

Gender and Serious Leisure Careers: A Case Study of Women Sea Cadets

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A central defining feature of serious leisure is the career afforded to its participants. This paper adds to emerging challenges to prevailing conceptualizations of the career as linear and progressive by exploring the lived experiences of women involved in the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC). By focusing on the plays of gender relations within and beyond the serious leisure social world, this paper demonstrates that women's relations to their career are shaped by the overall meaning they give to their participation; gendered divisions of labor within the SCC; and by their successful distancing from the demands of normative femininity in other social worlds.

KEYWORDS: *Serious leisure, career, women's leisure, gender, sea cadets.*

Introduction

The concept of serious leisure is increasingly recognized as a powerful means to explore the dynamics of enduring leisure engagement. Developed in the work of Stebbins (1979, 1992), the concept of serious leisure recognizes in leisure features and experiences normally associated with work (Beatty & Torbert, 2003). Commitment, boredom, stress and a continual balancing of immediate costs for long term gratifications distinguish serious leisure from more everyday or casual forms (Stebbins, 1992). This recognition disrupts any easy interpretation of leisure as necessarily relaxing or hedonistic and offers illuminating ways of approaching the complexity of our lived experiences of long-term and time-intensive leisure (Raisborough, 1999). The work-like qualities of serious leisure are mainly explored through the concept of a serious leisure career. Serious leisure was thus defined by Stebbins as: "The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience" (p. 3).

As one of the central defining features of serious leisure, the career neatly conceptualizes a participant's progression in the skills and knowledge

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Author note: Jayne Raisborough is a Senior Lecturer of the School of Applied Social Science at the University of Brighton UK. The author would like to thank SASS, University of Brighton, for teaching relief to complete this paper and Dr. L. O'Dell for her comments throughout. Further thanks are extended to the editor and reviews for their constructive suggestions and insights.

associated with the serious leisure activity and a participant's gradual immersion into the social world that surrounds it (Stebbins, 1992). However, the prevailing assumption that careers are uniformly linear and progressive has been recently challenged by claims that an individual's relationship to their career and the meanings they invest in it are shaped by changes in the unfolding of their life course (Heuser, 2005) or through changes in the serious leisure activity and its social world (Crawford, 2003). Such work recognizes that power relations within the serious leisure world, and within other social worlds a participant may belong to, impact upon career trajectories. This recognition aims to better realize the complexity of participation in enduring leisure forms by suggesting that careers may be more fluid and temporally-sensitive than previously conceptualised. Yet, there is little empirical work that systemically explores gender differences in serious leisure (Jones & Symon, 2001). This is despite growing critical awareness that leisure sites are those where gender relations are both reproduced and contested (Aitchison, 2000) and increasing empirically based evidence that women's career progression may be restricted either by the plays of gender power relations within the serious leisure world (Hunt, 2004) or those of the other social worlds women belong to (Stevenson, 2002). This paper aims to further explore the gendered power dynamics of serious leisure by contextualising women's careers in the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) in the round of their everyday lives. Stanley (1988) and others (Little, 2002; Scraton, 1994) have argued that it is only by conceptualising leisure in the round, that is within the rhythms of women's socio-cultural realities, that we more adequately grasp the use, meaning, experiences and choices surrounding their leisure participation. By exploring women's careers within the social world of the SCC and within the social world of family and non-SCC friends, this paper aims to examine the plays of gendered power upon leisure careers.

The Serious Leisure Career and Women

Stebbins' conceptualization of a career allows a focus on two related processes. The first is a progressive deepening of an individual's engagement with the leisure activity. This is normally expressed in the learning and development of specific skills. The second speaks to an individual's increased personal identification with the unique social world that develops around serious leisure activities. The social world is characterized by its "unique sets of special norms, values, beliefs, styles, moral principles, performance standards, and similar shared representation" (Stebbins, 1999, p. 71), and operates to recognize and reward its participants' efforts and displays of commitment (Kane & Zink, 2004). These insights have enabled researchers to focus on the time-demands of serious leisure careers. Studies of long distance runners (Yair, 1992), amateur actors (Stebbins, 1979), dog-handlers (Baldwin & Norris, 1999), and battle re-enactors (Hunt, 2004) demonstrate how participants privilege their time and resources for their serious leisure and its social world. Paid employment, romantic relationships, family and friends are often regarded as secondary to the demands of a serious leisure career

(Gillespie et al, 2002; Raisborough, 2006). Other work has demonstrated how serious leisure becomes the central organizing principle in people's lives (Brown & Getz, 2005; Kyle & Chick, 2004), with some creating distinct social identities developed in accordance with its values (Hunt, 2004; Jones, 2002).

