

## Women and leisure: Premises and performances uncovered in an integrative review

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### **Abstract:**

Research about women and leisure continues to expand as meanings are examined from different perspectives. The purpose of this paper is to extend three previous integrative reviews about research trends and outcomes regarding women's leisure. Research articles appearing from 2001–2005 in selected major research journals of English speaking countries were analyzed through an integrative review to ascertain patterns and themes. New as well as recurring patterns in the content of the research emerged. Results indicated five themes related to premises and performances of leisure that summarized the recent literature about women and leisure at the beginning of the new century: gender resistance and leisure choices, gendered leisure and critical theory, constraints in context, women's leisure and social factors, and active leisure.

**Keywords:** Research methods | gender | resistance | constraints | physical activity

### **Article:**

#### **Introduction**

Research on women and leisure emerged as a body of knowledge about 25 years ago. This literature has evolved in content and epistemology. Research about women and leisure in the past five years has continued to highlight leisure and its meanings for women from a range of cultural, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. This evolving research builds on previous studies to create a broader understanding of human behavior not only for girls and women, but also for boys and men as well as other marginalized groups. Researchers have continued to contribute to this body of knowledge through exploring a variety of topics.

The purpose of this paper was to extend three past integrative reviews (Henderson 1990, 1996; Henderson, Hodges, & Kivel, 2002) about women's leisure to include research trends and outcomes from the past five years (2001-2005). The integrative review is a strategy for analyzing literature focused on inferring generalizations about substantive issues from a set of studies that

address these issues (Jackson, 1980). Themes in the literature were uncovered and described as a means for demonstrating how this body of knowledge about women and leisure is maturing and contributing to a broader discourse about leisure behavior.

## **Previous Reviews**

Henderson (1990) concluded in the first integrative review that covered 1980-1989 that frameworks for understanding women's leisure emerged using a variety of methods with a focus on empowering women genetically to experience leisure. The content of that literature suggested that commonality existed for women and that a "meaning" of leisure for women was emerging. This analysis demonstrated that women (a) shared a common world in their inequality regarding opportunities for leisure (e.g., Glyptis & Chambers, 1982), (b) sought social relationships in leisure (e.g., Henderson & Rannells, 1985; Leaman & Carrington, 1985), (c) had fragmented leisure time (e.g., Deem, 1982; Shaw, 1985), (d) found the preponderance of leisure in the home and through unstructured activities (e.g., Bialeschki & Henderson, 1986; Gregory, 1982), and (e) lacked a sense of entitlement to leisure (e.g., Glyptis & Chambers; Shank, 1986).

The second integrative review (Henderson, 1996) included research published from 1990-1995 and broadened the basis of understanding to address multiple "meanings" of leisure with the notion that "one size doesn't fit all" (p. 139). This growing body of literature in the early 1990s debunked the idea that a common world of women existed except, perhaps, related to women living in a patriarchal world. Henderson suggested that themes were emerging related to: (a) gender explanations (e.g., Deem, 1992; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Karsten, 1995), (b) a continua of meanings associated with leisure that were sometimes contradictory for different groups of women (e.g., Bolla, Dawson, & Harrington, 1991; Datillo, Datillo, Samdahl, & Kleiber, 1994; Shaw, 1994), and (c) a focus on the diversity that existed among women who live in western cultures (e.g., Freysinger, 1994; Hunter & Whitson, 1991; Riddick & Stewart, 1994). Henderson recommended that researchers interested in addressing women and gender must continue to explore all possible dimensions of women's *and* men's lives. She also recommended that although individual empowerment is important, collective action might be an important focus if leisure for girls and women is to change.

Henderson et al. (2002) summarized the literature about women and leisure from 1996-2000. This integrative review analysis resulted in topics that were divided into two broad categories: dialogue and context. Dialogue referred to the foundations and patterns regarding how women and leisure were studied and understood. Context applied to the emerging research topics and questions encompassed by topics addressed about women and leisure.

Dialogical issues surfaced related to the theoretical foundations and patterns in the literature regarding women and leisure (Henderson et al., 2002). This analysis of the literature suggested trends related to feminism, internal critique, and emerging ideologies. Although feminism continued to underlie the research about women, only a few studies emphasized a specific feminist approach (e.g., Aitchison, 2000; Culp, 1998; Thomsson, 1999; Yule, 1997a). This literature was also considered dialogical because of the introspective nature of some of the questions asked relative to the ghettoization of feminist studies (Deem, 1999) and the contradictory nature of family studies (Shaw, 1997). This internal critique underlined how

complicated the study of gender related to women's leisure had become. The literature also placed a growing emphasis on the ideologies and hegemonies that shaped the experiences of girls and women and boys and men in society (e.g., Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998; Scraton & Watson, 1998; Shaw, 1996, 1999; Thompson, 1995). These gendered ideologies additionally had implications for policy development (e.g., Aitchison, 1997; Kay, 2000; Yule, 1997a; 1997b).

