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Outcomes associated with a UNLV outdoor adventures' women's wilderness canoe trip

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OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH A UNLV OUTDOOR ADVENTURES'
WOMEN'S WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP

by

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Bachelor of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Science in Sport and Leisure Service Management
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration**

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Joanna Leigh Libby

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**Outcomes Associated with a UNLV Outdoor Adventures' Women's
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ABSTRACT

The Outcomes Associated with a UNLV Outdoor Adventures' Women's Wilderness Canoe Trip

by

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The purpose of this study was to examine the outcomes associated with a short term women's canoe trip. Short debriefings, field observations and in-depth interviews were used to capture women's experiences and the processes that take place to achieve these experiences.

Eight females from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas participated in a three day canoeing trip led by the University's outdoor program. Their ages range from 18 to 40 and are all affiliated with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in some way.

Results from the participant's interviews highlighted four major themes. These themes are the disengagement from traditional roles, connection to other women, confidence and empowerment, and enjoyment. These results support that an outdoor environment can be conducive to elevating self-efficacy and empowerment in women.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, research in women's leisure has been recognized as an important area of scholarship (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, & Sheikholeslami, 2007; Henderson, Hodges, & Kivel, 2002). Multiple meanings of leisure for women have emerged. Researchers have found that women's leisure is influenced significantly by gender roles (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007, Jackson & Henderson, 1995). The body of knowledge on leisure and gender roles explores many topics, including constraints to leisure, gender resistance, and empowerment.

Women are limited by constraints to their leisure participation and experience more barriers than men in leisure (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Du, 2008; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Shaw 1994). This is especially true in outdoor recreation (Culp, 1998) which has historically been considered as a male domain (McDermott, 2000). Conversely, leisure is an area in which women can either reinforce or resist gender role expectations (Du, 2008; Shaw, 2001). Resisting gender role expectations can lead to empowerment and increased self-efficacy (Mitten, 1992, Shaw, 2001). Experiencing empowerment and self-efficacy through leisure contributes to the meaning of leisure (Henderson et al., 2002).

Some outdoor recreation activities may be especially conducive to self-efficacy and empowerment due to their dependence on the acquisition of technical skills, teamwork, and physicality (McDermott, 2000). The skills that are

used can be transferred into the daily skills that the individuals use throughout their lifetime (Goldenberg, McAvoy, & Klenosky, 2005). Outdoor recreation can help individuals in gaining physical fitness, self awareness, and self reliance (Goldenberg et al.). Previous research has indicated that outdoor recreation empowers women to become leaders, it builds confidence in their skills, and it increases self-esteem (Goldenberg et al., 2005; Martin & Leberman, 2005; McDermott, 2004). Outdoor recreation can aid in the amelioration of gender role expectations (Culp, 1998; Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000). In addition outdoor programs teach the practical skills that provide the opportunity to continue recreating in nature, which has many benefits for women (Culp, 1998).

McDermott (2000, 2004) studied the experiences of five women who participated in extended women-only wilderness canoe trips. Although the women had prior outdoor activity experiences, the trips were physically challenging. The study results indicated that the women were physically and emotionally empowered through their experiences (McDermott, 2000). Participants reported that the benefits of choosing women-only canoe trips were: being with other women, the equality of the setting, and the support provided (McDermott, 2004).

Purpose of Study

Although McDermott (2000, 2004) provided evidence that extended wilderness canoeing experiences can empower women (McDermott, 2000), additional research in this area is warranted. Specifically, McDermott explored the experiences of women on an extended, rigorous wilderness expedition. She

interviewed the women following their trips. This study further explored the experiences of female participants on a shorter, less rigorous canoe trip. In addition, the process of the experience was observed through field observations and daily debriefing sessions. The purpose of the study was to understand the experience of women on a women-only multiday canoe trip and the impact of the trip.

Similarly to McDermott, this study used a qualitative methodology. A qualitative study in this area allows for the open explorations of the outcomes associated with women's outdoor recreation experiences and the processes that contribute to the outcomes. Qualitative methodology allows the salient themes to emerge through the interviewing process and field observation (Pohl et al., 2000).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the outcomes for women engaged in a women-only canoe trip?
2. What aspects of the outdoor experience contribute to these outcomes?

Significance of Study

This study is important for several reasons. First, the impact of leisure involvement on health and well-being is an important area of research (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). Second, leisure involvement can have either positive or negative outcomes on individuals and society. For example, leisure activities can reinforce oppressive gender roles or serve as a vehicle of empowerment by resisting gender roles (Du, 2008; McDermott, 2000, Shaw,

2001). Research has indicated that outdoor recreation is a setting in which women can experience empowerment. This study examined the outcomes associated with participation in an outdoor activity, including whether women's engagement in a multiday women's-only canoe trip contributes to their empowerment and self-efficacy. Additionally, this study focused on the processes that contribute to the outcomes of the trip.

Definition of Terms

Leisure. A simple definition of leisure is "free time" (Shaw, 2007; Wearing, 1992). Free time is experienced when there is little perceived obligation or coercion to take part in an activity; there is a perception of self-determination.

Empowerment. Empowerment is a process through which individuals gain more power over their lives (McDermott, 2000). Empowerment enables women to resist gendered stereotypes and feel confident within themselves.

Resistance. Resistance is conceptualized as acts that challenge the structured power relations, in which oppressed or disadvantaged groups or individuals act to change power relations and gain personal or collective empowerment (Shaw, 2001). Behaviors include individuals acting in ways that do not conform to society, the presentation of new images of disadvantaged groups, and new forms of discussion that encourage different, non stereotypical views to emerge (Shaw).

Self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy reflects a person's perception that they execute the abilities necessary to be successful in a particular situation.

Outdoor Recreation. According to Ewert (1987) outdoor recreation is a self-initiated activity engaged in an outdoor setting that contains elements of risk. These risks can be minimized but are an important aspect of the experience. There is always a risk involved in outdoor recreation, but it is the perceived element of risk that increases feelings of accomplishment when the participants conquer the challenge (Stopha, 1994; Warren & Loeffler, 2006).

In the next chapter, the literature related to women's socialization into gender roles and the relationship between self-efficacy, empowerment and outdoor recreation will be reviewed. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to conduct this qualitative study. Chapter 4 presents the results, and chapter 5 is a discussion of results.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's Socialization into Gender Roles

Socialization refers to the attitudes and behaviors to which individual's are exposed in childhood and later adopt in their adulthood (Dixon, Warner & Bruening, 2008). However, socialization is not a one-way process because individuals do not adopt all that is being taught or experienced. As they mature they take in what they think is important and develop their own values and sense of identity (Dixon et al.).

The socialization of women into gender can be explained through the introduction of gender roles. Gender refers to the learned behaviors and expectations that are associated with males and females (Henderson, 1994; Wamala & Gunnar, 2004). For example, women have traditionally been expected to take care of domestic chores, e.g. preparing meals, taking care of children, and doing laundry (Fasting & Sisjord 1985; Henderson, 1994; Roster 2007; Shaw 2001). Men are expected to bring home the financial resources necessary to put the food on the table and take care of the physical labor associated with household responsibilities (Henderson, 1994).

Boys and girls are rewarded for what people in their society believe to be sex appropriate behavior; while gender inappropriate behavior is penalized (Maccoby, 1998; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). At a very young age, children already conceptualize what they should be doing based on their gender. Once

children know how they should behave, they use that knowledge to conform to their gender roles (Maccoby, 1998; Morgan, 1998).

In a study done on gender socialization, Owen and Hill (2008), found that parents have certain expectations of their children depending on their gender. Owen and Hill consider the family to be a central part of the gender socialization process. The parents create a gendered role by the types of toys, clothing and other items that they purchase for their children.

In addition, these researchers reported that the interactions that parents have with their children are different. Girls are encouraged to express emotional vulnerability and participate in social activities, take dance lessons, and engage in arts and crafts. Boys are encouraged to participate in more risky activities, such as football. It is considered more appropriate for the boys to show more anger and hide their emotional vulnerabilities (Owen & Hill, 2008).

Although some parents adopt the traditional role in their parenting, Owen and Hill reported that there are parents who adopt feminist attitudes in their families. The feminist style is to interact with their children the same, regardless of their gender. In those families, Owen and Hill found that the children are less likely to adopt distinct roles that pertain to their gender.

Because of these roles that women adopt, some women have accepted their gendered position in the home as natural and inevitable (Shaw, 2001; Wearing, 1992). When women accept their role, it is hard to resist and participate in activities that are not considered socially acceptable for them. The activities in

which they choose to participate are based on a personal opinion about the activity, which was shaped by the opinions of others (Bandura, 1977).

Socialization into Physical Leisure

Socializing agents (e.g., parents, peers, and teachers) have a significant effect on an individual's engagement in physical leisure. Parents serve as role models, interpreters of the experience, and providers of the experience; they are a long term determinant of children's perception of confidence (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). Individuals respond to this socialization into leisure by participating in sanctioned activities, rejecting the activities, and reacting to the feedback given by their social influences (Dixon et al., 2008). Reacting individuals often base their beliefs as to whether or not the activity is acceptable on the reactions of their parents, peers, and teachers to their involvement (Fredricks & Eccles).

Eccles and colleagues developed the Expectancy- Value model to describe the socializing agents' values and expectations, as well as role modeling behaviors that influence a child's choice of activities and the continuation of those activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). This model was created for academic achievement patterns but has been extended and applied to motivations as they pertain to a wide variety of activities, including physical activities. Since this study focuses on physical leisure it seems appropriate to integrate it as a model for socialization into physical leisure.

The Expectancy- Value model describes how individuals choose activities based on their performance expectations and the value that they place on the

activity (Eccles & Harold, 1991). It suggests that parents have the most impact when the child is young (direct impact); as teachers and peers begin to enter their lives parental influence begins to lessen (Dixon et al., 2008). However, researchers have found that parental socialization is a factor in women's physical participation activities through their adulthood (Shreeder, Thomis, Vanreusel, Lefevre, Renson, Eynde, & Beunen, 2006). In fact, early parental socialization of females is likely to have a strong and lasting impact (distal impact) on their lifelong physical activity behaviors (Dixon et al., 2008; Shreeder et al., 2006).