While the concept of career allows attention to the dynamics of time organization and to the development of serious leisure identities, there is little critical attention paid to increasing empirical evidence of gender differences in serious leisure participation and progression (Jones & Symon, 2001). While "woman" cannot be solely equated with "gender", women's location in a gendered social order shapes their leisure participation in distinct, albeit uneven ways, making their leisure participation worthy of intense scrutiny (Little, 2002; Stanley, 1988). That women may have different experiences of serious leisure careers is indicated by empirical evidence suggesting that women's access to serious leisure may be hindered by engendered social roles of caring that are not largely experienced by men. For example, Stevenson's (2002) research of master swimmers found that women's participation was largely dependent on their ability to organize child-care. Additionally, Heuser's (2005) study of lawn-bowlers argued that women experienced "momentary disinvolvements" (p. 54) in their careers, caused in part by the consequences of social expectations that they should care for family and friends. The unpredictability of caring confounds the best attempts to maintain a progressive serious leisure career. Heuser concludes that "women's career path in bowls zigzagged. . . some members voluntarily or involuntarily moved between social play, serious play and even temporary physical retirement depending on extenuating circumstances in their lives" (pp. 56-57).

Furthermore, empirical work also indicates that women's careers can be limited by the plays of gender relations within the serious leisure social world itself. Here, definitions of authentic participation emerge as a powerful vehicle for women's exclusion or partial inclusion. Crawford (2003) observes for example, that gendered notions of an "authentic" sport supporter effectively render women as "not real fans" (p. 234), making their recognition as "serious" participants problematic and restricting their movement along the career path. Crawford and Gosling (2004) argue that despite having similar levels of sport-knowledge and dedication as men, women's fan-authenticity was challenged by men who perceived women's interest to rest in "lusting" after male sport stars. Crawford and Gosling conclude that while serious skills and knowledge can be learned, any visible difference, in this case gender, can present such a deviation from the expected and traditional norms of the social world to ensure that women's careers are restricted or that women are excluded. Notions of authenticity and exclusion are further highlighted in Hunt's (2004) observations that women are restricted to the roles of nurses and soldier's wives in the world of battle re-enacting. Challenges to this restriction are countered by claims of historical authenticity, which Hunt identifies as masking a discursive equivalence between combat and privileged expressions of hegemonic masculinity which the men wished to protect. He

concludes that traditional gendered roles are “uncritically reproduced and amplified” (p. 396) effectively limiting women’s ability to progress along the career path. Both Hunt and Crawford and Gosling suggest that restrictions placed on women’s careers are maintained by men’s defense of the “male-only” nature of some serious leisure worlds.

These empirical studies strongly suggest that careers, a central defining characteristic of serious leisure, “may not be open to all” (Crawford, 2003, p. 234). They suggest that women’s careers are often “capped” by notions of authenticity within the serious leisure world or that women’s obligations to other social worlds do not satisfy the serious leisure demand of consistent commitment (Heuser, 2005). Significantly, they indicate that women’s careers are shaped to differing and different degrees by gendered power relations operating *within* and also *beyond* the serious leisure world and as such, pave the way for an investigation which contextualizes serious leisure careers within the wider and everyday contexts of participants’ lives. This paper starts this investigation by exploring women’s careers as Sea Cadets. By detailing women’s experiences and the meanings attached to their careers within and beyond the serious leisure world, this paper aims to both add to the empirically grounded studies of serious leisure and aims to interrogate prevailing assumptions that careers are uniformly linear or progressive in order to further realize the complexity of serious leisure participation.

This paper approaches women’s careers through the optic of a gender analysis. This has two advantages; firstly, feminist leisure research has argued that leisure spaces and experiences are not “free” from engendered power relations, but sites where gender relations are reproduced, contested and negotiated (Aitchison, 2000; Shaw, 2001) sometimes simultaneously (Parry et al, 2005). This allows insight into the workings of power within serious leisure worlds and their impact on women’s careers. Secondly, feminist work argues that it is “impossible to study women’s leisure as something which is separate from the rest of their lives” (Scruton, 1994, p. 253). Women’s lives are shaped to differing degrees by gendered norms that render them responsible for domestic and emotional labor (Lee & Bhargava, 2004; Oerton, 1998). These norms form the wider socio-cultural contexts that give leisure meaning and which shape women’s leisure choices (Little, 2002; Stanley, 1988). A gender analysis can then contextualize women’s careers both in the gendered dynamics of the serious leisure social world and within the wider contexts of women’s lives.

The Sea Cadet Corps

The SCC is a uniformed youth organization in the United Kingdom which is partially sponsored by the Ministry of Defence. It aims to promote responsible citizenship in young people (aged 11 to 18 years) through the application of military-like discipline and training. There are 400 SCC “training ships” in the UK. These may be donated church halls or factory canteens but they are considered “ships” (one goes “aboard” and “ashore”). Each

follows the routines, dress (naval uniform) and discipline of the SCC's parent organization the Royal Navy (RN). Training ships are inspected annually by the RN to ensure fiscal accountability and the maintenance of RN standards. Standards are also maintained through competitions with other training ships at local and national levels. The SCC recruits local young people (cadets) to its range of activities (sailing, shooting, camping and training in seamanship, engineering and communications) which are offered over two "parade nights" per week. Parade nights take place after the school day and most training ships organize extra activities over the weekends and throughout the school holidays. Cadets quickly gain skills and knowledge from a national curriculum and are rewarded with promotion through the SCC's version of RN military ranks.

