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## Book Review

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*Gender and Leisure: Social and Cultural Perspectives.* Cara Carmichael Aitchison. London: Routledge Publishing, 2003.

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"Gender" and "leisure" can no longer just be considered nouns used to describe a category of people and a segment of time. Instead, Cara Carmichael Aitchison tells readers that these words have shifted to verbs: Gender and leisure are practiced, achieved, and maintained. In *Gender and Leisure: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, Aitchison describes shifts in our understanding of gender and highlights the role of leisure as a significant site and process in the creation and contestation of gender relations.

*Gender and Leisure* is presented in two parts: The first half of the book reviews key theoretical concepts related to gender study and provides a chronology of research relating gender and leisure. The second portion of the book uses a series of case studies to explore the role of policy, education, and management of leisure in shaping gender and leisure relationships. The final chapter synthesizes the previous seven chapters. Additionally, the final chapter highlights how the interaction of social and cultural forces has created and reinforced gender relations through leisure.

The meat of the book, chapters two through eight, each contain adequate depth and could stand alone as literature reviews or journal articles. However, an important thread ties together each chapter and makes the book worth more than simply the sum of its parts. This thread is Aitchison's concept of a social-cultural nexus. The social-cultural nexus refers to the site or process in which social policies and management interact with the cultural norms and to shape the experience of gender. In each chapter the author revisits the idea of the social-cultural nexus to emphasize that it is the inter-relationship between structures and cultures that often serve maintain gender inequity within leisure relations. Taken together, the chapters represent a comprehensive review of gender and leisure studies applied to women's lives, leisure studies curricula, management, and policy.

Following an introductory chapter to orient the reader, *Gender and Leisure* begins by describing and evaluating the key social and cultural ideologies that have underpinned theoretical understandings of gender and leisure. This hefty second chapter provides a primer on the philosophy of science, outlines major paradigms (positivism, phenomenology, structuralism, and post-structuralism), describes and critiques different feminisms (liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, post-structural, post-colonial, and Black feminism), and builds the foundation for the author's description of a social-cultural nexus. It is at this point that Aitchison identifies her own theoretical ap-

proach: post-structural theory. The author, however, makes the book palatable for structuralists by acknowledging the role patriarchy and capitalism in shaping gender relations:

It has been argued that postmodernism may be a theory whose time has come, but only for men. As men have had their Enlightenment they are in a position of strength from which to deconstruct and de-center themselves. For women to take on such a position risks weakening what is not yet strong. . . . The challenge for this and other discussions of gender and leisure, then, is to provide a broad analysis of the cultural fragments and differences in the inter-relationships between gender and leisure while simultaneously attending to the broader structural relations of power. (p. 33)

Chapters Three and Four turn the reader's attention from broad ways of knowing to a survey of gender and leisure research. Aitchison begins her third chapter by outlining the range of meanings given to leisure: as free time, activity, psychological state, and more recently, as a liminal moment or metaphysical space. Although it remains unwritten, Aitchison implies that the latter conceptionalization of leisure is the only option for readers who are concerned with women's access to leisure. The influence of feminist research in leisure studies was next evaluated by tracing the evolution of the gender and leisure knowledge base and reviewing seminal works in the study of gender and leisure (e.g. Deem 1986; Green et al., 1990; Wearing, 2000; Wimbush 1986). The fourth chapter concludes the review portion of the text by describing new alliances between gender studies, leisure studies, and geography. A chronology details an academic shift from study of the physical, material and absolute nature of space to more recent analyses that emphasize socio-cultural, and symbolic nature of space. Newer notions of spatialized feminism, gendered space, and the sexuality of spaces are credited with sparking interdisciplinary understandings of leisure space and gender.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven link leisure policy, education, and management processes to gendered leisure. First, Chapter Five evaluates contemporary leisure policy according to its ability to address social inclusion and community development. Best practices for policy are identified by evaluating women's role as sports leaders, coaches and managers and by assessing the impact of compulsive competitive tendering policies in the UK. The author concludes that contemporary leisure public policy tends to benefit groups already over-represented in participation statistics. A call is made for rigorous feminist analysis applied to the study public leisure policy.

Next, the process of knowledge legitimization in leisure studies comes under scrutiny. Chapter Six provides an audit of academic journal submissions, acceptance rates, and editorial board composition is undertaken to understand "who holds the keys" to knowledge production. The merit of this chapter is in the recommendations for best practices. Among other suggestions, recommendations call for journal editors to take the responsibility of providing publication statistics by gender, publication of rejection rates by gender, single, jointly, and mixed-authored submissions, the publication of

names of the journal's editorial board, and the publication of a statement on equal opportunities policy.

Lastly, Chapter Seven describes how women have fared in leisure management. Aitchison first presents theories of gender interrelationships and organizations. The concepts of sex-role spill-over, sex-role stereotyping, and the sexuality of an organization are outlined. Next, findings from studies of gender equity in sport and leisure management are described (e.g. Henderson & Bialeschki 1993, McKay, 1996; Shinew & Arnold, 1998). Across all studies of these studies, Aitchison notes that women's experience in leisure management was characterized by inequity which was then maintained by the interrelationship of structural and cultural forces.

Overall, Aitchison's adoption of the social-cultural nexus is useful for readers investigating the legitimation of gender through leisure. However, while each chapter makes reference to the interaction of social and cultural factors, the book repeatedly critiques structural explanations of gender differences. This may confuse readers. On the one hand Aitchison recognizes the role of social policy and history (social structural factors) in shaping leisure opportunities for women. On the other hand, Aitchison considers structural or socialist feminist research limiting and inadequate. Thus, Aitchison finds herself in the unenviable position of arguing against a theoretical tradition from which most of her own and others' recent observations have evolved. This seeming contradiction is one limitation of *Gender and Leisure* and requires careful attention from readers.

Taken as a whole, Aitchison builds a well written argument to advocate for leisure research and policy using post-structural ideas. Part of her brilliance is that her argument follows a traditional positivist reporting format and relies on the familiar logic-based approach to give voice to the need for non-conforming, post-structural approach. Readers, however, are advised that Aitchison's argument, while well articulated and spot on, provides only one appraisal of gender and leisure research. It should be noted that this appraisal belies an international perspective which tends to minimize the contributions of North American leisure researchers who have relied on socialist feminisms for their research. Moreover, her evaluation of gender and leisure research suggests that we have learned all we can from traditional feminism and structurally driven leisure research. Aitchison opens a window to post-structural research, but does so by closing the door to the gender-based analysis which provided the foundation for this continued research. An informed reader must make his or her own decision about the utility of continuing "traditional" gender research in leisure studies.

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