For example, Dixon et al. (2008) found that women whose parents were actively involved in sports were strong role models in sport and physical activity; they provided support for their childhood physical involvement by transporting them to the activities and providing guidance. Most of the participants mentioned that their parents created an atmosphere in which sport was gender appropriate for girls. Their parents' support when they were younger provided socialization that went on into adulthood.

Gender role stereotypes are an important part of the decision to participate in an activity (Buchanan & Selmon, 2007; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Shaw, 2001). Gender roles are the product of various environmental and social contexts and influence one to behave in gender-oriented ways throughout one's life (Buchanan & Selmon, 2007). Social influences, such as parents, siblings, and teachers, play a role in the behavior and attitudes of a child regarding participation in physical activities (Dixon et al.,

2008). Although there is much evidence that girls are socialized into gendered leisure activities, Shaw (2001) suggested that socialization into leisure can also serve as resistance to these gender roles.

Shaw (2001) proposes two perspectives on women's socialization into leisure. Consistent with Fredricks and Eccles, (2002), she suggests that leisure is a vehicle for emphasizing family and social roles, reinforcing gender roles, and gender inequality. When women take part in activities such as knitting, cleaning, and sewing, they are indoctrinated into gender driven activities that are considered to be socially acceptable. Although these activities are not inherently oppressive, they reinforce their feminine role.

The second view is that leisure can be viewed as resistance (Shaw, 2001). When women participate in activities that are risky and physically challenging, such as motorcycling (Roster, 2008), football, and technical outdoor sports (Warren & Loeffler, 2006), they are taking a steps outside of traditionally female activities and resisting their role in society. This view will be further explained in a later section. In order to resist feminine roles, it is important for an individual to know and negotiate the barriers that keep them from participating in physical activities (Little, 2002).

Constraints to Leisure

A number of studies indicate that gender plays a role in limiting leisure participation (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, & Sheikholesiami, 2007; Cyba, 1992; Du, 2008; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger 1989; Shaw, 1994; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). According to most

research, leisure is more accessible to men and women are more constrained in their leisure than men (Arab-Moghaddam et al, 2007; Du, 2008; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Shaw, 1994). Major constraints include structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, and societal limitations (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Miller & Brown, 2005; Shaw, 1994). Researchers have found that the structural constraints of employment demands and equipment expenses are the greater barrier to men's leisure, but are significant to both men and women. The ethic of care affects women more than men (Shaw, 1994).

Structural constraints are those that lie outside of the individual. These constraints are on a societal or institutional level that curtails opportunities for the individual (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Little, 2002; Wamala & Gunnar, 2004). Structural constraints also include lack of opportunities, facilities and programs (Shaw, 1994).

McGinnis, Gentry, and McQuillan (2009) examined institutional barriers to women's involvement in the male-dominated game of golf. This study assessed how important gender is in creating an environment in which participants can engage and become part of a community. The researchers found that women face sexist attitudes and discrimination at golf courses and in leisure, in general. McGinnis and his colleagues proposed that rituals done by the institution reinforced masculinity, which deemphasized femininity and contributed to women leaving the game. These researchers state that the institution made it hard for the women to feel that they were part of the community.

Other structural constraints are lack of time, lack of money and lack of transportation (Miller & Brown, 2005; Orsega-Smith, Payne, Mowen, Ho, & Godbey, 2007). Different lifestyle and domestic situations mean that some women have less free time for leisure activities (Miller & Brown 2005). Domestic situations have the same characteristics as the ethic of care. Women already have less leisure time than their male counterparts and when there are young children in the family, they have even less time to pursue leisure activities (Miller & Brown). Women are more likely to feel that they are experiencing leisure when at home or alone with children (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). Miller and Brown explain that women feel that they have a lack of entitlement to leisure. They are more likely to put the needs of others before their own. Men give precedence to their personal leisure over their domestic responsibilities (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989). Overall, research indicates that women's enjoyment of leisure is affected by their gender roles, ideologically and internally (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Miller & Brown, 2005).

Intrapersonal constraints lie within the individual. They affect the preferences that one forms. They reflect what an individual has been socialized to believe is appropriate, important and possible. One intrapersonal constraint is the perception of a lack of self-efficacy, interest or physical ability (Little, 2002; Son, Kerstetter, & Mowen, 2008). Another intrapersonal constraint is fear. If the individual does not feel that participating in an activity will be physically or emotionally safe, this influences the decision on whether or not to pursue the activity (Culp 1998; Little 2002).

Interpersonal constraints are lack of availability of others with whom to engage in leisure and the resistance received from family and peers (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007). According to researchers, this strongly impacts individuals' decision to participate (Bandura, 1977; Culp, 1998).

Lack of social support and self-efficacy are major barriers when it comes to physical activity (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007). These two areas are predictors of an individual's participation in leisure. If an individual does not have other individuals with whom to engage in physical leisure or does not receive support from family or peers, they may choose not to participate. Similarly, when individuals do not believe that they can be successful in an activity they are more likely to be discouraged.

Gender ideologies that inform women's behavior are unlikely to encourage independent and active involvement in leisure (Miller & Brown, 2005). Gender ideologies encourage caring for others as a form of leisure for women. When a woman has free time she tends to accomplish tasks that contribute to the fulfillment of others around them.

In addition to their responsibility for family, women have pressures to remain within the gender role socialization of keeping up their appearance and staying within their level of perceived physicality (Mitten, 1997; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). This behavior results from the assumption that physical challenges have often been regarded as distinctively male (Hart & Silka, 1994); with this idea in mind women tend to participate in activities that socially fit them (Shaw, 1994).

For example, participation in aerobics and gymnastics complement, rather than challenge, traditional ideas of feminine behavior (Roster, 2007; Shaw, 1994).

The idea that negotiating these constraints and facing challenges through participation in physical leisure gives women an opportunity to successfully resist gendered stereotypes, leading to empowerment, has been noted since the early 1990's (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Little, 2002; Roster, 2007; Shaw, 2001).

Physical Leisure as Resistance and Empowerment

Viewing leisure as resistance came into focus in the late 1980's (Henderson, 1994). This focus is important in understanding the experiences of women in leisure today. One way that women use leisure is to resist gendered stereotypes and constraints (Roster, 2007; Shaw, 2001). Researchers have found that in order for empowerment to take place through physical activity, women must become more connected to their bodies' capabilities and develop a new understanding of themselves (McDermott, 2000).

Earlier, Shaw's (2001) perspectives on women's socialization into leisure were discussed. She proposed that leisure is a context for the reproduction of, but also sometimes resistance to, dominant ideologies. Ideologies are beliefs that people have that help them to make sense of the world around them (Shaw). Shaw also suggests that ideologies play a role in inequality because they conceal contradictions, making inequality seem normal or natural to the world around them.

According to Freysinger and Flannery (1992), there is always room for resistance and as long as women keep resisting, they can enjoy their leisure time. They suggest that leisure is an ideal context for empowerment and resistance because it is a life domain of relative freedom of choice.

Empirical research on leisure as resistance has explored the many ways in which women use leisure as a source of resistance and empowerment and show their dissatisfaction with gender roles (Miller & Brown, 2005; Shaw, 2001). “Resistance is seen to occur when women adopt behaviors to express themselves through activities which provide personal empowerment which at the same time reflect a challenge to dominant restrictive or constraining views of femininity” (Shaw, 2001, p. 191).

In her study of leisure as resistance for first time mothers, Wearing (1992) found that mothers who were working could justify their leisure time, but did not have much time available for it. Mothers who were at home found it hard to separate their work from leisure and identified leisure as taking care of their child. The mothers who were single had more control over their space and time. When the participants described leisure it was not always a non work concept as it was for their male counterparts.

One of the participants explained that her way of resisting having her life being dominated by motherly/wifely obligations was to organize effectively, making time and space for herself. Another participant explained that spending time at a reservoir with girlfriends was her way of resisting. Her husband was working and she enjoyed her time away from household responsibilities.

Wearing claims that leisure is more than just an escape for women: it is a site of resistance and transformation. She also states that women who find the time for leisure and resist their traditional roles gain in well-being.

Freysinger and Flannery (1992) found that women who participated in self-determined leisure became aware of themselves and were able to express themselves in new ways. This autonomy was empowering for most of the women interviewed. In addition, the women in this study found leisure to be empowering because it made them a person again; they weren't known only as a mom, a teacher or a wife. They were known as an individual. When they were asked what leisure was, they overwhelmingly associated it with freedom from roles and freedom of expression.

Physical activity can be theorized as an intersection between the female body and empowerment (McDermott, 2000). Women gain strength, self-esteem, empowerment and a sense of possibilities for moving beyond assumed limits, by seeing other women doing what society has taught them not to do (Stopha, 1994).

Self-efficacy is an important determinant in the resistance and empowerment process (Choi, 2004). It is important that the women are confident that they will complete the process; without this confidence and accomplishment empowerment will most likely not be reached (McDermott, 2004).

Self Efficacy

According to Bandura (1977), there are four sources of self efficacy. These sources of self-efficacy are: observing others successfully performing an activity,

obtaining verbal feedback and persuasion from peers or family, positive physiological experiences, and past success in similar activities. This last source of self-efficacy, one's past personal accomplishments, is the most important factor in self efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Eccles & Harold, 2002; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; Orsega-Smith et al., 2007).

Researchers suggest that parents, peers, and institutions play a major role in the development of an individual's self efficacy from infancy to adulthood (Buchanan & Selmon, 2008; Dixon et al., 2008). Self-efficacy is important because it is a major predictor of participation in physical activity. Self-efficacy can create an opportunity or a barrier (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007).

Personal accomplishment relates to the previous experiences of the individual. If an individual has attained success before, they are more than likely to take part in another activity that is the same or similar. Any failures will lead to negative perceptions of their skills and will result in decreased participation. With that being stated, "It is important to attain success early on in activities to build strong self-efficacy" (Propst & Koesler, 1998, p. 321). Strong self-efficacy leads to the desire to participate in the activity and the accomplishment leads to empowerment (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007).

