Gender is a powerful influence in the lives of people and societies. Often confused with the word sex and associated mostly with women, gender is a consideration that everyone must negotiate (Freysinger et al, 2013). Indeed, gender is so pervasive that it often takes a deliberate disruption to draw attention to the gendered nature of society. Given the pervasive nature of gender in society, it follows that leisure is also influenced by gender. Over the past three decades, a large body of literature has revealed the important ways that gender influences leisure, but also the ways that leisure influences gender. The purpose of this chapter is to draw upon recent theoretical contributions and empirical research to discuss the interplay between gender and leisure, including an analysis of women’s and men’s leisure experiences, attitudes, constraints, challenges, and behaviors. I emphasize the ways in which gender relations and gender role expectations affect, and are affected by, leisure.

What is Gender?

The words “sex” and “gender” are two distinct, but overlapping terms. Typically, sex refers to assignment of male or female based on biological features (Lorber, 2006) such as genitalia, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics. In Western society we commonly consider there to be only two sexes, although some researchers argue there are as many as five. To unpack the male/female duality, Fausto-Sterling (2006) uses the term intersex to refer to those who embody a mixture of male and female characteristics including hermaphrodites, male pseudohermaphrodites, and female pseudohermaphrodites.
In contrast to sex, which is biologically driven, gender is a social and cultural construct. Gender refers to societal expectations for roles and behavior based upon one’s assigned biological sex. Freysinger et al (2013) explained, “one’s biological sex leads to a lifetime of relationships and expectations, opportunities and constraints, based upon gender…[it] is an ongoing process rather than an inborn biological trait. People learn and transform gender, they do or perform gender, in every context of their lives” (p. 12, original emphasis). Indeed, social and cultural notions of gender inform our conceptualizations of masculinity (tough, aggressive, strong, unemotional) and femininity (caring, supportive, nurturing, compassionate), which translate into gender role expectations. For example, understandings of masculinity translate into roles such as fatherhood and economic provider (Freysinger et al., 2013). Similarly, notions of femininity translate into roles, such as motherhood and the acceptance of household and emotional responsibility. With this in mind, Lorber (2006) explains gender is not “in our genes,” but rather is a social process constantly created and recreated through human interaction and social life. In this sense, gender is commonly referred to as a social construction that humans produce, reproduce, and resist in their social interactions. For these reasons we can think of gender as relational, “constructed and reconstructed in relation to and interaction with other individuals within the contexts of society, culture and history” (Freysinger, et al., 2013, p. 4).

Given its relational nature, we often think of gender differences as occurring between groups of men and women. However, there are also differences among and within groups of women and men depending on age, life stage, sexual identity, socio-economic status, abilities, and race/ethnicity among others. Freysinger et al (2013) explained, although the concept of gendered lives implies some commonality of experience among women, other dimensions of power and ideological constructions such as racism,
heterosexism, and discourses surrounding obesity and appearance, also differentially affect women of colour, older women, and women and girls who do not conform to the ideal ‘body weight, body shape or functioning. Similar processes also affect men in marginalized groups such as men who do not conform to the dominant norm of heterosexism” (p. 12).

Either way, between group differences or within group differences, there is plenty of evidence that society is gendered for everyone. At the social or macro level, we see the influence of gender in our societal structures including the family, work, institutions, and public policies. Similarly, on an individual or micro scale, the influence of gender is evident in daily routines and practices, including childrearing practices, leisure choices, television shows, and sports (Scraton & Watson, 2013; Schmalz, 2013). In short, gender remains a salient practice that informs and shapes lives and societies (Freysinger et al., 2013).

**Feminist Scholarship within Leisure Studies**

Within leisure studies, much of the research exploring the influence of gender is conducted from a feminist theoretical perspective. Feminism is enormously diverse and dynamic as it represents both an individual and collective identity of complex political and personal ideologies (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Indeed, there are as many variations of feminism as there are feminists, which leads many to suggest the term of reference should be “feminisms” (Braithwaite, 2002). Despite the diversity in feminisms, most feminists share a consciousness about women’s distinct and shared disadvantages within patriarchal society, the political nature of everyday life, and link these everyday experiences to larger social injustices (Rupp & Taylor, 1999). One recent definition of feminism proposed by DeVault and Gross (2012) offers
feminism as “a set of practices and perspectives that affirms differences among women and promotes women’s interests, health, and safety, locally and abroad” with a goal of well-being and social justice (p. 207). Similarly, Lather (1998) posits, “through the questions that feminism poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in shaping our consciousness, skills, and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege” (p. 571). From a feminist perspective, power and privilege is linked to the patriarchy.

