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Girls in the Woods: An Exploration of the Impact of a Wilderness Program on Adolescent Girls' Constructions of Femininity

Anja Whittington

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**GIRLS IN THE WOODS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT
OF A WILDERNESS PROGRAM ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS'
CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMININITY**

By

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B.S. University of New Hampshire, 1997

M.Ed. University of Maine, 2001

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

(Individualized in Girls' and Adolescent Development)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

May, 2005

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Phyllis Brazee

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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Historically, the wilderness and outdoor recreational activities have been portrayed as a masculine domain. In spite of this, women's participation in wilderness programs has increased, illustrating what research has proven—that women reap positive mental, physical, and spiritual outcomes from participating in outdoor experiences. Research on the benefits for female participants focuses primarily on women's experiences; however, little research investigates the outcomes of girls' participation. More specifically, the literature neglects the study of how participation in outdoor wilderness programs challenges conventional notions of femininity.

The goal of this study was to 1) add girls' voices to the research on the outcomes of participating in an all-female program, 2) expand the research on girls' development, 3) examine how participation in a wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls, and, 4) expand the research on poor and working-class girls' constructions of femininity through the lens of their participation in an outdoor recreational program.

Feminist and qualitative research methods were used to examine how participation in an all-female wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls. Interviews, a focus group, public presentation, parent surveys, journal entries, applications, and trip reports were used to examine the ways in which girls, who participated in an outdoor experience, spoke about personal change and growth and how the experience challenged their constructions of femininity.

The results of this study indicate that girls who participated in an extensive wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity in diverse ways. This includes: 1) perseverance, strength, and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls' abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls. This study reveals the importance of including girls' voices in the examination of wilderness programs and offers a clearer understanding of how participation in an outdoor program challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....ii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGING FEMININITY IN THE WILDERNESS.....1

 Statement of the Problem.....1

 Rationale.....3

 The Study.....3

 Description of the Program.....6

 Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls.....7

 The Setting: Life on the River.....10

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: WILDERNESS PROGRAMS, ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND FEMININITY.....14

 Outdoor Recreation/Wilderness Programs.....14

 Rationale for All-Female Wilderness Programs.....14

 Constraints to Girls’ Participation.....17

 Female-Friendly Models.....18

 Application to the Present Study.....21

 Theories of Girls’ Development.....23

 Gender Identity Development.....23

 Gender Socialization.....27

 Femininity: Not the Same for All Girls.....30

 Influence on Nontraditional Occupations.....33

 Leadership.....36

Application to the Present Study.....	37
Literature Review Summary.....	38
3. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	39
Research Goal and Questions.....	39
Guiding Research Questions.....	39
Participants.....	40
Research Methodology.....	41
Reflexivity.....	42
Researcher as Instrument.....	43
My Personal Struggle with Conventional Notions of Femininity.....	43
Feminist Research.....	47
Data Collection.....	51
Data Analysis.....	54
Trustworthiness.....	57
Research Design Summary.....	58
4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: SHARED THEMES.....	60
Background Themes.....	61
Decision to Participate in the Canoe Expedition.....	61
The Ideal Woman.....	64
Common Themes.....	67
Perseverance, Strength and Determination.....	69
Challenging Assumptions of Girls' Abilities.....	72
Elevated Self-Esteem and Feelings of Accomplishment and Pride.....	74

Questioning Ideal Images of Beauty.....	75
Increased Ability to Speak Out (Voice) and Leadership Skills.....	78
Building Significant Relationships with Other Girls.....	80
Summary.....	84
5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: NEGOTIATING FEMININITY IN THE WILDERNESS AND “REAL WORLD”	87
Challenging Femininity through Voice, Leadership, Confidence & Strength.....	88
Description of Cody.....	88
Increased Ability to Speak Out (Voice), Elevated Self-Esteem and Confidence.....	91
Leadership.....	92
Summary.....	96
Challenging Femininity in Nontraditional Roles.....	97
Description of Mazie.....	97
Nontraditional Career Goals.....	100
Understanding of Self and Working-class Values.....	103
Summary.....	106
Complexity of Challenging Conventional Femininity.....	108
Description of June.....	108
Building Relationships with Other Girls.....	110
Struggling with Images of Beauty.....	113
Summary.....	116
Summary of Findings.....	118

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	119
Summary of Research Design.....	119
Summary of Findings.....	120
Limitations.....	123
Future Research.....	125
Implications of the Study.....	128
REFERENCES.....	138
APPENDICES	
Appendix A Individual Interview Guide: Interview #1.....	148
Appendix B Guiding Questions for Focus Group.....	149
Appendix C Sample of Parent Survey Questions.....	150
Appendix D Individual Interview Guide: Interview #2.....	151
Appendix E Transcription Summary Form.....	153
Appendix F Interview Summary Form.....	154
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.....	155

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

CHALLENGING FEMININITY IN THE WILDERNESS

Statement of the Problem

Historically a masculine domain, the wilderness trip is painted by the message bearers of the media and tradition as a scary, uncomfortable, and intimidating event. The moment she steps into the woods, her femininity is in question. Faced with these odds, it is a great social risk for women to be involved in outdoor programs. (Warren, 1985, p. 11)

Twenty years ago Warren spoke of the woods as challenging women's femininity. Her decision to step outdoors, get dirty, take risks, and be physical, challenged conventional notions of femininity. Outdoor and adventure activities have been portrayed by the popular media as a "masculine sphere" (Humberstone, 1990, p. 200). By participating in activities considered masculine, a woman puts herself at social risk. She may "face social sanctions such as being labeled weird, deviant or lesbian" (Loeffler, 1997, p.119). Currently, girls and women are still at odds with this dilemma. Social expectations of how a girl should behave influence girls' participation in the outdoors. A woman's decision to "step outdoors" challenges notions of femininity (Loeffler, 1997; Warren, 1985).

Understanding what it means to be female through the lens of girls participation in wilderness settings may help researchers and educators explore how all-female programs offer a comforting respite from the social constraints of the ideal female image.

Understanding how these programs challenge conventional notions of femininity¹ for adolescent girls and how they negotiate these understandings upon returning home offers new insights to the growing body of research on the benefits of all-female wilderness programs.

Despite extensive research supporting the benefits and rationale of participating in all-women's outdoor programs (Arnold, 1994; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Henderson, 1994, 1996a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Henderson & Grant, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Diana, Seimens & Priest, 1997; McClintock, 1996; McDermott, 2004; Mitten, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000; Warren, 1996) very little research has been conducted on girls. Research on women indicates that participating in all-female outdoor programs increases self-esteem, self-respect and self-integrity and may help women rid themselves of self and societally imposed limitations (Bialescki & Henderson, 1993).

An outcome of this research has been the development of a variety of programs designed specifically for girls and women. One such program, the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls through the Chewonki Foundation, offers an all-female program designed for adolescent girls from Maine and serves girls from poor and working-class families. This program offered an avenue in which to analyze girls' voices in an outdoor recreational program and was used to examine how the girls challenged conventional notions of femininity through their experience, resulting in the following research study.

¹ For the purpose of this study the term 'challenge femininity' refers to the ways in which the girls challenge dominant social constructs of femininity and gender stereotypes.

Rationale

During the canoe expedition, the girls discovered a variety of attributes about themselves, working in a group and the natural world around them. When we made our last portage from the St. John River and began the six-hour drive to Chewonki, the girls said good-bye to life in the woods, and began the transition back to civilization. As I said good-bye to these young women, I pondered what they would do when they got home. I began to question how this experience was unique to each individual and in what ways it was similar. I wondered what stories they would tell of their experience. What skills did they gain and what skills would they use in the real world? I knew the stories that unfolded at the campsite, and paddling or sitting by the waters' edge showed evidence that in many ways the experience challenged their constructions of femininity. It is these questions that prompted me to embark on an exploration of how their experience challenged conventional notions of femininity.

The Study

My goal in this study was to: 1) add girls' voices to the research on the outcomes of participating in all-female outdoor programs, 2) expand the research on girls' development, 3) examine if and how participation in a wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls, and, 4) expand the research on poor and working-class girls' constructions of femininity through the lens of their participation in an outdoor recreational program. By listening to and examining the voices of young women, I was able to uncover the ways in which the girls spoke about personal change and growth from their experiences as well as how the program challenged their constructions of femininity. Furthermore, I was able to explore the ways

in which the girls adhered to, maintained or negotiated these changes in their everyday life.

I brought to this research my experience as a wilderness guide and environmental educator. Working with a variety of mixed gender, single-sex, urban, rural, multiracial and fairly homogenous groups, I saw many differences in the way group members interacted and the outcomes of their participation. The most significant difference I observed was that of single-sex experiences for males and females. This difference prompted an effort to offer single-sex wilderness experiences and began my interest in documenting how an all-female program for adolescent girls challenged conventional notions of femininity.

It is through this lens that I examined both the commonality and uniqueness of the girls' experiences, collectively and individually. Through the girls' voices, I examined the multifaceted structures that define their understanding of femininity and the complex ways that girls' adhere to, complicate, or contradict social and conventional constructs of femininity. Furthermore, I examined the ways in which participating in the canoe expedition shaped, challenged, redefined, complicated, contradicted, and challenged their construction of femininity.

The research design employed feminist and qualitative research methods and methodology to examine how participating in an all-female wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls. Interviews, focus groups, journal entries, and parent surveys were utilized to examine the ways in which girls, who participated in this outdoor experience, spoke about personal change and growth and how the experience challenged their constructions of femininity.

Subjects in this study were nine girls, ages 13 to 18, who participated in the 2003 Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls. The girls in this study came primarily from poor and working-class families and live in a variety of locations throughout Maine; a majority of the girls reside in rural communities. The girls were primarily white, with only one girl a minority. According to the U.S. Census Bureau for 2000, 96.9% of the population in Maine is white, while 3.1% are minority, suggesting that the small number of minority participants in this study is representative of Maine demographics. The family structure of the girls is diverse as some live in two-parent homes, others share time between divorced parents and some live with other family members; one girl lives with an aunt and another with a sister.

I also include myself as a participant in the research. As the researcher, I have a close, personal connection with this investigation since I was an instructor for the program during the year this study was conducted. I worked with the girls during their experience and then sought to explain the outcomes of their participation, resulting in the compilation of this research project.

In order to examine how girls' participation in an extensive wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity the following research questions guided this study:

- In what ways did participating in an all-girls' wilderness program challenge conventional notions of femininity?
 - How did the girls describe the ways in which this program challenged femininity, both collectively and individually?
- What impacts did participating have on the girls' everyday lives?

- In what ways were their understandings transferred or used in everyday life?
- In what ways did they negotiate these understandings after the program concluded?
- How might these understandings or changes influence their long-term decision making—life choices, ambitions, and goals?

The results of this study indicate that girls who participated in an extensive wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity in diverse ways. This includes: 1) perseverance, strength and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls' abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls. This study highlights the importance of including girls' voices in examining wilderness programs and offers a clearer understanding of how participating in outdoor programs challenged conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls.

Description of the Program

The Chewonki Foundation is a non-profit educational institution offering a variety of programs. The main programs are a summer camp, an academic semester for high school juniors, a variety of educational programs—for instance traveling natural history programs, vacation camps and day and overnight programs for schools, businesses, and other organizations—and wilderness excursions for adults, families, and individuals. The goal of the Chewonki Foundation is to help people grow individually and within the

community by providing educational experiences that foster an understanding and appreciation of the natural world (Chewonki, 2004).

Chewonki serves people of all ages throughout the year. The living is simple and the communities are small. Chewonki's programs occur in indoor and outdoor classrooms, the woods and waters of Maine and beyond, and on Chewonki's 400-acre campus. Programs offer participants the opportunity to explore the relationships existing between people and their world, to work hard in activities challenging them physically and intellectually, and to build self-confidence and a strong sense of community (Chewonki, 2004). The Chewonki Foundation originated as a boys' summer camp in 1917 and now offers a variety of programs for girls.

Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls

For the past three years, the Chewonki Foundation has offered a program titled the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls. This program is a three-week summer wilderness expedition supported by a year-long Mentoring Project. The program aims to increase girls' self-confidence and leadership skills while deepening their knowledge of Maine's cultural history and ecology (George, 2002). Up to ten girls, ages 14 to 17², make their own wooden canoe paddles and explore over 150 miles of the Penobscot River and Allagash Wilderness Waterway. While on the expedition, women foresters, biologists, and historians meet with the group to talk about the ever-changing North Woods region. Each girl is paired with a mentor from her home community and the two meet regularly for the year following the trip. Additional follow-up experiences for the alumnae include a final celebration, reunion, and public slide show presentation (George, 2002).

² Exceptions are made for participants who are younger or older as approved by the Program Director. On the 2003 expedition one girl was 13 and two girls were 18.

Each year the expedition community is made up of a diverse cross-section of Maine girls—both rural and urban, Caucasian, and Native American (also other ethnic origins), experienced campers and novices (George, 2002). The primary criterion for acceptance is the applicant's personal desire to participate fully in the program and to challenge herself physically, intellectually, and socially. The long-term vision of the program is to strengthen Maine families and communities by inspiring and supporting adolescent girls in becoming self-confident and caring women, empowered citizens, and curious life-long learners (George, 2002).

The objectives of this program are: 1) to help Maine's adolescent girls discover their inborn capacities for courage, compassion, insight, and perseverance, 2) to provide opportunities for girls to develop leadership skills, establish meaningful relationships with peers and adult mentors, and contemplate their dreams, 3) to deepen girls' "sense of place" and further their environmental knowledge of the North Woods, 4) to involve communities and families in supporting girls as they transition into womanhood, and, 5) to have fun (George, 2004).

The Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls is a progression of experiences designed to meet these objectives. The experience begins in April, when 10 girls and two trip leaders gather at Chewonki's campus in Wiscasset to form their community and to prepare for the expedition. During the weekend the girls develop relationships with their peers, make white ash planks into traditional canoe paddles, and spend time with their mentors.

Canoeing and camping skills are taught intensively during the first few days of the expedition and the girls gradually acquire more responsibility for navigation, group safety, and cooking. During the expedition the girls meet women who live in the North

Woods who share their stories and bring the history of the North Woods to life. By the last week the girls are expected to possess the skills to travel safely and make difficult decisions with minimal input from the instructors (George, 2004).

During the expedition the girls participate in a variety of activities that offer them opportunities for self-discovery, promote self-confidence, and develop leadership skills. The various roles of cook, navigator, woodchopper, and “Queen” for the day are all part of this process. Being chosen Queen is significant because it allows each girl to take charge and make decisions for the group. This event offers each girl the opportunity to gain leadership skills and to practice facilitating the group.

Another critical activity is a day-long solo. The purpose of the solo is to provide the girls with personal space in the woods for 12 hours. The girls spend this time alone in a designated spot in the woods where they do not have direct contact with other group members. If needed, they can call for help by blowing their whistles to alert others. During this time, they have the opportunity to read, sleep, contemplate their accomplishments, and enjoy their natural surroundings. The main goal is to offer them the time and personal space for deep contemplation.

The Mentoring Project includes identifying, training, and supporting volunteer mentors who live near the girls. The chosen mentors make a commitment to meet with their “little sisters” several times before the expedition begins and every two weeks for the following school year (George, 2002). During the training, the mentors learn more about the program objectives and engage in self-reflective exercises to explore their role in beginning and sustaining safe, authentic relationships (George, 2002). Although conversations between mentor and girl are confidential, each mentor maintains regular

communication with one of the two Resource Counselors (assigned according to geographic region), asking for guidance when needed. In the spring, the formal mentor/mentee relationships are carefully ended and the mentors and girls decide how they want to keep in touch as friends (George, 2004).

The Setting: Life on the River

I feel an account of the canoe expedition is essential in offering the reader some knowledge of the background in which it took place. It is my goal to provide the reader a glimpse into the girls' 23-day excursion into the wilderness, the most significant component of the program. In the account, I use my personal reflections from my journal and those of the girls as documented in the daily group journal which was kept by the whole group. Each day a girl was assigned the job of writing her thoughts and feelings about the day and their interactions with other group members. It also held a list of wildlife sightings, memorable quotes, and personal jokes. While my brief introduction does not fully describe all that they experienced, it does provide a general sense of what life on the river was like, and the many factors that influenced the girls' experience.

Describing a typical day on the river is challenging. Lightning, wildlife, girls' attitudes, sickness, high winds, and many other factors influence how the day unfolds. As one girl said, "it was an adventure. You never knew what you were gonna wake up to." This statement held true as each day provided us with an array of obstacles, a need to react quickly and to build connections with one another to achieve our group and personal goals. The most influential factor affecting our experience was weather.

At least three evenings we sat in our tents eating a dinner of corn chips and carrots due to severe lightning storms. At other times, we pulled off the river to go into a

lightning drill³ only to have the lightning pass over the mountains beyond us.

Additionally, we cooked in the rain, slept in the cold, and fought high winds on open waters. Positive aspects of the rain were keeping the black flies and mosquitoes away, the beautiful vistas of rain clouds and rainbows, and the raw connection with the natural world.

