

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.

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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

reasons for studying women's leisure" (p. 2). A discussion of feminist approaches, a definition of leisure, and social psychological/sociological perspectives on leisure are found in the first chapter. The authors also introduce the reader to the assumptions which guide their analysis of women and leisure as set out in the book. They work from the viewpoint that "... women almost always function in a world that is governed and controlled by men" (p. 8), subsequently their leisure "... is often a reflection of their oppression in patriarchy" (p. 8). Nonetheless, leisure can also be a site for resistance and empowerment. Indeed, the feeling that it is possible to evoke social change, however small, is a constant lesson to be learned from this book.

The second chapter provides the historical context for the discussion of women and leisure. While the authors readily admit that this book is written "from a North American perspective" (p. 3), they attempt to address the experiences of women outside of middle class, white, heterosexual society. Indeed, in Chapter Two this attempt at being inclusive is very much in evidence. For example, the reader not only learns of the primarily white suffrage movements of the nineteenth century, but she/he learns that the Black Baptist churches at the turn of the century formed the core membership for the National Association of Colored Women. The authors also address the issue of homophobia in women's leisure, primarily in relation to physical activity and sport. As such, this is a valuable contribution in itself since a discussion of the issues surrounding women's participation (or lack of) in sport is rarely found in leisure texts; a fact which is rather curious considering the significance accorded sport in many individuals' lives.

Chapter Three takes "the bull by the horns" and confronts the often negative connotations surrounding the terms feminist and feminism. The authors open the chapter with various quotations from their students when asked if they are feminists. These quotes tend to support Henderson et al's contention that "many people hesitate to be associated with feminism for fear of the repercussions that could arise from some of the negative stereotypes about feminists" (p. 71). This chapter elucidates some of these misconceptions. It helps the reader to understand that there are different feminisms. Liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, cultural, ecofeminism, and postmodern feminism(s) are discussed in Chapter Three. The authors also help the reader to understand how individuals holding a particular feminist view of the world would view issues pertaining to women in leisure. Indeed, this notion of viewing world from a particular theoretical perspective is a reoccurring theme throughout the book.

What does leisure mean for women? Does leisure mean the same for all women or do class, race, age, and other differences influence women's definitions as to what constitutes leisure? Most leisure studies students are familiar with the "problems" associated with defining leisure; however, such discussions often restrict themselves to a "unisex one size fits all" definition of the concept. In Chapter Four, starting with the "classical" definitions of leisure, the authors expose the weaknesses in these various conceptualizations for both men and women. Taking the lead from Shaw (1985), the

authors utilize the notion of a "leisure container," (the idea being that "the type of activity in which one participates, the physical setting or environment, and the social context combine to form the 'container' within which the individual defines the situation as a leisure experience" (p. 101). Indeed, by drawing upon research from much of the western world it soon becomes apparent to the reader that the "life situation" (e.g., age, class, marital status, etc.) of women is extremely influential in determining how individuals define leisure.

Chapters Five and Six address the implications of life course stage on leisure for women. Both chapters outline and critique various theoretical approaches to gender and life span/course development. Chapter Five concentrates on childhood and adolescence and leisure for girls and young women. The reader learns how girl's play is often viewed differently from that of boys and how in adolescence social forces become even more powerful in shaping the leisure and general behavior of young women. For example, the issue of eating disorders that often manifest themselves in adolescence, may be linked to various leisure contexts such as sports and the "glamour-consumer" role (e.g. concern with image, shopping for clothes, etc.). Chapter Six furthers the journey through adulthood and concentrates on women's leisure in young, middle, and late adulthood. The concepts of continuity and change provide the focus for this chapter. Specifically, women's changing roles over the life course and the possible effects on their leisure are discussed. Most notably, attention is given to women's roles within the family both in relation to child care and caring for elderly or other relatives.

Participation in various forms of leisure and constraints on participation are discussed in Chapter Seven. The problems associated with actually measuring women's participation in leisure are addressed. This emphasizes again the difficulties associated with defining leisure, as discussed in Chapter Four. Constraints on leisure for women are discussed in their own right in this chapter. In previous chapters, constraints on leisure have always been part of the discussion as it is impossible to divorce the analysis of women's leisure from social structure. However, in Chapter Seven the studies which have investigated the relationship between leisure and constraints are elucidated in more detail.

Chapters Eight, Nine, and Ten, I would argue, address the issue of how can I make a difference? Chapter Eight explains how to "do" feminist research and warns the reader of some potential pitfalls she/he may encounter. Of note for many new and established researchers is the value of theory in the research process. The reader is told that "one of the risks of atheoretical research is that unexamined assumptions might be made or implications drawn that are irrelevant" (p. 229). Chapter Nine continues the theme of making a difference by discussing how both researchers and practitioners alike can effect change on women's leisure. "Empowering ideologies, practical programs, personal strategies, and pluralistic research methods are all needed if we are to change or enhance women's leisure in the future" (p.

257). Indeed, this future oriented theme rounds out the book in Chapter Ten where the authors present the reader with five scenarios describing the potential configuration of women's leisure in the year 2020. The reader is asked to choose the scenario that best describes her/his vision of the future. In so doing, the authors are hoping not only to stimulate thinking and debate, but to instill in the individual that it is everybody's responsibility to effect change.

It is this persistent encouragement to the reader to become involved in changing the present status of women's leisure which sets this book apart from many other texts. We have reached a stage in leisure studies whereby our task is not merely to describe, but to explain and effect change. This book does much to encourage and show individuals how to complete this charge. Indeed, the authors contend that "this book is a work in progress" and "more information about gains and gaps, more scholarly theoretical analyses, and ways to implement these ideas in practice are being developed each day" (p. xiv).

Another feature of this book is the nature of the discussion questions found at the end of each chapter. Instead of asking the reader to merely recall particular aspects of each chapter, the questions often ask individuals to relate the theory back to their own life experiences. Additionally, readers are asked to state their opinions regarding various issues. Again this is another step towards extending the boundaries of knowledge and understanding as this approach requires that the reader actively engages in thought rather than passive recall of information.

In reading *Both Gains and Gaps*, I was impressed by the breadth of information across diverse academic disciplines from sport sociology and economics to life span developmental psychology, among others. The authors also cite research from all over the world, thereby breaching the artificial divide between much North American, European, and Australasian research. However, if I were to pose one criticism to the authors it would be the lack of attention to tourism and vacations as important components of leisure. Some of this blame may lie in the lack of research in the area of women and tourism. But, as I sit reading this book while viewing the dynamics of a number of European families on holiday at a French campsite, I can't help but feel that there is a major gap in our understanding of the female experience of vacations, and family vacations in particular. How do women view and experience vacations, which are supposed to be the preeminent leisure experience people save for, plan for, and await with anticipation all year?

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