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which power rests with men and privileges them through greater access to institutional power, higher incomes, higher labour force participation, and greater access to social and cultural resources, public and private spaces, and other beneficial arrangements (Kirkley, 2002; Hibbins, 2013). Toward this end, Snyder-Hall (2010) argued, feminism is “fundamentally about transforming patriarchal culture and society” (p. 256). Consequently, many feminists focus on patriarchy (as opposed to women), which makes the movement inclusive of both women and men. As leisure scholars have identified, patriarchy does not serve marginalized groups of men well (i.e., gay men, poor men, racialized men, men with mental health challenges, etc.) (Hibbins, 2013; Johnson, 2013). Feminism enables men to challenge the social construction of masculinity and break free of traditional ideals about what it means to be a man (Johnson, 2013). Feminists (female and male) can work together to expose, analyze, and ultimately deconstruct the patriarchal system of domination and oppression, thereby creating a more just society for women and men (Snyder-Hall, 2010; Reid, 2004). Feminism is thus inherently activist.

Feminist scholars bring an activist lens to their work by challenging “taken-for-granted beliefs about women and about the naturalization of gender and gendered lives within society” (Freysinger et al., 2013, p. 63). In doing so, feminist scholars argue for social change, seek ways
to empower women, and advance gender equity by changing attitudes and behaviors, but also social, economic and political practices (Freysinger et al., 2013). In their efforts, feminist scholars use a combination of epistemology, methodology, and methods (Hesse-Biber, 2012). There is no single or monolithic method, methodology, or theoretical base of feminist scholarship; in fact, there are competing theoretical foundations and varied methodologies that reveal sexist, racist, homophobic, and colonialist points of view (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Despite this diversity, there are several dominant tendencies of feminist research: (a) values underpin all research; (b) the personal is political; (c) women’s lived experiences are an important source of knowledge; (d) relational approaches to research and their inherent subjectivity is valued; and (e) truth and objectivity may not exist (Thompson, 1992). These tendencies reveal that the process of research is just as important as the outcomes of research (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012).

Moreover, these tendencies speak to the ways that feminist scholarship takes up issues of power, authority, ethics, and reflexivity while seeking to challenge the patriarchy in all forms and permutations with the goal of advancing a more just society (Reid, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2012).

**An Interactive Relationship: The Interplay between Gender and Leisure**

Over the past three decades, feminist scholarship has informed leisure studies while evolving through a variety of phases or stages (Henderson 1994; Parry, 2003). Initially, leisure research ignored women and focused solely on men assuming a universal leisure experience. This “male scholarship” evolved into what Henderson (1994) coined the compensatory phase wherein women’s experiences were recognized as an important consideration, commonly referred to as the “add women and stir” phase. Next, leisure studies benefitted from “bifocal scholarship” that focused on gender differences between groups of men and women. Following this phase, leisure
studies moved into a “woman-centred” stage that brought to the fore the gendered forms of oppression that women faced in their daily lives, specifically leisure. Research during this stage focused on gendered ideological influences, such as womanhood and motherhood (Shaw, 1994). Following this woman-centered approach a fifth stage coined “gender scholarship” emerged. Henderson (1994) noted “a premise underlying this phase of scholarship is that all of us live in a heavily gendered society so behavior can be better understood by examining the experiences of women and men within that framework (pp. 3-4). Gender scholarship extended feminist work by proposing that women’s leisure could not be universalized and by asserting that no one female or male voice existed. A sixth phase of feminist leisure scholarship purports it is not enough to interpret the gendered nature of the world, but that it be changed as well (Parry, 2003). Social change and justice can be accomplished when research is undertaken for critical, strategic, and political purposes. This sixth phase of feminist leisure scholarship exposes and transforms subtle and deep rooted causes of oppression moving the field closer towards what Denzin (2000) referred to as a ‘politics of hope’ (p. 262). Thus, the sixth phase of leisure research is grounded in social justice, advocacy, and a hopeful optimism.

Collectively, these phases have revealed that the relationship between gender and leisure is interactive (Freysinger et al, 2013), meaning leisure is a context in which people can embody and/or resist gendered discourses (Shaw, 2001). More specifically, three decades of feminist leisure scholarship has demonstrated that gender influences leisure, but so too, does leisure influence gender.