Contextually, the literature about women and leisure broadened in the latter half of the 1990s with the study of new topics about different populations across the lifespan who experienced leisure in a variety of ways (Henderson et al., 2002). In addition, the intersection of gender with other characteristics such as race and class became evident in emergent global and cross-cultural perspectives (e.g., Bialeschki & Walbert, 1998; Russell & Stage, 1996; Taylor & Toohey, 1996). Women's role in families was an ongoing area of study where some personal attitudes had seemed to shift, but where behavioral changes regarding leisure had not necessarily followed (e.g., Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997; Peters & Raaijmakers, 1998). The issues surrounding spaces that women claimed for leisure in both physical and symbolic spheres was an area of interest in the late 1990s (e.g., Aitchison, 1999; Deem, 1996; Scraton & Watson, 1998). Further, the notion of whether leisure is inherently good was explored (e.g., Henderson & Gardner, 1996; Jeffreys, 1999) as one of the contexts of the literature from 1996-2000.

Thus, in the twenty years leading to the start of the 21st century the study of women's leisure evolved from a singular focus on finding the meaning of leisure to recognition of the complexity of examining any topic as broad as the ideas of "woman" or "leisure." Although the breadth of the topic makes drawing conclusions difficult, the examination of this corpus of literature continues to reflect the thinking of feminist researchers as well as individuals involved in the ongoing examination of the meanings of leisure and leisure behavior.

### **Integrative Review Approach**

The intent of this integrative review similar to its predecessors was to examine the literature about the leisure of girls and women to ascertain the status of this research and the directions that researchers have taken in the past five years. With this examination, we offer an analysis about the "state of the art" research on women and leisure so that others may draw possible insight for future research.

Similar to the past three integrative reviews about women and leisure, the research review questions for our analysis related primarily to the topic of study in these articles, the way the research was conducted, and the emerging theoretical implications. Studies from eight primary English language refereed journals were identified and examined from 2001-2005: *Annals of Leisure Research*, *Leisure*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, *Leisure Sciences*, *Leisure Studies*, *Society and Leisure/Loisir et Societe*, and *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*.

To understand more about women's lives and leisure, we examined all articles using the keywords of women, men, girls, boys, feminism, gender, or related words such as widow, caregiver, family, or lesbian that appeared either in the title, the abstract, or among the identified keywords. Those articles that dealt with professional issues regarding women, recreation,

careers, and leadership were not included. In addition, we excluded articles that dealt with tourism because we did not feel that the sample in these journals represented the breadth of research that might exist on women and tourism. Tourism has a body of knowledge sufficient to warrant its own analysis, but not for this integrative review. Although additional papers have been delivered at conferences and included in book chapters, we focused on only these refereed journal articles because they were more readily accessible. Further, we delimited the work to the English language not because no other work is occurring outside English speaking countries, but because translations from other languages were not available.

Sixty-seven articles met these criteria and were reviewed and summarized. Findings were analyzed using qualitative comparisons of the content of the selected articles. Each of us read these summaries of the articles independently and categorized them according to topic, conceptual foundations, and implications. We then compared the coding and notes made and discussed the patterns and themes that emerged. Content analysis allowed us to compare and contrast the purpose and findings of the articles to one another and to our preliminary analyses focusing on common and divergent themes. We also noted the methods used and samples that were selected. For this paper, the articles were conceptually grouped and themes were identified that provided a summary of the literature published in these journals from 2001-2005. We also examined some aspects of the research methods as well as the authorship and samples examined during this time period. In the discussion section of this paper, we offer our synthesis and interpretation of the meanings associated with all these aspects of the studies.

## **Methods Analysis**

To provide further detail about how data were collected and summarized, we examined the methods, authors, and the samples that we identified in conducting this integrative review. A variety of methods were described in the studies. We counted the research methods used and found these percentages:

- semi-structured and in-depth interviews (n = 18; 27%);
- conceptual (literature reviews, secondary analyses, and historical/content analyses (n = 16; 24%);
- quantitative questionnaires (n = 13; 19%);
- mixed methods (n = 13; 19%);
- case studies (n = 3; 5%); and
- focus groups only (n = 4; 6%).