Training ships are staffed by adult volunteers who recruit, train and supervise the cadets. They handle the administration and are accountable for the weapons, equipment and the maintenance of the ship's physical buildings. Adult volunteers are mainly drawn from three pools; from cadets who have reached the age of 18 years; from ex-naval personnel; and from the parents of existing cadets. Adults also wear naval uniform and undertake regular training, some of which is held on RN bases or ships. As adults gain knowledge they progress up a two-tier hierarchy of military ranks. The first consists of three positions collectively referred to as "Senior Rates". The second tier consists of three Officers positions. Officers are accorded greater respect (they are saluted by both Senior Rates and cadets) and enjoy greater privileges. Progression between the two tiers is possible if one is recommended as an "officer-candidate" and is successful at an intensive Officer's Selection Board (OSB) overseen by RN staff.

The SCC is a prime example of serious leisure. It is an organized leisure activity that provides its participants with a career as they acquire skills and knowledge. The sense of career is heightened not only by the public displays of rank (displayed on their uniforms), but by formalized entry and exit points. All new members (both cadets and staff) are placed on probation before they can start their career, after which they must resign, retire or are formally discharged. The SCC also provides its participants with a unique social world involving naval language, traditions, uniform-wearing and prescribed ways of moving and greeting others (marching and saluting). Each training ship depends and expects great dedication and commitment from its staff as their non-attendance or neglect could result in the failure of a ship's long-term goal or the disappointment of the cadets in their charge.

Method

Access

Serious leisure worlds are often inaccessible to non-participants (Green & Jones, 2005), it is not then unusual for researchers to be members of the serious leisure worlds they explore (Gillespie et al, 2002): this allows the researcher an "insider role" (Wheaton, 2000, p. 257). My own "insider role"

was achieved by my own membership in the SCC (from the age of thirteen). Yet, the demands of pseudo-military environment made the dual role of participant and researcher untenable. In particular, I found that my rank (Lieutenant) made rapport with those considered my "junior" difficult and cautious. Consequently any critical discussions of commitment to the SCC became guarded and problematic. I resigned in order to overcome these problems but also concur with Kane & Zink's (2004) point that to have once been a serious leisure participant but to be no longer "serious" captures the benefits of familiarity (in terms of routines, jargon and so forth) yet allows a focus on the research and not on the activity. It was then, as an "ex" member that I gained access to a local training ship in the North West of England where I was known but had not served.

However, an unintended consequence of my change in status (from "serious" to "non serious") was that a once familiar world was quickly rendered unfamiliar. Not only was I non-uniformed in a uniformed environment (which freed the ways that I could move about and the places I could go) I was also released from the formalities of military hierarchy (which freed the ways I could talk to others). Interestingly, the seriousness of the SCC and the value it placed on commitment rendered me a failure in the eyes of many SCC personnel; my resignation signaled a lack of personal stamina and dedication. While I was an "insider" with intimate knowledge of SCC organization and terminology I was also firmly placed and regarded as an "outsider", not only in my dress, but in terms of the very values that define the SCC as "serious". This position, while at times personally difficult, allowed me a sharper critical focus on the ways that "seriousness" works and its importance in the lives of serious leisure participants. It was then, from the position of "insider-outsider" that my research was executed. It involved three years of ethnographic immersion in a local training ship over the period 1997-2000; opportunity interviews with a snowball sample of women in surrounding ships and at SCC events over that period; and interviews at a local ship in the summers of 2002 and 2003.

Participants

In total 40 women participated. The women in this study were all "lifers" (a colloquial term given to those who joined the SCC as cadets and continued their career into adulthood). Many of them had belonged to the same training ship for the length of their SCC career, which averaged between 20-23 years. As such, my research makes no claims to be representative of women's experiences of SCC involvement, but may more closely reflect the experiences of those who have maintained a commitment for the duration of their adult lives. The participants were white; one spoke of a disability and the majority defined themselves as working class. Five women declared their (closeted) lesbian identity over the course of my ethnographic research; other women signaled their sexuality through references to male partners. The women were aged between 20-55 years with an average age of 35. The

majority of women were employed; over half in full time positions (three described their work as professional). Four described themselves as full time housewives.