Observing others successfully perform an activity is called vicarious experience. Bandura (1977) states that "the self-efficacy theory implies that the observer makes judgments of his/her efficacy based on the observed performance and behaviors of others" (p. 196). When watching peers and leaders like themselves perform an activity successfully, individuals will base

their anticipation of their own success on the success of others. They will take mental notes and carefully observe the way in which one is completing the challenge. The leader, peer, or coach plays a major role in increasing self-efficacy with this source.

Verbal feedback and persuasion can shape how participants view their successes and failures in an activity. It relays to the participants that they have the competence and strength to complete a task and shows them that their involvement is important (Bandura 1977; Buchanon & Selmon, 2008; Dixon et al., 2008; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Orsega-Smith et al., 2007). The people who have strong relationships with the participant (e.g. parents, coaches, teachers, and peers) have a major influence on how individuals perceive their success in an activity.

Emotional, physical, and mental experiences are considered physiological states. Bandura (1977) says that “individuals tend to rely on information from past performances to judge their emotional and physiological capabilities, “If the activity generates too much fear then people tend to arouse themselves to levels of stress that can challenge their future competencies and involvement in the activity” (p. 208).

The importance of self-efficacy can be illustrated through the activity of rock climbing. Achieving a goal in rock climbing can be a result of self-efficacy but also can increase one’s self-efficacy. An individual may already feel competent when approaching the activity, but when an individual reaches the top of a mountain, it can be very rewarding if their parents, peers, or teachers believed

they would succeed and supported the importance of their participation in this activity (Dixon et al., 2008; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). If they feel that they are supported in this activity, they are more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment and continue their participation. Conversely, if they do not feel that they are supported in their participation, the importance of their involvement declines (Bandura, 1977; Buchanan & Selmon, 2007).

Miller and Brown (2005) found that the more women were involved in independent active leisure, the greater their sense of self-efficacy. The participants in their study believed that engaging in physical activity was accomplishable. Orsega-Smith et al. (2007) examined self-efficacy in relation to physical leisure activity. Physical leisure activities, especially when they do not reinforce traditional gender roles, may have the capacity to contribute to the empowerment of women. For example, aesthetic and graceful leisure reinforces female gender roles, while activities that emphasize power do not.

Self Efficacy, Empowerment, and Outdoor Recreation

One possible method through which women are able to reclaim their voices is by participating in wilderness recreation (Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000). Historically, leisure, especially outdoor and physical activities, has been viewed as a male domain (Culp, 1998; Little, 2002; McDermott, 2000). Women are not socialized into outdoor recreation as much as men are as they are growing up (Culp).

However, current research does indicate that more women are participating in outdoor recreation activities, such as cross-country skiing, white water rafting,

and rock climbing, than previously (Roster, 2007). In today's society, there are fewer gender role restrictions on women's behavior. This increased participation and decreased gender role pressures may have beneficial consequences for women's perceptions of self-efficacy and empowerment.

As previously discussed, low self-efficacy is a significant barrier in physical activity (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007). In a study of girls and outdoor activities (Culp, 1998), the participants reported that there were some activities in which they did not feel comfortable because of the nature of what was involved. The participants thought that they could not accomplish the physical skill that was associated with some outdoor recreational activities. Therefore they did not approach those activities. This low self-efficacy prevented the girls from participating in the activity.

In a study done on physical activity among women with young children, Miller and Brown (2005) report that it was important for women to be able to take time out in their lives. Physical leisure provides physical and mental health benefits and makes women feel good about themselves. Furthermore, participation in physical activity helps them better fulfill the role of mother and wife. One of the women in the study mentioned that when she is in a bad mood, it affects the whole family. Her role is central to the entire family, so when she feels good the family feels good. Physical leisure affects the whole family.

Pohl et al. (2000) suggest that women do not feel that they have to conform to the gender roles that govern their everyday lives when participating in outdoor recreation. In addition, there are other benefits gained through the participation

in outdoor recreation. Through their analysis, these researchers found that wilderness recreation influences women's lives in a variety of forms. It changes the way they feel about themselves and what they can do. Their perspective of their gender roles creates a deeper connection to others and clarifies their mental state of mind.

As long as the women are participating in self-determined outdoor recreational activities they feel as if they gain a sense of capability, competence and confidence (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). Women receive many benefits by participating in physical leisure. One specific benefit is self-esteem, which leads to empowerment. Furthermore, the personal responsibility and physical competence required to be self-sufficient in wilderness can filter into everyday life, enhancing one's confidence, self trust, and self-worth, thus resulting in a positive view of self or self-esteem.

McDermott (2000) explains that outdoor recreation allows participants to be more conscious of their bodies. It provides development of physical strength, skill, and may improve the way women view their bodies. Body image is defined as the mental image one has of one's own body (Copeland, 1994). Many females are faced today with eating disorders or other obsessions to improve their image. The media plays a major role in making females feel like they are not good enough for society's standards. Not only are women's visual and mental images distorted but their feelings about their bodies are negative, as well (Copeland).

A wilderness setting is an environment in which skills are needed; it often requires one to be in good physical condition to navigate it successfully. The technical skills and physical activities allow women to experience their body in active functional areas, rather than an aesthetic one (Copeland, 1994). Copeland also described a study done with wilderness experiences that mentioned body image. In that study, the results showed that women reported more positive feelings about their bodies after attending a three day wilderness course.

McDermott (2000) found that canoeing created embodiment among women. McDermott reported, "A physical activity experience that provides an awareness of the body through the "doing of it" was found to offer a much deeper feeling of one self as embodied through feeling connected to one's body in ways not readily experienced in one's everyday life."(p. 351). Exercising alone does not improve body image (Copeland, 1994). Studies have indicated that there have only been improvements when there is either increased level of fitness or improvement in skill levels. As mentioned earlier, McDermott stated that empowerment cannot take place unless the individual has interconnected their physicality with an awareness of new possibilities. Outdoor recreation allows for these dimensions to coexist.

McDermott (2000) studied the experience of women during physical activity. She studied the women in two different physical environments. One was aerobics, which tends to reinforce gender conformity; the other was wilderness canoeing, which does not. McDermott found that canoeing was more

empowering than aerobics. The women in the study were empowered in two ways. The first involved ideologies surrounding resistance to gender socialization. The second involved gaining an understanding of their physical abilities. Canoeing gave the women an opportunity to move, experience, and live their bodies in ways different from their everyday lives. From this experience, women became more comfortable with their new behaviors and those behaviors could be transferred into real-life situations (Hart & Silka, 1994; McDermott, 2000).

Although there are many benefits associated with aerobic activity, other physical activities may provide more intense experiences of physicality. Canoeing is more likely to result in empowerment because of its resistance to ideologies and the technical and physical skill required to accomplishing the task (McDermott, 2000; Warren & Loeffler, 2006).

Stopha (1994) examined the impact of physically challenging activities on women. She discussed how women increased their ability to identify and/or move past fear, built trust and support, and gained a clearer understanding of their relationship to leadership through a ropes course challenge. The ropes course included walking on high and low ropes and using team building and problem solving skills to accomplish tasks. It was intended to increase outdoor skills and knowledge and increase the awareness of surrounding environments.

Stopha asked her respondents to debrief their experience on the ropes. She found that women recognized the connection between their own feelings of isolation and oppression, of not being able to find their way out alone, and the

need for contact with others in order to understand their oppression and the oppression of other groups. In addition, she found that women reported other changes in their feelings and awareness of themselves.

A study done by Pawelko (2004) examined the factors that influence women's continued participation in outdoor recreation with a program called Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (B.O.W.). They found that women reported feelings of competence and confidence in the outdoors as a reoccurring factor influencing their involvement. They found that the B.O.W. workshop (which is a weekend program) offers women the opportunity to learn new skills and build confidence through participation in outdoor activities.

Not only does self-efficacy and empowerment through outdoor recreation help individuals to feel confident around other people but they also become confident that they can independently carry out their skills when they are on their own (Hart & Silka, 1994). There are many ways to accomplish the task of increasing efficacy through the use of outdoor recreation.

The literature has provided us with empirical research that is the theoretical underpinnings upon which this study is built. The major body of knowledge in this study includes the impact that leisure time, specifically outdoor recreation, has on women. There are several studies that have shown positive outcomes that are gained through participation in outdoor recreation as a leisure activity. However, little research has shown what processes take place in order to achieve these outcomes. Therefore, the purpose this study was to understand

the experiences of women during a wilderness trip and the processes that contribute to these experiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research methods were used to collect information on women's experiences in outdoor recreation. Specifically, the study sought to understand the experiences of participants during a three day all-women canoe trip and the impact of the trip on the women. Group debriefings were conducted at the end of each day and in-depth interviews shortly after the conclusion of the trip. Field observations were also made during the entirety of the trip. This methodology was imperative because it allowed findings to emerge throughout the in depth interview process. The interview questions were designed to answer the guiding research questions.

Since this research focuses on women's experiences of outdoor recreation, daily debriefing sessions were used to capture what these women were feeling as their experience unfolded. The behavior of the women and leaders were observed during the trip to capture what was naturally happening to the participants as they went through their experiences. In depth interviews were used to understand the impact of the overall experience, in general, and specifically as it related to perception of self-efficacy and empowerment.

This study employed a feminist approach. The relevance of using this approach is because it focuses on the leisure experiences of women as a source of empowerment. Without this theoretical perspective our world is incomplete (Sky, 1994). This perspective better understands women's

experiences. It puts their experiences at the center of research. It shifts women from being objects of a study to knowledge of a study. Feminist attitudes have the goal of gender equality in social structures and practices (Eisele & Stake, 2008). In addition, it focuses on creating more opportunities for females (Henderson, 1994). This study was approached with the understanding that women's experiences in outdoor recreation could best be grasped through getting to know the women and observing them in a natural environment.