Mixed methods included a combination of data collection techniques such as two or more qualitative approaches (e.g., focus groups and interviews, n = 3; observations and interviews, n = 3; focus groups and observations, n = 1; content analysis and interviews, n = 1; interviews and diaries, n = 1), two or more quantitative measures (e.g., questionnaire and accelerometer, n = 1), or both qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g., questionnaires and interviews, n = 1; or focus groups and questionnaires; n = 2). The mixed methods represented combinations of qualitative data (e.g., James, 2001; Parry, Glover, & Shinew, 2005) or quantitative measures along with qualitative data (e.g., Brown, Brown, Miller, & Hansen, 2001; Crawford, 2005; Currie, 2004) more than combinations of quantitative measurements.

These methods summaries can be compared to Henderson et al.'s (2002) study of women and leisure as well as a review of articles and their theoretical implications done by Henderson, Presley, and Bialeschki (2004). The data from 2001-2005 compared to the 2002 study of women reflected about the same distribution of structured and in-depth interviews as well as conceptual studies, slightly fewer quantitative studies (23% in 2002), and more mixed methods as well as focus groups. The patterns of the methods used to study women were fairly similar to Henderson et al.'s examination of theory. Some of the present studies about women also came from the four journals (i.e., *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, *Leisure Sciences*, and *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*) examined regarding theory so overlap exists. Nevertheless, in the analysis of theory in these four journals from 1992-2002 ( $N = 808$ ), 49% of the studies used quantitative questionnaires, 11% in-depth interviews, 20% conceptual (including secondary data analysis), 7% experimental, 7% mixed methods, 3% case studies, 1% focus groups, and 2% other. The difference in the use of methods between researchers examining women and leisure and other leisure research is striking. The use of in-depth interviews and mixed methods accounted for almost half of the integrative review about women while the literature in the broad field of leisure research included only 18% with interviews and mixed methods. Conversely, leisure researchers used quantitative questionnaires for half the studies compared to only 19% in the analysis of the women and leisure literature.

Past integrative reviews about women and leisure did not address the sex of the authors, but this analysis was undertaken since a point of comparison was available from Henderson et al. (2004). Examining the numbers may be a bit deceiving if some prolific authors dominated. However, of the 67 articles reviewed, 56 different first authors were represented (i.e., one author was first on four publications, one author had three, and six authors were listed first on two publications). For these integrated studies about women and leisure, 37% were single female authors, 28% were two or more women, 30% were mixed sex authors, and 4% were men only. These data compare to all the studies published in the four major US journals from 1992-2002 where similarly mixed male and female authors comprised 31% of the articles. However, in that broad literature only 10% of the articles were by single females and 11% were two or more women. Approximately 43% of the articles were by one or more males. Since these data were not compiled in the past, the comparison of the 2001-2005 literature about women and leisure is not possible. What is of interest, however, is that the literature on women and leisure was dominated by women, but one third of the articles included at least one or more males.

The girls and women examined in the empirical studies varied regarding age and sexual identity as well as race and ethnicity. Over a third (34%) of the studies of women and gender were based on adult female populations (e.g., Auster, 2001; Condon, 2005; Hood, 2003; Shores & Scott, 2005) with 16% of the researchers studying adult women in comparison to adult men (e.g., Berg, Trost, Schneider, & Allison, 2001; Bryce & Haworth, 2002). Older women (e.g., Gibson, Ashton-Schaeffer, Green, & Autry, 2003/2004; Heuser, 2005) comprised only about 4% of the sample compared to 19% who were girls or young women (i.e., under the age of 23 years; Autry, 2001; Bedini & Anderson, 2005; Hurtes, 2002). One study each on lesbian women (Pritchard, Morgan & Sedgley, 2002) and transgendered youth (Grossman, O'Connell, & D'Aughelli, 2004/2005) represented together only 3% of the articles. The remaining articles did not deal with specific populations, but with literature reviews or content analyses (e.g., Aitchison, 2001; Foley,

2005a; Parry, 2003). These studies from 2001-2005 also reflected some similarities to the literature about women and leisure reviewed in the last five years of the 20th century (Henderson et al., 2002). The identification of particular characteristics of girls and women remained about the same compared to the literature throughout the 1990s.