The Influence of Gender on Leisure

One of the main contributions of the feminist leisure literature has been to illustrate that gender has an important influence on leisure opportunities, experiences, and meanings. The
influence of gender can be seen in the extent to which leisure pursuits and activities are gender stereotyped. This research dates back to Metheny (1967) a sport sociologist who studied the gender stereotyping of sports, which she argued is linked to gendered roles and expectations. Metheny’s research revealed that sports can be categorized as either “masculine” or “feminine” depending upon physicality, bodily contact, and aesthetics. Decades later, Wiley, Shaw, and Havitz (2000) noted football, ice hockey and boxing are considered as socially appropriate sports for men while dance, gymnastics, figure skating and other non-contact sports are considered as socially appropriate for women. Based upon their findings, Wiley, et al., concluded, gender “stereotyping of activities clearly affects participation choices, with most men restricting their participation to masculine activities that conform to male gender role expectations, and the majority of women participants also conforming by choosing activities that are thought of as feminine” (p. 22). Most recently, Riemer and Visio (2003) concluded that gendered stereotypes of sport participation persist. For example, gymnastics and aerobics are considered female sports whereas football and wrestling are seen as men’s. In short, men are channelled towards contact sports whereas women are encouraged to participate in graceful, aesthetically pleasing activities that do not involve physical contact or aggression (Shaw, 1994).

Although women and men face gender stereotyping of leisure activities some research suggests men may face more restrictive choices because, as a society, we tend to be more accepting of women crossing over into non-traditional gender activities (Schmalz, 2013). That is, the “opportunities for girls in so-called ‘masculine’ activities increased in Western societies in particular in recent years,” but not with equal opportunity (Freysinger, 2013, p. 9). For example, it tends to be more socially acceptable for women to participate in a non-traditional leisure pursuit such as riding motorcycles (Roster, 2013). In contrast, boys and men who pursue leisure
interests that fall outside of dominant expectations of masculinity are particularly likely to be stigmatized (Johnson, 2013; Schmalz, 2013). In particular, there is significant pressure for boys to play sports as a context for learning/developing/practicing/displaying (hegemonic) masculinity (Messner, 1998; Schmalz, 2013). Messner notes how boys learn to be men – tough, aggressive, competition – through sport and leisure. Unfortunately, research illustrates that most people do not cross traditional gender lines in their leisure because “conforming activities that are deemed to be gender-appropriate provides females and males with higher social status compared with participation in nonconforming or gender inappropriate sports” (Wiley, et al., 2000, p. 22). In short, the influence of gender on leisure is evident in the reproduction of pursuits considered gender appropriate.

A second area where the research reveals a strong influence of gender on leisure is with respect to leisure constraints. Constraints are personal and situational factors that impact upon access to, and enjoyment of, desired leisure pursuits (Samdahl, 2013). Constraints are often categorized as structural (lack of resources or external forces), intrapersonal (within an individual) or interpersonal (between groups of people) (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Shaw, 1994). Research in this area reveals that women experience all three types of constraints including time and money (structural), an ethic of care that socializes women to sacrifice personal desires for the sake of others (intrapersonal), and family responsibilities/commitments (interpersonal) (Samdahl, 2013).

Indeed, a number of studies have demonstrated that women are constrained by not feeling entitled to personal leisure (Henderson, 1994) and by household and childcare responsibilities that serve as a second shift of work after paid employment (Hochschild, 1989). For example, Miller and Brown (2005) found that women, and especially women with young children, were
less likely to participate in physically active leisure despite being aware of the health benefits of such participation. They explained, “household norms relating to gender-based time negotiation and ideologies regarding an ethic of care were important determinants of active leisure among women with young children” (Miller & Brown, 2005, p. 405).

Notably, interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints are often harder to identify and negotiate than structural ones (Samdahl, 2013). As a result, gendered constraints – such as family responsibilities and an ethic of care - result in a major gap between men’s and women’s leisure time and experiences (Freysinger et al., 2013). Men, however, are also constrained in their leisure by paid employment responsibilities, social pressure to be successful, and gendered expectations around activity participation (Freysinger et al., 2013). Kay (2006) studied men’s experiences with fatherhood and noted that males are often constrained by the role expectations of breadwinner, limiting their time for family leisure. Taken together, constraints research demonstrates how gender impacts both access to and enjoyment of leisure (Shaw, 1994).