The role of the researcher was to attempt to understand the women's experiences through discussion and observation. Trust was developed with the participants to achieve the best results (Zikmund, 1991). The researcher does have a bias in this area and was tempted to lead the women when collecting data. However, precautions were taken in order to achieve well-founded results in a natural environment. This was done so the original intentions of the study were not lost (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). Information was gathered through casual conversation and observation. This was done so that the participants did not feel pressured or that they were continuously objects of a study. The researcher balanced her participation in the activity and observation.

Although there are strengths associated with this research method, there are limitations. Because the data collection is intrusive, collecting the data may change the experience of women.

Sample Selection

The sample included eight women registered for a beginners' women-only canoe trip with UNLV Outdoor Adventures. All participants were invited to

participate in the study. UNLV Outdoor Adventures agreed to ask the canoe trip participants if they would like to participate in this study. The coordinator of UNLV Outdoor Adventures provided the researcher with the contact information for all of the women who registered for the trip. Each of the participants were contacted by electronic mail to invite them to participate in the study (see Appendix I).

Sample Description

The researcher worked in coordination with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Outdoor Adventures to conduct the study in a safe environment. UNLV Outdoor Adventures provides experiences for the university and Las Vegas community. Some of the programs are targeted towards women only. Previously, the researcher worked for Outdoor Adventures for two years. Her prior work with this organization motivated her interest in this study. Participation in the study was not a condition of the participants' involvement in the canoe trip and the participants were under no obligation to participate.

Working with UNLV Outdoor Adventures helped to acquire study participants. The study participants represent a small group of women that elected to participate in an outdoor program at the university. The participant selection was one of convenience. The convenience sample facilitated the ability of the researcher to find participants whose traits related to the study and were more readily available (Berg & Latin, 2008).

Participants

The Outdoor Adventures canoe trip was open to female UNLV students, faculty and staff, as well as the outside community. The trip was advertised mainly on campus with some advertisement in the community.

Eight women residing in Las Vegas, Nevada signed up for the trip and agreed to participate in the study. Not all of them are enrolled at the University but all are affiliated with it. The age ranges from 18 to age 40 (18-25 n=2, 25-29 n=3, 30-40 n=3). Of the eight participants, two women have children no older than four and two women were married. Their racial/ethnic backgrounds were: five Caucasians, one Latina, one American Japanese, and one unidentified. The education attained ranges from first year in college to a doctorate. The most frequently educational level reported was working on a bachelor's degree. For most of the participants, this was their first time canoeing. On the next page, Table 1 provides a description of each participant.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Marital Status	Number of Children; Age	Education Level	Previous Canoe Experience
Corina	40	Caucasian	Married	2; 4 & 2	Ph.D. degree	Little
Francesca	28	American Japanese	Single	None	Working on B.S. degree	None
Hyla	29	Caucasian	Single	None	Associates degree	Little
Kimberly	26	Caucasian	Married	None	2B.S. degrees	None
Maxine	40	Latina	Single	None	Working on B.S. degree	None
Nina	23	Caucasian	Single	None	Working on B.S. degree	Little
Veronica	30	Unknown	Single	1; 4	M.S. degree	Little
Wendy	18	Caucasian	Single	None	Working on B.S. degree	None

Most of the women have participated in some outdoor recreation, however, six of them found this trip challenging and two of them noted that it was not challenging enough. The challenge experienced by the majority of women was optimal, as, theoretically, the women needed to be challenged optimally in order to develop a sense of self-efficacy or personal growth (Bandura, 1977).

Settings

There were several different settings during this study. The in-depth interviews took place at the location the participants chose. Some chose to meet at the university and other public locations, while others felt more comfortable in their own homes. Allowing the women to choose the setting for the interview was done to assure that the participants were comfortable, familiar with their surroundings, and in their natural environment (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to one and a half hours, providing time to capture their full experience and what they believed contributed to those experiences. The setting of the trip will be described below.

Outdoor Experience

The canoe trip took place in Arizona. The specific name is Black Canyon, located about ten miles south of the Hoover Dam. This is a popular area for a variety of boating opportunities and other outdoor activities. The outdoor program at the University has been traveling to this location for sixteen years and has run into minimal problems representing risks to the participants.

Outdoor Adventures ran an all-women's canoe trip to Black Canyon. Permission was received from the program coordinator to conduct the study during this time. There were two female leaders who were responsible for most of the planning, minimization of risk, and teaching the skills necessary for the success of the participants. The researcher did not participate as a leader during this trip.

Outdoor Adventures takes many steps in order to ensure their participants' safety. The staff members are certified in first aid and CPR and are thoroughly trained in the field before becoming a leader. The leaders are aware of the location and have had multiple trainings in the Black Canyon area. Staff training consists of strategies for minimizing risk, wilderness first aid, leadership techniques, and skills training for the outdoor activity.

In addition to the staff, a pre-trip meeting was held two days before the canoeing trip. The pre trip meeting is designed to answer any questions or respond to any concerns that the participants have about their participation. The participants were educated before the trip on what they need to bring, what to expect from the trip and how to prepare for the risks involved with participation. This helps ensure that they are well prepared and have a successful trip. During this time participants gave their consent for their involvement in the study.

During the first phase of the outdoor activity, the participants were taught the basic skills of canoeing. They learned the most efficient way to move across the water and the proper positions. Before heading upriver, participants were given time to practice their skills. When the leaders felt that the participants were

ready, they canoed eight miles upstream, with breaks and lunch included. When they got to the destination, everyone set up camp and prepared dinner. The camp was at this location for the next two nights.

The next day's activities consisted of paddling four more miles upriver and taking challenging hikes to explore two different areas of hot springs. The activities required that the participants provide support for each other and pay attention to their climbing technique. The staff was there to make sure that participants were climbing safely. The participants then paddled four more miles back down river to their original camping spot where they spent their last night.

On the last day, the participants paddled the eight miles back down the river. Down river should be much more relaxing and faster than canoeing upriver, however, the environmental conditions made downhill much more challenging than expected. The participants had to fight against the wind blowing them back upstream the majority of the time.

Procedures

There were three sources of data collection used in this study. These sources were short group interviews during the trip, one individual interview after the experience, and field observations. The women who volunteered to participate in the study were given an informed consent form explaining the extent of their participation in the study. Each source of data will be described in further detail below.

Group Interview Protocol

Each evening, participants were collectively interviewed. The participants were asked about their experiences that day, for example, how they were feeling about the trip and the positive and negative aspects of their day (see Appendix II). They were asked to be completely candid in their responses. These short interviews were intended to have the participants reflect on their very recent experience while the events were still fresh in their minds.

When participants are interviewed together it can create a wider range of information and insight. They can piggyback off of each other and develop interesting comments. With these sessions, there is a sense of comfort in knowing that other people may feel the same way contributing to a sense of security in talking about it. Once the conversations gets going, individuals who may have not felt so inclined to talk about their feelings on a subject will be stimulated by the efforts of others (Zikmund, 1991). The expression of diverse viewpoints were encouraged and supported at the debriefings. Unfortunately, although the group interviews were conducted, the women's comments were unintelligible because of the outdoor environment in which the recordings took place. Therefore, the group interviews could not be transcribed word for word. However, notes were taken during this time.

Interview Protocol

The questions were developed with the goals of the study in mind. The questions were broad enough to not lead the participants in their answers, but were to the point so that they stayed within reach of what the study was trying to

accomplish. The first set of questions was developed in the first researcher's qualitative methods class. A pilot study was done with a woman through the Outdoor Adventures program. This gave the first researcher additional insight and some of the questions were modified due to the results. In addition, a second researcher helped with the modifications of the interview questions.

In-depth interviews were conducted within four days of the trip's conclusion. The interviews were audio taped to ensure that their responses were accurately recorded. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one and a half hours, allowing flexibility for elaborated responses.

The women were asked open-ended questions addressing their trip experiences and the perceived personal impact of the trip. The researcher was interested to know if any of the outcomes experienced on the trip carried over and affected their lives after the trip. Additionally, the researcher was interested to see if the women's perception of their experience changed in anyway after camp, whether the outcomes derived from the experience extended beyond the trip, and if they intend to participate in future outdoor activities (see Appendix III). The main point of interest was if the program increased their self-efficacy and empowered them.

Field Observation Protocol

The observations took place during the canoe trip. Observations were casually documented throughout the trip. The researcher did not want the participants to feel that they were being watched during the duration of the trip so she made an effort to make only a brief note of her observations at the time,

commit the observations to memory, and write them down and reflect on them later. The researcher remained open to any events that seemed significant. Additionally, the leaders' behaviors were assessed relative to their impact on the self-efficacy of the participants.

There were a number of factors that were observed in relation to self-efficacy. These included observations of the leaders supporting the participants, the participants supporting themselves and others, the participants' attainment of outdoor skills, and role modeling by instructors and other participants. These observations gave the researcher the chance to reflect on what was going on during an outdoor activity to gain a better understanding of what was occurring with the participants. The observation of the interactions and experiences of the participants were to inform the debriefing and interview questions, as well as frame future interpretations of the process of the canoe trip.

For organization, the researcher kept a log of dates, names, times, and places where, when, and with whom she gathered information (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), as well as a place for additional comments. With the permission of the women, the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. All information was stored in a computer, with files backing up the information. Each woman was given a pseudonym so that she could not be associated with her data. All transcribed and electronic recordings will be kept at UNLV for three years in a locked file cabinet.

Data Analysis

For analysis, the constant comparative method was used. Constant comparative method involves combining coding with the analysis to build the foundation of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Two researchers independently coded the transcribed data by finding words and sentences related to the experiences of the women and the impact of those experiences.

The researchers' first color coded the words or phrases that captured the processes and outcomes that were salient to the research and identified emerging patterns (Glaser & Strauss). For example, the women who said anything about feeling confident, those words, sentences, or phrases were highlighted in green. If they said anything relating to resisting gender roles it was highlighted in pink.

The words and phrases were then integrated into categories based on their common properties. For example, accomplishment, skill development and confidence were placed into the category of Development, while self-sufficiency was placed into the Gender Roles category. Based on their conceptual commonalities, these categories were then reduced to four themes.

The two researchers identified themes independently. They discussed the themes that emerged and reached consensus on the four major themes. Then they recorded the number of women that discussed each theme to quantify how significant these themes were to the women's experiences.