More attention was paid to race and ethnicity in the research conducted about women and leisure from 2001-2005. Although over a third of the studies made no reference to the race of the study participants and 20% were conceptual studies, 35% of the studies reported mixed racial groups (e.g., James, Hsu, Redmond, & Hope, 2005; Klitzing, 2003; Santiago & Coyle, 2004; Shores & Scott, 2005) with 8% reporting all white groups (e.g., Parry & Shinew, 2004; Pritchard et al., 2002) and 3% relating to a specific ethnic group (e.g., Taylor & Toohey, 2001/2002). Henderson et al. (2002) reported that half as many (18%) reported using mixed racial groups in 1996-2000. The importance of race and ethnicity seemed to gain some salience in the most recent integrative review.

These summaries of the methods, authors, and characteristics of the sample provide a baseline for examining some of the epistemologies of the research. They also offer some insight relative to how knowledge is constructed about the themes that were uncovered in the analysis.

### **Content Theme Analysis**

This integrative review resulted in five themes identified in two categories. The two broad categories of *premises* and *performances* were used to consider the theoretical underpinnings and the nature of leisure for women. About one fourth of the articles dealt with premises about the conceptual and critical understandings of women, gender, and leisure (e.g., Aitchison, 2001; Foley, 2005b; Parry, 2005). This category was subdivided into the themes of gender/critical theory and gender resistance/leisure choices.

The second category included about three-fourths of the articles and dealt with the "performances" of leisure by women in a still gendered society. Performance addressed the "doing" of gender and leisure. Three interrelated themes emerged related to constraints in context, women's leisure and social factors, and the role of active leisure. Within each of these themes, sub-themes were also evident.

#### **Premises**

As true in the most recent integrative review (Henderson et al., 2002), when an area of study reaches a critical mass, the analysis turns to an integration of broader theoretical frameworks to assist in understanding the interconnections of the research. Jackson (2005) similarly described this need for integrating the corpus of work regarding his analyses of constraints. Premises are underpinnings that offer both a conceptual foundation as well as springboard for further theoretical development. In our analysis of the literature, we identified two premises that tied the literature together in a way that uncovered more about the philosophical bases of the recent research published about women and leisure. The first premise was critical theory and gendered leisure. The second premise, which interrelated in many ways with the first, was gender resistance and leisure choices.

**Critical theory.** Most definitions of critical theory suggest it is focused on how scientific investigations underline political implications. Critical theory requires that a researcher takes her/his beliefs about society into account rather than suppressing the beliefs in the interest of dispassionate inquiry (Henderson, 1991). Critical theory calls for a body of knowledge that is created based on culture and values. In many ways, the explication of feminism as a philosophical and theoretical framework for the study of women has always been an embodiment of critical theory.

Several authors (e.g., Aitchison, 2001; Fox & Walker, 2002) discussed the research on women and leisure as it influences politics and culture. Aitchison examined the evolution of leisure scholarship related to women. She noted in the journals focused on leisure and tourism that male authors outnumbered females four to one. She admonished editorial boards to adopt principles and practices that demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion. Fox and Walker decried dualism in any research that examines women. They described how feminism has many ethical dimensions that must be acknowledged in any discussion of leisure. Parry's (2003) presentation of a sixth phase of feminist leisure research advocated not only focusing on how women live and negotiate their leisure experiences, but how the gendered nature of society should be challenged. She advocated for a "politics of hope" that enables researchers to integrate their voices with those of their participants as a means for avoiding dispassionate inquiry.

Humberstone and Kirby (2003) used a critical theory approach to examine the contested knowledge within leisure studies. Based on observations and interviews in teaching a university class in the UK, they found that students sometimes resisted knowledge that challenged their central values. Race was a more contentious issue than gender. Related to race, Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) described the issues that must be addressed in conducting research that uncovers the racial inequities that exist in society.

As noted, the examination of women and leisure in the past often has been approached from a critical perspective, but the most recent research articulated the continued need to underline how research must contribute to further ways of understanding gender as well as race and culture. Tied intricately to critical theory was the second theme regarding the premise of gender resistance related to leisure choices.

**Gender resistance and leisure choices.** One aspect of critical theory is the work of Foucault that Wearing (1998) described relative to poststructuralism and leisure. Wearing illustrated how ideas about resistance could be related to gender with the notion of struggling for feminine subjectivities that are not inferiorized to masculine subjectivities. From a structuralist framework, women have been presented as universally oppressed. The idea of resistance enables women to have a more flexible and optimistic situation grounded in their everyday experiences. These ideas were reflected in several articles published between 2001-2005.