Despite the weather, we forged forward with our itinerary and spent the days paddling and getting to our next site. Some days this required four miles of paddling, others 20. At times we had the added challenge of portaging⁴ or paddling upstream. The daily journal provided insights to portaging. In this case one of the girls wrote the following entry,

After lunch we got a lesson on portaging and then set off with our five canoes. When we got to the gate we had a brief snack and then proceeded to carry three canoes and paddles and life vests with our dry bags to the campsite. After this first trip some of us went back for a second that night. Some of the gear and the other three canoes got left at the gate or along the trail. We then settled in for the night with a supper of carrots and cheese. The soup we were planning on eating went sour and many of us were disappointed. Some of us went to sleep in our cozy tents then, after a hard day of canoeing and portaging.

Although this day was particularly challenging for the girls, their recounting of it in the journal makes the hardships seem insignificant. My recollection of that grueling day was

³ In this particular situation, a lightning drill consisted of pulling to shore and securing the canoes. We then had to place ourselves strategically in the forest, away from ground roots, tall trees and at least 25' apart. We used lifejackets as ground insulators and sat in a crouched position to protect ourselves from a possible strike.

⁴ Portaging is the process of carrying all gear and canoes over land. In this particular case we had a 2.3 mile portage on logging roads and trails from Round Pond to Allagash Lake.

starting at 5 a.m. and ending at 10 p.m., when we entered our tents for another lightning drill. Supper, which we had cooked the night before, had spoiled and due to lack of time and energy we opted for quick foods. It was 8 p.m. when we arrived at our campsite and the Fourth of July was celebrated with nature's fireworks, lightning.

Other days were less tiresome and offered time for reflection, journal writing, rest and relaxation. One entry stated,

Today was a great day! We paddled only a little and got to camp early. We had a lot of free time and napping time. I napped for awhile but then had a 10 or 15 [minute] writing time that was prompted. We had an awesome dinner and now we are getting no-bake cookies. That's awesome. The time that has been spent with my new family/friends has been wonderful. I love it.

Other days we—myself and coworker—surprised the girls by cooking a gourmet breakfast or preparing some sort of treat. Sometimes, we opted to wake them up in a more comical manner. One entry stated,

This morning we were all awoken by the penny whistle but if that was not good enough the bright and early dip in the ice cold water did it. We had to go over nose and toes⁵ while in the rapids and we washed up because everyone's smell was driving us all sooo crazy.

The days also provided opportunities for viewing wildlife. The girls tried to tally their encounters with wildlife and the results (miscalculated, I think it was higher) were:

⁵ In this entry, nose and toes refers to the process of learning how to swim down rapids. When in rapids you swim on your back with your feet up out of the water. The goal is to prevent foot entrapment which occurs when one of your legs—particularly a toe or foot gets trapped under a rock. This position can be life-threatening as the current may push your head under water while your leg is trapped.

26 moose, 20 deer, 16 eagles, 11 snowshoe hare, 1 coyote, 30 loons, and 17 Canadian geese. In the daily journal, one girl recalls her encounters with moose,

As we paddled back toward the dam, we came upon an interesting sight. We saw a moose swimming in the lake. As we approached, it scrambled out of the water. We continued from that spot after a moment of reflection.

One memorable moment was watching a damselfly hatch from its nymph stage to its adult stage, its final stage of metamorphosis. At night in our tents, we listened to loons' call and the buzz of insects.

The final reflection in the group journal occurred three days before we returned to Chewonki. The entry noted,

Today we pulled [the canoes] a lot because the river was low. We as a group did great. We paddled hard when we could and pulled hard the rest. We also portaged today. We carried all our stuff a quarter of a mile. We have a lot of gear but as soon as we kicked into gear and made a few trips everything worked out and we even had enough time to swim at the falls. They were awesome! There was also lots of foam so we could have foam fights. Overall, we had a great day and I know I am going to miss everything and everyone. Good luck to the [last] 21 miles to come.

After this entry, the group paddled the final 21 miles in one day and we spent the remainder of our time on an organic farm on the St. John River, eating, relaxing, and reflecting on our experience.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:

WILDERNESS PROGRAMS, ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND FEMININITY

The review of the literature focused on research in two disciplines: outdoor recreation and girls' development in order to illustrate the complexities and intersections between the two. Research on girls' experiences in the outdoors is limited so I have drawn on studies conducted with women. My assumption is that the rationale and constraints affecting women's participation are similar to girls. Furthermore, I have drawn on research in leisure studies because of their feminist methods and their attempts at developing female-friendly wilderness programs. This research examined the potential outcomes for girls who participate in programs designed specifically for females.

The review of the literature on girls' development included research on gender identity development, gender socialization, and femininity to illustrate the multiple layers and complexities affecting girls' development. My review of this literature is not exhaustive; rather, I provide a broad overview of the topics directly related to this study.⁶

Outdoor Recreation/Wilderness Programs

Rationale for All-Female Wilderness Programs

Recently a female friend of mine participated in a coed backpacking trip in which a male member of the group timed how long it took each participant to complete the required hike of the day and spoke openly about how the progress of the group was impeded by the female participants. This story illustrates the potential disadvantages and negative aspects of coed groups. A misconception of the great outdoors is that in the

⁶ Researching the multiple factors that influence girls' development is extensive and beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, I have focused on leadership, voice, images of beauty, power, and nontraditional occupations as they are directly related to my study.

wilderness inequalities are removed and social stereotypes are broken. Warren (1985) speaks of the myth of egalitarianism in the outdoors. In coed groups she suggests, “the wilderness is not a natural place to break stereotypes” (p. 11) and it serves as a “constant, insidious reminder to women that their intrinsic worth on the course is in doubt” (p. 11). This is magnified by women’s comparative lack of physical strength and their inability to carry as much gear as men. A subtle message is that each individual must carry his or her weight and an equal portion of the groups’ weight. Because women generally have less carrying capacity than men, the message prevails that women are not as strong. “Since research has demonstrated that women have proportionately less absolute strength than men, wilderness course components that favor strength discriminate against women” (Warren, 1985, p. 11).

Stereotypical roles are often adhered to in coed groups. For example, women often do the cooking and men gather wood and tend the fire. The division of labor predetermined at home, often emerges in the woods. While leaders may teach members new skills and provide ample opportunities to do various tasks, “when it’s pouring rain, the group has been hiking all day, and it’s growing dark, the most expedient way to set up camp is for people to do tasks that are comfortable and familiar to them” (Warren, 1985, p. 11). In times of discomfort or when efficiency is required, participants slip into their assigned gender roles. To reduce compliance with gender stereotypes and to provide women with a place psychologically, socially, and spiritually in which to resist adherence to gender roles, a growing support and demand for all women’s programs in the outdoors has occurred.

An important reason for women to participate in all-female groups is the opportunity to step out of gender role stereotypes. Women report increased self-esteem, self-respect and self-integrity by participating in outdoor recreational programs (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Perry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997). Women have the opportunity to try new skills, “get dirty”, challenge themselves physically and emotionally and accomplish things previously believed unattainable. Participants become aware they have been socialized to consider certain behaviors as appropriate or not appropriate based on their gender and they desire the opportunity to literally step outside and challenge those roles.

Outdoor experiences “can become a source of personal fulfillment and tranquility for women and offer opportunities to increase self-esteem, self-respect and self-integrity” (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993, p. 36). A sense of gender role empowerment may arise from participating in outdoor experiences. Socialized to be less capable, less physically skilled and poorer in decision making than males, professionals believe that outdoor experiences may be one of the best ways to counter this view (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993).

Professionals and participants describe the importance of defining and challenging gender roles in the outdoors. They expand their self-images by going “past self-and-society-imposed ideas of what is possible, both as individuals and as women” (Mitten, 1992, p. 57). Women report that recreating in the outdoors allows them to shed these beliefs and provides opportunities for increased self-esteem and empowerment.

“Self-esteem is defined as a core belief by a person that she is okay, has a right to take up space, and is lovable” (Mitten, 1992, p. 57). This right for women to take up

space is discouraged in society, yet often regained through experiences in the outdoors. Self-esteem develops through personal growth. In the outdoors personal growth is obtained through goal setting, meeting challenges, and feelings of accomplishment. Goal setting promotes self-esteem when people feel accepted for who they are and acceptance is based on achievement rather than the product (Mitten, 1992). During a recreational program, women can increase their self-esteem but the extent of this development is dependent upon each individual. Mitten (1992) suggests “self-esteem develops when aspects of life are present such as support, love and acceptance, work and accomplishment; play and fun; and time for reflection and introspection” (p. 57). When these opportunities exist, one can gain self-esteem.

Constraints to Girls' Participation

Several research studies (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Culp, 1998; Henderson, 1991, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986, 1991; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, Freysinger, 1996; Henderson, Stalnaker & Taylor, 1988; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Little, 2002; Shaw, 1994, 1999) have been conducted to explore the limiting factors (constraints) for women and girls who participate in outdoor recreational programs and leisure studies. Research suggests that there are many constraints that limit women's participation in outdoor recreation. For women, a lack of time and power, the responsibility of taking care of others, and lack of financial resources are a few of the many constraints based on gender. “A constraint refers to any relative and/or relevant factor that mitigates between a possible activity and one's opportunity for involvement in that experience” (Henderson, 1991, p. 366). One study conducted by Culp (1998) looked specifically at constraints for adolescent girls. Although constraints are fairly consistent

for women and girls, girls expressed more extensively the impact of peer influence. Other major constraints identified for adolescent girls in this study were gender roles, lack of opportunities, and differential opportunities for males and females (Culp, 1998).

Adolescent girls discussed gender roles as the most frequent constraint for participating in outdoor recreation. They expressed concerns about lack of competence—they couldn't do it—as a result of minimal prior experience in the outdoors. They discussed how it was unacceptable for girls to get dirty—a social constraint—and the lack of female role models and images of women in the media as contributing factors deterring them from participating. In situations where girls felt capable, they still did not view themselves positively able to do those activities (Culp, 1998).

“If girls do not learn outdoor skills as children they may not feel competent enough to engage in opportunities when they get older” (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993, p. 39). Research indicates that there are several positive outcomes for participating in outdoor programs for women. Support that promotes young women and girls' participation is essential to remove or diminish constraints as they become adult women.

Female-Friendly Models

“[Women] should build alternative models of leadership that are intrinsically more liberating, rather than emulate the traditional, masculine-based models” (Henderson, 1996b, p. 113). Research suggests a feminist perspective on outdoor programming for women is essential to provide positive experiences for women and girls in the outdoors. Programming for females offers an altered approach from the typical male model of outdoor programming which tends to focus on competitiveness, aggression, and authoritarianism (Henderson, 1996b). Rationales for women's programs

and female-only groups and the benefits of same sex experiences are numerous (Arnold, 1994; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Henderson, 1994, 1996a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Henderson & Grant, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Perry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997; McClintock, 1996; McDermott, 2004; Mitten, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000; Warren, 1996)⁷. Research indicates programs should be replaced with “characteristics popularly described as female, such as cooperation, nurturance, and consensus” which “strives to create an environment where women feel free from discrimination, and sexism, and where a greater sense of control and autonomy is felt” (Henderson, 1996b, p. 113).

Program philosophies most effective for girls include opportunities to express oneself, importance of having choice about participating, a wide variety of “hands on” and enjoyable activities, time alone, opportunities to learn technical and outdoor skills and unstructured time to spend with friends (Culp, 1998). Giving girls choice is very important as “females often perceive lack of choices in their lives” and the “ability to make their own choices fosters a sense of empowerment and independence” (Culp, 1998, p. 376). This freedom of choice and opportunity for decision making offers valuable opportunities for girls to gain leadership skills and to consider their personal and the group’s needs. “Unless a woman makes a free choice to participate, she may be struggling the entire time with feelings that alienate her from the experience” (Mitten, 1992, p. 58). An important consideration for girls’ and women’s programs is the opportunity for females to decide whether or not they will participate. They should not be coerced or manipulated to do things that make them uncomfortable. A gradual

⁷ This list is not exhaustive but provides an overview of some of the research that discusses the rationale and benefits of all-female programs.

process into activities and the opportunity to participate when ready are essential components in female programs.

Strategies to guide development of women's outdoor programs have been described in great detail by Mitten (1985, 1986, 1992) and a philosophical basis for women's programs was developed through her experience in working with all-female groups. Mitten (1992) states three goals to guide female programs: 1) a program philosophy which respects women and promotes increased self-esteem, 2) leaders skilled in implementing the program philosophy, and, 3) participants who have choices about and within the experience (p. 58). She has also developed ten principles of leadership and program design derived from the Woodswomen, Inc. (Mitten, 1992, p. 58, Mitten, 1985, 1986) which expand upon the philosophy of effective programming for women.

Mitten's suggestions have been greatly expanded in the past 20 years. Female leaders have added to the body of knowledge by designing leadership styles that challenge the traditional male-oriented model where power rests with the leader (Jordan, 1992). Instead, Jordan (1992) states that "a good leader has ability in human relations functions, which focuses on interpersonal skills and relationships among and between individuals within a group" (p. 62). The goal of a leader is to provide group members the opportunity to accomplish personal and group goals and to motivate and lift others to higher levels of drive and performance (Jordan, 1992). A leader promotes communication through trust-building activities, promoting positive group dynamics, and handling personality conflicts (process-oriented) rather than focusing on tasks (Jordan, 1992).

Outdoor recreational programs that are congruent with the suggestions for promoting girls' and women's participation in the outdoors can provide a variety of social, emotional, and physical benefits. When constructed using the models designed for females, outdoor recreational settings can offer girls the space to grow and develop socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Outdoor programs offer quiet time for reflection, introspection, and a spiritual connection to the environment. They offer girls time to talk, read, laugh, and enjoy being in the company of other girls and women. Outdoor recreational activities provide opportunities for risks, decision making and challenges. These opportunities allow room for multiple perspectives and the chance to make mistakes without being watched and judged by others. While participating in outdoor activities, one's body becomes a conduit for work, recreating, accomplishing a goal, and survival.

Application to the Present Study

I suggest that outdoor recreational programs may serve as a place that researchers in girls' development have termed a "hardiness zone" (Brown, 2003; Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999). Offering opportunities for girls to resist social stereotypes and promote positive gender identity development promotes hardiness zones. Promoting hardiness zones, "a context in which girls can experience greater control, commitment, and challenge" (Debold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999, p. 191), may help girls to gain resilience and protection from the stressful social context in which they live. Research on girls' development suggests that they respond to meaningful relationships and these relationships should be fostered. Meaningful relationships with adult women—mothers, friends, teachers, and counselors—could serve as a protective space for girls as

they navigate adolescence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999; Gilligan, 1991b; Orenstein, 1994). These relationships can be developed within the family or external to the family with a trusting adult woman.

There are multiple ways adult women can help girls develop healthy and happy gender identities, ones fostering positive relationships among girls and women. Brown (2003) offers a variety of suggestions for providing spaces for girls where they can release their anger, challenge social constructs of femininity, and work together. The goal of these environments is to allow girls to develop significant relationships, reduce tension between girls, critique narrow social conventions and promote “sisterhood” as they develop into women. A few suggestions are: to promote spaces where girls can question heterosexual or traditional romance stories, develop media literacy and activism, practice voice, and challenge cultural stories of good girl-bad girl images. These spaces should also promote the building of girl allies, which challenge stereotypes of girls as catty, deceitful, and manipulative by encouraging positive relationships between females, challenging girls to take themselves and other women seriously, and promoting opportunities for girls to use their bodies through sports. “It’s important to encourage girls to redefine femininity to include strength and courage and to reimagine our bodies” (Brown, 2003, p. 222) as strong, active, free, risk takers, and physical.

Recreational activities, specifically designed for girls and women, may create an environment described as a “hardiness zone”. Through interactions with caring adults, opportunities to take risks and be challenged, and time away from the media and society, girls may have the opportunity to challenge gender roles. All-female groups support girls

in working together and depending on each other for support, encouragement, and strength.

Simply by “stepping outdoors,” girls challenge stereotypes. Understanding this meaning for girls’ development and how these experiences challenge gender socialization enhances the research on the benefits of providing wilderness programs for girls. More importantly, it adds to the body of research on girls’ development and offers new insights to defining and challenging social constructs of femininity.

To comprehend how a wilderness program challenges conventional femininity for young women, a clearer understanding of gender identity development, gender socialization, girls’ development, and femininity is necessary. I have offered some background into these complex and dynamic topics, so that readers may understand my perspective and the research that guides my thought processes.

Theories of Girls’ Development

Gender Identity Development

“During middle childhood, ages 8 to 11, girls become more androgynous as their identification with feminine characteristics decline” (Basow & Rubin, 1999, p. 29). During this period of development girls tend to be strong, self-confident, and outspoken (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). They typically trust their feelings and are not afraid to say what they think. They engage in and play all kinds of activities with little concern about what is appropriate based on their gender. At adolescence, gender roles affect girls’ development as they become more aware of gender and gender constraints. It is during puberty that adherence to gender-related expectations, roles, and stereotypes for females is intensified. This intensity affects an individual’s self-concept, including self-esteem

and self-efficacy (LeCroy & Daley, 2001). This developmental age has been termed a crossroads, a period between middle childhood and early adolescence where girls are expected to conform to the more traditional female roles (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Adolescents strive to develop a secure gender identity development within the social constructs defined by the world around them (Johnson, Roberts & Worell, 1999). Adolescence is a crucial time in girls' lives as they begin to negotiate the roles they are encouraged to develop while also discovering that these roles are not valued by society (Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, 1999).