After the data was analyzed the conclusions were sent back to the women so that they could affirm or deny that they had accurately been represented.

Two women confirmed that they had been accurately represented, while the other six did not respond. Member checking is very important to qualitative research. It is the most effective way to make sure that study participants' experiences were not misinterpreted (Maxwell, 1996).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study examined the experiences of eight women during a three-day canoeing trip, as well as the outcomes associated with the experiences. The women-only canoeing trip was offered through a university outdoor adventures program. Eight women from a variety of backgrounds participated in the trip. All of the women on the trip agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected through three days of field observations, daily focus groups, and in-depth interviews with each of the eight women at the conclusion of the trip. Collection of data from multiple sources allowed for a triangulation of the data and placing the results in context. The in-depth interviews were transcribed. Two researchers independently coded and identified themes in the data.

The results of the analyses yielded four themes representing the processes of the women-only outdoor adventure and the outcomes of the experience. The first theme was that the women were able to disengage from their typical gender roles (75%) while engaged in this women-only outdoor experience. The second theme that emerged was that the women experienced a deep sense of connection, appreciation, and acceptance with the other women on the trip (87%). The disengagement from traditional roles and the supportive environment opened the women up to new experiences. The third theme was that by overcoming the physical and mental challenges of the trip, the women acquired a sense of accomplishment and empowerment (87%). The fourth

theme that emerged was that women experienced relaxation and enjoyment (100%).

Disengagement from traditional roles

The majority of women stated that the women-only canoeing trip allowed them to step away from traditional gender roles. The women suggested that in a co-ed environment, they would have been less likely to operate to their full potential. Females often find learning physical skills to be intimidating in a mixed gender setting (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Many of the women stated that they would have allowed a male to take over the challenges, carry the canoe, or set up the equipment. They would have defaulted to their everyday routines. The women believed that if men had been present, they would have been more reluctant to express their abilities. In addition, because they were able to express themselves in a new way, they felt as if they were free from their normal routine. According to Kimberly,

Men would have made it harder for me. I think I would not have worked as hard. I would have let someone else work harder because [I would have thought that] men are fine using their muscles because they are stronger, which is not true. Again, I don't think I would have been that open about whom I was if there were guys. I would not be able to open up myself.

Among the women there was a belief that if men had been there it would have been a different experience for them. Since it was only women, if something was going to get done and the challenge conquered, the women had

to complete it. The women suggested that since there were no men it was easier to resist their gender roles. Corina stated,

I think just by having been raised in a gendered society that there is a sense that well, the man has to do the heavy lifting. We were all women and if we were going to get this done we were going to have to do all the heavy lifting and the cooking and the cleaning and we got it all done. We could get it all done; there was no question. There was no sense that the guys were going to get the canoes far up; if we were going to get the canoes up, well here we were. If my husband were there, I would have been expecting him to carry the big things even though quite frankly I am just as strong as he is. I don't have to feel like I have to compete or rely on men.

When asked what most stood out for Corina during her experience, she emphasized that during the trip she was not seen as a wife or a mother, but as a person. She reported that this sense of self was refreshing for her. Many women perceive themselves as a family member first and as individuals second (Henderson, 1998). According to Corina, "I just have to take care of myself and not three other people." The women discussed how they appreciated the escape from the nonreciprocal female role of caregiver. The women reported that they took care of each other naturally and everyone shared in the responsibility.

Veronica stated,

Did we take care of each other, yes, but it wasn't...these roles didn't become very fixed. It just seems to be more intuitive and emotional with a group of women. There was less expectation for how things would go. Going outside

for me is always a good thing. What made me most interested in going on the trip was having a couple of days with no responsibility. The outdoor aspect was appealing to me but I was ready to not be a wife and mom and have experience with guides. When you have a baby you put so much of your energy into their existence. I feel like at some point if I don't put some of my own back into myself, I am going to forget how to. Reclaiming a little bit of 'me' time was really good and I could do it again soon.

When asked about gender roles, Veronica's statement was consistent with Shaw's (2001) theory that a leisure environment is either a vehicle for resisting or reinforcing gender roles.

I think that roles are going to be exacerbated and are going to become stronger [in an outdoor environment]. I think a man's desire to protect becomes stronger and women's desire for protection becomes stronger, especially for less experienced campers or just people new to that experience. A woman in a new experience, if there is that big strong man, will very comfortably slip into the role of getting taken care of.

The fact that this was an all female environment allowed the women to step away from slipping into the roles of getting taking care of. Corina said,

I didn't see gender roles being there because when there are just women you can't fall back on the defaults. Sometimes you get into a group of women where there are some women that have more masculine essence or spirit, but this group was, we were all just people. It wasn't about femininity or masculinity and I thought that was really refreshing.

The women also suggested that the all-women environment reduced the pressures associated with attaining a physical and technical skill. Nina mentioned, “I would have felt pressure to canoe faster and physically push myself to limits I did not necessarily want to be pushed to in a coed environment.”

A number of the women stated their belief that a male presence during the three days might have changed the dynamics. Some of the women expressed that they would have felt a little bit more insecure about themselves. The women believed that their conversations would have been different and that they would not have been as comfortable sharing thoughts and feelings. Veronica stated that,

I think some of what Francesca said was correct that there is a really different mindset in being around women and a different mindset when there are guys and girls together. I definitely enjoy the rhythm of women’s company and the atmosphere we created. It was a really nice feeling. I think women change when men are around and I don’t usually particularly enjoy the competitiveness and the flirting.

In a female environment these women did not have to worry about their insecurities, grooming or modesty. Maxine stated, “I think that I personally would have been a little more self-conscious and just feeling different with the way we were dressed. Sometimes your t-shirt is sticking to your body and with this women’s group I didn’t really have to worry about that.” Being with women, some noted, they did not have to be as concerned with appearance. Francesca

said that on a trip several years ago,” I was concerned about looking cute. I brought my make up with me on the camping trip. There was one point where I even attempted to shave my legs.” This experience was different for her. She felt really comfortable right away. She said, “I didn’t have to worry about what I looked like.”

Although the majority of women stated that the outdoor experience had allowed them to resist traditional gender roles, two women that did not mention anything explicitly about stepping away from gender roles. However, Maxine talked about how she might have felt a little bit more insecure about her appearance if men were present. Without men there, she was free to be herself. She is single and has no children, so she depends on herself and takes on both feminine and masculine roles typically. Hyla talked about how she would have been more competitive if men were on the trip; however, she did not frame her experience as related to gender roles, per se.

If additional women-only outdoor opportunities were offered through the Outdoor Adventure program, a number of the women said that they would take part in another all female adventure. An all women’s environment affected the women and their perceived roles. It allowed them to rely on themselves more and express their full capabilities.

The women were able to let go of concerns about self-presentation when in an environment that did not contain men. They felt a difference in how they expressed their abilities and their personalities. These women perceived that

the sense of self and connection to other women achieved in this outdoor recreation environment would have been different if men had been present.

Connection to Other Women

Eighty seven percent of the women reported that they felt a deep sense of connection to other women during the trip. However, Nina did not feel that she had significant interactions during the trip. She interacted with one leader, who was her partner, but other than that she did not feel that there was anything significant. Her experience did not seem to interfere with the depth of connection reported by the other women.

For the vast majority of women, the more challenges that the women conquered, the more they began to trust each other and bond together. Some of the women believed that the natural setting contributed to their bonding with the other women, because it provided an authentic setting for those experiences. The experience wasn't just about bonding with other women, but also feeling relaxed and one with nature. This helped create openness to experience and each other.

The wilderness is conducive to connecting an entire group because everyone has common goals and they are all sharing in the experience (Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000). Being outside in the elements brings people closer together. Kimberly stated that, "she felt that nature nurtures caring and considerate people because essentially we all depend on each other for our survival."

During the three days, there were a number of hikes that were challenging. I observed how supportive the women were towards one another. The amount of support that the women gave each other was overwhelming. Each time someone safely walked down a waterfall or climbed up or down the ropes, the women would cheer for her and give each other high fives. Kimberly mentioned, "I was happy when Veronica succeeded on the ropes and, when I got done, there she was waiting for me when I did it and cheering me on." Most of the women noted this support and named it as a benefit. Veronica stated,

The most significant benefit was sharing the experience with women. There was a feeling of warmth and support. Like an interconnected web. I didn't even think I realized how rare it is for women to do that without a man, you know canoeing or carrying stuff.

Kimberly stated that, "During the entire trip we stayed together as a team. We did everything together and every time we were eating, taking a break, or just relaxing we sat in a circle and bonded." I observed that spending three days in the wilderness together brought many deep conversations and increased the intensity of interaction with one another. The women talked about their relationships as a team often throughout the experience. Maxine said,

I had a connection with every single one of them in a different way. My partner and I created a relationship where we felt safe around each other and that we could see each other's, not faults, but vulnerabilities, I guess. I know that if I go hiking with my partner and tell her I can't go any further that

it would be okay because we have already established that comfort zone between us.

Maxine also expressed how supportive the relationship was between her partner and herself. When Maxine noticed that her partner was struggling, she reinforced that “we do what we can and what we can’t do, that is okay. I wanted her to have a good time so I would let her know it is okay. The interaction was very significant.”

In an all female environment, vulnerabilities and insecurities are exposed in a way that is safe for women. Veronica said, “We were in a judge free environment and were encouraged to share our thoughts, frustrations and feelings with one another.” According to Francesca, “going with all women made me feel comfortable.” As an observer, I saw many opportunities for the women to relax and just be comfortable around one another. They took advantage of every opportunity. Francesca said,

We all talked openly about ourselves and our own insecurities and there was a lot of “oh I feel that way too and oh yah you’re right, and this is my experience in regard to what you said” and it was sharing as opposed to competition. I was really blown away and by the end of the trip when we were driving home I was thinking this was a beautiful group of people that got together and did this. I was just pleased to be a part of it.

Wendy had an interesting experience. As the youngest participant she connected with everyone in a different way. She was able to connect with

women about life experiences to which she can look forward as she grows older. Wendy expressed,

It was good for me to hang out with some older women because I am so used to hanging out with people my age, I think it was good for me to see what it's like and also to see that I can do that too when I am older.