Shaw (2001) published a significant paper that used resistance as an example of the political nature of leisure. She described the collective versus the individual nature of resistance, the outcomes of resistance, and the issues of intentionality and resistance. Shaw also noted that the ideas of resistance could apply to women's leisure as political practice. Shaw showed how

resistance can take on different types and forms and her ideas were foundational for several other subsequent papers by other authors.

Noad and James (2003), for example, described women's experiences as resistance in the male-dominated martial art of aikido. Bryce and Rutter (2003) examined the highly gendered area of computer gaming where women are now resisting societal notions. Gibson et al. (2003/2004) described how retired women resisted an ethic care because of their sense of entitlement to leisure. Parry et al. (2005) found themes of gender resistance in their study of the empowerment women felt as a result of their experiences with community gardens. Foley's (2005b) historical examination of Australian and British women in the late 19th century described how middleclass women often used leisure spaces to resist oppression. Herridge, Shaw, and Mannell (2003) uncovered the importance that women associated with couple leisure and also how they resisted the constraints on their personal leisure.

Other researchers studying women and leisure emphasized the notion of resistance in their analyses of leisure choices. Although Auster (2001) did not use the language of resistance, the notion of society not being supportive of nontraditional leisure choices (e.g., motorcycle operators) and how women pursued these choices despite their gendered assumptions was an example of resistance.

Therefore, theoretical perspectives of critical theory and resistance emerged in the literature as underlying premises about how women were no longer victims of their situations and had the power to challenge their circumstances and make choices. These premises were also reflected in the ways that women "performed" leisure in their lives.

## Performances

Aitchison (2003) described how leisure theory as a poststructuralist discourse could be described as performative where meanings and identities are fluid and enacted processes. We used the category of performances broadly to illustrate how women's lives are influenced by gender and leisure. The category of performance was reflected in three themes in examining women's leisure: constraints in context, women's leisure and social factors, and active leisure. These themes were not mutually exclusive and single studies could not be necessarily pigeon-holed into one area. The three themes, however, highlighted the substance and content of the research on women and leisure as it evolved from 2001-2005.

***Constraints in context.*** The literature during the past 20 years is replete with studies about constraints. In fact, Jackson (2005) edited an entire tome about various dimensions of constraints. In the chapter about gender constraints, Shaw and Henderson (2005) advocated that moving beyond a list of constraints toward further analysis of how constraints mitigate one another would be useful. They also suggested that some of the uneasiness with the alliance of constraints and gender has been the focus on the psychosocial (i.e., individual) nature of constraints compared to the potential sociocultural issues that exist. The research on women's leisure in the past five years seemed to address some of the criticism that Shaw and Henderson described. Several studies were conducted about constraints that focused on constraints within an articulated context (e.g., Bedini & Anderson, 2005; Brown, Brown, & Miller et al., 2001; Parry,



2005). We identified two ways of expanding an understanding of constraints in the context of women's lives concerning the relationship between benefits and constraints, and the identity creation associated with the context of constraints.

Several articles addressed how benefits and constraints exist within any leisure undertaking. For example, Anderson, Bedini, and Moreland (2005) described the benefits of physical activity for girls with disabilities and how the benefits mitigated some of the constraints these girls faced. Other articles also focused on negotiating constraints because the benefits of leisure were great. For example, Brown, Brown, and Miller et al. (2001) studied young mothers and the parameters around their ability and inability to pursue active leisure. Similarly because of the benefits of solo hiking, Coble and Selin (2003) found women were more constrained by fear than men but also took more defensive action to negotiate and avoid negative encounters. The ways that leisure was a means for addressing stress through coping was another example of looking more broadly at why constraints had to be addressed and not just accepted as synonymous with women's leisure (e.g., Iwasaki, MacKay, & Mactavish, 2005; Klitzing, 2003).

A second sub-theme of constraints in context related to the identity characteristics that presented challenges for some women in their leisure. Moving beyond the notion of a common world of women (Henderson, 1996), several researchers examined particular life situations of women and the relationship to leisure. For example Klitzing's (2003; 2004a; 2004b) work with homeless women was an example where women had an identity and life situation that suggested major constraints to leisure. Klitzing's research showed in several ways how these women coped with stress in their lives through the use of diversionary leisure (2003) and the social support (2004a; 2004b) of friends and family. Condon (2005) examined the interrelatedness of sleep and leisure for sole mothers. These women described how leisure was experienced as sleep (e.g., sleep-ins, naps) and how sleep was sometimes a contested leisure space. Shannon and Shaw (2005) described the constraints to leisure that breast cancer presented and how it resulted in being a catalyst for restructuring leisure time and its meanings for women. Parry and Shinew (2004) examined infertility as a characteristic of some women that constrained their leisure. Unlike several of the other studies, Parry and Shinew did not see infertility as having a positive impact on leisure, but they recognized the identity issues associated with the performance of leisure for these women.