Data Collection

Extensive field notes form a key part in ethnography (Coffey, 1999) and mine furthered my understanding of a world that now seemed unfamiliar in many regards. Now freed from the often frenzied business of being "serious" I worked to understand the contexts in which participants experienced their leisure (Kyle & Chick, 2004). Coffey (1999) argues that field notes, in common with other literary texts, are partial, subjective and intensely personal. More than a direct report, field notes are, she argues, "textual memories" (Coffey, 1999, p. 121) which involve subjective observations and interpretations that carry the researcher's own investments. In line with feminist methodological principles aimed at increasing the voices of participants in the research focus (Maynard & Purvis, 1994), I used field notes not only to prompt interviews but to explore if women recognized my observations as relating to their social world. This opened up a useful means of moderating my interpretative frameworks and allowing contradictions to emerge more strongly in the data and subsequent analysis. One such contradiction discussed later in this paper related to how women perceived one SCC regulation (the Female Cover Rule) as limiting their participation in the SCC yet as operating to allow them to satisfy what they saw as the main purpose of the SCC (spending quality time with young people). The interviews throughout the research process were both informal and interactive to allow women space to discuss their understanding of their serious leisure and its relationship to their wider lives (Wheaton, 2000). Two forms of interviews were deployed. Informal interviews, loosely structured with prompts and questions from my field notes and from the women themselves, were executed in moments of rest during a parade night ("Stand Easy"), onboard empty training ships or in the women's own homes. In addition, unstructured, opportunist, interviews were played out against the backdrop of busy training ship life; as such these snatched conversations generally related to on-going activities.

Analysis

While transcription of interviews is often held to be the key to analysis (Berg, 1995; Fielding, 1993) I rejected the time-consuming process for two reasons. Firstly, the emotion in women's voices was hard to communicate in stark and lifeless transcripts. Secondly, the background noise on the tape recordings (of bugles, orders, interruptions, cadets running past) clearly spoke to the conditions of women's everyday leisure experiences, serving to remind of the lived realities of "doing" leisure. It was indicative of the work that women did in the SCC that many interviews were undertaken against the energetic and exhausting backdrop of training ship life.

Field notes and tape-recorded interviews were analyzed following an adaptation of Gordon et al (1998) three-stage process. The first stage (thematic) refers to immersion within the aural data and field notes in order to identify emerging themes. This involved listening to the tapes several times and manually color-coding field notes. The second stage (interpretative) involves returning to the data to interpret their content through those themes. The final stage entails the extraction of illustrations and examples of those themes. This process of "repeated-listening" and detailed reading of field notes produced the three main themes discussed here. The first, "giving something back" refers to the relationship between the meanings women give to their serious leisure participation and the progression of their careers. The second, "female cover" relates to women's experiences of a gendered division of labor in the everyday organization of the SCC. The third theme "at home" speaks to the meanings women gave to their serious leisure career when they were involved in social worlds of home and family.

Giving Something Back: Why a Career in the SCC?

The women believed that their own teenage involvement in the SCC had kept them on the "straight and narrow" (Joan) and they wanted to provide the same opportunities for young people:

Penny: "I suppose, pay back. The SCC was good for me as a kid, it got me out and about, [I wanted to] put something back into it, same as everyone else really. I spent more time down here than at home, it's been more family".

Jayne: "good?"

Penny: "Oh yeah, I'd probably be up the duff [pregnant] at fifteen (laughs). . ."

Penny, like others, constructs the SCC as an antidote to the trouble of young peoples' unstructured free time. The belief that adult supervised activities are a solution to the trouble of young people (Grieves, 1989; Kloep & Hendry, 2003) not only gave women a way of making sense of the SCC's impact upon their own teenage years, it also operated as a positive justification for their continuing engagement (see Raisborough, 2006). As Helen noted, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem, right? [. . .] Every kid we have in here is one less on the street."

This belief motivated women to advance their careers, with many quickly acquiring skills at the start of their careers to improve their contribution. Steph stated, "I took my mountain leaders mainly because we didn't have it. I could have four cadets out on hikes and that, bit of camping, climbing." However, those at the start of their careers also felt a pressure to prove their value to existing staff members. Speaking of her recent transition from cadet to adult, Vic said: "You're always thinking like, that they're thinking you're actually not good enough and still a kid. You have to show them that you can leave that bit behind and start hanging around [with them], doing their stuff." Proving oneself meant approaching SCC training opportunities with great enthusiasm and leaving the probationary period quickly. Stephenson

(2002) and Kane & Zink (2004) have illustrated that career progression is strongly motivated by the desire for status and recognition by others in the leisure social world. Likewise, Vic suggested that moving between formal ranks is accompanied by the need to be recognized as an authentic staff member.

“Giving something back” was interpreted in different ways with a striking impact upon career progression. This was evidenced in discussions with Senior Rates who actively resisted the opportunity to progress to the Officer tier:

Janice: “I’ve been asked to go [OSB] I’ve been ready for it for ages but no way I’m doing that. I didn’t stay on for that.”

Jayne: “Why?”

Janice: “To do stuff with the cadets. I don’t want to change that. It’s not me, it would change everything.”

Women who remained Senior Rates for the length of their careers perceived the Officer tier to be a threat to their ability to work with young people. The military division of labor ensures that Senior Rates work more closely with cadets while Officers take on managerial duties. As Jez noted, “I work for a living, not floating around.”