On the same note, Francesca expressed how she connected with the women, particularly an individual who was younger than her. She said,

We have a lot of common bonds and interests. In terms of sustainability and philosophy and the idea of being the type of feminist where I felt like I was honoring myself for being a woman. I felt like a lot of the women were like that on the trip. Seeing some of the women, one woman in particular, whose personality and words that she said reminded me a lot of myself when I was much younger. How I didn't feel like I had to judge but instead empathize with where she was coming from. I really felt connected in that way.

In addition to creating connections and relationships, this experience provided opportunities to embrace existing relationships. There were a couple of women who already knew each other at the start of the trip. Francesca and Hyla both mentioned that being a part of this canoe trip was good for their friendship. They have been friends since high school. Hyla said "we both like outdoor activities, so this was good for both of us to get out and do this together. It will definitely help us on hanging out more."

Veronica and Corina both mentioned that one of their most significant interactions were with one another. They both met as moms and spend most of

their time interacting with each other in a book club. Corina said “I learned a lot about her during this trip. I have known her for a couple of years, but it has been in really controlled setting. We worked well as a team.”

During the three-day experience, the first researcher conducted about twenty minutes of debriefing each night. The debriefing sessions were held in order to capture thoughts and feelings while they were still fresh in the women’s minds. The debriefing sessions played a major role in how the women interacted. Veronica claims that if there had not been a time set a side to debrief the day’s experiences on all three days, the connections among the group may not have been as deep. During the debriefings, the first researcher observed that the women really opened up which made the next day’s challenges a lot easier to deal with because they knew how one another felt. Veronica stated,

It was hard for me to talk about the experience while I was having it. The discussions gave us an opportunity to speak more honestly than we would have if there wasn’t someone instigating that. I think that people would have probably needed an outlet and so they would have done it in smaller groups. It wouldn’t have been as productive. I wouldn’t have gotten to see how Corina felt about that and how I didn’t feel about that and I wouldn’t have learned as much.

The women enjoyed being with each other. The women were supportive of each other which seemed to create a positive learning environment. The group was clearly oriented towards helping and supporting each other. It was not about competition. This allowed the participants to increase their skills and

become confident in their abilities to complete tasks. An all-female environment proved to be very enjoyable for the women with one hundred percent of the women reporting that they would participate in another experience with all women. Women spoke of this development of a sense of competence; they felt like they could do things that they never thought they could do.

Confidence and Empowerment

Eighty seven percent of the women reported feeling empowered and seventy five percent said that they had increased their confidence as a result of this trip. Outdoor environments provide challenging environments. There are many uncontrollable factors that can occur during an experience to which one must respond. Spending three days in the wilderness allowed the women to either acquire or hone physical and psychological skills. All of the women discussed how they had grown through facing physical and emotional challenge.

At the beginning, each woman noted how nervous she was because she did not know exactly what to expect from the trip. All of the women had participated in a pre-trip meeting but because this had been the first canoeing experience for most of them, they were worried about their abilities. Corina said "I was a little worried about the trip before I went. I didn't know how I was going to do with the canoeing." They were not concerned with doing better than the other women, but did not want to be the weakest link. After the staff demonstrated the skills and the participants had time to practice, based on my observation, the participants expressed greater comfort. The women started to do better with the canoe and

understand how to steer and paddle the boat. They began to relax and have casual conversations.

The interviews revealed that the participants did better than they anticipated and were proud of their physical and mental capabilities. Some of the participants stated that the opportunity to reflect upon the canoeing trip during the debriefing sessions while on the trip, as well as participate in post-trip interviews, further affirmed their newly discovered capabilities.

Although the majority of the women had been exposed in some way to the skills associated with outdoor activities at some point in their lives, each participant noted a change in skill that they developed during this experience. Veronica said, "I have never done three days worth of canoeing before and I don't think I ever learned anything at the time when I canoed before. I think that my navigating the canoe got a lot better." Corina said that,

I think my skills have improved a lot. Whereas before I think I would have been hesitant to go camping. My husband is always talking about a camping trip but he doesn't always organize a camping trip, so if we are going camping it will be me organizing it. We would have went and I would have been afraid that we would forget something crucial and now because I saw the trip leaders and how organized they were and what they took, and indeed how little you actually need to take to make a trip successful.

The women not only learned the basic skills of how to paddle a canoe but also attained the skills necessary to prepare for and pursue an outdoor

experience. Attaining these skills were part of their motivation to go on another camping/canoeing trip in their near future. Maxine noted that,

This experience was a live-and-learn kind of thing. I was just like, “just go as prepared as you can,” but I wasn’t prepared. I know to be more prepared for the next trip. Because it was my first time in a canoe I got the hang of how it works. I definitely have more skills in that. Nina expressed,

I learned new routes and I can go back and do it again. I learned where the hot springs are and I can go do that, even if I don’t canoe. Now I know where I can go, know where to go, and know that I can launch a canoe into Willow Beach.

The women developed a belief in their own outdoor capabilities not only from their direct experiences, but also their observations of the female outdoor leaders and other participants. When the women trip leaders or other women trip participants demonstrated the skills necessary for a successful outdoor experience, the remaining women participants were empowered. On the second day, there was one part of the river that was very difficult to surpass. The researcher was the second to last boat to make it through rapids. As Kimberly and Maxine were struggling to get through the current, the researcher heard Maxine say “if they all made it through the current than we can too” and they began to paddle as hard as they could and made their way out of the current.

Wendy has been camping many times before this experience and never learned how to use some of the equipment involved. She said that, “going on this trip and seeing the leaders doing it, it was like ‘oh, girls do the cooking and

light the stoves, use the gas and the fires and everything.’ Now I want to learn how to do that.”Francesca said,

Being with women that are experienced with this kind of stuff which are the leaders... it’s inspirational. These girls do it all the time and know how to do it. So that inner competency and competitiveness lights this fire in my butt like I can totally do this too. I think that women have so much power that if it were to be unleashed it really would change the world.

Among some of the women, prior to the trip there was a sense that they had limited physical ability. On the trip, the participants became more aware of their physical movements and could feel their strength and power. Hyla stated, “I could feel me getting stronger and better. I feel a lot stronger.”Veronica reported that,

Physically speaking it was a different pace for me. It made me feel good about what I can do physically. I think that was really- I don’t want to say empowering- I know I am a powerful person but it is just being powerful. So there was a huge advantage just for my physical self and my opinion about my physical self.

Some of the women experienced some physical reminders of the demands of the trip. Physical pain sometimes extended a couple of days beyond the trip and reminded the women of their accomplishments. Two days after the trip, Maxine was interviewed and she said,

When I wash my hands with hot water I can feel it is still tender where I have blisters. They never really surfaced but they are there and my knees are

banged up where I hit them against the canoe getting in or out. It definitely pushed me to limits that I didn't even know I had in me and it makes me feel absolutely awesome.

Through their outdoor challenges, some of the women obtained an enhanced general sense of confidence or empowerment. The challenges that nature creates are unpredictable and can push people to limits that they never thought possible. Conquering this challenge is empowering. Kimberly mentioned,

There wasn't anything that I felt like I couldn't do. Other people can do it; I can do it. I know it's so stupid because I can do the same things a guy can do and we proved it this trip. We can do it.

Corina said that,

I feel so powerful having done it; there is a lot more that I can master. I think that has to do subtly with the fact that we were all women. We were all women and if we were going to get this done we were going to have to do it all. We could get it all done; there was no question. It was just us and we could do it.

When an individual attains a physical and technical skill, they know that they can rely on themselves to accomplish the task. The skills acquired in an outdoor environment are easily transferred to tasks that are performed on a day-to-day basis (Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). When the women were physically able to push themselves, set up camp, and essentially survive the experience, it awakened their independence. Corina

expressed, "You have to do it yourself. During the weekend I thought a lot about self-reliance and how important it was to be self-reliant." Kimberly said,

I keep buying all these books on stuff to learn and know how to be more about myself and not so much on being so dependent and having other people depend on me, being more individual. But this trip was hands on. Being away from my husband and making my own decisions, it is really great. It really is.

Knowing that you have many options and learning how to deal with challenging situations was a big part of the attainment of self-reliance for the women. Corina said, "Coping with difficult situations also helped one to understand that there are alternatives for any problems and if you think outside of the box you will be able to solve the situation."

The women were open to new experiences and exploring their physicalities and shifting out of their comfort zones. Maxine said, "This was something where I was out of my comfort zone and I embraced it." This exploration of the abilities led to self-growth. Most of the time, the women were unaware of how strong they are both mentally and physically. Corina stated,

I feel like I really self expanded my horizons. As a result of this trip I feel a lot more confident. I could see it immediately. There was definitely a shift in consciousness of how I can deal with challenges and stress. I can do it. It's doable; other people have done it and I can do it too."

Only one participant reported that the trip was not out of the norm, and, therefore, she did not experience a significant elevation in confidence. She expressed,

There were some women that really accomplished things. They had done things that was totally out of there comfort zone. There wasn't anything like that... I didn't really stretch out of my comfort zone and I didn't do something I wouldn't normally do. I felt very comfortable with everything that we had done.

For the rest of the women, the experience was challenging enough to bring out their power, and, at the same time, enjoyable enough to create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere.

Enjoyment

All of the women expressed how much they had enjoyed the canoeing trip. People typically feel enjoyment when they experience stimulation, achievement, learning, and positive relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2008). All of these qualities were articulated in the interviews. It is important to note that the connection to one another and conquering challenges was part of their overall enjoyment of the entire experience. The women discussed also their enjoyment of nature as an important aspect of their experience.

Connecting to nature was a part of the benefits of participating in the canoeing trip. These moments of connection were an important part of the experience because they allowed the women to become one with nature.

Veronica stated that,

I think it's really good to remember that we are just a part of nature and we don't own it. When the wind hit, it wasn't just like it rained again today, you are actually part of what is going on. It was a good thing for me to have.