The study of constraints has existed in the literature about women and leisure since the early 1980s, but the focus from 2001-2005 was on a deeper understanding of the meanings of constraints. However, unlike some of the other research about constraints, the issue of constraints was a part of the positive as well as negative context of women's lives. Constraints were something that could be resisted in relation to the potential benefits and the lessons that could be learned about how leisure was embodied.

***Women's leisure and social factors.*** North American studies of leisure have sometimes been criticized for the implicit liberal individualism that underlies the assumptions about leisure (Coalter, 1999). Although some truth exists with the notion that the research is focused first and foremost on leisure and second on the society, as Coalter suggested, much of the research about women from around the world framed questions within broader social parameters. Related to the idea of constraints in context, issues of inequality of power and opportunities due to social

factors were evident in some of the topics addressed about women and leisure. Examples of these social factors were related to the sub-themes of time pressure, cultural diversity, and technology.

Although leisure has long been framed within the notion of time, the impact of time pressure on women's lives was analyzed related to the pace of society. For example, Brown, Brown, and Powers (2001) described the feelings of being rushed and its implications on the quality of women's lives. Similarly, Fullagar and Brown's (2003) secondary analysis of two large data sets about women and their health revealed how the temporal qualities of life influenced meanings and how leisure should be an opportunity to resist social time pressures, not add to them. Cartwright and Warner-Smith (2003) found women were dissatisfied with the amount of time they had, that time fragmentation resulted in health deterioration, and that leisure could allay these issues.

The changing nature of social factors and cultural diversity also received further discussion in the articles that were published from 2001-2005. This focus on diversity began in the 1990's (Henderson et al., 2002) and continued with additional emphasis in the early 21st century as was evidenced to some extent earlier with the discussion of sample characteristics. Several of these studies related to how people who were seen as Other used leisure such as Muslim women (Taylor & Toohey, 2001/2002), Turkish women (Demir, (2004/2005), or other immigrants (Taylor, 2001). Diversity also related socially to illnesses such as alcoholism (Hood, 2003) and to diversity in sexual identity (Pritchard et al., 2002). These examples point further to the recognition that leisure is performed in numerous interconnections that extend beyond gender.

The impact of technology as a social factor also had implications for women's leisure. Due to the highly gendered nature of digital gaming, many females remained less likely to participate (Crawford, 2005). In a study of gambling, Walker, Hinch, and Weighill (2005) found men identified with the rush while women gave primacy to emotions and escape from some of the demands in their lives. The relationship of technology explicitly for women's leisure was a new area of study that raises many questions for future research.

Although the individual girl or woman continued to be the focus of many studies, the recognition of social factors related to women and the structural aggregates of power, collective identities, access, and opportunities juxtaposed with the ideas of resistance and choices were evident in the literature and showed a blending of women's leisure as a part of social issues and not apart from them.

***Active leisure.*** The final theme highlighted in this five year analysis of the literature included a way of thinking about the performance of girls' and women's leisure within a physical activity context. Although much has been written about women and sport in other fields as well as about physical recreation as one dimension of the activity choices available to girls and women, physical activity as an important leisure choice was highlighted in the literature from 2001-2005.

Physical activity by choice (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2005) is a notion that can tie together the importance of leisure and health. Concerns about inactivity and obesity dominate health literature. Although leisure has included sports and physical activity as dimensions, the importance of leisure as a means for becoming and remaining healthy has taken on new

significance. This interest was also evident in the research about women and physical activity in the form of fitness as well as outdoor adventure possibilities. Brown, Brown, and Miller et al. (2001) found that young mothers wanted to be physically active despite some types of constraints. Similarly, Currie (2004) determined that mothers reported greater feelings of well being due to gaining a space of their own and doing something to improve physically. Miller and Brown (2005) established that women who perceived that an ethic of care pertained to them as well as their families saw being physically active as part of being a good mother. Older women were also capable of physical activity by choice as evidenced in Heuser's (2005) description of women lawn bowlers as well as Henderson and Ainsworth's (2001) examination of the physical activity of minority women.

