political moment in time. The book is also valuable because the authors explicitly address the issue of "leisure" in the lives of mothers, fathers and adolescents. For the many family and adolescent studies researchers who will pick up this book, it is my hope that they find the authors' discussions of leisure to be enlightening. Although leisure researchers may find some of the discussions of leisure to be redundant (e.g., women are constrained in their leisure within the context of home and men feel more entitlement to leisure than women because they work outside of the home), they will, nevertheless, find the book helpful because it provides insight into the intimacies and complexities of individuals within family contexts. The authors conclude that "collective family well-being depends not on fixed role assignments, but rather on flexible processes . . ." (p. 219). Such a conclusion might be helpful to leisure theorists as they conceptualize and conduct research about the topic of family. Perhaps leisure researchers could also embrace the authors' suggestion to replicate this study across many different kinds of families—African-American, lesbian/gay, single-parent. Although it is unclear what such studies might reveal, Larson and Richards have, nevertheless, provided us with a framework from which to begin a process of understanding the "emotional lives" of individuals within the context of family.

Beth D. Kivel, Ed.D., University of Northern Iowa.

Lopata, Helena Z. (1996). *Current widowhood: Myths and realities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, ISBN 0-8039-7396-9, \$21.95 (paperback), \$44.00 (cloth), pp. 251.

"Widows are probably one of the most misunderstood groups in America today" (Lieberman, 1994, no page number) in spite of the fact that they make up over 11% of the female population. The loss of a husband, more than any other loss, profoundly disorganizes a married woman's life. It brings about fundamental disruptions in her emotional life, removes key relation-

ships from her social environment, and introduces new difficulties into her life which she is mainly left to deal with on her own (Lopata, 1979). Yet the image of widowhood that is emerging from current research is of a resilient woman, "able to work through her grief, cutting ties with the deceased, accepting life without him, modifying existing social relationships and roles and building new ones, and reconstructing the self into an independent whole human being" (p. 221-222).

For more than 30 years, Helena Lopata has been the primary voice of widows and the leading researcher on the topic of widowhood throughout the world. In her latest book, *Current Widowhood: Myths and Realities*, she explores many of the popular, common sense and "semiscientific" myths about widowhood in contemporary societies and cultures by pulling together and reanalyzing the theory and research on current widowhood. She uses social development theory and the social role paradigm to guide her synthesis and reanalyzes. Interestingly, this is her first completed work on widowhood since becoming a widow herself.

Current Widowhood: Myths and Realities is organized around three themes: the influences of modernization and social development on widows; the non-role of widowhood in American society; and the myths, stereotypes, and assumptions that surround widowhood and the circumstances of becoming and being widowed. Lopata begins by providing definitions of four basic concepts: social development, social role, social life space, and myths. Social development or modernization summarizes the direction of change in societies during the past century. This change has been in the direction of increasing complexity which theoretically allows people more societal resources and opportunities to build flexible social life spaces. Relatively few people, especially older American women, have been socialized to take advantage of these resources or create their own resources to build complex, flexible and satisfying life courses. According to Lopata, their problems are markedly evident in their role as wife and in widowhood.

A predominant theme of this book is that of the transitional social role of widows in contemporary American society. After the duties, rights and obligations surrounding the funeral and indefinite and varied mourning period, the role of widow ceases to exist and becomes a characteristic of the woman that enters more or less significantly into her many other social roles. Widowhood becomes a pervasive identity rather than a specific social role with a social circle of rights, privileges, duties and obligations.

Lopata defines social life space as the complexity and variety of social roles of a member of society. "Some people have a relatively flat social life space, being involved in social roles that fall into one institution [e.g., family]. . . . Other people have a multidimensional social life space, being involved in social roles in several institutions [e.g., family, work, recreation]" (p. 4). Lopata proposes that the wider and more complex a woman's social life space, the less likely her identity as a widow will enter the social relationships of each of her roles. In spite of the tenet that contemporary society offers no social role for widows after the death rituals are completed, she

consistently argues that the social life space of widows is important to their life satisfaction, and needs further study.

Lopata constructs this volume on the myths surrounding widows and widowhood. She defines myth as "a belief, assumption, or stereotype that influences behavior of persons toward each other . . . [or a] belief about the self" (p. 5). Even though myths can present neutral or positive pictures as well as negative ones, the problem is that they are oversimplified stereotypes that can influence personal perceptions, and limit social interactions and social policy (Hunter & Sundel, 1989). Myths about widowhood, as Lopata states, often negate each other and "provide overgeneralized ideas as to what is a needed support and result in many efforts that actually contribute to a new widow's depression" (p. 221). Lopata uses this theme of contradictory myths to structure this volume.

She begins in Chapter 2 by presenting comparative and historical case studies of widows from India, Israel, Korea and Turkey. These cases dispel both the myth of inevitable family support systems for widows in traditional societies and the myth that modernization inevitably benefits all members. Such myths are detrimental because they may be used to justify not providing services that elderly women need to continue functioning adequately in the community (Sanchez, 1989).