However, leisure itself can also be constraining because of the potential to reinforce and reproduce oppressive gender structures or relations (Shaw, 1994). Du (2013) explained, “Leisure activities are often a re-embodiment of stereotyped gender roles and further reproduces inequity in the relationships between men and women” (180). For example, Berbary (2013) explored leisure pursuits within sororities demonstrating how the activities produced and reproduced stereotyped gender roles, behavior, and expectations. That is, stereotyped gender behavior was reproduced through leisure in sororities. For example, through leisure the sorority girls learned to how act like a “lady” including being respectful, modest, gracious, and reserved, which reproduced hyper-feminine gendered behavior. Berbary (2013) explained, “within sororities, leisure spaces, where individual gendered performances are watched, judged, and restricted,
often become discursively disciplined” (p. 153). Sororities, Berbary reveals, are important contexts in which girls learn about gendered behavior through their involvement in leisure activities that reproduce stereotyped gender roles. Similarly, Delamere and Dixon (2013) found women’s behavior was strictly governed according to gendered ideologies in their study of women’s experience of digital game play. They found game culture and the behaviour of some male gamers created a hostile environment for female. More specifically, female gamers experienced overt sexism from male players including name calling (bitch, whore, slut), damage to their gaming equipment, and being asked to perform sexual acts both outside and inside the game (Delamere & Dixon, 2013). In a study of Civil War re-enacting, Hunt (2004) reported that males did not want women intruding on their space—they justified this on the basis that their presence would undermine authenticity.

It happens for men too! Johnson (2013) expressed feeling as though his masculinity was under attack when he took off his shoes and socks at a spring picnic with his friends to reveal his toenails painted hot pink, which is not expected or socially sanctioned as appropriate for men. Collectively, these areas of research demonstrate that constraints are influenced by “networks of sociocultural beliefs that shape expectations and opportunities,” but also enjoyment of leisure based upon gendered ideologies (Samdahl, 2013, p. 120).

An important body of leisure research focuses on the negotiation of gendered leisure constraints. From a gender perspective, constraint negotiation occurs when people accept certain aspects of cultural discourse, but reject or redefine others (Samdahl, 2013). Constraint negotiation is an important line of research as it “contested the image of women as helpless victims of discrimination and emphasized, instead, how women can be active agents who creatively response to inequity” (Samdahl, 2013, p. 117). For example, James (2000) found
young girls utilize a variety of strategies to negotiate body consciousness and a fear of the public
gaze at public swimming pools. While this has been an important line of feminist research, the
individual focus of constraint negotiation also has its critics. Samdahl (2013) argued, “It is no
longer sufficient to study how individuals overcome constraints on their own; focusing only on
individuals ignores the cultural factors that placed constraints in their paths in the first place” (p.
120). Her statements clearly indicate a new direction for future leisure research.

Taken collectively, feminist scholarship has revealed that gender has a powerful
influence on the type of leisure pursuits people select (or feel channeled towards) and their levels
of enjoyment. Thus, leisure may be considered constrained or constraining to both women and
men given its role in reinforcing and reproducing oppressive gender structures or relations
(Shaw, 1994).

The Influence of Leisure on Gender

While it is important to understand the ways that leisure serves to reproduce gendered
ideologies, roles, and expectations, it is equally important to understand leisure as a context for
resistance. Resistance refers to “questioning, challenging, and seeking to change processes and
circumstances that are disempowering” (Freysinger et al, 2013, p. 91). This line of research
emerged in the literature when women were found to gain a sense of empowerment from their
leisure. Shaw (2001) explained, women use their leisure to “challenge their own lack of power or
their dissatisfaction with societal views about women’s expected roles and behaviors” (p. 187).
The notion of leisure as resistance is based on the idea that leisure practices, experiences,
satisfactions, choices, and activities are linked to power and power relations in the social world
(Shaw, 2001). Leisure when conceptualized as resistance, is seen as a site for people, either
individually or in groups, to challenge unequal power distributions or the ways that power is
implemented. Under this premise, leisure becomes one arena where power is gained, maintained, reinforced, diminished or lost (Shaw, 2001). In this sense, women’s leisure as resistance is based on two theoretical assumptions: “first, the idea of agency…which allows for the view that women are social actors who perceive and interpret social situations and actively determine, in each setting, how they will respond” (Shaw, 1994, p. 15). Second, the notion that leisure experiences are relatively freely chosen. Specifically, two key characteristics of leisure, personal choice and self-determination, are associated with resistance to traditionally prescribed gender identities, stereotypes, and roles propagated through dominant patriarchal culture by enabling women to exert personal control and power (Shaw, 2001).