Further, the roles of physical activity for girls with disabilities (Bedini & Anderson, 2005) as well as women with special needs (Santiago & Coyle, 2004) were also described among the studies conducted from 2001-2005. James et al. (2005) found that among Australian and Taiwanese adolescent high school students, boys scored higher in level of participation and enjoyment than did girls in either country. Campagna et al. (2002) also discovered that boys were more likely to be active in their leisure than girls and that girls were more constrained than boys. Therefore, constraints in the context of physical activity for girls clearly need further investigation. Physicality and body image were also important as James and Embrey (2002) found in examining how girls' perceptions of their bodies both contributed to and constrained leisure behavior. Further, McDermott (2004) noted that women experienced their bodies through physically challenging leisure activities.

The emphasis on the body and physical activity choices and enjoyment related to women's leisure as noted previously was not a new topic. However, the number of studies that addressed the performance of various aspects of physical activity showed this area as eminent and one where a good deal is yet to be learned from the perspective of leisure behavior.

## **Discussion**

This integrative review delineated evolving areas related to premises and performances regarding women and leisure at the beginning of the 21st century. The focus of this analysis was on girls/women and not on gender per se. As in the past, few studies existed about the gendered lives of men. Interestingly, except for a few cases in which gender differences were described as one aspect of analysis, the research on women and leisure moved beyond gender differences as conclusions for research. Most of the themes had a small number of studies associated with them, but they pointed to continuing and emerging directions of research about women, gender, and leisure.

Several statements can be offered in summary of the results of this integrative review:

- Aspects of critical theory in analyzing the lives of women points to the continued political nature of women's leisure.
- A focus on resistance acknowledges that gendered leisure is changing and that many girls and women embrace a myriad of potential leisure choices.

- Constraints to women's leisure are discussed in a more complex way relative to the context of women's lives.
- Leisure in women's lives cannot be separated from the social factors that influence their lives.
- Physical activity by choice offers a forum for examining more about the everyday lives of girls and women as well as their physical and mental health.

Before tying this summary to some of the extant literature, a few comments about the methods analyses may be useful. The idea of giving women a "voice" (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996) is evident in the ways that qualitative data were used in many of these studies. As noted, a good deal of the research reported used qualitative data, mixed (i.e., primarily qualitative) methods, or literature analysis. Although more is being learned about women and leisure, the nature and quality of experiences remains best captured with qualitative data. The methods used varied greatly and this plethora of approaches and mixing of data in studies highlighted the diversity of questions asked (Samdahl, 1999).

The authorship of articles about women and leisure remained predominately women. This finding is important since women provide an important standpoint theory that is needed in research. On the other hand, more diversity of authors may also mean a greater variety of interpretations. Guarding against the ghettoization (Deem, 1999; Henderson & Shaw, 2006) of women and leisure remains an issue that must be addressed both in terms of the researchers as well as the outlets for this research.

The different characteristics and identities of women gained more breadth in the research undertaken from 2001-2005. Recognition that women have multiple identities is clear in the literature. Most researchers have also been aware of the need to report the age, race and ethnicity, and sexual identity of the participants so that assumptions of a dominant culture are not taken for granted. Research that acknowledges the multiple identities that everyone has is important to address, although this consideration often makes research analyses more complex.

Another item separate from the content of the studies is that slightly fewer studies about women and leisure were reported from 2001-2005 than in previous five year periods of the 1990s (i.e., using the same criteria, 74 studies about women were analyzed from 1996-2000, and about the same number from 1991-1995). Henderson and Shaw (2006) suggested a perceived slowdown in the research and writing about women and leisure as well. We hope this lessening of articles is not because of a complacency that suggests all that needs to be known has been uncovered about girls and women and their leisure. Although the analyses are more complex than mere descriptions of women's leisure, more is yet to be explained such as how the various identities of women facilitate or constrain their leisure, how leisure is gendered for both women and men, and the implications of culture and other social ecological parameters on women's leisure.

Through the aspects of critical theory and gender resistance, feminisms continue to underlie the published work, even if not explicitly stated (Henderson et al., 2002). Articles continue to emphasize the premises of feminism as a focus on equity, empowerment, and social change (Henderson et al., 1996). Most articles articulate one or more aspects of these three foci whether feminism is made explicit or not. Further, as these studies indicated, researchers have not been

afraid to ask questions about whether or not leisure is always a good thing. This critical reflection remains obvious in the studies that have been described in this review. In addition, the emphasis on an idea like resistance has provided a means for seeing the complex possibilities of leisure that have always existed, but were not generally described prior to 2001.