Perhaps adolescence is an especially critical time in women's development because it poses a problem of connection that is not easily resolved. As the river of a girl's life flows into the sea of Western culture, she is in danger of drowning or disappearing. To take on the problem of appearance, which is the problem of her development, and to connect her life with history on a cultural scale, she must enter—and by entering disrupt—a tradition in which human for the most part meant male. (Gilligan, 1991a, p. 37)

Entering the Western culture consists of a myriad of contradictions. These contradictions confuse and often silence girls as they negotiate their position in a male dominated society. As girls transition into adolescence and develop into women, they learn to silence themselves. This silence is a reaction to fitting into the normal definitions of femininity, of making sense of the many contradictions that girls' experience. Girls, at the edge of adolescence, begin to “lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves and their character” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2).

They begin to struggle over speaking and not speaking, and they begin to lose their voice (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

The roles encouraged for women focus on attractiveness and serving the needs of others, more specifically the needs of men. Women describe themselves as living in relationship to others, of controlling their voices and interests in order to maintain relationships and become a “good” woman (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The dominant society values autonomy and independence, both conflicting with developing relationships (Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, 1999) and being a “good” woman.

The ideal girl is physically controlled, emotionally contained, compliant, innocent, cooperative, attentive, always nice and sweet, polite, positive, upbeat, sincere (Brown, 1997), passive, pure, selfless, and good (Brown, 1998). Furthermore, girls compare themselves with a white, middle-class, heterosexual definition of femininity. They understand that in order to fit the dominant construction of a “good girl”—white, middle-class, heterosexual model— they must adhere to these norms. “[G]ood girls are calm and quiet, they speak softly, they do not complain or demand to be heard, they do not shout, they do not directly express anger” (Brown, 1998, p. 12).

Ironically, at the same time girls are learning to be “good,” they are seeing images portraying women as sexual objects glorified by the media. Advertisements are designed to “evoke images of women as beguiling, and seductive” (Anderson, 1988, p. 23), to make women “fearful of aging, fearful of being overweight, and fearful of being alone” (Anderson, 1988, p. 23), and, such advertisements often portray women as submissive, passive, emotional, and concerned with trivial matters such as “spots on the glasses” (LeCroy & Daley, 2001). Females are expected to be beautiful, sexual, and sexually

active, yet only behind closed doors and in ways where they will not later be deemed as promiscuous. The media, television, popular music, advice columns, and other cultural images play a significant role in influencing our thinking about gender roles in society (Anderson, 1988; LeCroy & Daley, 2001). These images influence young women as they struggle to be valued for their beauty. The mass media contributes to a preoccupation with physical attractiveness. Girls compare themselves with these models and the “impact can be particularly devastating in early adolescence, when the media calls for women who are beautiful and thin, just when girls are experiencing a developmental, pubertal fat spurt” (LeCroy & Daley, 2001, p. 15). These images can be damaging to one’s development as girls struggle with eating disorders and use various other means to alter their bodies to fit the image of beauty portrayed in the media. Girls also learn that certain personality characteristics are favored over others.

Girls and young women struggle in the battle to become the “perfect girl,” one who is praised and admired for her physical beauty and personality.

[R]ecognizable to anyone who opens the pages of a teen fashion magazine:

beautiful, tall, long hair, perfect skin, pretty eyes, nice figure. This girl must also be talented and get good grades; she is humble, modest and liked by everybody, with a personality to match her looks. (Brown, 1998, p. 138)

Again, the contradiction of being beautiful yet humble, sexual but not promiscuous, smart but not intelligent, talented yet modest, and liked by everyone, plays out in this description. Another contradiction is the “perfect” girl—or girls most resembling this image—is often hated by her female peers and disregarded because she is too “perfect”.

Gender Socialization

“[S]ocialization refers to the process by which social roles are learned” (Anderson, 1988, p. 73). Sex role socialization begins at an early age; even the names chosen for children illustrate how we make assumptions about girls’ and boys’ proper roles (Anderson, 1988). “Girls’ names are supposed to be feminine—soft, pretty, and symbolic of goodness, sweetness, and beauty; boys’ names are supposed to be masculine—short, harder in tone, and symbolic of strength, determination and intellect” (Anderson, 1988, p. 73). From these names assumptions are made based on one’s gender, and this influences the sex role expectations of the child throughout his/her life. These expectations influence one’s socialization and are maintained through expectations for play, games, scholastic ability, occupations, family responsibilities, reproduction (Anderson, 1988), and one’s access to leadership, positions of power, politics, recreation, leisure and athletics.

Gender establishes a path for us in life and can influence “our life chances and directs our social relations with others” (Anderson, 1988, p. 75). From birth, males and females are treated differently. It is from this socialization that we become different (Kimmel, 2000). At a very young age a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity occurs. Boys and girls learn that to be feminine is not an advantageous trait. Qualities associated with femininity and femaleness, “such as efficiency, cooperation, mutuality, equality, sharing, compassion, caring, vulnerability, a readiness to negotiate and compromise, emotional expressiveness, and intuitive and other nonlinear ways of thinking are all devalued” (Johnson, 1997, p. 6).

In our culture we engage in practices that separate boys and girls, one desiring male characteristics but not female characteristics. “What is culturally valued is associated with masculinity and maleness, and what is devalued is associated with femininity and femaleness, regardless of the reality of men’s and women’s lives” (Johnson, 1997, p. 64). Boys learn at a young age that it is not desirable to be “like a girl”, to “act like a girl,” or to “throw like a girl”. The hidden message is that girls are inferior and to be like a man, to acquire male characteristics, to be a tomboy or to hang out with the guys is perfectly acceptable. This dichotomy and emphasis on male traits causes confusion for girls as they enter adolescence and womanhood.

Most men and women do not conform to the cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, yet these cultural expectations still serve as standards against which people judge themselves and others. At no time are these expectations more salient than at the start of adolescence. (Basow & Rubin, 1999, p. 26)

Cultural expectations are enforced through a variety of avenues. Parental expectations, schooling, play activities, activity level, teachers, books, media and friendships (Lott, 1981) are examples of the many ways our society constructs and reinforces gender stereotypes.

In a culture valuing autonomy, power, competitiveness, aggression, and authoritarianism, girls learn that feminine characteristics are inferior compared to male characteristics. This contradiction of devaluing feminine characteristics, yet requiring them to be a “good” girl, often causes girls to disregard their femininity and move away from their close relationships with other women.

In a culture that values masculinity and the characteristics that go with it, separating from other girls—separating from an inferior, weak femininity so incapable of attaining real power and control—is the way to gain the power of maleness for themselves. (Brown, 2003, p. 31)

Girls move away from relationships with other girls as they engage in “boys’ journeys, learn their magic, master their battles, they also learn in the process not to like girls, trust girls, respect girls, or take girls very seriously” (Brown, 2003, p. 25). In their struggle to obtain equality in the dominant culture, they tend to disregard relationships with other females and struggle with societal expectations of femininity.

These social contradictions greatly influence gender identity development. Stresses, problems and risks for adolescent girls include, among other things, violence, suicide, depression, eating disorders, self-cutting, sexual behaviors, delinquency, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure, and dropping out (Johnson, Roberts & Worell, 1999).

Femaleness is voiced and mimed throughout girls’ lives, but as girls move into the culture, the conventional gender/sex system and its intimate connection to idealized femininity become heightened, narrowed and more controlled. Girls, to varying degrees conscious and unconscious of such control, react, either by complying or resisting. (Brown, 1998, p. 153)

Those complying with the dominant image may struggle with the problems stressed by Johnson, Roberts and Worell (1999) and those resisting these stereotypes risk being ostracized or labeled a dyke, lesbian or unfeminine.

Femininity: Not the Same for All Girls

For white girls, gender may be the most difficult personal identity struggle. For girls of color, working-class and poor girls, gender is not the only struggle and may not be the most important (Tatum, 1992). During adolescence black girls must “recognize, explore and integrate the multiple identities of race, class, and gender” (Ward, 2000, p. 95). Ward (2000) suggests that African American girls are raised by women who “tend to reject the traditional notions of womanhood that are equated to dependency, submissiveness, obedience and conformity” (p. 97).

Instead, black girls are raised with African American values of cooperation, collective responsibility, interdependence, group loyalty and view that being powerful, independent, and resilient are important for building pride in oneself (Ward, 2000). Collins (1999) developed a black woman’s epistemological standpoint to shed light on the need to consider diversity. She criticized white, middle-class feminists who generalize women’s experiences and “argued that race, and class are socially constructed and are connected and interlocked in terms of an individual’s lived experience” (cited in Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004, p. 102).

In a study conducted by Erkurt, Fields, Sing, and Marx (1996), results “show a relationship between high SES [socioeconomic status] and the desire to be of service to others” (p. 60). They express the value of exploring gender across race, ethnicity, class, and urbanization. They suggest,

There is a need for explorations of girls’ life experiences in multiple and diverse contexts in order to (a) illuminate gender as one kind of socially constructed difference among other kinds of difference that are equally significant (e.g., race

or ethnicity and class), (b) detail how gender is configured and plays out differently in diverse community and contexts, and (c) examine how gender as a configuration of power relations interacts with other asymmetries of power, including asymmetry based on race or ethnicity and class. (p. 61)

Furthermore, they state that “the gender roles, expectations, and relations that prevail in one community do not necessarily translate to “female” in another community” (p. 61).

Often, “research studies typically represent White populations from middle-class backgrounds” (Bing & Reid, 1996, p. 185). Despite the fact that white women are the majority group among the poor, issues of class have regularly been excluded (Bing & Reid, 1996). We know very little about the experiences of girls and women from poor and working-class families. Reay (2004) suggests, “regardless of whether we see ourselves in class terms, class just as much as race, gender, age, and sexuality shapes, and goes on shaping, the individuals we are and the individuals we become.”

Way (1995) suggests that urban, poor, and working-class adolescent girls display images of femininity different from the white, middle-class ideal. In her study of 12 urban, poor and working-class girls, she found the girls were able to speak honestly in most of their relationships. With parents, teachers, and especially friends, they felt they were outspoken and able to express their opinions. This differed from prior research (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) on white, middle-class adolescent girls where research suggests that girls silence themselves in their relationships. The girls in Way’s study were able to express anger more readily and were able to speak out in their friendships. These findings have also been detected in research conducted with white, working-class girls from urban communities.

Brown (1998) discovered that white, working-class girls construct femininity to include “toughness, a self-protective invulnerability to sadness and fear, an often direct and unapologetic expression of anger, as well as a deep capacity for love and nurturance toward those who need them” (p. 69). In her research, Brown (1997, 1998, 2001) explored the ways in which 6th, 7th, and 8th grade white girls from poor and working-class families in rural Maine reacted to dominant cultural definitions of femininity. What she discovered was a “discourse and behavior that is radically different from the dominant White middle-class cultural ideal” (1997, p. 685) and that this difference afforded the girls “a wide range of physical and verbal expression not usually considered under the rubric of conventional femininity” (1997, p. 685).

Her conclusion suggests that white girls from poor and working-class families were aware that the white, middle-class model of femininity was a “bad fit” for them because of its “narrow context” (1997, p. 698). Although this research was conducted with girls in early adolescence, it indicates that girls from white, poor, and working-class families may not strive to fit the white, middle-class femininity model that dominates the culture. Instead, they may opt to resist this model. “Girls are either initiated into or, with the support of their families and local communities, encouraged to actively resist this dominant social construction of reality” (Brown, 1998, p. 6). Despite the support of their parents and other adults in their community to resist middle-class values, the model the girls and other adults (i.e., teachers, employers) in the girls’ lives compare themselves to is dominated by a white middle-class definition of femininity.

Additionally, Madden in her research on poor and working-class rural girls in Maine examined girls’ femininity through the lens of sexuality (2000). She revealed that

the girls in her study, “support, expand upon, and challenged the literature on girls’ development and sexuality” (p. 91) and that “they illustrate a complex relationship with middle-class conventions of femininity” (p. 91). The girls resisted conventions of how a girl should react in relationships and challenged “any attempt to meld their experiences with the experiences of girls from urban or suburban areas, or from middle or upper-middle-class families” (p. 93).

These findings have implications for my research as I examined poor and working-class girls’ constructions of femininity through their participation in an outdoor recreational program. My research examined the ways in which the girls challenged, adhered to, maintained, and altered their constructions of femininity by participating in a wilderness expedition. While research on poor and working-class families indicates that they construct their femininity in diverse ways, the girls are still “increasingly pressured at the edge of adolescence to fall in line with the dominant (that is white, middle-class heterosexual) social construction of reality” (Brown, 1998, p. 109). This pressure to fall in line with the dominant construction has implications for girls’ and women’s positioning of self in society—especially in career choices, and positions of power and leadership.

Influence on Nontraditional Occupations

Adherence to social stereotypes influences the decision making and experiences of girls and women. For instance, job occupations have been sex segregated in U.S. society. “The assignment of different tasks to women and men—which is termed the sexual division of labor—is a fundamental feature of work” (Padavic & Reskin, 2002, p.

57). Occupations, such as a nurse or construction worker, are traditionally labeled as belonging to one sex or another, and are heavily influenced by socialization.

Changes in which sex performs a task usually occur slowly, however, because the existing sexual division of labor shapes social expectations about who should do certain types of jobs and because in many occupations turnover of an existing male workforce is slow. (Padavic & Reskin, 2002, p. 8)

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, nontraditional occupations for women consist of positions that are occupied by less than 25% women. In 2002 and 2003 some of these occupations were: surveying and mapping technicians (17.3% in 2003, 15.4% in 2002), first-line supervisors/managers of farming, fishing and forestry workers (10.8% in 2003, 15.1% in 2002), first-line supervisors/managers of landscaping, lawn service and groundskeeping work (5.4% in 2003), logging workers (2.5% in 2003, 1.3% in 2002), conservation scientists and foresters (8.3% in 2002), and fish and game wardens (0% in 2002).

By comparison, in 2003, occupations with the highest percentage of women were preschool and kindergarten teachers (98.3%), secretaries and administrative assistants (96.3%), receptionists and information clerks (93.2%), and teacher assistants (90.9%). The obvious split in occupational preference and/or access continues to persist in traditionally feminine and masculine roles.

Evidence of this dichotomy has been observed in experiential and outdoor careers⁸. With the goal of altering this dichotomy, several strategies have been developed for promoting women in experiential careers. These include: 1) offering advanced skills

⁸ There are several occupations to which women have traditionally been denied access. I have highlighted experiential and outdoor careers due to its relevance to the research.

training in single-gender environments, 2) actively recruiting and encouraging women to apply for outdoor leadership positions by providing scholarship and financial opportunities which allow access to training programs, and, 3) increasing the number of female participants by offering single-sex programs for women and girls⁹ (Loeffler, 1996). Offering advanced skills training in single-gender environments allows women to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. “[M]any outdoor leadership skills require women to act outside traditional gender roles, a single-gender group can provide support and opportunity to push beyond previously held limits” (Loeffler, 1996, p. 96). This also allows women to develop the technical skills needed for career development in nontraditional fields.

Offering scholarships and financial opportunities allows women to gain skills that are often not accessible and this assistance can increase career opportunities for women. “[S]cholarships and other forms of financial assistance would aid women in becoming more successful in their careers by giving them greater access to training in outdoor leadership skills” (Loeffler, 1996, p. 98). Financial assistance allows women to overcome a constraint that often limits girls’ and women’s participation in outdoor settings, ultimately allowing access to future employment opportunities.

Additionally, increasing the number of female participants by offering single-gender programs for girls and women is an essential component of promoting future career choices in outdoor settings. In Loeffler’s research, one long-time field instructor stated, “as more girls participate in outdoor programs, more will become aware of outdoor leadership as a career option. We need to let girls and young women know this is a work option that they can choose” (p. 99). In time, these strategies may alter the

⁹ This list is not exhaustive. I have drawn on those suggestions most relevant to this research study.

adherence to sex segregation and stereotyping that still currently influence career decision making in outdoor recreation.

Another consequence of segregation includes limited access to positions in society. “[S]ex segregation in the workplace plays a fundamental role in maintaining sex inequalities in modern societies” (Padavic & Reskin, 2002, p. 59). This results in denied or limited access to positions of power, leadership, and ultimately higher-paying jobs. “The consequences of segregation at work have ramifications for women’s position of power in society” (Padavic & Reskin, 2002, p. 58).

Leadership

Typically, women have been denied leadership roles in our society and have had limited access to positions of power. “A single woman leader of a few women in a larger group are tokens; each token has to prove she’s man enough for the job” (Wilson, 2004, p. xiii). Because leadership is gendered and defined by masculine traits, “we often find resistance to women’s leadership because they are not seen as tough enough, both due to the male-oriented definition of “leader” and the entrenched “cultural ideal” of female” (Wilson, 2004, p. 22). Evidence of this deeply rooted belief is most obvious in our political structure. Currently women “are only 14 percent of the present Congress, and it took us a long time to get there. Of nearly 12,000 people to serve in the legislature since the founding of the nation in 1776, only 215 (1.8 percent) have been women” (Wilson, 2004, p. 4).