Francesca expressed that,

There was nothing more breathtaking than to look at the high cliffs on each side and realize how small you actually are. You are this tiny little boat looking up on these two cliffs. It puts me in my place. It's like standing on the ocean and looking and realizing how small you are. I have this one image of me just looking at the water and then just watching my paddle come up and the water come across and splashing and the dipping back in and then just the way it made my whole body feel, my breathing and the serenity of the entire environment. I really just felt so alive. The entire experience as a whole made me feel connected and alive.

Maxine expressed amazement about the entire experience. She thought nothing of the hot springs when she first was told about them in the pre-trip meeting. She said,

I thought hot springs, a hole in that ground that's bubbling and maybe hot and to see it and go through and see how many there were was amazing. There was one point where everybody had their head lights off and the canyons were twenty feet high and we are in the hot springs and I look up and all I see is black sky and bright stars. That was one of those moments of totally just being in nature and just loving it. That was a high point for me.

Through the connection to nature came the ability to just enjoy the present moment. This immersion in the immediate experience served as an escape for the women from their daily routines. According to Nina, it was easy to let go of her stressful fast paced life and slow down and experience the moments. She said,

The moment that most stood out for me was the first day when we were floating or pushing to go up the river. I think that is what most stands out because while it was hard, it wasn't too hard for me and I could really kind of sit back and enjoy what was going on around me. I didn't have to think about what was going on with school or at home and work. I could let all that go and enjoy the moment.

For some of the women, it was the combination of hard work balanced by the relaxation afforded by the outdoor environment that was meaningful. The spot that was chosen for the outdoor adventure worked out well for the participants because they had the opportunity to sit in natural hot springs after a long day of canoeing and hiking. Maxine noted that, "the reward that came after a challenge was amazing." Hyla said,

The first night when we got to the hot springs is what stands out the most for me. That was cool and really nice. We worked all day and then just got to sit there and just chill. It was really nice that we could just be in between a couple of rocks, mountains or whatever. Just chilling in the hot springs.

When women get together in a natural environment, many processes take place that awaken individuals. These women were more likely to be themselves

and reveal their true physical and mental potential. They were open to new experiences and willing to push themselves to limits that they would not have in a coed setting. The women let go of their expected roles and became more in touch with their authentic self, were accepted and supported by other women, and both challenged and renewed by the natural environment. As a result of this process and experience, the women became comfortable even out of their comfort zones. Everyone was comfortable enough to just lounge around like they were in their own element. Corina referred to what they had created as an outdoor living room.

All of the women reported that they are more motivated to participate in outdoor recreation as a result of their enjoyable experience during this trip and even more inclined to participate with all women again. When asked if the trip affected their intentions to participate in future canoeing and outdoor recreation, overwhelmingly the responses were affirmative. Corina said,

I am definitely going to do it again. I am not going to wait 19 years to do it again. I would like to do it again with all women if Outdoor Adventures does it again. I have tasted the blood and I want more.

Some women have lived in Las Vegas for many years, some over twenty years, and never viewed it as a location for outdoor recreation. This trip changed their perspective and now that they know that outdoor opportunities exist, they will use their outdoor resources more. According to Maxine, "it makes living in Las Vegas more tolerable."

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of eight women during a three-day canoeing trip, as well as the outcomes associated with the experiences. The observations, debriefings and in-depth interviews provided insight into the lived experiences of the trip participants. This study both affirmed and extended the literature on the impact of challenging outdoor leisure experiences on women's lives.

Disengagement from traditional roles

A leisure environment has the potential to offer freedom of choice and freedom from gender roles (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). Leisure can be a context for escape from everyday life and freedom from the forces of one's culture and physical environment (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). The women in this study reported that the roles among the women on the trip were fluid and equally reciprocated. This adventure was an opportunity for the women to escape their everyday lives and experience themselves outside of their normal roles and routines. The results of this study were consistent with previous research suggesting that participation in wilderness activities allows individuals to step out of their everyday lives, gain new perspectives on life, and escape the rules of society (Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000).

Participating in canoeing is physically challenging, which is incongruent with the activities deemed socially appropriate for women. Gender incongruent activities provided an opportunity for the women to resist norms and value that

society places on activities. Activities that reinforce gender roles, such as arts and crafts, sewing, and aerobics, will not provide an optimal environment for resistance. Society sometimes leads women to believe that they are physically powerless, so intense physical experience is an opportunity for them to show society their true physical capabilities (McDermott, 2000).

A leisure environment can play a part in deconstructing gender roles (Pohl et al., 2000). Learning the skills required in a wilderness and being able to successfully perform them contribute to self-sufficiency. In a co-ed environment, outdoor recreation has the potential to reinforce gender roles. This was an all female environment where the roles were equal and reciprocated. Some of the women suggested that in a co-ed trip, a man's desire to protect and a women's desire to nurture might become stronger in a wilderness environment.

This study found that the women had internalized their gender roles; they suggested that if men had participated they would have been likely to enact the feminine role. This all female environment allowed the women to negotiate the role constraint and let go of their personal barriers. The women suggested that in a co-ed environment, it would not have been necessary for the men to tell them that they were not capable of accomplishing physically challenging or leadership tasks. They had internalized the roles to such an extent that they would assume those gendered roles relatively automatically.

This all female environment fostered a sense of autonomy. When individuals feels that their autonomy is supported, they are more likely to freely pursue their

interests, and assess the personal relevance and importance of participating in socially valued activity (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Connection to Other Women

The women provided support for each other as they entered into challenges; everyone took care of each other. The women were able to enjoy their experiences and challenges as a result of their comfort with one another. The relationships that were created were extremely important to the women. This sense of relatedness is a basic human need (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

In this situation, an all female environment in the wilderness enhanced the connection that was built between the women. The physical challenges related to this wilderness experience aided in the connection between the women and led to better communication (Pohl et al., 2000). Physically active leisure is a space that is used for women to interact and communicate with family and peers (Brooks & Magnusson, 2007).

Brooks and Magnusson (2007) conducted a study of women's engagement in physically active leisure and found that many women do not participate in physically active leisure primarily to maintain physical health. Rather, the value of physically active leisure is enhancing emotional health and building positive social relationships (Brooks & Magnusson, 2007). Physical activity is an outlet for women because it allows them to build relationships outside of their gendered expectations and create supportive relationships based upon common interests outside of the norm. This gives women a sense of individuality (Brooks & Magnusson, 2007). In addition, for younger women, physical activity gives

them an opportunity to socialize with people with whom they would not have otherwise socialized, like older women (Brooks & Magnusson). Doing these activities together as women provides an environment where the women are not competitive and do not feel that they have to outperform their peers and friends. A noncompetitive environment is important in the decision to continue participation in physically active leisure, as it provides an opportunity to create valuable friendships. "Laughing with the girls is more valuable in physically active spaces" (Brooks & Magnusson, p. 71). In the current study, the social interaction that took place during this trip was very rewarding and significant for the women.

Research examining the relationship between social support and physical activity suggests that social support influences engagement in physical activity primarily through self-efficacy (Ayotte, Margrett, & Hicks-Patrick, 2010). This study found that the social support found among peers and the new relationships forged through engagement were important to how the women felt about participating in the activity. These existing and new relationships that were fostered and built had a major role in the women's efforts in accomplishing the tasks. Social support was directly related to higher levels of self-efficacy (Ayotte et al.) which, in turn, encouraged the women's engagement in challenging physical activity. Developing these relationships made it easier to negotiate barriers to participation in physical and technical activities (Ayotte et al.).

The current study also opened the women up to have more all-female experiences. The social aspect of a wilderness experience promotes greater comfort to try new things with others (Austin, Martin, Mittelstaedt, Schanning, & Ogle, 2009), and offers an opportunity for bonding to take place in a new environment (Davis, 2009).

Confidence and Empowerment

In the current study, the environment elevated their accomplishments. The element of self-control, both physically and mentally, empowered the women. They gained a sense of themselves and became aware of their physical and mental capabilities. As a result the participants were both individually and collectively empowered.

Individuals obtain a sense of competence from engaging in optimally challenging environments. They develop a healthy locus of control because of optimistic confidence and element of trust (Davis, 2008). An internal locus of control is important because it is a person's ability to positively reinforce themselves based on their own behavior (Laffery & Isenberg, 1983). Wanting to do an activity because it makes you feel good mentally and physically enhances competence. Many outdoor recreational activities are conducive to empowerment and self-efficacy because of their dependency on the acquisition of skill, physicality, and teamwork (McDermott, 2000).

Wilderness activities force you to be to rely on yourself and solve problems that arise in the wilderness. This forces one to become self-sufficient, which builds confidence (Pohl et al., 2000). Being able to solve problems in the

wilderness requires individuals to be creative and operate outside of their comfort zones. One woman in the current study suggested that working through the problems she faced during this canoe trip gave her confidence that she can successfully work out problems that arise in her everyday life.

Self-efficacy, in this situation, refers to the control that was exerted in the achievement of the skills required to be successful during this canoe trip. Self-efficacy is the strongest determinant in participation in physical activity (Ayotte, Margrett, & Hicks-Patrick, 2010; Bandura, 1977). The women had to adapt to environmental force, and it was through control over their own state of mind that they were able to successfully deal with the situation (Scherl, 1989). The women had instant feedback with regard to their environmental mastery. The wind was very challenging for the women on the last day. Confronting the environmental challenge increased their confidence in themselves.

When people feel like they can do things that they did not dare to do previously they experience fewer barriers and constraints and enhanced personal freedom in their lives (Scherl, 1989). Women can perform better in their everyday lives as a result of participating in outdoor recreation. For some, the connection with others and acquisition of new skills can last well beyond the immediate experience. As a result of stepping away from gender roles, elevation of development, and connecting with other women, the participants were able to enjoy their experience. They not only had a deep connection to other women but had a deep connection with nature. The deep connection with nature was a part of the benefits that they received.

Enjoyment

Nature provides an environment where the women felt that they could just let go and enjoy the moment. This element of letting go and enjoying the moment provided psychological benefits. According to Davis (2008), direct contact with nature leads to increased mental and physiological development.