The work on women and constraints continues to grow whether it is connected to the mainstream constraints literature or not. Goodale (1992) noted that all studies of women and leisure are studies of constraints. Shaw and Henderson (2005) suggested that the ties between constraints and women's leisure, however, have not always been made well because of the "individual" nature of constraints verses the ways that women's lives are mitigated by social role expectations as well as other social factors. Our assessment about women's leisure constraints showed a broader basis for examining constraints in the context of outcomes as well as the influence of women's identity and a mitigation of the benefits of leisure. Constraints to leisure considered in a variety of contexts offer more insight about leisure meanings than in the past. Yet, more work is related to how constraints intersect with structural inequities in gendered societies.

Women's leisure and social factors tie to the constraints conclusions. Leisure is holistic in women's lives and how leisure is perceived is framed solidly in social influences. These notions also relate to the social construction of leisure and what Aitchison (2003) termed the social-cultural nexus. Separating leisure in society from society in leisure (Coalter, 1999) was a false dichotomy as we examined this research. Henderson and Shaw (2006) called for a focus on macro-sociological perspectives regarding women's leisure and those perspectives appeared to be happening to some degree as evidenced in the literature examined from 2001-2005. The research has moved beyond examining primarily white heterosexual women. However, progress remains slow since many researchers are inclined to study people who are like themselves in one way or another. Issues of globalization are also gradually being addressed, although the potential for analyzing women's leisure is just beginning according to Henderson and Shaw. Structured inequities are not melting away (Aitchison, 2000), but a leisure in society approach moves further beyond "blaming the victim" as has sometimes been the case in earlier research.

Physical activity and health are blossoming areas within the leisure literature and women cannot be left out of these discussions. This integrative review showed the emerging interest in physical activity as an important element of choice for women. One of the values of this physical activity research is that it enables researchers to move beyond sports as the major connection between girls/women and physical activity. The opportunities for girls and women to participate in outdoor activities as well as a variety of forms of exercise attests to the valuable connections between women, leisure, and health. This physical activity research also provided a framework for further analyzing the meanings of leisure as it relates to women's health as a social issue.

This review of the literature about women's leisure underlines the idea that leisure is an important aspect of everyday life (Henderson & Shaw, 2006). The review also suggests that the study of women's leisure is bridging interactionist and poststructuralist approaches to research. Poststructuralism is opening up a myriad of ways that leisure can be embodied in everyday life for girls and women. In the early 1980's little was known about women's leisure. Research was needed that provided a description of structuralism and women's leisure experiences (Wearing, 1998). The focus on functionalist theories about leisure until that time had obscured the issues of

power and inequalities for women. The structural approach focused on the implications of power and women's oppression (e.g., Deem, 1982). In the 1990s interactionists (e.g., Henderson et al., 1996) who were largely from the US focused on determining the personal meanings of women's leisure and the "microsocial milieu of individual actors" (Wearing, p. 39). Emerging ways of thinking about women's leisure in the context of poststructuralism now underlines the ideas of multiple identities, the reflexive self, and the breakdown of clear divisions between concepts like constraints and benefits or affordances. Researchers studying women and leisure are aware of the problems inherent in totalizing or one-dimensional depictions of any explanations of leisure. Some of the studies demonstrate that researchers recognize the tensions that exist between issues such as diversity and the commonality of experiences (Henderson & Shaw, 2006).

Some researchers studying women and leisure are also beginning to pay attention to how understanding gender more broadly (i.e., the meanings of masculinity) and how globalization embody both commonality and diversity. Thus, the research on women and leisure at the beginning of the 21st century has continued to uncover more information about women's experiences with leisure and at the same time is recognizing that all theories are fluid and incomplete. This research also points to the importance of having a variety of researchers and using a plethora of individual or mixed methods to answer complex questions.

Finally, in the research about women and leisure, researchers should heed Samdahl's (1999) admonition and continue to reflect on the questions that have not been asked. Some of the previously unasked questions (e.g., how leisure might not always be positive or the influence of social inequalities) are being asked, but additional issues such as the relationship of gender to other identities, post-colonialism, and the meanings of freedom and choice for all women must be conceptualized in expanded ways. Samdahl noted that researchers cannot continue to move forward simply with more of the same such as beginning with the same premises or reinforcing expected performances of leisure. We believe the literature about women's leisure shows an evolution over the past twenty-five years that indicates forward movement, but asking more and deeper critical questions for the future is mandatory. Accepting the multiple answers that may emerge from these questions is also imperative for the future.

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