Women are denied or through socialization do not pursue leadership positions in athletics, politics, academics, administration, corporate positions, media, and most other non-domestic sectors of our society. Over the past two decades, women leaders in

business, politics, sport, and professions have been “embraced and resisted, accepted and denied by both institutions and individuals. The path to leadership in boardrooms, in public office, and on the playing fields has not been smooth” (Freeman & Bourque, 2001, p. 3). Leadership for women has been deemed appropriate only in fields defined as female or in “arenas related to the home” (Freeman & Bourque, 2001, p. 3). Due to the lack of female role models in positions of power, girls and women are forced to compare their abilities to those of men. “To see herself as a leader, for example, a woman must first get around the fact that leadership itself has been gendered through its identification with maleness and masculinity as part of patriarchal culture” (Johnson, 1997, p. 7).

Application to the Present Study

My review of the research on girls’ development, femininity, gender identity, and socialization seeks to provide insight into the complex social constructs that influence girls’ development. I studied topics on voice, images of beauty, leadership, power, and occupations as they are directly related to the outcome of this study. More specifically, the research examined the ways in which these terms define and shape us as individuals and how they influence girls’ development.

Using femininity and masculinity to describe people puts us in a straightjacket that denies the inherent complexity of what we and our experience are all about. It backs us into a tight little corner where we are always just a step or two away from having to defend against challenges to our legitimacy as men and women. And it sets us up to struggle endlessly with contradiction, ambiguity, and denial as we search for an authentic sense of who we are. (Johnson, 1997, p. 73)

For adolescent girls, this struggle for an authentic sense of who they are is magnified by the social contradictions that they experience growing up in a society that devalues femaleness. This struggle, while existing for all females, differs in its nature, complexity and the influence that it has on girls' lives. Coupled with other factors—race, socioeconomic status, rural or urban community, religion, parental and peer influences, school and other social constructs—the impact this devaluing has on one's development differs. Despite this complexity, white, middle-class images of femininity prevail in our society and these images are pervasive, seeping into every component of our lives.

Literature Review Summary

The review of the literature on women's outdoor recreational programs and girls' developmental theories highlights the need for further exploration to develop a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of girls' participation in wilderness programs. In general, research has been conducted with adult women and the voices of girls have not been explored. Furthermore, the research has not comprehensively examined the intersections of participation in wilderness programs and femininity and the ways in which participating can challenge conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls. This study worked to address these gaps.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Goal and Questions

Research suggests women who participate in wilderness recreation programs can free themselves of self- and society-imposed limitations. By participating in outdoor recreational programs, women challenge traditional female roles and “discover aspects of themselves they did not know existed prior to challenging themselves in this environment” (Henderson, 1996a, p. 196). Further research indicates that the results of participation include a higher self-esteem, self-reliance, and a greater sense of personal empowerment (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993). Although these studies suggest various outcomes for women, very little research provides insight into girls’ development. The research that explores girls’ experiences investigates changes in high-risk adolescents and provides limited interpretation of how these experiences challenge girls’ femininity and affect girls’ development.

The purpose of this study was to expand and deepen the knowledge of girls’ participation in an all-female wilderness program. More specifically, this study explored the impact that participating in an all-girls wilderness program had on nine girls and the various ways their involvement challenged conventional notions of femininity.

Guiding Research Questions

- In what ways did participating in an all-girls’ wilderness program challenge conventional notions of femininity?
 - How did the girls describe the ways in which this program challenged femininity, both collectively and individually?

- What impacts did participating have on the girls' everyday lives?
 - In what ways were their understandings transferred or used in everyday life?
 - In what ways did they negotiate these understandings after the program concluded?
- How might these understandings or changes influence their long-term decision making—life choices, ambitions, and goals?

Participants

Subjects in this study consist of nine girls, ages 13 to 18, who participated in the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls. The Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls consists of several components, the most significant is a 23-day canoe trip along the Penobscot River and Allagash Wilderness Waterway. The program seeks to provide opportunities for adolescent girls from Maine and offers substantial financial aid. The program is unique in “its intention to offer substantial scholarships” (George, 2002, p. 42) to those in need, as most outdoor programs offer opportunities for participants from middle to upper-middle-class backgrounds.

A participant's financial contribution to the program is determined using the National Association of Independent Schools, School and Student Service Financial Aid Forms. Parents are also asked to honestly assess what they can and would be willing to contribute to the program. During the 2003 expedition most of the girls received full scholarships; only one girl contributed \$800 out of the \$3,500 tuition and another contributed \$700. Each girl, regardless of her financial ability, is asked to raise \$200 towards tuition. The goal is for participants to feel a personal investment to the program.

The raising of \$200 has been obtained by girls in various ways—for instance, other family members may contribute, they seek funds from community members or they find short-term employment, often doing yard work or cleaning.

The girls in this study came primarily from poor and working-class families and live in a variety of locations throughout Maine; a majority of the girls reside in rural communities. The girls were primarily white, with only one girl a minority. According to the U.S. Census Bureau for 2000, 96.9% of the population in Maine is white, while 3.1% are minority, suggesting that the small number of minority participants in this study is representative of Maine demographics. The family structure of the girls was diverse as some live in two-parent homes, others shared time between divorced parents and some lived with other family members; one girl lived with an aunt and another with a sister.

I also included myself as a participant in the research. As the researcher, I have a close, personal connection with this investigation. I was an instructor on the expedition, as well as an active participant in the girls' experience. I have an interest in promoting all-female programs and an understanding of the valuable benefits these programs have for young women. I believe that current research lacks girls' voices about their experiences—primarily research has been conducted with women—as well as a deep understanding of how these experiences challenge femininity, especially at adolescence.

Research Methodology

This research is guided by a feminist qualitative research design. A feminist researcher frequently starts with an issue that she has a personal connection with and then uses all available data sources to study it (Reinharz, 1992). Using a feminist framework allowed me to start from my own experience in order to start from the standpoint of

women (Reinharz, 1992). In order for me to start from my own perspective it was essential that I positioned myself in the research through a reflexive process. One strategy of feminist research is for the researcher to examine her own social background and location in order to explain how her knowledge and experience have shaped her research (Hertz, 1997; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Therefore, in the following sections on reflexivity, researcher as instrument and my personal struggle with conventional notions of femininity, I have examined my social background, connection to the research, and personal assumptions, so that the reader may examine my position and biases, and their influences on this study.

Reflexivity

Authors Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) describe reflexivity as “the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines and understands how her social background, positionality, and assumptions affect the practice of research” (p. 115). As an active participant, “it is essential to understand the researcher’s location of self” (Hertz, 1997, p. viii) and how the researcher’s knowledge and construction of knowledge has been shaped by society as well as her location within its social structures (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). This positioning affects all stages of the research process and asks that the feminist “researcher makes visible to both the research audience and possibly the participant’s one’s own social locations and identities” (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004, p. 115). Reflexivity is especially important when researching a topic where the researcher has an intimate connection with both the participants and the program.

Researcher as Instrument

In feminist research, the researcher is the primary instrument through which the research is explored. Feminist research differs from that of qualitative research in that a researcher has a standpoint—rather than a bias—that serves as a feminist framework (Reinharz, 1992). A feminist researcher 1) presents the research in her own voice, 2) describes where the project stems from and how it is part of her own life, 3) is likely to reflect upon what she has learned in the process, 4) can merge the public and private interests of her research, and, 5) holds a researcher's standpoint rather than bias in order to start from the standpoint of women (Reinharz, 1992).

My standpoint is especially important for this project because I served as a leader on the expedition, am an advocate of outdoor experiences for girls, and have spent a significant amount of time “in the field” with these girls. I am white, with working-class roots and now of middle-class status, feminist woman who has worked in the field of outdoor recreation and academics for several years. I have been challenged, especially in the field of recreation, in many aspects because of my gender and therefore find it essential to offer girls' programming that promotes places for them to grow and develop outside of the social constructs and stereotypes that enforce particular behaviors for males and females.

My Personal Struggle with Conventional Notions of Femininity

Recently, I spent the day walking the shores of Popham Beach with a girlfriend. We've been friends for over 16 years and have maintained our relationship the best that we can living on separate coasts, and both pursuing academic careers; she's a medical doctor. We spent the day reminiscing about high school, talking about our work and

laughing about the many “debates” we used to have as adolescent girls. We were both highly opinionated even as young women. She reminded me that I had always been a “feminist”—something I thought I had just developed—and stated that in high school “they tried to shape you into something you are not.” I asked her what she meant by this and she stated, “you were given the status of beauty queen, something you never really wanted or asked for and you fought it.”

At first I dismissed this conversation but upon reflection understood that even as a young woman, I challenged conventional notions of femininity. I challenged conventional notions of beauty, the silencing of girls and women, and the personal characteristics attributed to girls as calm, quiet, physically controlled, compliant, and passive (Brown, 1997). My femininity was shaped by my working-class roots, but in the dominant social cultures, I was analyzed, judged, and evaluated by the standards of white, middle-class femininity. Teachers and peers expected me to behave by the standards defined by society.

I recognize now that I aligned more with working-class girls in my ability to speak honestly in relationships with parents, teachers, and friends. I expressed my opinion, asked questions, was an active participant, and challenged the adults with whom I worked. I distinctly recall my male physical education teacher telling me one day “that I was angry” and he wondered what the source of my anger was. Now I feel I could articulate those feelings through theories on girls’ development, social dynamics, and stereotypes and provide him with some substantial reading; but back then I could barely mutter, “whatever.”

I grew up in a rural community of New Hampshire. Originally I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, moved to Cape Cod, then Thornton, New Hampshire, and our final move was to the town of Bridgewater, located on Newfound Lake in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. I was in 7th grade when we made our final move. At this time the community was considered rural; the nearest mall was in Manchester, New Hampshire, an hour and a half away, and the nearest movie theatre approximately a half hour away either in Laconia or Plymouth, New Hampshire. In the summer, the population doubled or tripled as cabins on the lake were inhabited. My high school, grades 9-12, was small, with about 300 students representing seven towns. It was in this community that I recall when I first began to question conventional femininity.

My first act of challenging conventional notions of beauty occurred the year I refused to participate in our annual Carnival Queen Pageant. This pageant, an important component of the community, coordinated by the community center, consisted of a procession where the girls who were nominated—based on their popularity, not necessarily their aspirations—were part of two activities: a poised walk on the platform in a pageant dress and a speech. Fortunately, there was no bikini contest or talent component. In the past, I had accepted this nomination and dutifully filled my role, but my senior year I simply said “no.” At the time, I did not realize this was my first act of feminist resistance, as I questioned societal notions of beauty and challenged an ingrained system that values girls for their beauty. Rather, I thought, “I just don’t want to do it.”

Instead, my reality consisted of sports and physical recreation. I saw my body as a conduit for strength, determination, and physicality, an object to be used rather than an object to be looked at and appraised. I recall the power I felt when I scored a goal or

blocked a pass in field hockey and the exhilaration of sweating and teamwork. Sports, for me, were an avenue where I felt strong and accomplished. It was an escape from everyday life: school, boys, friends, the media, and everything else that shapes adolescent development.

At this turning point in my development, I was cognitively aware of the natural environment and interested in pursuing a career in a nontraditional field, science. I became interested in science, the natural world, and protecting the environment. My science teachers, who were all male except one in 7th grade, were supportive of my endeavors as I sought out opportunities to explore my growing interests.

I attended a conservation camp through cooperative extension and 4H, and a science and mathematics institute offered at the University of New Hampshire. The conservation camp was run by professional women and the science and mathematics institute by male professors. Both of the programs were free of charge, an important component for my ability to participate and brought about significant changes in my long-term goals. Through these avenues, I found individuals to share my interests and passions with and I gained confidence in my ability to pursue a career in science.

These experiences prompted my decision to study forestry at the University of New Hampshire. After completing my B.S. in Forestry, I worked as a forestry research technician, park ranger, trail crew maintenance worker, environmental educator, and surveyor. During these experiences, I became infuriated by the way I was treated; a treatment that was a direct result of my gender. I was purposefully ignored in situations where I was in charge, and often told that my presence supported affirmative action. I was frustrated and began to wonder where it is that females can be valued for their

contributions and can find space to feel safe, empowered, and supported. I felt that in the wilderness, stereotypes could be broken down and with this belief I sought employment leading wilderness trips.

During my experience as a wilderness guide, it became clear to me that the outdoors, and programming led by females, designed specifically for girls and women, could provide a place for girls to grow, gain strength and confidence, and challenge their construction of femininity. Traditional models of outdoor leadership and program planning do not address theories on girls' and women's development. Rather, traditional coeducational models often support gender stereotypes, through gender role adherence. For example, I have observed in mixed groups the boys' insistence on carrying the girls' packs despite the fact that, in early adolescence, many of the girls are physically stronger than the boys. Furthermore, I watched as the girls pretended they couldn't accomplish things and took a back seat in decision making processes. This knowledge prompted my earnest desire to locate a program that supported theories on girls' development and female-friendly outdoor recreational programs, and it is through this avenue that I came to know, work for, and research the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls.

Feminist Research

DeVault (1999) states that there is no how-to manual for feminist methods but rather there is a perspective that informs our use of research tools. DeVault suggests that a feminist methodology should shift "the focus of standard practice from men's concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspectives of (all) women" (p. 30). Additionally it should use a "science that minimizes harm and control in the research process," (p. 30)

and should “support research of value to women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women” (p. 31).

A feminist perspective was used in this study to uncover the girls’ experiences on the canoe expedition and how this experience challenged their femininity. “Research on women makes the lives of women visible but it is feminist perspectives that demand social change” (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1999, p. 168). In this study, I have drawn on the extensive research conducted in leisure studies because of its emphasis on using a feminist approach for studying women’s recreation and leisure. Feminist perspectives in leisure studies suggest that research has done little to change women’s lives in regard to leisure participation, and it is through research “on women’s lived experiences and the issues of gender from feminist perspectives addressing equality, liberation and integrity [that] has provided the foundation for social change” (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1999, p. 168). Feminist research goes beyond descriptive explanations of a female’s experience and provides a means for addressing what can be done to challenge their situation and promote social change for women (Henderson, 1990). Understanding recreational experiences of adolescent girls and how these experiences challenge conventional notions of femininity can help program planners offer critical and transformative approaches for girls’ outdoor recreational activities.

For the purposes of this study, I used a feminist case study method. Feminists write case studies “to illustrate an idea, to explain the process of development over time, to show the limits of generalizations, to explore uncharted issues by starting with a limited case, and to pose provocative questions” (Reinharz, 1992, p.167). In this study, I investigated a program and the young women who participated in the program. The

program is bound by time, place, and common experience. By investigating this topic, I documented the girls' experience, the program and how their participation challenged femininity. The strength of using a case study method allowed me to explain the girls' experience and the outcome over time, to show the limits of generalizing the experience to other girls or programs and to explore a particular issue, conventional notions of femininity. Furthermore, from this case many questions arose beyond the scope of this research project and offered avenues for future research (Reinharz, 1992).

A case study allowed me to utilize the girls' voices to explore similarities among the participants. At the same time, the program was individualized by providing different and important outcomes for each girl. Stake (1995) suggests that each case—individual persons or programs—are similar and unique. He states, “We are interested in them both for their uniqueness and commonality” (p. 1). For the purposes of this study, I did not draw commonalities among programs, but focused on the girls' experiences, within one program, during one particular year that the program was offered.

I selected interviews as the primary method of inquiry, to provide a deeper understanding of the girls' experience and the meaning they made of their experience (Seidman, 1998). Interviews provided me the opportunity to engage in conversations concerning the girls' experience. Interviews were beneficial because after the expedition, I could no longer observe the girls behavior, feelings or how they interpreted the world around them (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). Additionally, interviewing served as a valuable tool because I was interested in learning about past events that were impossible to replicate (Merriam, 1998). The canoe expedition, a prior experience that is not replicable, falls neatly into this category. To understand and make meaning of the girls' experience,

interviews allowed the girls to speak freely, provided insights into how the girls negotiated the change and challenges they experienced. Feminist methods promote interviewing as a way of accessing “people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than the words of the researcher” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19). It also offered an avenue for avoiding control over others and for gaining a connection with others (Reinharz, 1992).

The interviews were constructed in an open-ended, conversational manner in order to provide a comfort level between the girls and myself, and to allow flexibility for follow up questions and/or clarification of statements. I followed Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) suggestions for maintaining a friendly conversation throughout the interview, beginning with general questions, and proceeding to more specific ones once the participant was comfortable. I used a friendly-conversational manner to ease the girls’ concerns and to invite a more interactive and comfortable interview. This was particularly important since the girls knew me as a wilderness guide, caregiver, and teacher, and not as an academic researcher. Assuming a different role might have confused them, raised their level of anxiety about the interview and potentially caused false responses. Additionally, I avoided conversations where I provided answers to the questions or personal opinions about the experience. These strategies diminished the potential hierarchical relationship between the girls and me and required me to consider the impact of my interactions with the girls (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Data Collection

For this study, I used multiple steps for data collection and analysis. This allowed emergent findings to be uncovered and explored further. This worked effectively for discovering a phenomenon, “challenging femininity” and exploring this phenomenon.