Connection with nature is crucial to those that are participating in an adventure sport (Brymer & Gray, 2009). The women in this study were not competing against each other or trying to triumph over nature; they wanted to connect with it. Confronting the challenges presented by nature can contribute to the meaning and value in one's life, especially when successful. The relationship with nature is about the process. Engaging in outdoor recreation is a transformational experience that enhances states of being. Individuals engaged in nature's challenges are physically, emotionally, and, for some, spiritually pushed. (Brymer & Gray)

Researchers have reported that the disconnection of humans and the natural world has had negative implications for well-being (Brymer & Gray, 2009). Enhancing opportunities for connecting to the natural world is important. When asked if the women would participate in outdoor trips again, overwhelmingly the responses were yes. These findings suggest that women receive many benefits as a result of their participation in outdoor recreation. These women developed a strong intrinsic motivation to engage again in outdoor recreation experiences.

When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they engage in activities because of the satisfactions inherent in the activity. They are acting with a sense

of self-determination. They are not motivated by the coercion of others or the internalized “shoulds” or “oughts” of their lives. Intrinsic motivation is doing an activity because it provides feelings of accomplishment, an opportunity to learn, or is stimulating; it is enjoyable (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The women in this study experienced all of the elements of intrinsic motivation.

According to Deci and Ryan (2008), people are intrinsically motivated to participate in activities through which their three basic needs are satisfied. First, one needs to feel autonomous. This all female experience allowed the women to be their authentic selves and explore themselves outside of their everyday life. Secondly, they need to have a positive perception of competence. Almost universally, the women experienced competence and empowerment. Thirdly, people have a need for relationships. The women connected to each other and the leaders in a deep way. People tend to gravitate towards what they need. This canoe trip addressed those basic needs.

Finally, research indicates that individuals will go to great lengths to pursue activities through which they experience flow. Flow results in a deep sense of enjoyment that fosters continuation of the engagement (Pruitt & Anshel, 2010). Flow occurs when an activity presents challenges that match or stretch the capabilities of the individual. In flow individuals are completely absorbed into the activity and emerging of awareness and action takes place (Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). The women in this study were consciously optimally challenged. Outdoor Recreation is a location for intrinsic motivation, self-determination, and flow to take place. These elements provide an optimally enjoyable experience.

Implications for Practice

It is quite evident through the research that women receive a plethora of benefits by participating in outdoor recreation. The results of this study have implications for wilderness and recreation programmers. Programmers should provide activities that encourage suspending or resisting gender roles, facilitate a deep connection to others (women), enhance competence and empowerment, and facilitate enjoyment. The following recommendations for practice are offered.

Foster Disengagement from Traditional Roles

Provide more all-women outdoor experiences to aid the women in stepping away from gender roles. Foster a supportive environment through which women can be autonomous and encourage them to depend on and be themselves. All-women programs offer decreased gender role pressures and have beneficial consequences for women's perception of abilities. Recognize and be sensitive to the gender roles that participants come in with and be willing to challenge those roles.

Foster Connection to Other Women

2.) Create an open environment for the women to be able to build relationships with one another. An open environment is one in which the women can feel comfortable talking to one another. Encourage the interactions between the women and take part in those interactions. Relationships with the leaders are just as important as the relationships that the women create with one another.

3.) Provide opportunities for women to debrief their experiences throughout the outdoor adventure, as well as at the culmination of the program. The debriefing sessions allow the women to relive their experiences. They are able to openly communicate about how they felt and what they could do to make the next day better. In addition, it allows them to feel a deeper sense of connection with others in the group.

Foster Competence

4.) Provide optimal physical challenges and the attainment of technical skills for women. The more women are involved in physical activity, the more they will become aware of their bodies and the better they feel about their physical ability.

5.) Provide programs that will increase self-efficacy for women. Not only does self-efficacy in outdoor recreation help an individual to feel confident around other people but also feel confident that they can independently carry out skills when they are on their own. The four principles of self-efficacy are observing others successfully perform an activity, obtaining verbal feedback and persuasion from peers or family, positive physiological experiences, and past success in similar activities. Build self-efficacy early on in the activity.

Foster Enjoyment

6.) Understand the connection between humans and the natural environment and encourage that connection. The instructors should be educated on the surrounding environment and share the information with the participants. In

addition, allow for time for the participants to enjoy the natural space on their own.

7.) Follow up with the participants after the trip has ended. Reliving their entire experience fosters a higher sense of enjoyment. People look for others with whom to share their experience who will understand it. It gives participants an opportunity to feel connected again after their experience.

Limitations of This Study

Although this study contributes to body of literature in the area of women's leisure, there are limitations. This study consists of women who are affiliated with the University in some way; it was a fairly well-educated group of women. In addition, all of the women live in Las Vegas.

This study only focuses on the women's experiences directly after their canoe experience. Outdoor adventure experience tends to have a long lasting impact.

Implications for Future Research

This study focuses on the outcomes associated with outdoor recreation in an all-female outdoor environment. In this environment, women are more likely to feel empowered and disengage from traditional roles. Some of the women in this study were more inclined to participate in this adventure because it was an all-female environment. Other women reported that when they first signed up they would have participated in the co-ed trip if one were available, because their husbands or boyfriends would be able to participate with them. Other

studies should focus on the outcomes and processes associated in a co-ed environment and note the differences.

Other studies should be done on the internalization of gender roles and how it affects women's motivation to participate in outdoor recreation. Although women's participation in outdoor recreation has been increasing, women still experience constraints. Further studies should investigate women's perceptions of outdoor recreation, their levels of involvement, and the impact of involvement on their internalization or resistance to gender roles.

Other studies should focus on the elements of flow and self-determination in outdoor recreational activities. Research should focus on the degree to which autonomy, relatedness, and competence needs are met through outdoor recreation and whether there are any gender differences in this need satisfaction.

Studies should be done on the outdoor adventure experiences of diverse groups of women. Not every woman is going to enjoy being out in nature or has any internal desire to do so. Further research should focus on the benefits of women from diverse backgrounds and the types of activities that generate benefits.

APPENDIX I
E-MAIL SCRIPT

Hello fellow canoeist,

My name is Joanna Libby. I am a graduate student in the Recreation and Sport Management program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Tasha Purcell (program coordinator of Outdoor Adventures) mentioned to you that I would be contacting you to ask if you would be willing to participate in my study of women's experiences in an outdoor environment. The study is being conducted as my thesis project. I will be participating in this canoe trip as a Student Investigator.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: 1.) Participate in short (20 minutes) informal group interviews at the conclusion of each day's activities. The group interviews will focus on your experiences each day and how you felt about them. 2.) Participate in an in-depth interview of one hour to one and a half hours duration within two weeks of the trip's conclusion. The interview will take place at the location of your choice. This in-depth, post- trip interview will focus on the most meaningful aspects of your canoe trip and the outcomes of involvement in the experience. 3.) Consent to unobtrusive field observation conducted during the duration of the trip. Finally, if you are interested, you will be given the opportunity to review transcripts of the group interviews and your individual interview and provide feedback regarding their accuracy to me at the conclusion of the study. This study will take up approximately two hours of your time (i.e. short daily group interviews, in-depth post-trip interview).

The results of this study may contribute to the understanding of women's experiences when engaged in wilderness outdoor recreation and the outcomes associated with that involvement. Additionally, the results may be used to improve UNLV Outdoor Adventures trips.

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary. All information gathered through this study will be kept confidential. If you do not wish to participate in this study, your participation in the canoe trip is still enthusiastically welcomed. If you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university or the

Outdoor Adventures program. Participation in the study is not a condition of your involvement in the canoe trip, and you are under no obligation to participate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you are willing to participate in the study or have any questions or concerns about the study, you may e-mail me or contact Cynthia Carruthers, Ph.D. at 702-895-4192, Cynthia.carruthers@unlv.edu.

Thanks again,

Joanna Libby

jl_libby@yahoo.com

(801) 815-7282

APPENDIX II
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First day:

1. What were your experiences like today?

Based on the responses, prompts may follow:

- a. What was it like to canoe up the river for the first time?
 - i. If difficult, what kept you going?
- b. What were the positives of the day?
- c. Were there any negatives?

Second day:

1. What were your experiences like today?

Based on the responses, prompts may follow:

- a. What was it like to canoe up and down the river today?
 - a. If difficult, what kept you going?
- b. What was it like for you on the hike today?
 - a. If difficult, what kept you going?
- c. What were the positives of the day?
- d. Were there any negatives?

Third day:

1. What were your experiences like today?

Based on the responses, prompts may follow?

- a. What was it like to canoe down the river today?
 - a. If difficult, what kept you going?
- b. What were the positives of the day?
- c. Were there any negatives?

APPENDIX III

IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When you think about your canoe trip, what most stands out for you?
2. As you remember your trip, what thoughts and feelings come to mind?
3. What were your most significant experiences of the trip?
4. What were your most significant interactions with leaders/participants you had on the trip?
5. When you think about your canoe trip, how did it benefit you?
6. Were there any things that negatively impacted your experience?
7. How did you feel about your ability to participate in canoeing, camping, and hiking before the trip? How did you do in comparison to how you thought you would do?
8. How would you describe your canoeing, camping, and hiking skills now?
9. How did you feel about participating in this activity with women only (for the first time)? Do you feel like it would have been different in a mixed-gender setting? If so, how would it be different?
10. Would you participate in canoeing or other outdoor activities in the future? Why?
11. Do you think that you or your life changed in any way as a result of the canoe trip? If so, how?
12. How much have you participated in outdoor recreation prior to the Outdoor Adventures canoe trip?

Demographics

13. What is your age?
14. What is your marital status?
15. Do you have any children? Ages?
16. How would you describe your ethnicity or race?
17. What is your highest grade of education?

APPENDIX IV

IRB APPROVAL



**Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review
Approval Notice**

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: March 27, 2009
TO: Dr. Cynthia Carruthers, Recreation and Sport Management
FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co -Chair

Protocol Title: Outcomes Associated with a UNLV Outdoor Adventures' Women's Wilderness Canoe Trip
Protocol #: 0903-3055

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is March 19, 2010. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:

Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond March 19, 2010, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** 60 days before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

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