In Chapter 3, Lopata examines the variations of widowhood within American society, debunking two contradictory myths. First, the United States is a modern society, and most of its members, including widowed women, display modern ways of thinking and lifestyles. Second, widows in American society lead very restricted, isolated, or dependent lifestyles in a limited social space. America is a diverse society. Widows, as other Americans, live in a variety of environments that differ considerably in the resources they do and do not provide. Lopata found that American widows can be modern, as well as restricted, isolated, and dependent.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Lopata explores the process by which wives become widows and the various problems surrounding this major life transition. Contradictory myths as to whether sudden or prolonged death is more difficult for the survivor seem to prevail in both popular and scientific thought. Lopata argues that it is the extent of caregiving, location of death, ages of survivors, and alternative support systems that influence how the husband's death affects the wife, not whether his death was sudden or prolonged. She also dispels the myths that grief is a universal experience with definable stages and length of time; and younger women suffer more in being widowed than do older women. Grief is not linear and does not follow a specific schedule or set of stages and younger women experience grief and widowhood differently, but there is no agreement in the literature as to who suffers more.

Lopata examines myths related to changes in personal relationships in widowhood in Chapters 6 and 7. These chapters, along with Chapter 8, may have the most to say to leisure scholars and practitioners. These myths include: (a) Widowed mothers are heavily dependent on their children for

financial, service, social, and emotional supports; (b) in widowhood, women are likely to turn to their siblings for major supports; (c) elderly widows have limited involvement with friends; and (d) courtship among the elderly moves at a slower pace than among the young. She contends that the higher a widow's education and socioeconomic lifestyle, the better her health, and the broader her support network, the less dependent she is. When support is sought or given, it is usually from or by the widow's daughter. Lopata concludes there is no evidence that widowhood decreases social involvement with friends. Widows often find they have more in common with never married women than with other widows.

In Chapter 8 Lopata discusses two myths around involvement of widows in the community and the resources provided by American society to older women. First, widows are valued and respected members of American society. Second, American society has always supported and assisted the social integration of widows. Widows, especially older ones, have not been a valued part of American society, therefore few social resources have been allocated to them. Few societal programs exist, and ageism and sexism are prevalent.

Lopata concludes by summarizing the theoretical and empirical issues of the book and stressing the importance of social development and personal process in debunking the myths and understanding the realities of widows. According to Lopata, the changes that occur in a woman's world on becoming widowed vary by many factors including her location in the society and community, her dependence on her husband and the type of life they lived while he was alive, on her financial, health and other personal resources, and on her self-concept. All of these factors need to be taken into consideration when studying, developing policy for, and providing services to widows.

While this book is aimed primarily at scholars working in family studies, sociology, psychology, social work, gender studies, and related fields that focus on the family, leisure scholars have a lot to gain from this body of knowledge. Leisure scholars can and need to gain a greater understanding of the sociological perspective of widows and the process of widowhood. They can become aware of how popular and "semiscientific" myths bias practice and research agendas especially as they relate to older women. They can gain an appreciation of the importance of social development and personal processes in facilitating life course transitions.

Lopata herself identifies an avenue for leisure scholars to add to this body of knowledge. "We really do not know enough about the differences in emotional consequence of widowhood on women with flat and with multidimensional social life spaces. One can hypothesize that the more multidimensional the life space, and the more important the other roles, the less disorganizing and traumatizing is the death of the husband. On the other hand, a multidimensional life may require deep personal commitments with one person, which is likely to be a husband" (p. 218). Understanding how leisure as a flat or multidimensional social life space contributes to social and personal development in widowhood is fundamental to the further development of a critical and comprehensive body of knowledge.

As the most comprehensive and current text on widowhood to date, *Current Widowhood: Myths and Realities* is a must for leisure scholars who desire to gain an understanding of the processes, problems, and potentials facing widows in American society today.

References

- Lieberman, M. A. (1994). *Must widows wear black? Growth beyond grief*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Lopata, H. Z. (1979). *Women as widows: Support systems*. New York: Elsevier.
- Hunter, S., & Sundel, M. (1989). Introduction: An examination of key issues concerning midlife. In S. Hunter & M. Sundel (Eds.), *Midlife myths: Issues, findings, and practice implications* (pp. 8-28). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sanchez, C. D. (1989). Informal support systems of widows over 60 in Puerto Rico. In American Association of Retired Persons (Ed.), *Midlife and older women* (pp. 265-278). Washington, DC: Pan American Health Organization.

Candace Ashton-Shaeffer, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Henderson, Karla; Bialeschki, M. Deborah; Shaw, Susan M.; and Freysinger, Valeria J. (1996). *Both gains and gaps: Feminist perspectives on women's leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc, ISBN 0-910251-79-7, \$32.95, (hardcover), 357 pp.

Both gains and gaps: Feminist perspectives on women's leisure by Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, and Freysinger takes the reader on a journey through a wide range of theory, research, issues, and ideas about women and leisure. This book is an update of *A leisure of one's own: A feminist perspective on women's leisure* (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989). The authors contend that "although many gains have been made in understanding women's leisure, much remains to be learned" (p. xiii). It is this theme of gains and gaps that guides the analysis of women and leisure throughout the book. *Both Gains and Gaps* is intended to serve as an introduction to the topic of women and leisure. The authors achieve this goal by employing a clear, succinct writing style. They also work from the assumption that the reader does not necessarily have a background in women's studies, leisure studies, and/or social sciences. Having said this, the book is not so simplistic that scholars in the field will not find reading this book beneficial. Indeed, I would argue that Henderson et al. achieve their goal of improving "... clarity and thinking about both the gains and gaps surrounding women, gender, and leisure" (p. 4).

Both Gains and Gaps is divided into ten chapters, or stages, in a journey of comprehension about women and leisure. Each chapter clearly outlines the theoretical perspectives, terminology, and the leisure-based research on a particular aspect pertaining to the topic of women's leisure. Chapter One "... sets the stage for subsequent chapters by discussing the underlying