Data collection consisted of:

- Individual interviews conducted four to five months after the expedition and 15 to 18 months after the expedition.
- A focus group conducted six months after the expedition.
- A public slide show presented six months after the expedition.
- Journal entries, personal reflections, and a variety of other written pieces—college acceptance essays and graduation speeches.
- Parent surveys.

The first set of data collected served as an evaluation (Whittington, 2004) to determine the efficacy of the program and the significance of the experience for the participants. Data collection for the evaluation consisted of 1) individual interviews conducted within four to five months after completing the expedition, 2) a focus group conducted six months after completing the expedition, 3) a public slide show presentation conducted six months after the experience, 4) journal entries, personal reflections and a variety of other written pieces—college acceptance essays, graduation speeches, and, 5) parent surveys.

Nine individual interviews were conducted within four to five months after the expedition. Eight of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and one via phone. Parental consent was obtained and the interviews took place in a variety of areas

designated by the parents—primarily the girls’ homes—and lasted 45 to 90 minutes. Interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions (Appendix A), allowing the girls to explore what meaning the expedition had for them individually. These interviews were audio taped, transcribed, coded and analyzed for significant findings.

A focus group (Appendix B) was conducted in January 2004 during the expedition reunion. Nine girls participated in the focus group, which was audio taped and transcribed. During the reunion, the public presentation was also recorded, transcribed and evaluated. A survey (Appendix C) was mailed to parents and legal guardians of the 2003 participants and 6 out of the 12 were returned. The parent surveys were used to provide an alternative perspective to the girls’ experience and to offer suggestions for program change.

During the analysis of the evaluation, I searched for evidence supporting the program goals and objectives and examined how the participants were being served. The evaluation evolved as an independent study for my doctoral work and was analyzed and compiled for the purposes of obtaining funds and program planning for the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls.

While analyzing the data for the evaluation, an interesting problem or area of “puzzlement” evolved (Stake, 1995). The girls spoke extensively about how participating in the program changed them and challenged their constructions of femininity. Upon recognizing this problem—how participating in a wilderness program challenged girls’ femininity—I reanalyzed the evaluation for the purposes of my dissertation and also conducted a second set of interviews to examine more closely how

the girls' participation in the canoe expedition challenged their constructions of femininity.

Fifteen to 18 months after the expedition, the girls were asked to participate in a second interview. Parental consent was obtained and all nine of the girls agreed to participate. The second interviews were guided by a set of questions (Appendix D) pertaining to the canoe expedition, their background and self-descriptions, gender, and aspirations. Follow-up questions were derived from the analysis of their first interviews to uncover the phenomenon of how participating in the canoe expedition challenged conventional notions of femininity. Five of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and three were conducted via phone. The second interviews were conducted in the same manner as the first interviews and lasted 60 to 90 minutes.

Existing data from the girls and the program were used as needed and included applications, interviews, newspaper articles, trip reports, and a graduate thesis which provided the framework for the program (George, 2002). I also used my personal journal from the trip, which provided a descriptive background of the experience and helped me recollect valuable components of the experience.

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed by me. Transcribing my own interviews provided me with the "opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights" (Patton, 2002, p. 441). I found this to be a valuable tool as it allowed me to focus on each girl's voice intonation and to document my first impressions. Due to the small volume of interviews and my connection to the girls, this served as a valuable first step in analyzing the data. After completing each

transcription, I documented my initial thoughts and feelings about the interview in an transcription summary form (Appendix E).

During the first interviews, I learned that taking notes distracted the girls despite my reassurances that I was writing about our conversation. To alleviate this distraction I adapted a contact summary form as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) into an interview summary sheet (Appendix F) to be used after each interview. This allowed me to develop an overall summary of the main points (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and to reflect upon the interview. The interview summary also included field notes regarding 1) prominent themes, 2) tensions that were raised by me or the participant, 3) modifications for future interviews, and, 4) conditions—setting and distractions—in which the interview was conducted (Phillips, 2000).

Data Analysis

I drew on Patton's (2002) suggestions for analyzing case studies and Phillips' (2000) description of how she analyzed her data on young women's sexuality. Patton suggests a three-step process for constructing case studies. The first step involved was the assembling of raw data: collecting all the information about the person, organization, program, and setting for which the study is about. During this step, I read through each transcript and made summary notes about the interview (adapted from Phillips, 2000). This included 1) a general description about the participants—demographics, her life situation, 2) the participants' general feelings about their participation in the canoe expedition—successes and challenges, 3) the girls' feelings about gender and their participation as a girl in the program, and, 4) overall thoughts and feelings—projected themes—about the interview.

The second step was to create a case record, which allowed me to condense the raw data into an organized and manageable file. This step employed an inductive analysis to discover “important patterns, themes, and interrelationships” (Patton, 2002, p. 41) that began with exploring and then confirming to offer a creative synthesis of the findings. During this process, I used coding. Coding is the use of “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). There are many ways to code and these can include words, phrases, and sentences or whole paragraphs. The purpose of coding is to retrieve, organize, and categorize data so that the researcher can “quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57). Coding is the process of simplifying and making sense of the raw material to determine what is significant (Patton, 2002). My initial stage of coding consisted of reading each transcript line by line in order to uncover themes and patterns in the data. I used a color printer and shorthand codes were typed in the margins of the passage. I then conducted a second reading searching for those instances of when the girls challenged femininity.

Finally, I wrote a final case study narrative. During this step, I wrote a holistic portrayal, to provide a descriptive picture or story about each girl, the program, and organization in order to provide the reader with “all the information necessary to understand the case in all its uniqueness” (Patton, 2002, p. 450).

In reporting the data, I used thick, rich descriptions to describe the participants and the setting of the experience. The purpose of thick, rich description is to “open up the world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and

places” (Patton, 2002, p. 438). This allowed the reader to make decisions regarding the transferability of the research (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998, 2002). Although this experience is not generalizable to other wilderness experiences or to other participants, it may be transferable to programs in similar settings, or with similar goals and objectives. Other strategies for data analysis included the use of reflexivity and voice.

Throughout this document, I have been reflective about my beliefs and my background in order to position myself in the research. I have tried to make visible to the research audience my “own social locations and identities” (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004, p. 115) so that the reader may understand my position and perspectives and may make meaning of the research based on these understandings.

Being reflexive (reflexivity) is to “have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment” (Hertz, 1997, p. xiii). This process is used to examine “what I know” and “how I know it.” Throughout the data collection and analysis I examined what I knew and how I knew it through extensive journaling and note-taking.

During the writing process, I used voice in order to share my findings with others. Patton (2002) states that a “credible, authoritative, authentic, and trustworthy voice engages the reader through rich description, thoughtful sequencing, appropriate use of quotes, and contextual clarity so that the reader joins the inquirer in the search for meaning” (p. 65). Furthermore, I have written in the first person, active voice in order to communicate “the inquirer’s self-aware role in the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Patton identifies a variety of voices—for example, the narrative voice of a storyteller—and

during data analysis and writing I used the “intimacy of the insider’s voice” and “the excited voice of discovery” (p. 65) in order to communicate my voice and perspective. The intimacy of the insider’s voice results from my participation on the expedition and my close connection with the girls. The excited voice of discovery stems from the uncovering of the phenomenon, how the experience challenged girls’ understanding of femininity.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness of my data I have used a technique described by several researchers as “triangulation” (Creswell 1998; Merriam, 1998, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995, 2000). Triangulation is the process of “using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning” (Stake, 2000, p. 443). This can be done using multiple data-collection methods and the incorporation of multiple data-collection sources (Glesne, 1999). In this study, two individual interviews conducted at least 10 to 12 months apart, a focus group, parent surveys, journal entries and a variety of other sources were used in an effort to obtain multiple sources of data collection and to ensure trustworthiness. “The more sources tapped for understanding, the richer the data and the more believable the findings” (Glesne, 1999, pg. 31). The combined methods served as a cross-reference, allowing me to discover similarities or anomalies that needed further investigation. Conducting two separate interviews 10-to-12 months apart offered validation to the girls’ stories—this was evident because the girls often repeated and expanded upon the themes most prevalent in their first interviews. This helped to validate my initial findings and the interpretation of my findings.

Another technique I used was verification. Extended engagement in the field to build trust with participants, use of multiple and different sources, methods, and theories, peer reviewing or debriefing, and thick, rich description were used to establish verification (Creswell, 1998). In this study, verification was conducted by prolonged engagement in the field, multiple data collection methods, peer debriefing, member checks, and rich, thick descriptions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest prolonged engagement in the field and focus on elements most relevant to the study as critical in attending to credibility. This attention to detail allows the researcher to know and understand the phenomenon or participants she is studying, gain access to information, and reduce the likelihood participants will “feign behavior or feel the need to do so” (Glesne, 1999, pg. 151).

This was especially important, as there is a strong connection between the participants and myself. This proved valuable in gaining access and creating a detailed description of the girls’ experience, and reduced the girls’ desire to answer questions based on what they thought I would want to hear. My goal was that they would not elaborate or withhold information to satisfy me or assist me with my research.

Research Design Summary

By utilizing feminist and qualitative research, I was able to uncover how the girls’ experience challenged their constructions of femininity. Qualitative research fits well with feminist goals as it gives voice to women and allows the researcher to focus on “particularity over generalization” (DeVault, 1999, p. 33). The use of qualitative and feminist methods and tools, particularly interviews, allowed me to engage in conversations with the girls, giving them the opportunity to explore and make meaning of

their experience. The use of a multi-data collection process allowed for emergent findings that could be further investigated and clarified. To offer clarity and trustworthiness to the findings, the use of multiple-data collection methods and verification were used.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

SHARED THEMES

This chapter examined the common themes shared among and between participants throughout the data analysis. In this chapter, I provided an overview of the girls' experience, focusing on why the girls chose to participate in the canoe expedition and the outcomes they hoped they would gain through their participation. These are reflections the girls made about their experience prior to the expedition but were collected approximately six months after completing the expedition.

I then examined how the girls defined femininity through their descriptions of the ideal woman and how they opposed or aligned themselves with society's image of the ideal woman. This data was collected during the second interviews conducted approximately 15 to 18 months after the expedition.

I used the voices of all nine participants to examine the similarities within the group and to develop prevalent themes. The prevalent themes that emerged are 1) perseverance, strength and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls' abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls.

In chapter 5, I examined the experiences of three individual girls. This allowed me to reveal the complex ways in which different girls challenged, adhered to, maintained, and complicated conventional notions of femininity through their participation in the canoe expedition. This offered an examination of the intricate ways

the girls maintained or disregarded their understanding in their everyday lives. I chose these three girls because they represent different approaches to negotiating conventional notions of femininity after the expedition, and they each came to the program with different constructions of femininity. Additionally, they each left the program challenging, adhering, altering to, and redefining their constructions of femininity in diverse ways.

Background Themes

Decision to Participate in the Canoe Expedition

The girls heard about the program from a variety of sources—their guidance counselors, program staff, prior participants, public announcements and newspaper articles all served as avenues in which the girls learned about the program. The primary source for introduction to the program was through their school guidance counselors, who target girls they feel would benefit from and appreciate the program. For most of the girls, financial support played a large role in their ability and decision to participate in the program. Traditionally, outdoor programs offer opportunities for participants from middle-upper-class backgrounds so a major goal of this program is to serve girls from poor and working-class families who could not afford such an experience. In 2003, seven of the girls received full scholarships and one girl contributed \$800 of the \$3,500 dollar tuition and another \$700. The financial assistance offered helps to remove a limiting factor often associated with lack of access to outdoor recreational programs for girls and women.

Upon learning about financial assistance, the girls began to see this opportunity as a realistic endeavor. As one girl stated, “we [her family] were kind of hesitant about it

[the program] because we saw the price tag. So we kind of dismissed it because it wasn't really an option at that time." Later in the year, she learned that there were opportunities for financial support and she immediately applied, was accepted, and awarded full financial aid.

The girls in this study recognized that financial assistance is a necessary component for their participation. Research on constraints indicates that for females a major limiting factor in obtaining access to outdoor recreational activities is a lack of financial resources. For the girls in this study, this holds true not only as a direct result of their gender, but also because of the socioeconomic status of their families.

The girls were primarily drawn to the program because they felt it would be a "once in a lifetime opportunity." They viewed the experience as something "cool to do," a unique way to spend their summer. One girl stated,

I was planning on doing something completely different and when I talked with my parents about it, it seemed like it was [a] really cool idea. I had thought it might be a really nice thing to do and it sounded like it would be one of those once in a lifetime experiences that I might not be able to do [again] so why not do it now?

Additionally, the girls were drawn to participating in the program due to the fact that the program is designed solely for girls. One girl stated, "I thought it was interesting that it was all Maine girls" and another said, "I was really excited to go canoeing with a bunch of girls. I thought it would be fun." They felt the experience was enhanced by its all-female focus. One girl said,

I just thought it was a brilliant idea, like I never heard about doing that before. Like I've heard of going to camp and everything and I knew that you could go out and paddle down the Allagash but as a group I thought that was a really good idea. Just to get a bunch of girls together that had never met before and go camping and I thought that was just a nice idea in itself.

To participate in the program, each girl went through an extensive application and admission process and was chosen based on a variety of criteria that illustrated her desire “to challenge herself physically, mentally and socially” (George, 2002, p.7). The process included submitting an application, a personal interview, and written references from adults in their lives. Once an applicant had been accepted to the program, financial aid forms were completed, an adult female mentor chosen, and \$200 towards tuition was raised. When the girls chose to participate in this program, they committed not only to a 23-day canoe expedition but various other components such as a paddle-making weekend, public presentations, and a mentoring project.

For most of the girls, the decision to participate was supported by their parents and caregivers who hoped that through this experience their daughters would gain confidence, improved relationships, and an understanding of self, others and the natural environment¹⁰. They expected their daughters to learn and grow from the experience and therefore supported their daughter's decision to step out into the wilderness, into a sphere primarily seen as masculine. When parents were asked what they hoped their daughter would gain from the experience, one parent stated,

¹⁰ This analysis was examined from the parent surveys conducted approximately six months after the expedition.

My hope for my daughter was to gain self-confidence. To be challenged and to learn through those challenges her capabilities. I also had hoped that she would understand the dynamics of teamwork and how everyone benefits by working together. Although she has a great appreciation for the wilderness, I hoped she would gain knowledge and greater respect.

The girls in this study were drawn to the canoe expedition because of its uniqueness in serving Maine girls and the financial assistance that removed a limiting factor in their participation. Additionally, their parents were supportive of their endeavor and hopeful that the experience would promote change in their daughters. When choosing the program both the girls and their parents knew their participation would promote change; however, the nature of this change was unclear.

The Ideal Woman

Many of the girls who participated in the program arrived with a nontraditional construction of conventional femininity. They described the ideal woman as “intelligent, powerful, independent, creative, courageous, strong, fun and outgoing and smart in more ways than most women realize.” They felt that the ideal woman, “has to be strong in the sense that she has her own opinions and knows how to express herself.” One girl stated that the ideal woman should be,

Strong mentally and physically, more mentally than physically. I think probably believing in herself and being accepting of others and willing to help when someone needs a helping hand. [She should be] understanding of people’s problems and of the world around them.

The images they shared are of women who exist in their everyday lives; women who care, teach, and love them and who serve as role models. One girl stated, “the ideal woman is strong, determined, um, role model type. Let’s see [she] knows what she wants to do and will do her best to get it. Like my mom!!”

They shared stories of their mothers, female mentors, bosses, aunts, sisters, and teachers who have in many ways helped shape their constructions of femininity. These women play a vital role in the girls’ lives and help them to shape their futures as women and to set goals for adulthood.

When asked how society would describe the ideal woman, some of the girls struggled with this question and dismissed it with statements such as “there are just too many images; there is just too many opinions” or “I don’t know; it is just too complicated.” Several of the girls added physical features as an important component of society’s image. One girl stated, “Society’s image is beautiful, skinny, prissy, like you are supposed to get upset when you break a nail.”

Others used descriptors that differ from their opinion of how they described the ideal woman. One girl stated, “I think society sees the ideal woman as more focused on one thing but I like to have my fingers in everything.” Another girl stated,

Society’s image of the ideal woman would be more based on looks. The ideal woman doesn’t really do much in the outdoors and you can’t really paint a good picture of them. They’re skinny, they’re pretty. It doesn’t seem like we are basing it on much.

She feels the ideal woman should be “serious, yet knows how to have a good time when the time is right.” She would also, “like the outdoors but likes doing other stuff too.”

The data analysis suggests the important role that social constructs play in shaping femininity. The girls described these social constructs as their family members, peers, teachers, and the community in which they live. They used the word community primarily to describe those who have a direct impact on their lives—parents, teachers, and friends. As one girl stated,

I don't really know too much about my community. I try to do community service for school. I don't really know too much about my community. I am not really a community-oriented person. I mean I have my friends and that is about my life—like my friends, my family, my school. That is a huge part of my life.

For most of the girls, community consisted of those with whom they come in contact on a regular basis.