It was through this close working that Senior Rates felt they had more to offer cadets. (Officers “float” while Senior Rates “work.”) “Lifer” Senior Rates maintained their career position by rejecting the opportunity to acquire skills past that required for them to “do their job” as they saw it. Indeed, any advancement past a certain point was regarded by some as motivated by self-interest. Meanwhile, Officers saw their progression as boosting their contribution to the SCC. Some felt they provided a positive role model for female cadets. Others, including existing Senior Rates who planned to progress, were motivated to protect or shape the future of the SCC. Being part of decision-making processes was regarded as vital:

I guess it was getting in there to make the decisions. I mean some of the stuff they [SCC management] come up with it’s mad[. . .] when it hits the ground, being there when ideas become orders is important, to me anyway. [Lesley]

This is not to suggest that women were not also passionate about various SCC activities (water-sports and shooting were highlighted); some pursued these with determined energy. However, women’s main identification was not as a “sailor” but as a member of the SCC. This identification operated to give a moral imperative to their career development by ensuring that individual acquisition of skills also benefited the purpose of the SCC to provide a solution to troubled youth.

The “Female Cover” Rule

It became clear that a gendered division of labor operated within SCC routines and daily training ship life. Gendered divisions of labor in the sphere of paid employment draw on cultural beliefs of women’s “natural” capacities for emotional (caring) labor (McKie et al, 2002). Similarly, SCC

women spoke of their experiences of being positioned as carers and of the consequences this had for their careers. A prime example of this, emerging across all the women's accounts, was the Female Cover Rule (FCR). This SCC regulation stipulates that female staff members must be in attendance when female cadets are involved in any SCC activity, especially those involving male staff (it is widely assumed that the FCR protects female cadets from inappropriate adult male attention).

The FCR operated to place women in roles that made very little use of their skilled training and made it difficult for women to present themselves as authentic staff members. The following field note extract describes Jude's experiences of providing female cover on a residential course onboard a RN ship.

1100: Jude and I are sitting at the back of a class "taught" by Bill (SCC officer in charge). It is deadly hot. I'm struggling to stay awake. Jude was up at 4 am with a homesick cadet and as we got the cadets up before 6 am, she must be exhausted. The cadets are struggling but they need to pass this course Jude passes me a note questioning the material being taught, we are amazed at how boring the teaching is—the cadets are not allowed to ask any questions. At stand easy, Bill calls her by her name (not her rank!) and asks her to put the kettle on. She responds with a heavy "Sir" to show how people should be addressed. One of the cadets smirks because he knows what game is playing here. Jude knows that Bill will be reporting on her ability to supervise so she makes the tea. We both spend time chatting to the cadets. They are bored and she's trying to keep them going.

1400: This day seems unending! Jude has dozed off at the back with a book open on her lap. I might have dozed off at some stage, it is so hot. Bill draws the class's attention to her, she wakes. Many of the cadets look uncomfortable they know that this goes against the rules. Bill leaves the room commenting on Jude's suitability to supervise. He mumbles some question why we were both tired (sexual reference—I don't know if Jude and I were supposed to have been with sailors or together all night). Jude is pissed off, but rallies the cadets who are listless.

2100: We helped the cadets practice their drill. Jude sorted out a squabble between two female cadets. Got them in their bunks for lights-out. More homesickness. She does a head count at 11 pm and then again before turning in at 12.

Jude was not just responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of the cadets but also positioned as the tea maker. Her inauthenticity is marked by a breach of expected conduct between officers; her rank was dropped, she was addressed by her first name, and mocked, all within hearing range of the cadets. There are references to her ill-discipline (she sleeps in class and is sexually reckless at night). Certainly in this case, Jude's emotional labors are seen by Bill to make little contribution to the course.

Other women working within the normal routines of training ship life reported feeling like "spare parts" when providing female cover to male-organized activities. Mel stated, "I mean there's nothing to do but watch, so

they [the cadets] see you not doing anything, or just pottering round trying to be useful." *Pottering* included servicing and supporting the activities of others. In order to feel "useful" women cleaned the training ships, prepared and served meals and drinks, and were available to meet the emotional needs of cadets. This meant that there was little opportunity for women to practice their own training. Fran, speaking of her engineering qualification earned on a RN training course, claimed,

It's hard to be taken seriously cos you can't get the time and practice to do your stuff and you get rusty you know? Then you feel a fraud, cos when it comes down to it I know I can't just do it now, I'd have to get me notes out.