Resistance can manifest, for example, in women challenging the aforementioned constraints on their time by asserting a sense of entitlement to leisure despite caregiving roles (Freysinger et al., 2013). This form of resistance was evident in Wearing’s (1990) study of first time mothers who resisted an ideology of motherhood that perpetuated the belief that “good” mothers did not prioritize themselves or claim personal time by asserting their entitlement and carving out space for leisure. Resistance is also evident in challenges to gendered expectations for activity participation. For example, Roster (2013) studied women involved in motorcycling, which remains a male dominated pursuit. The women in her study “embraced the positive attributes of strength, independence, freedom, adventure, and power that were associated with the masculine biker culture, but rejected stereotypes that suggested women riders were passive, sexually promiscuous, drug addicts, or rebellious members of society” (p. 199). A similar form of resistance was revealed by Dionigi (2013) who studied senior women participating in competitive sports. She argued by choosing competitive sport activities “that go against the cultural grain, these older women are using leisure as a site for resistance” (p. 168, original
emphasis). Men also use leisure as a context to resist the patriarchy. Johnson (2013), for example, outlined how gay men resist heterosexism at gay bars by feeling free to “openly challenge and/or create a new gendered meaning…where they perceive freedom from heterosexual ideologies” (p. 252). Leisure, therefore, is an important context for women and men to resist gendered ideologies grounded in the patriarchy.

Two important conceptual issues have emerged with respect to leisure as resistance. The first is regarding the intentionality of resistance. Shaw (2001) explained, since empowerment and resistance are seen to be associated with self-expression and self-determination, this would seem to be imply that resistance is a deliberate or conscious choice made by the participant or actor. This idea, though, has not been fully explored” (p. 192).

Recent research exploring this important aspect of resistance demonstrates at least some degree of intentionality is behind many acts of resistance within leisure contexts. For example, Roster (2013) found that female motorcycle riders were attracted, at least in part, to the non-traditional leisure pursuit precisely because of the challenges they faced partaking in an unconventional gender choice. Berbary (2013) also found intentionality in the acts of resistance within sororities. She argued, “a few women began to see how they were disciplined and started to re-constitute themselves as something other than what had always been expected” (p. 164). This led Berbary to conclude “even in strictly disciplined leisure spaces, women were able to penetrate boundaries, signify new meanings, and create spaces for alternative possibilities” (p. 164).

Similarly, in my own research, I found women dealing with infertility made intentional decisions around leisure pursuits, activities, and experiences based upon resisting a pronatalist ideology (Parry, 2005). However, there are other acts that demonstrate an unintentional resistance. For
example, a female hockey player who plays on a men’s team because there are no teams for women could be seen as resisting, but she might argue she just wants to play the game. Intentionally, therefore, is an important conceptual issue with respect to resistance and this area warrants our further investigation.

The second important conceptual issue with respect to resistance is the individual versus collective nature of the act and the outcomes (Shaw, 2001). The research in this area demonstrates there are both individual and collective acts of resistance. Yet, even our individual acts can have collective outcomes. For example, a woman who, through her leisure choices and pursuits presents herself as strong, independent, and athletic challenges traditional conceptualizations of femininity – her individual action. Yet, her actions can then encourage other women (maybe men too), serving as a collective outcome (Freysinger et al, 2013). One example from the literature is Roster’s (2013) study of female motorcycle riders, which represents both individual and collective acts of resistance. More specifically, a decision to ride motorcycles represents an individual act of resistance to gendered activity participation. Yet, Roster also revealed a central theme of girl power in the women’s participation. In her words, “by banding together, these women riders sought to put a new attractiveness to other women. Many women felt like pioneers forging a path for other women to follow. These female motorcyclists relished opportunities to demonstrate their collective power and display positive gender role models” (p. 197). Thus, Roster’s study demonstrates both individual and collective acts and outcomes of resistance. In contrast, Berbary’s (2013) study of sororities detailed only individual acts of resistance. However, such individual acts of resistance had collective outcomes as “their small resistances created cracks in the discursive foundation and provided insight into or illuminated the discipline and resistance of dominant discourse within leisure spaces” (p. 164).
Similarly, Lewis and Johnson (2011) detail how leisure can be a safe site for individuals to perform preferred gender expression, which can have implications for the way others understand and appreciate transfolks. Clearly, even individual acts of resistance have the potential to create collective outcomes for women (and other marginalized populations) as a social group.