Ironically, at the same time, the girls described the influence that their peers, teachers and parents had in shaping their development; they ignored the larger social constructs that also shape them. The media seemed to play an insignificant role in their development and the ways they described the ideal woman differed from the woman who society values. Several of the girls described the ideal woman as intelligent, powerful, independent, creative, smart, courageous, strong, believing in herself, accepting of others, willing to help others, understanding of people's problems and the world around them, fun and outgoing. Others were unsure of their ideal image and ascribed to those designated by their community, simply stating, "My ideal image, I don't know. Kind of like the community's I guess." One girl was confused by the images and stated, "There is just too many images like there is too many opinions," illuminating her struggle with

developing a clear picture. Most of the girls recognized that society's image of the ideal woman differed from theirs. One girl stated,

I think society they think they need to be skinny; they need to be beautiful, blonde hair and blue eyes. They need to have the Pamela Anderson image. They need to have big breasts and blonde hair and gorgeous blue eyes. They need to be skinny and I mean they need to be able to sing and dance and juggle at the same time. I think society, I think they expect too much of women.

The girls in this study recognized the social constructs that define femininity and the unrealistic image they portray. Research on poor and working-class girls (Bing & Reid, 1996; Brown, 1998; Madden, 2001; Tatum, 1992; Way, 1995) suggests that girls from working-class families have learned that it is virtually impossible to obtain white, middle-class femininity and therefore may construct femininity to include other characteristics (Brown, 1998). It may be these other characteristics that draw girls to participate in an experience such as the canoe expedition, an experience not deemed feminine, in an "ideal" sense, but that matches their construction of femininity.

Common Themes

Common themes were uncovered by analyzing data from a variety of sources. Interviews conducted four to five months and 15 to 18 months after the expedition served as the primary source of data collection and analysis. Secondary sources consisted of a focus group and public slide show conducted six months after the expedition, journal entries and other written reflections, parent surveys and my personal journal all served as instruments to examine the girls' experience.

From the data analysis several common themes arose. I grouped these themes into six categories which include: 1) perseverance, strength and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls' abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls. Many of the themes overlapped and worked symbiotically with others; they influenced each other in many dynamic ways. For instance, many of the girls felt an increase in self-esteem due to the fact that they were proud of their accomplishment—completing the canoe expedition—and through this experience, gained feelings of perseverance, strength and determination, which resulted in an increased ability to speak out (voice) and increased leadership skills. The various themes worked intricately together, offering a variety of outcomes for each individual.

Some of the themes—for instance, theme one: perseverance, strength and determination and theme three: elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride—could have been grouped into one category because of their similarities and the ways in which they tended to overlap. However, because of the frequency with which they were reported and the diverse ways in which the girls discussed these themes, I felt they deserved individual recognition. Additionally, I found it challenging to develop a single term to capture all that the girls experienced and decided to use a variety of descriptive words, with the goal that it would capture the overriding themes in a manner that was coherent to the reader.

Perseverance, Strength and Determination

Perseverance, strength and determination were a prevalent theme found throughout the data analysis. The girls described in detail how the experience prompted for them an inner strength both physically and mentally, and they spoke openly about how these feelings supported them in their everyday lives.

I learned that if I actually pushed myself to do something, I could, because before, when I tried to do something, if it was hard, I just gave up because I didn't want to. But out on the trip I couldn't just say "I don't want to" because that would have been bad. So I learned that I should push myself more, whether I feel scared or just keep trying. Because I never would have tried this before but I had the chance.

Other girls said similar things. One girl concluded, "I feel so proud to have accomplished this trip and I'm proud that everybody made it and now I have the feeling I can do anything I put my mind to." Another girl stated, "On the trip I found what I really had in me and felt that I gained a lot of really nice friends." One girl exclaimed, "I was just proud of myself that I was able to make it through the whole thing. After the trip, I realized that I did have the strength to do it and I was proud that I was able to."

The girls spoke extensively about how the experience made them feel physically stronger and helped them recognize their abilities. One girl said, "It made me stronger and made me realize how strong I am." They carried this strength into other physical activities of their life. One girl said,

Once you do something like that and focus on one part of your body—for like canoeing you use your torso and your arms. After you feel like you can do

everything with your arms. I swing harder when I play softball and I throw harder and straighter. And when we go kayaking I can at least somewhat keep up with my aunt when we are racing. You just after you do something like that you have all the confidence in the world and you want to do everything with that part of your body.

During the trip the girls used their bodies as an avenue for accomplishing a goal. They discovered their physical abilities and learned that they could accomplish goals that required physical strength. Prior to the trip they hesitated and questioned their abilities but after the experience they felt more confident in themselves and felt more “up to the challenge.” One girl said,

I think that at the end of the trip I realized I was just proud of myself that I was able to make it through the whole thing. Before we went on the trip, I like, when I first heard about the trip I was excited. Then I had this period I went through, it was kind of like the week before the trip, I’m like do I really want to be doing this? Do I really have the strength to go? Is everybody else gonna be way ahead of me? I was just I was having second thoughts. But after the trip, I realized that I did have the strength to do it and I was proud that I was able to. I realize things [now] that I probably wouldn’t be too sure about if I didn’t go on the trip. I feel the challenge to push myself.

The feeling of strength has helped the girls in their everyday lives. One girl stated that she learned, “I have to push myself a little harder when I think I am going to give up and that I have a lot more in me than what I think I do.” The feeling of strength promoted in the girls perseverance and determination in goal setting and accomplishing

tasks. The girls drew on their feelings of strength and determination in times of need.

For instance one girl stated,

I think about it now. Like in school I get down because my grades aren't so good and I think to myself well I did that, I got through my trip, I can do this. I can stay after and just get some extra help. It helps me now because I got through the trip. I just think to myself I got through that I can get through this. This is nothing compared to that because that was three weeks and this is just one day. If I am having a bad day I stop and think about it.

Another girl said,

It helps me when I feel like I am going to give up, like on schoolwork. I just got to try to push myself to pay more attention and ask for help or you know just try to not give up as easily and when socially I feel like if I am just going to explode just keep your cool and you know try to be the responsible one I guess.

One girl felt the experience taught her and helped her with perseverance and stated that it "definitely helped me when I was applying to scholarships last year and the stack was five inches tall." Even though she didn't want to, she kept applying. She said the experience, "definitely helped with not giving up and realizing that the reward was going to be worth the trouble." For her college entrance essay, she wrote a piece titled, *Perseverance*, and spoke about the challenging day of pulling up Caucomgomoc Stream. For her closing statement, she wrote the following excerpt,

This experience is something that I will carry with me always. The story and its lesson will carry me through life. The whole day taught me so much about

perseverance and willpower. It showed me that even though things may be very difficult, sometimes the hardest thing is the most rewarding.

This young woman is now a first year student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (MA), studying Environmental and Civil Engineering.

Challenging Assumptions of Girls' Abilities

The interview question, "What would you say others would say about girls rather than boys doing this experience" brought out some interesting results. One girl stated, "Changes people's images of girls and their abilities. Boys are brought up to climb trees and do stuff, this shows others that girls can do it too." The girls voiced the value of how an all-female trip challenged assumptions about their abilities and images of conventional notions of femininity. They also recognized that it was brave and that they were different from other girls in their goals and endeavors for participating in such a program. One girl replied,

I think they think it was brave actually. Cause most people don't really think of girls doing that type of thing. I didn't really think about it until I went on it. I think [others] they'd be more interested because you hear about guys doing athletic things all the time and not girls. Really not for that long of a time.

Although the girls felt their participation would challenge images of girls' abilities, some met opposition to their upcoming experience. One girl stated that the guys in her class were opposed to the trip. She said,

A lot of the guys I talked to were like "what are you crazy, you're not doing that. I mean they were absolutely amazed that a "chick" was going to go out and paddle the river. They were like "I can't believe a chick is going to do that."

This message differed from her beliefs of women's abilities. She said,

It was absolutely amazing for me. I have always grown up [believing] that women are the same as men. We have different body parts but that's it. I can do anything you can do and sometimes better. That's just like my mom was in the fire department and everybody was like I can't believe that. It was the same thing I think. It was the same as my mom [who] went into burning buildings, and saved people's houses. I mean I didn't save people and save people's houses on the canoe trip but I mean people were just amazed. The guys at school were amazed that a girl was going to do something in the outdoors like that.

Additionally, the girls found the all-female program to be empowering and liberating. They felt the time away from boys was essential for maintaining group dynamics and building close connections with other females. One girl stated,

It is so empowering. It shows you that you don't need help, like those times we canoed by the boys and they wanted to help us with our gear and we didn't need them. It shows you what you can do. Every girl should do this.

Another component that challenged assumptions of girls' abilities is their interactions with adult role models. The leaders, mentors, and women resource counselors allowed them to see and interact with women in nontraditional fields and roles. This interaction promoted for some of the girls an interest in pursuing a career in a nontraditional setting. One girl now works as a ranger on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and another is contemplating becoming a trip leader for wilderness programs as a future career. Not only did the girls challenge assumptions of girls' abilities, but also their interactions with adult women allowed them to expand their options for future

employment and allowed them to recognize their potential for working in predominately male occupations.

Elevated Self-Esteem and Feelings of Accomplishment and Pride

As a group, the girls spoke openly about their feelings of pride and accomplishment for completing such a large endeavor. Although the girls' journey—the expedition—was long and complex, full of hardships, homesickness, illness, soul searching and group dynamics, most of the girls stated, “I would do it again” because it made “me feel proud.” As a group, the girls spoke openly about their feelings of pride and accomplishment for having completed such an endeavor. The following quote illustrates these feelings,

I would say the most rewarding part was accomplishing what we set out to do which was finishing and I think we did it with flying colors. We were on schedule or ahead of schedule some of the time and we had lots of challenges during the trip. Some of it was new territory for everybody and I think that the most rewarding part was accomplishing what we set out to do.

The feeling of accomplishment instilled in the girls a sense of self-esteem and a degree of pride in their accomplishments. They spoke about how they were proud of themselves in many ways. One girl stated, “I was just proud of myself that I was able to make it through the whole thing. After the trip, I realized that I did have the strength to do it and I was proud I was able to.” Prior to the trip the girls were concerned about their abilities to accomplish the expedition. One girl said,

I wouldn't say anyone doubted me, except maybe me a little bit. I was a bit apprehensive at first. I was a little nervous. I'd been canoeing before, not a lot

and being away from home for three weeks was intimidating too because I'd never gone that long. But look at me now.

Through their experience, they learned that they were capable and are now less apprehensive about testing themselves. They feel that they "can do anything they set their mind to," and challenge themselves to complete complicated tasks rather than walking away from them. One girl commented, "I now try things I wouldn't normally have tried because I hated to not be good at something. The canoe trip forced me to try things because when you are out there you have no choice." Additionally, they felt the experience was essential in gaining pride and feeling accomplished. One girl stated, "It is the best thing you could ever do. It gives you so much pride when you finish and you feel so accomplished and it is just great. It lets you know who you really are." These feelings allowed the girls to feel accomplished and capable, and they carry these feelings into their lives in many ways. One girl said, "I felt that if I could get through this I could get through anything. Made me feel accomplished and capable."

Questioning Ideal Images of Beauty

During and after the experience, the girls questioned ideal images of beauty. While on the trip their bodies became a source of physical strength. They were complimented on their abilities to accomplish goals and tasks and were not admired for their physical beauty. The reality of an extensive wilderness program is that there are no showers, flushing toilets, laundry facilities, electricity, or creature comforts that humans are used to. The clothes you have consist of what you can fit in your dry bag¹¹ and are minimal. The experience is totally different than everyday life and the girls on this trip

¹¹ Dry bags are heavy-duty waterproof bags that are used to keep personal items dry. The girls put all their personal items in one dry bag. This included their sleeping bag, pad, writing materials, clothes, and any other items they brought with them.

embraced the challenge. Many chose not to shave their legs and wore the same clothing day after day. Rather than bathing they just took a dip in the lake or river and called it “good enough.” This sense of freedom from conventional norms of hygiene allowed them to question ideal images of beauty. One girl said,

You realize so many things that you never realized before you went on the trip you come back seeing the world as totally different. Me, personally, before the trip, I was like there is boys, gotta look nice can't be an idiot and I came back and there is so much more than boys, and make-up and all this stuff.

When the girls returned home they felt more comfortable in a pair of jeans, and sneakers. As one girl said, “I just like living a lot more simpler sorta you know what I mean and just walking around in sneakers and not dressing up all the time” The value of excessive personal hygiene is diminished. One girl said, “You realize you don't always have to take a shower three times a day or you don't have to wear deodorant just to smell good.” She also stated, “I don't brush my hair anymore. I am just like whatever. Messy good. If it is not done oh well. I just like being messy now. I am not like “oh no it is dirty,” I just go along with it now.

Additionally, the girls also learned not to adhere to other people's opinions of style and to ignore negative comments and the sanctioning of dress. One girl said,

I learned that I was a better person. People's opinions matter but it is more like if they say I don't like that shirt you have on I mean it may hurt at first, they don't like how you are dressed, but it is more like if you like the shirt wear it. I mean I learned to be a better person like that. I learned not to let people's opinions [hurt] and if they don't know me they can't really judge me.

Another significant finding is the ways in which the girls viewed food during the expedition. One common change the girls discussed was a conscious decision to eat healthier foods. One girl stated during our interview, “I cook differently. I cook a lot of couscous and tofu. We are having tofu for dinner tonight.” Another mentioned, “I eat breakfast now. During the summer I ate breakfast because while we were on the trip we needed breakfast [for strength] and that changed my diet in the mornings.” During the expedition, food became a source of nourishment, a necessity to accomplish the day’s goals and to maintain strength. While in the wilderness the girls ate voraciously, exuberantly, happily and without concern or limitation. Leftovers from dinner were often eaten for breakfast and I remember one particular lunch which consisted of leftover spaghetti on a bulkie roll with tuna fish. The few days we had treats—no-bake cookies, apple crisp, pudding, brownies, S’mores¹², and root beer—the girls ate without regard to calories or concern about who was watching. This freedom to eat is not present in girls’ everyday lives as they struggle to maintain the ideal image of weight, often dieting and skipping meals to stay or become skinny.

During wilderness adventures that require physical strength food is valued, appreciated and thoroughly enjoyed—even if the meal consists of instant potatoes and soup. Food is viewed as a necessity, a way to maintain strength and to accomplish goals. Additionally, the girls also enjoyed cooking and preparing meals for the group. As the weeks went by they experimented with various foods, often preparing a variety of delicacies that used what was available in the food bin, what had to be eaten and ways to

¹² Smore’s are roasted marshmallows, chocolate and graham crackers—sometimes peanut butter—which are sandwiched together in a big gooey mess.

make it more tasty. Those who were on cook crew were often praised for their creativity and were greatly appreciated as we all liked to eat.

Increased Ability to Speak Out (Voice) and Leadership Skills

The theme of speaking out (voice) was prevalent throughout the data analysis. For example, one girl stated, “I am not so soft spoken now. Like I am willing to speak up if stuff needs changing or if I don’t understand something.” They talked extensively about how the experience helped them to gain leadership skills and the ways in which this influences their everyday life. One girl said,

I am not afraid to speak out any more. At school I’m not so shy. I sit up in front and I say answers. Before I would just sit in the back of the room and not say anything but not any more and I think that is because of the trip.

Several of the girls stated that these feelings were a direct result of the canoe expedition and their opportunities to practice leadership skills. One expectation of the girls during the canoe expedition was for each of them to serve in a variety of jobs and roles. The roles consisted of medic, weather reporter, Leave No Trace coordinator, navigator, naturalist, historian, group journal writer, and Queen. The various roles and jobs the girls were asked to perform were developed by the trip leaders in order to provide opportunities to 1) understand the various components of leading a wilderness trip, 2) gain leadership skills, and, 3) contribute to the community. The most difficult role was serving as Queen. As Queen a girl was designated as leader of the day. She was in charge of planning the daily activities, including wake-up calls, organizing meals, and motivating others. This role allowed the girls to use and practice their leadership skills and challenged them to take charge. One girl said,

I have never really been all that great you know taking charge or when I am put on the spot and told to take charge. I have never really been good at it. I am not one like to try to push people around and not like you are trying to push people you're just trying to get things going the way they are supposed to. I thought it was a little hard cause I'd always get sidetracked by something. But it was a good experience to help us later in life.

Although this leadership role was difficult for some of the girls, they really appreciated the opportunity to be in charge. My reflection is that many of the girls in this study needed permission or space to take charge. In society, this space is narrowly construed and often limited access is granted to girls. When given the opportunity, the girls filled this role with confidence and skill and upon discovering their abilities, enjoyed the experience. One girl said, "I thought it made me feel important being the leader. I thought that was a real good day to test how far we each could go and really pushed us to expand ourselves as people and explore our limits." Another girl said, "I think being Queen is really important because, um, some people don't ever get the chance to be Queen before and some people get it all the time so it is kind of fun." Through her experience she, "actually discovered that I could do it so I can be able to speak out more at school and just realized hey I can do it and that gave me the courage to be able to do it from then on."

For some, they were able to apply their skills to their everyday lives. A few of the girls returned to their schools, joined leadership organizations, and took a more active role in these groups. One girl spoke of how she joined a service organization, which allowed her to get more involved in her school and community, and helped her to

formulate future goals. She said, “I have more leadership qualities in me. Getting more involved with my future and school now.”