Other women spoke of not being regarded as "serious" and were conscious of how the cadets perceived them. This affected their confidence in their own abilities. Feeling like a fraud echoed through many women's accounts, making them unsure about their own relationship to the career path. Meg noted, "Only sometimes but I do feel not like a real lieutenant, I mean I'm proud and that but it's been a while since I've done the stuff. I mean anyone can sort the kids out you know?" The alternative was for women to organize their own activities, which they did. However, they felt a constant pressure to give their time to female cover to allow the female cadets full participation in SCC activities:

I couldn't even begin to tell you of when the weather is crap. But I know there's two girls to go canoeing. So I get up really hating every minute and I go canoeing, or watch just so they can. Yeah! I enjoy it, probably, when I get going. But there's a million times when I'd rather not go. But I'd feel awful letting the girls down. [Kay]

However, annoyance with the FCR was not consistent. For some, at different times, the FCR allowed women to better achieve their purpose of adding value to the lives of young people. As Frith and Kitzinger (1998) note elsewhere many women consider emotional labor as central to their jobs. Likewise some SCC women regarded their emotional labor as part of their wider moral duty towards the young people in the SCC.

There's some kids here, honestly who've never had a bloody kind word, and you know, but get them chatting you know and they open up. Then they're coming with little tales of what's going on with them you know, what's happening at home, and I don't know, it just makes it feel that, you know, things are all right, because we're doing something good here for these kids and many people miss that you know. [Lilly]

The FCR allowed women time with the cadets which many found deeply satisfying. However, the continuous demands of the FCR produced a sense of dislocation from the seriousness of the career path with many women reporting, at times, a fraudulent relationship to their career status. This may suggest that while women valued the emotional labors they provided, particularly as they corresponded with "giving something back", they also shared, at times, the belief that these labors were not skilled (a job "anyone" could

do) and not part of the “real” work expected of their location on the career ladder.

At Home

Women’s SCC careers were not confined to the social world of the SCC but also shaped women’s involvement in other social worlds to which they belonged (family, friends and paid employment). The demands of the SCC career involved learning new information (such as tidal formula or ceremonial routines); practicing skills (tying bends and hitches); preparing class activities for the cadets; and uniform preparation (“bulling” shoes to a glass-finish). Much of this “back stage” labor took place in the home and in work lunch breaks. All of the women spoke of the ways that the SCC had “taken-over” their homes. All had dedicated space for their uniforms; some had study space for their SCC materials; while many more felt they had SCC equipment and resources “everywhere”:

There’s tide tables stuck to me fridge, piles of kit in the hall, god knows what’s under the stairs and there’s photos and certificates all over the house and there’s me study full of bits of rope and that. Oh—there’s some rigging in the shed—I need to take back; a bit of mast in the hall. It’s just like all over the place, it’s a mess, apart, well, from me shoes. They’re in shoe boxes, in cotton wool on a shelf. [Marge]

SCC uniform/equipment and “back stage” labors all helped to make women’s participation in the SCC visible to non-SCC others (such as family and friends). Research has indicated that those in non-leisure worlds regard the commitment of the serious as “crazy” and “nuts” (Gillespie et al, 2002, p. 290), but argue that being labeled as such is a positive identity marker for serious leisure participants. Likewise, SCC women spoke of the attitudes of people in the “real world”, with many claiming that the “seriousness” of their participation did earn them respect and status.

They don’t get it, like, I mean they do [think] I’m mad at my age doing this, but you know, they do get that it’s good stuff I’m doing here and, like, it’s like they’re kind of proud of that you know? [Bev]

As “mad” but respected, SCC women were considered to be “different” from other women and they used this difference to distance themselves from the duties and roles associated with normative femininity (see Raisborough, 2006). This was best evidenced when women spoke of housework and their relationships with friends:

It’s OK for the place to be a tip, we just get used to it. Everyone knows I’m dead busy so no one expects it when they visit like and if anyone has a go I say “you bloody do it”! I’ve got better things to be doing. They’re sad if that’s all they’ve got. [Julie]

I’m not a housewife that’s clear and I know that some want that and good luck to them, but it’s not me and that’s all there is to it really. OK, I’m never going

to win mother, daughter, whatever, of the year—so what? Like, who cares?
[Pam]

Me mates know that the SCC takes up me time and that. They might ask me if like I'll do something or go out and that. But, they know I don't hold with all that girly stuff in clubs and that, because I'd rather be at home doing me shoes and that, you know what I mean, it's like a laugh to go out with them and that, I've got better things. I suppose I do go on about it a bit. [Stella]

The ability to be different (“I’m not a housewife”) and to use this to escape emotional and domestic labor (and “girly stuff”) in non-SCC worlds was afforded by the “seriousness” of SCC participation (“I’ve got better things”). While “giving something back” was an important aspect of the “seriousness” of the SCC, the career, with its formalized progression points and the expectation of certain knowledge and skills, operated to distinguish the SCC from more casual forms of leisure because of the work and effort it demanded. These aspects of a career helped women to avoid the accusation of being selfish with their time and resources:

They can see, see that I've been sweating over something. I mean, can see that I've worked bloody hard and you know, it isn't all fun and games! I mean it's not like we're having a laugh down here, sometimes and you know, it's pretty shit. [Liz]

It's not like I'm sitting on my backside down here, relaxing or whatever, it's not like going for a drink or whatever. It's like studying a lot, getting up early, going to bed dead late, doing your head in as you're dead tired, dead on your feet. [Mez]

These extracts indicate a construction of justified leisure that echoed with different intensities across the women's accounts. This construction was powerful in justifying women's time away from families and/or normative gendered roles. Time spent relaxing and “having a laugh” could not be justified. Time spent working hard, with no guarantee of “fun”, in order to provide a positive community service was justifiable and suggested sacrifice as opposed to selfishness.