Moreover, individual acts of resistance in one leisure context have the potential to spillover and influence other aspects of a woman’s life. Resistance, therefore, has implications for the individual involved, but also for others and large scale social change (Freysinger et al, 2013). Given that the notion of resistance respects each woman’s agency, but also recognizes the existence of oppression, inequities and constraints, individual and collective outcomes of resistance with the potential for spillover are an important outcome (Shaw, 2001).

The literature clearly demonstrates that leisure is an important context for people to resist societal views about socially sanctioned, appropriate, and expected roles and behaviors based upon traditional gender ideologies (Shaw, 2001). Given this important role of leisure, we need to ask, how might leisure contexts be created to promote resistance (Berbary, 2013)?

**Future Directions: Feminist Research in the Contemporary Era**

The body of feminist scholarship demonstrates that “gendered ideologies and discourses influence what is seen as appropriate and what is seen as possible. Although these discourses can be challenged, systemic inequity persists in subtle and overt ways, influencing time use, leisure involvement, and leisure experiences” (Freysinger et al, 2013, p. 542). Given the salience of gender to leisure choices, experiences, and pursuits, there are a number of important areas for our future inquiry.
One important consideration for future feminist leisure scholarship will be “the growing interest in thinking about gender identities, experiences, diversity, and interconnections” (Parry & Fullagar, 2013, p. X). *Interconnections*, argue Parry and Fullagar (2013) move beyond the concept of intersectionality and “connotes more movement and fluidity than lies in the metaphor of intersection, as well as offering a way of thinking about how not only race and gender, but also nation, sexuality, and wealth all interconnect, configure, and reshape each other” (Bhavnani & Talcott, 2012, p. 137). Interconnectivity reveals how the leisure literature can bring a “feminist consciousness that opens up intellectual and emotional spaces for all [people] to articulate their relations to one another and the wider society – spaces where the personal transforms into the political” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 2). Indeed, interconnectivity enables the proliferation of feminisms so that each individual can articulate her or his own feminist lens and bring that perspective to the literature. Hopefully, this type of proliferation will ensure underrepresented groups will be given appropriate feminist attention.

For example, Grossman, O’Connell, and D’Augelli (2005) noted transgender people have received scant attention in the leisure literature or elsewhere. Transgender – transsexuals, cross-dressers, gender benders/blenders – “challenge recreation and leisure professionals because their gender identity and expressions differ from society’s role expectations of what it means to be male or female. These … people confront traditional ‘girl-boy’ activities associated with gender stereotyping” (Grossman, O’Connell, & D’Augelli, 2005, p. 5). Clearly this is an area of gender research that deserves more attention, which could be addressed through a focus on interconnectivity. In short, interconnectivity would help ensure the feminist leisure literature benefits from a robustness of substantive, theoretical, epistemological, and methodological
diversity that will further the understanding of this complex phenomena of leisure with the goal of creating a more just society.

Social justice is also another area for future feminist research. Given the activist orientation of much feminist leisure research, social change and social justice are key areas of interest. Stewart (in press) noted there are several streams of leisure research focused on various forms of oppression and marginalization related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, ability, and socio-economic status within leisure-related contexts. Interestingly, even though many areas of leisure research explicitly work toward a social change and social justice agenda, they have largely done so in isolation from one another (Stewart, in press). An opportunity exists, therefore, for these multiple strands to explore common themes across otherwise distinct areas of leisure literature. Stewart (in press) explained “with a focus on critiquing the philosophy and practice of research, rather than on the particular injustices, the cross-cutting themes emerge as bridges across traditionally isolated strands of research” (p. X). Along with taking up the theme of interconnectivity described above, feminist scholars could also create the “bridges” with other leisure researchers focused on exposing oppression and marginalization with the goal of advancing social justice.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate a clear link between gender and leisure that has implications for the lives of all individuals. Opportunities for a variety of leisure experiences are needed and our attention should be directed towards creating environments that empower people to resist traditional gender roles, expectations, and relations (Berbary, 2013). Indeed, feminist leisure scholars and professionals are in the unique positions of being able to
contribute to social justice –either on an individual or broader level – in regard to gender roles, expectations and relations through the provision of leisure pursuits that are not divided along gender lines, but support the lives of both men and women. Recognizing the influence of gender helps people understand their leisure choices and think critically about the type of choices they make and why. Problematizing gender is a responsibility that we all need to face and embrace to bring about a more equitable society (Sandberg, 2013).

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