Building Significant Relationships with Other Girls

Most of the girls spoke about the difficulties of building and maintaining relationships with other girls. Prior to the experience, some of the girls lacked female friendships, yet through their participation they gained a sense of confidence in interacting and developing relationships with other girls. One girl spoke about how, “she now gets along with girls much better than I thought I would” and that it “was so cool just like talking with someone because I don’t get to do that with girls too often.”

Another girl said,

I value friendships with girls more after the trip. Before, I had a lot more guy friends. I feel more comfortable around a bunch of girls. I don’t place as much importance on having a boyfriend anymore. If I do, I do. If I don’t, whatever, I don’t get upset. Like before I did and I have a lot more girlfriends now to hang out with whereas before I was always hanging around with the guys.

From the relationships they made they spoke intimately about how they valued characteristics in other girls. These characteristics were based on the girls’ personalities, not their external beauty, popularity, or the ways in which they sanctioned the group. Rather, they described their peers as “big sisters” or as really “cool.” One girl said of another,

I know she stood out in me as one of those people who encourage you no matter what happened she’d be like you could tell she’d be so flustered sometimes but

she'd keep going. She'd be so encouraging all the time and I thought that was a pretty cool characteristic in somebody.

Another girl described one of her tripmates as "kind of a big sister to me, she was a big sister to everybody. She wasn't the kind of person to get into fights and didn't take sides." Furthermore, this young woman helped everyone in the group and worked to maintain the cohesiveness of the group. She was also strong and independent, characteristics that many of the girls admired.

The girls also spoke about how the experience helped them to interact and learn from new people and challenged them to interact with individuals whom "they wouldn't normally hang out with." One girl said, "It definitely helped me meeting new people and being with such a diverse group of people created an understanding that everybody had a special quality." Another girl said of the experience, "It taught me to look further than just skin deep. Like I made friends with people I didn't think I would make friends with." Their experience allowed them to work with a variety of individuals to reach a common goal. The common goal was to finish the trip as a group. They also got to meet and interact with a diverse group of individuals. One girl said,

I got to meet people who are kind of shy and people who are kind of in the middle and people who are older and younger and I really think that helped me with my perspectives of people so that now I feel more comfortable around different groups of people and I think that is really important.

At times maintaining positive relationships and "keeping one's cool" was difficult. Living in such close quarters and depending on each other every day led to some arguments and animosity. However, despite these feelings, the girls learned that

they were more likely to accomplish their goals if they maintained a level of respect for each other and each other's individuality. One girl said,

It kind of showed me how we had to help each other out and like even though we are not all on good terms with other people we came together anyways and we were just like we can do this and let's just plow through.

Another girl said,

I think most of the time we all got along well for being on a trip for three weeks but, um, sometimes we had our moments like all people do when you are with that many people for that certain amount of time. We have trouble understanding or you just get really frustrated at times but I felt that was a normal thing that would have happened to most anybody who went and did that stuff.

During the expedition, the girls were challenged to deal with conflicts through group mediation and processing. This involved "circle-time" where we came together as a group to share our thoughts and feelings of the day as well as any personal conflicts we were having individually or with others. When needed, a trip leader would mediate a conversation between two girls who were in conflict with one another. This often resulted in the two girls sharing frustrations, resolving incidents, apologizing, hugging and developing a plan to confront their conflicts with each other, rather than being "mad" or worrying that the other person was mad at them. Most often the issue was a minor misunderstanding that was resolved through talking. Mediation between two individuals rarely occurred but was used when the girls asked for the opportunity. In the one conversation I mediated, the two girls had each thought the other was mad at them for something insignificant, and they resolved their tensions by clearing up the

misunderstanding. This conversation ended in the sharing of positive characteristics they liked about one another, hugs and goals to talk to one another if they thought there was a problem.

During the experience the girls gained a variety of skills that offered opportunities for teamwork, allowing the girls to practice compromising, working with others who don't cooperate, and sharing group decision making. The girls spoke about "feeling more comfortable in different groups of people," and of how the experience increased their confidence of interacting with others. One girl said, "I have more confidence now than before. I can speak out in class. I can join groups of friends. Whereas before I would kind of wait on the outskirts but I don't feel that way anymore."

Additionally the interactions with others on the trip challenged their understanding of friendship and their relationships with others. One girl stated,

I think when I came back I kind of knew what friendship was all about and after I got back I kind of broke off some of my friendships here because they weren't real friendships. Then I gained new friendships because I knew they'd be like a friend and they'd be at my side through everything.

The girls expressed how they gained social skills, patience with others, confidence in their own voice and in interactions with others, and an increased comfortableness around different groups of women. These feelings caused them to evaluate their interactions with others and their prior friendships. One girl stated,

When I got back I saw a big change in the way I acted. I thought I acted normal but I got back to school and I realized that a lot of people I had chosen for friends were not what I thought.

This particular girl spoke about how she feels more grown up than her prior friends and how she finds them to be immature. She no longer wants to “act stupid” and “do stupid things” but rather to take school more seriously and to take her relationships more seriously.

The interaction the girls had with each other allowed them to build significant relationships with each other; relationships they maintain and appreciate. They spoke extensively about the “times fooling around with other girls” and how much they miss each other. One girl said, “I miss like you guys because there is only memories I can have with you guys.” They miss the feeling of camaraderie, the togetherness of the group and the way they helped each other. One girl wrote her feelings in a poem that she left untitled.

*Blue skies one day, gray clouds another,
the rain drip dropped and we sheltered each other.
Though some were sick, and others felt strong,
no matter what we carried on.
Some days just four miles and others fourteen,
we always remembered we were a team.
Either tight convoys or scattered on lakes,
maybe trying to keep each other awake.
Cooking, cleaning, and chopping wood,
we always did the best we could.
Sunburns and bug bites, gigantic and small fights,
we've been through it all together.
No matter what time or even the weather,
we'll all remember this trip forever.*

Summary

As a participant, trip leader and through analysis, I observed how the experience challenged conventional notions of femininity for this group of girls. Women are often described as “unaggressive, shy, intuitive, emotionally expressive, weak, hysterical, erratic and lack[ing] in self-control (especially when menstruating), dependent, passive,

subjective, submissive, indecisive, lacking in self-confidence, and nurturing” (Johnson, 1997, p. 61). The girls in this study challenged these conventional notions of femininity by displaying strength, independence, and confidence. They paddled through 179 miles of Maine’s wilderness, often making difficult decisions which required thoughtfulness and analytic capabilities. During this experience, they also relied upon those familiar and traditional attributes deemed as feminine, such as intuition, nurturing and emotional expression. These attributes helped to maintain the cohesiveness of the group and the social and emotional well being of each individual.

The girls in this study shared many similarities in the way this experience affected them. Through their voices, I examined the six common themes of 1) perseverance, strength and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls’ abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls.

While all of the girls questioned femininity from the outset, they each came to the program with an array of different backgrounds and departed with different outcomes. They left the program with unique understandings of themselves, and their femininity continues to be influenced, challenged and shaped by the complex interactions that influence them after the experience. Participating in the canoe expedition helped to challenge conventional notions of femininity in many complex ways and for some solidified the girls’ already complex understanding of femininity. To describe these complexities, the stories of three girls, Cody, Mazie and June are told in chapter 5 to

illustrate the various ways in which the program challenged conventional notions of femininity for this group of young women.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

NEGOTIATING FEMININITY IN THE WILDERNESS AND “REAL WORLD”

The goal of this chapter was to examine the ways in which participating in the canoe expedition challenged adolescent girls’ constructions of conventional notions of femininity, for specific individuals. Using a case study method allowed me to explore the similarities and uniqueness of the experience for each participant, collectively, and individually. Utilizing qualitative and feminist data, I analyzed the individual participants and the program (the canoe expedition) for their uniqueness and commonalities (Stake, 1995). In chapter 4, I examined the common themes shared by the group. In this chapter, I will share the stories of three girls to illustrate the complexity and the uniqueness of the experience for each girl.

I have chosen three girls, Cody, Mazie, and June, for several reasons: 1) they represent three different approaches to negotiating conventional notions of femininity after the expedition, 2) they each came to the program with different understandings of femininity and their construction of femininity, 3) they each left the program challenging, adhering to, altering, and redefining their constructions of femininity in different ways, and, 4) they each represent the common themes shared by the group in diverse ways. Additionally, I chose these three girls because they live in different locations throughout the state. Cody comes from northern Maine, Mazie from western Maine, and June from southern Maine. To ensure confidentiality, I have changed the girls’ names and left out any identifying features such as racial background, and the names of communities in

which they live. All of the girls come from poor and working-class families since the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls seeks to serve this population of girls.

Challenging Femininity through Voice, Leadership, Confidence & Strength

Description of Cody

At 17 Cody is in her senior year of high school. Cody was first introduced to the canoe expedition in 2002 when she was 15. During the expedition she was evacuated after she slipped on a rock, fracturing her arm. During the 2003 expedition, she reapplied and successfully completed the program at the age of 16. During our first interview, Cody was 16 and during our second interview Cody turned 18 three days later.

Cody said she was initially drawn to the program because,

I decided I would like to do it because it was something my grandpa had done. I thought it was interesting because it was all Maine girls and it would give me the chance to learn about the natural history of the area that I live so close to but don't know much about.

Cody's grandpa was a guide on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and had spent many summers leading groups down the river. Cody was initially thrilled to be "following in his footsteps," but upon having to be evacuated, said of the 2003 expedition, "the second time I wanted to go because I really wanted to finish the trip." Cody also said, "I wanted to go on a trip that would make a difference. Something I'd never tried before."

Cody describes her immediate family as really close and her extended family as relatively close. She spends a lot of time with her parents, grandparents, and other members of her family. She also speaks of her school fondly. She said,

I love school. I love everything. I love talking to people and I love all my classes. I love all my teachers. I don't know, I love it. It gives me something to do during the day. Like summer vacation towards the end just drags for me because I can't wait to go back to school. It has always been like that.

She described her community as fairly private. She said, "I have known the people across the street my whole life but I don't know them you know. It's weird."

Cody grew up in a rural community in Northern Maine. She described the people in her community as:

Older married couples with kids gone off to college. Every husband has a truck and every mom has a car and we all have puppy dogs and it is very quiet at night.

Everybody says hi but you never visit with anybody.

Cody described her community as an outdoor community, "but outdoors for like guys."

When asked what others would say about being a girl doing this type of experience, she replied that, "you would probably meet some opposition to doing it definitely. Like I know I did from my father and friends. They were like why would you want to do that?" This influence resulted in mixed messages about her abilities to complete the expedition. Her father doubted her and "didn't want me [Cody] to go on the trip." The women in her life, her mom, aunt, and female teacher all supported her decision and gently pushed her to follow her goal.

Cody felt that her community plays a large role in setting standards by which men and women should live. She described the ideal woman in her community is "like have a job but work at the bank. Like stay home and cook supper for the husband at night" and "be independent but still come home at night and cook dinner. A lot of my friends'

moms either stay home or work at the bank, [or] as waitresses, teachers or nurses.” She described her ideal image of a female as similar to the community; yet, she is willing to challenge the notion that women are not meant to be outdoors by participating in the canoe expedition.

Cody described herself as “sometimes I am quiet and sometimes I’m not. Depends. I like to listen to what other people are saying and I like to get an idea.” She said others describe her as a “caregiver.” She stated,

I like helping other people feel better. I like talking to other people like all my friends come to me with all of their problems all the time. Sometimes it is kind of hard cause I don’t really have anybody to talk to.

Cody’s long-term goals are to become a nurse, then a nurse practitioner so that she can work under a doctor and eventually run her own practice. She is headed off to college in September, 2005, and has already earning her CNA certification so that she can work at a nursing home for summer and skip introductory courses at college. She sees herself living in a medium size community and moving even farther up North in Maine. She is “drawn between northern Maine, Canada or Vermont, [somewhere] outside of a city.”

From her participation in the canoe expedition, Cody challenged conventional notions of the outdoors as a “male sphere.” Cody gained from the experience an increased ability to speak out, elevated self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills. Her story is typical of research on women who participate in outdoor programs as she acquired skills that helped her to gain voice and to question her lack of confidence in her abilities.

Increased Ability to Speak Out (Voice), Elevated Self-Esteem and Confidence

Before the trip I had less confidence. I would just sit in the back of class and I made good grades but I just didn't take part. I didn't participate in class and now I don't know why just after the trip I have more confidence and now I can just go into class and say what I need to and it is actually a lot better. I am more interested in my classes now that I can speak out and have a part in them.

During the canoe expedition Cody experienced increased self-esteem and confidence and increased ability to speak out (voice). Girls' voices, often muted in Western culture (Gilligan, 1991a), are at-risk as they struggle to remain connected to what they feel and think while negotiating their position in a male-dominated society. As girls transition into adolescence and develop into women, they often learn to silence themselves. This silence often becomes persistent throughout their lives, and if they choose to challenge this social construct, they [girls] often receive negative backlash from others such as peers, teachers, and parents.

The silencing of girls' and women's voices influences one's motivation and participation in and for the task at hand. For Cody, it influenced her participation at school and silenced her contributions to class discussions. In classes, Cody rarely asked questions despite enjoying school both "academically and through extracurricular activities" and "being a good student." Her apprehension is similar to many girls at this age. Since participating in the canoe expedition, Cody no longer fears speaking up. She said,

I am not afraid to speak out any more. At school I'm not shy. I sit up in front and I say answers. Before I would sit in the back of the room and not say anything but not any more and I think that is because of the trip.

Additionally she is not as nervous in her classes that require public speaking or presentations. She stated,

Like today I had to give a presentation in my health occupation class and I wasn't even nervous, so I, I don't know before I would be like *aahh* with my little note cards and shaking and now I go off the top of my head.

By finding her voice, Cody became more interested in school and her contributions to class discussions have increased. Cody attributed her increased desire to participate to the canoe expedition. Along with increased confidence and voice, Cody discovered her ability to lead others. This discovery directly influenced her confidence and resulted in an awareness, that given the opportunity, she could lead.

Leadership

A requirement of the girls during the canoe expedition was to serve in a variety of jobs and roles. Jobs consisted of cooking, cleaning, sanitizing water, and gathering wood. Roles consisted of medic, weather reporter, Leave No Trace coordinator, navigator, naturalist, historian, group journal writer, and Queen. The various roles and jobs the girls were asked to perform were developed by the trip leaders in order to provide opportunities to 1) understand the various components of leading a wilderness trip, 2) gain leadership skills, and, 3) contribute to the community.

The role Cody found particularly challenging, yet extremely rewarding, was "Queen." When serving as Queen, a girl was designated as the group leader for the day.

She was in charge of planning the daily activities, which included wake-up calls, organizing meals, and motivating others. She made all final decisions for the group¹³ and led group discussions and decision making processes. For a few of the girls, this position was uneventful as they were accustomed to serving in leadership positions, but for Cody it was an important opportunity to gain new skills and discover her abilities. She said,

Being Queen. That was interesting because I was really nervous. I was like *err* because I had to make decisions and help make decisions and kind of be in charge. I liked being Queen because I liked I just liked being able to decide when to get up, when to go and when to arrive so that was fun. And that was probably where I felt the strongest on the trip. I think being Queen is really important because, um, some people don't ever get the chance to be Queen before and some people get it all the time so it is kind of fun. I just really liked it cause I was like we are getting up now and we're gonna eat on the water and we're gonna get there and that works so I was like, wow, it worked.

When asked to explore her statement, "sometimes people get to be Queen all the time and sometimes people don't ever get the chance," she replied,

At school I was really shy and was never really a leader in much of anything so being Queen I was like, I actually discovered that I could do it so I can be able to speak out more at school and just realized hey I can do it and that gave me the courage to be able to do it from then on.

During the expedition, I kept a journal reflecting on the experience, the natural environment, and the girls. I analyzed the journal for the purposes of this research study,

¹³ As long as the decision met safety requirements and in no way harmed the group or group members. Trip leaders only interjected as needed.

and discovered that on the day Cody served as “Queen” (July 13, 03), I wrote the following entry:

Early rise 6:00am. Cody Queen. Fourteen-mile paddle. Went to Long Lake Dam where we lined our canoes¹⁴. My favorite stretch of river as we dumped into Round Pond. Excellent day! They [the girls] did really well as a group on their final expedition¹⁵-smooth, and efficient.

Later I reflected in my journal, “Cody is an excellent Queen. Quiet but passionate personality. Observant of nature and shares her skills with others-like spruce gum¹⁶.”

My observation of Cody’s ability to lead a group reveals her lack of confidence despite her innate ability. Cody was hesitant about her abilities to lead a group, yet when offered the opportunity, accomplished her task effectively and with great ease. Cody, a quiet, introspective member of the group, needed an invitation and opportunity to serve in such a role. Because each girl was asked to fill the role twice during the expedition, they were able to practice their skills. The girls were asked to lead in a manner that felt comfortable to them. For Cody, this included listening to and helping others—attributes she used to describe herself and attributes that describe a female model of leadership. This leadership style differs from the hierarchical model often used in Western society. When Cody was able to intertwine feminine and masculine leadership styles, she was able to gain confidence in her abilities. In all-women’s groups “women feel freer to interact using these explicitly “feminine” behaviors” (Mitten, 1992, p. 79). All women’s

¹⁴ Lining is the process of using ropes to move a canoe downstream from the shore. In this particular case it was over a dam.