However, as the seriousness of the career allowed women some space from the demands of normative gendered expectations in non-SCC-social worlds, women were aware that they needed to consistently perform ideal notions of commitment and hard work to maintain this space. As Claire noted, “You've got to be 100%. All the time. Always a 100% cadets. Anything else and it's like they [non-SCC] can spot a weakness, want to pull you back into their, like, ordinary, well, you know, normal.” In order to prevent being pulled back into the “ordinary” lives of other women, SCC women had to engage in visible back stage labors even when there was no need to do so:

I know it sounds bad, it does, I know, but the thing is that if you want space, it would take hassle and a row, and the thing is that if I say “well, I can't go cos I've got to get ready for tomorrow night” or whatever, there's a sigh and bit of sulk and that's it really. [Fran]

I've got out of some family stuff to enjoy being in the house on me own. It's a bit naughty but I'll like do me shoes for a bit and like, kick back and watch

TV, have some wine and like, keeping an ear out from them coming back, you know? [Steph]

Fran, like the other women in this sample, spoke of the difficulty in managing time and space within the rhythms of home life. Pressures of family and friends, while sometimes enjoyable, were at times demanding commitments. By claiming that they had to study or prepare, SCC women actively drew on the "seriousness" of the SCC career to claim some space and time for themselves in ways that were, on the whole, understood ("hassle" and "rows" were replaced with regretful acceptance). Constant use of terms such as "bad" and "naughty" indicated women's awareness and unease with the duplicity involved, but all were clear that this was the only way to carve out time to relax or at least to exercise some choice in how and when women interacted in non-SCC worlds. The seriousness of the SCC career thus performed an important function in non-SCC worlds by operating to enable women the time and space for their "own" leisure.

Discussion

The prevailing assumption that once "hooked" a participant proceeds on a well trodden path through different levels of activity-skill and through social-stratifications of "dabbler" to "novice" to "veteran" does not adequately account for the SCC women's experiences of their careers as represented here. To add to emerging challenges of the serious leisure career, this paper focuses its discussion on two overarching themes; the notion of authenticity and that of approaching leisure in the "round".

Authenticity

Crawford (2003) and Hunt (2004), working in different serious leisure worlds, observed that notions of an "authentic" participant effectively curb women's inclusion into serious leisure worlds and their progression along the career path. In both studies authenticity refers to the construction and shared understanding of a "real" participant, with Crawford & Gosling (2004) further arguing that these constructions are gendered, operating to exclude women despite their acquisition of skills and knowledge. These constructions are also evident in the social world of the SCC; while the SCC organization declares itself to be gender neutral, with career progression open to all members of staff, closer examination of the plays of the FCR indicate strong gendered assumptions of male sexuality (as predatory) and of women as carers.

It is helpful here to draw on research conducted in the sphere of paid employment. Dunne (1997) argues that an understanding of gender and employment must critically engage with the ways in which hegemonic masculinity secures a discursive equivalence with the public spaces and practices of work. The operations of hegemonic masculinity not only interpellate men in to certain and specific performances, but also constitute and depend upon a gendered division of labor that draws on the belief that caring is an essen-

tial quality of "woman," with the consequence that caring is not regarded as real work: and, to some degree, that women as the "rightful" performers of that labor, are not recognized as "real workers" (Leonard, 2001). One consequence is that women can be regarded as inauthentic workers who only support and service the "real" work of others (Jenson, 1989; Tyler & Abbott, 1998). The work-like qualities of serious leisure suggest that these findings can be applied to the SCC to further explore the notion of authentic participation. It could be suggested that workings of hegemonic masculinity within the military environment of the SCC encouraged a division of labor in which women's role and position was, at times, delimited. Certainly, when working under the auspices of the FCR the women reported feeling "frauds" and of being dislocated from their "real" career position. This dislocation was produced by a role which did not draw on their SCC skills or knowledge, but on their "natural" qualities, and which restricted women's participation to that of a by-stander to SCC activities. Their dislocation was emphasized by the ways that naval etiquette was dropped and the women were addressed in ways more common to non-SCC social worlds. While SCC women may not be restricted in their career progression in the ways observed by Crawford (2003) and Hunt (2004), it is clear that despite acquiring skills, training and knowledge and progressing along the formal career path, the gendered division of labor as expressed by the FCR, operated to construct a problematic and fluid relationship with locations on the career path. It was clear that being a member of staff, feeling like one, and being treated like one were very different experiences for SCC women at different times in the routines of SCC life. This lends support to emerging claims that careers are more temporally-sensitive and subjective experiences than previously realized (Crawford, 2003) and further suggests the value of focusing more critically on the routine ways collective serious leisure is organized.

However, the notion of authenticity offers a further layer to the exploration of the serious leisure career. The data indicate that the women's feelings of dislocation were tempered at times by the purpose and meaning they gave to their SCC participation as a whole. The theme "giving something back" spoke to the women's belief that their participation in the SCC performed a positive social contribution by "keeping kids off the streets" (Pam). The ways that women made sense of the SCC had a striking impact on their attitude towards career progression. For some women intense career development at the start of their membership was followed by an active resistance to further progression. This was clearly evident at the point at which Senior Rates could progress onto the Officer tier. This move was only regarded as desirable if it allowed women to "work" with the cadets in a way that satisfied the overall meaning they gave to their participation. "Giving something back" also helped women to apply a higher purpose to the dislocations they felt through the operations of the FCR. The caring role it imposed on women allowed some women the space and time to dedicate to what they saw as the real purpose of the SCC. Here authenticity was re-read in terms of higher moral purpose not in terms of confident inhabitations of status points in the SCC career structure. This indicates that motivation to engage

in a serious leisure world cannot be solely understood as “a sign of embarking on a path to develop one’s skills and interests” (Baldwin & Norris, 1999, p. 8). To do so places too much emphasis on the progressive career at the expense of exploring what careers mean to, and how they are used by, individuals who live them out.

In the Round

Kelly and Freysinger (2000) are among those who argue that studies of women’s leisure can only be politically meaningful if leisure is recognized as embedded within the broader socio-cultural realities of women’s lives. Stanley (1988) in particular refuses to conceptually separate leisure from the wider relations that give leisure meaning, for to do so leaves researcher-defined categorizations of leisure unchallenged, lifeless and sometimes irrelevant to the lives they purport to speak of and from. The once predominant work/leisure dichotomy, for example, was destabilized by exploring leisure definitions, experiences and opportunities in the round of women’s lives, which were characterized by the boundless nature of domestic and emotional labor. There is justification then, for placing serious leisure careers in the round as the overarching focus to date has been upon careers within their unique social worlds, encouraging the experiences and relations between the various social worlds of a participant’s life to gently fade from critical view.

Placing women’s SCC careers in the round of their home life has allowed a brief focus on the important symbolic function the SCC career plays in the women’s lives. By making their SCC labors visible, women created important space and time from which they could negotiate the everyday demands associated with normative femininity. The revision, preparation, dedication and “sweat” that the women gave to the SCC operated to signal the seriousness of their participation to those whose demands might prevent regular access. Such “back stage” labors helped women convince others of their justifiable right to serious leisure and helped remove them from their domestic and family duties. Significantly, authenticity is relevant here; the women had to perform credible and visible expressions of commitment and dedication to meet the image their family and friends had of an authentic, committed (albeit “mad”) participant. To maintain this image, women exaggerated the amount of back stage labor they had, sometimes using the time and space this opened up for otherwise unachievable opportunities for their own leisure and relaxation. That the SCC demanded back-stage labors and women’s ability to harness them to such effect may partially explain why SCC women did not experience the “zigzag” nature of careers reported by Heuser (2005). These different accounts indicate that careers and women’s experiences of them may well be shaped by the specific nature of respective leisure activities and pursuits.

However, again the plays of authenticity are more complicated. The women in non-SCC worlds had to perform a “different” arguably inauthentic femininity in order to get the time, space and approval for their continued

participation. Maintaining access involved the production of an “authentic” committed member (“always 100%”) to family and friends. Yet, in the SCC world, women’s career authenticity was troubled by the plays of gendered relations that worked to re-position them, at times, in those authentic gendered roles that women had worked hard to escape. The differing plays and workings of authenticity are significant as they speak directly to the continuous, uneven, spatio-temporal, negotiations of engendered power that shape leisure meanings, uses, and choices (Little, 2002), strongly demonstrating that serious leisure worlds are not free from engendered power relations but are sites where these relations are re-played, re-negotiated and re-enacted in dynamic relations with other social worlds. A critical and systematic analysis of gender relations in serious leisure is therefore worthy of further attention.

Conclusion

This study supports recent challenges to the predominant assumption that serious leisure careers are linear and progressive and adds much needed empirical exploration of gender relations within serious leisure. By building upon Crawford (2003) and Crawford and Gosling’s (2004) insights into the gendered construction of an “authentic” serious leisure participant and upon Heuser’s (2005) critical understanding of the relationship between serious leisure worlds and wider gendered expectations, this paper has revealed the plays of gender relations within and beyond the serious leisure world of the SCC and their impact on women’s careers. What is clear is that the experiences of a career extend past those of the serious leisure social world, enabling women to negotiate gendered demands of non-SCC social worlds and to carve out some time and space for own leisure. There is then a powerful suggestion that careers are not consistently motivated by interest in the leisure activity or competition for social capital in the serious leisure social world, but may be, at times, pursued for the additional benefits that “seriousness” in one social world can afford women in others.

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