¹⁵ The final expedition occurs during the last five days of the trip. The trip leaders step back and allow the girls to run all components of the expedition. Very little input is given by the leaders and the goal is that the group carries out the remainder of the trip as a team, led by each other not an adult.

¹⁶ Sap from spruce trees can be gathered and chewed like bubble gum.

programs offer opportunities to lead using an alternative style, a style to which Cody could relate to and feel comfortable with.

During the expedition, Cody had her first opportunity to lead, and from this experience she gained confidence in her abilities. "I didn't know I could lead people like that. I didn't know I could and when I found out I could I was still nervous but I practiced and it changed me." She claims this experience transfers to other situations and that she has been able to use these skills in her everyday life. During both interviews, Cody spoke extensively about how she now holds various leadership positions at school. As president of Medical Explorers, a group dedicated to gaining skills in medical professions, Cody is required to 1) invite medical professionals to speak to and work with the group, 2) lead and assign tasks to other group members, and, 3) to speak publicly in front of others. She finds that speaking to audiences is not as difficult as she previously believed. She said,

It helped me be a little bit more of a leader like before I was very, very, shy and I am president of Medical Explorers and I hold offices like that and I don't mind giving presentations in front of class any more.

In Western culture, leadership positions are predominately held by men and a leadership style, dominated by male characteristics, such as aggression and control, is favored (Wilson, 2004). For girls and women, it is difficult to find space that values a feminine leadership style. This lack of space often results in few opportunities to gain leadership skills. The canoe expedition offered Cody a comforting respite from the male model and an opportunity to practice her skills. Upon gaining confidence, Cody was able to apply these skills in her everyday life.

Summary

In summary, Cody came to the experience with mixed messages about her ability to endure such an experience. She found her community supports men's endeavors in the outdoors but not women's. Through her experience, she gained strength, independence and confidence. "I think I have more confidence because I felt I was stronger after the trip and I still feel that way." This strength has taught her that she is capable of leading others and accomplishing her goals. Cody challenged the social stereotypes that the outdoors was a place for men and redefined femininity to include strength, courage, and leadership. Through her interactions with female adult leaders and peers, she saw herself as a risk taker and gained access to leadership. She was able to get around the fact that leadership has been gendered with masculinity (Johnson, 1997) as seen in her community, and she found a place where she felt comfortable stretching beyond her skills and boundaries.

Cody reflected upon the experience during challenges in her life and felt the experience helped her through difficult situations. "I think about it a lot when I am faced with a challenge. I think well I did that then. I carried that canoe or when I was really homesick so I can do this now." Cody's experience built confidence in her abilities, helping her to become a leader among her peers. Additionally, Cody felt that she could do anything she sets her mind to. She said,

I think it has been my best growing up experience so far, being able to go on the river and complete it. And I'm not so shy and everything seems brighter now and I know I can do, I can finish something and I can go up against the challenge and make it. If I got the chance to do it again, I definitely would.

Cody discovered her innate capacity to lead others and applied this skill to her everyday life. From participating in the canoe expedition, Cody gained the ability to speak out (voice), confidence, and strength. Cody spoke extensively about how she draws on these skills and uses them to accomplish her goals. Through Cody's voice, I examined the ways in which her experience increased her confidence, strength, leadership skills, and voice. Despite the social constructs that confine Cody, her experience gave her an avenue in which to challenge constraints, to gain leadership skills and confidence, and to use her voice. Furthermore, I examined how Cody challenged conventional notions of femininity by stepping outside of the social norms that limit her participation in outdoor activities and her communities' belief that the outdoors is a male sphere.

Challenging Femininity in Nontraditional Roles

Description of Mazie

Mazie participated in the 2002 and 2003 canoe expeditions. Her experience in 2002 had such a large impact on her that she asked to return for the 2003 expedition. Her request was accepted, however, she was asked not to merely participate, but to serve as an assistant trip leader. This added responsibility allowed her to participate in staff training and to gain skills as a leader. It is in this role that I came to know and work with Mazie. Mazie was 17 the first year she participated in the program and 18 the year she served as an assistant trip leader. She turned 19 two weeks after our first interview and 20 a month after our second interview.

Mazie's parents are divorced and she lives primarily with her father. She felt that while growing up her parents supported her to be "different" and this difference helped

her to shape her femininity in nontraditional ways. She described herself as a “tomboy,” who as a young girl was always hanging out with Dad, “pulling fish out of the water and skinning deer.” Growing up, her father nurtured her passion for the outdoors and Mazie spent a lot of time with her father, hunting, fly fishing, boating, and camping. She recognized that if her parents had pushed her into that “prissy crap”—wearing dresses—she would not be who she is today.

She described herself as “the black sheep of the family.” When asked why she describes herself in this way, she said,

I am trying to break the mold by going to college and trying to find a career that suits me and something that makes me happy. I just feel like [what] I grew up around is just working because that is how you put bread on the table and that is a job. But you can make yourself happy and have [a] successful life and career by doing things that make you happy and you can sustain and live life.

She said she thinks about her future all the time and is trying to “look at different options for careers in the outdoor field” as well as trying to go to college. Mazie graduated from high school in 2003 and has spent the past two years trying to find the right college and the finances to go to school. Her plans now, two years after high school, are to attend a small, private college where she can earn an associate degree as a forest technician.

Mazie described herself as adventurous and willing to tackle “hands-on stuff,” and found she learns best when she can apply her skills. For her, school was a great place to socialize but not a place where she exerted much effort. This lack of effort, she observed, was not due to lack of ability, but rather a lack of interest in applying herself. She called herself “an academic nightmare for any teacher definitely.” She claimed that

upon returning from her first trip she discovered her academics would influence her future goals and it was then that she applied herself. Her mom states that after the trip, “she was focused on her goals. She had a clarity she did not have before. She entered her senior year upbeat and positive. She was determined to make it a great year.” At the end of her senior year, when Mazie was asked to prepare a graduation speech, she wrote about her experience with the canoe expedition.

Mazie came to the program with an altered conception of conventional norms of femininity. She challenged stereotypes in her many pursuits in the outdoors and her beliefs of what an ideal woman should be like. She described the ideal woman as someone who is “intelligent, powerful, independent, creative, smart in more ways than most women realize.” In her application for the canoe expedition, she was asked to name and describe three people who she admired. She spoke of three women who are strong, courageous, independent, smart, fun, and outgoing.

She said she was first drawn to the program because, “I just love canoe tripping and it just seemed like something really cool for me to go out for 23 days and just paddle. Make your own paddle and you know everything just sounded pretty neat about it.” Prior to the expedition, Mazie also had extensive experience in the outdoors both with her Dad and through her participation in wilderness trips with a group at her school called YETI (Youth Expeditions to Ignite). The purpose of YETI is to help youth ages 14 to 21 develop high self-esteem, decision making skills, leadership, and socialization skills through a variety of activities. The primary activities her group embarked upon were a variety of wilderness trips. Mazie had already canoed the Allagash Wilderness Waterway with this group prior to participating in the canoe expedition. Her leaders for

this program were two male teachers and one wrote a letter of reference for Mazie for her application to the canoe expedition. In the letter he wrote,

I can not say Mazie will be uplifted and radically transformed by this experience.

It is possible to be a turning point but seems more likely to be an identity solidifier and an experience to boost her striving for outdoor recreational work.

She already has a strong sense of direction and outdoor skill.

This assessment seemed to hold true. However, Mazie spoke of the experience as a huge turning point in her life and that while serving as an assistant trip leader, she gained skills to work as a leader in the field. She said of her position, “I just had to show a little more authority and I knew that was what I was there for. I then knew I could step up but before that I was kinda skittish to step up.” From her experience, she learned about the opportunities for women in nontraditional roles and it allowed her to “totally reevaluate my life.”

Nontraditional Career Goals

On July 8, 2002 the day of solos¹⁷, Mazie wrote in her journal,

I don't want to drive cars, switch on lights, turn on faucets, talk on phones or watch TV. I want to gather wood, hunt for dinner, light a fire for cooking, hike, canoe and sleep on the ground. I don't want to see hundreds or thousands of people everyday. I don't want to buy a meal I want to earn it. I want to work hard to make things for myself. I am capable and I will do it.

When asked about that entry a year and a half later, Mazie replied, “from that minute last summer, to this very minute, I feel the same clarity and excitement about my future

¹⁷ Solos consisted of spending 12 hours alone in a designated spot in the woods. The girls had no direct contact with other group members, but if needed could call for help, alerting others with their whistles. The main goal of solos is to offer the girls personal time and space for deep contemplation.

working in the outdoors.” Solos, for Mazie, were an important place for her to discover self-realizations about herself and her future goals. She said,

I just realized so much in so little time that it changed my entire outlook on life.

It changed the way I perceived everything; people, trees, anything just the outdoor world. It changed my entire perspective on life. It was really strange for all of that to happen in about eight hour’s time.

During solos Mazie began to question and develop her future goals. Additionally, she said the experience,

Definitely changed my outlook on life. I knew that I needed to be outside and you know that is what made me happy. But going on that trip really made me realize I have to be outside there is no other option, there is no alternative. But in order for me to achieve happiness I need to be in the outdoors. Definitely helped me to see that. It gave me a way brighter outlook on things like just life in general.

This understanding helped her to set goals and find purpose and meaning in her life. She said, “I didn’t have any specific goals. I guess I felt like I didn’t really have a place, or a purpose or meaning.” Discovering goals and meaning for her life prompted Mazie to improve her grades and her interest in school. She discovered that in order to accomplish her goals she would need to improve academically. Her mom stated that for her daughter this trip was,

A true adventure that changed her outlook. She came back from the trip with so much energy. Her senior year turned out to be full of great things. She was focused more than ever and she attributes this to the experience. She is so clear

about her future plans—how to combine her passion for the outdoors and career in one.

Mazie also stated,

Twice over, this trip has definitely been one of the best things to ever happen to me in my life. It has helped me gain footing for my future and I can't wait to see what the outdoor world holds for me next.

She further stated that, “without it I wouldn't be where I am now for sure. I wouldn't have any direction. I don't know where I would be.”

During the 2002 expedition, Mazie had the opportunity to meet the manager of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, who happens to be female. This interaction prompted for Mazie a desire to obtain a similar position. The thought of working on the waterway and living in her own cabin, surrounded by the natural environment intrigued her. In 2003, Mazie was reacquainted with the manager and offered a position on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway as an Assistant Park Ranger upon completing her duties with the canoe expedition. Since then Mazie has worked seasonally (starting her 3rd season in May 2005) on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway as an Assistant Park Ranger. Her relationship with her boss has supported her endeavors for pursuing a career in a nontraditional field and Mazie speaks of her as a role model for herself. She stated,

She is wicked cool. She was a game warden for a while, and she has worked for the Forestry Service doing fire watches and fire towers. She manages the waterway, which is an incredible feat. She has a whole lot of power and gusto.

Mazie's immediate future plans are to attend college in the fall and to “pursue a career in the outdoor world, hopefully the Forest Service.”

Mazie's desire to embark on a nontraditional career was fostered through her experience with the canoe expedition and is maintained through her interactions with her boss, who serves as an ally for Mazie's dreams, and helps her to focus on her aspirations. From the experience, Mazie also came to many self-realizations and, "how [she] works as a human being."

Understanding of Self and Working-class Values

Mazie shared that the experience allowed her time to think and to discover attributes about herself. Additionally it gave her the opportunity to make changes in her life and to set goals and directions. She said,

It gave me time to find myself a bit. Find a little bit of direction and realize that I was a person and I could make a difference and that my decisions affect me and others. I just think about things now I didn't before. Just a positive force and influence in my life.

Additionally she said,

Since I went on that first trip life has been different. I see it all differently. I think about things a lot differently. Choices that I make, choices that I've made. Possibilities, or options or downfalls, negative influences or impacts or negative outcomes from the decisions I have made or making. Things just seem to occur to me a little quicker now.

In this prior passage, she is speaking about the unhealthy choices she has made in her life in regards to not working hard at school, goofing off, and drinking. During the canoe expedition she felt that the experience provided for her a positive environment in which to discover her life goals. Understanding that she desired to work outside changed her

outlook on life. She said, “I learned how I work as a human being and what I need to do to maintain my being and try to be happy.”

Mazie also spoke about how the trip helped her to relax a bit and to slow down. She said,

Helped me relax quite a bit. Stepping back and evaluating things before jumping to conclusions. I felt like I aged about 15 years in three weeks. Not in a bad way but in a good way it gave me a lot of time to sort things out. Reevaluate everything.

This time to herself, away from everything, gave her “time to think about things that I never thought about before and I had all these strange realizations.” One strange realization is the discovery that she didn’t have to live a life that makes her unhappy. That life is more than just making money to put “bread on the table” and that she can have a career that she enjoys and sustains her financially.

This time away from her family and working-class roots allowed her to analyze her life goals and situations. She said,

I didn’t realize I guess that I was a person before that. Some people don’t ever realize they just go through life as a drone that was like my point [of] realizing that I’m a human being and I have my own path and we are all individuals and we need to know who we are and we are all so different.

She feels that she is different from her family in her desire to have a career that provides her personal fulfillment as well as financial stability. This differs from her family’s belief that a job is good enough if it pays the bills. She speaks of life as a drone because

she felt prior to the experience she was just doing what she had to in order to get by. She said,

Like I was just going to school because that is what people my age did. I didn't think about it. I didn't do well in school because I went to school everyday because that's what people my age did and we screwed off and did whatever. I didn't realize any part of who I was, at all, whatsoever. I was just like a drone just going through life because that is what you do. Just do the routine and you live and then you die.

She felt that at first these self-realizations made her feel strange. She describes herself as feeling strange when she first returned home because she was trying to "fit into my own skin that still seems strange because I realize more and more who I am everyday." Despite "feeling strange," Mazie felt this was an important process for discovering more about herself and she loves, "learning something new about myself everyday." For her the outdoors provides an avenue in which to do so.

Mazie describes the outdoors as an important place for her to make self-discoveries, center herself and to remove everyday trivial matters. She said,

Every time I go out there [outside] I learn something new about myself. I just have another realization cause it gives me time to get away from everything else and stop thinking about traffic and you know what is going to happen next. Am I going to get pulled over? And we all got to be at work on time. When you are in the woods you're not thinking about just looking in front of you. Being in the outdoor world there is just so many more possibilities. I think it just opens up my mind so much.

She said of the experience,

It was good. It was really good. I don't know it got me started on a lot of great things and it's got me headed down a pretty good road. It helped me meet a lot of really neat people and get tied down with neat organizations and doing different things.

Summary

While participating in the canoe expedition, Mazie had the opportunity to interact with women in nontraditional fields. An important part of the program included interaction with women mentors and resource counselors, consisting of foresters, biologists, rangers and other women in nontraditional fields who work on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and immediate surrounding areas. These women met with us at various times during the expedition to share stories about the natural environment in which they work and live. Mazie's desire to work in the outdoors, typically deemed a masculine field, was intensified during her experience on the canoe trip. Access to female role models provided her with the confidence to pursue a career in outdoor leadership.

Mazie's participation in the canoe expedition offered her an opportunity to gain advanced skills in outdoor recreation and leadership. For women, these advanced skills are often a limiting factor in gaining access into nontraditional occupations. Often women are excluded from gaining advanced skills training due to lack of financial means. The financial assistance that the canoe expedition offered allowed Mazie to overcome this limiting factor.

Although Mazie came to the canoe expedition supported by her family and friends and challenging conventional notions of femininity, lacking was a clear sense of who she was. Before the trip Mazie stated that she had “no self-confidence really and I was miserable because of it.” She felt she had no specific goals or aspirations in her life and rather was “just living in the moment.” She felt unhappy and lacked direction. She stated that the trip,

Made me a happier person for a while. It helped me out, I did better in school when I went back my senior year. It gave me more direction so I had a little bit more steam behind me to keep going.

From this experience she gained clarity, a sense of direction, and an understanding of the opportunities in a male-dominated field. Her participation and the outcomes of her participation challenged conventional notions of femininity in that she is decisive, independent, courageous, motivated, and goal-oriented in a profession that is dominated by men. She states, “The canoe expedition helped me from not knowing what I want for breakfast to knowing what I want for the rest of my life. It affects me everyday. I think about it everyday.”

The experience also allowed her to discover that she can have a career that provides personal fulfillment and financial stability. This challenges her working-class notions that work serves as a financial means and that a job is substantial if it provides financial sustenance. This indicates that for Mazie gender may not be the only and most important struggle of her identity but that class may play a substantive role in her identity development.

Mazie continues to challenge conventional notions of femininity by working on the waterway and pursuing opportunities in outdoor settings. Her future plans consist of attending college for a degree as a forest technician and her long-term goals are to work for the Forest Service. For now she enjoys working on the waterway, living in the solitude of her cabin and hunting in her spare time.

Complexity of Challenging Conventional Femininity

“Although the wilderness is a wonderful place for transformation, brief Outward Bound-type courses provide a place to begin, not a place to end” (Arnold, 1994, p. 53).

This quote speaks to the complex nature of transformation and the reality that an individual does not simply change from one experience, rather, an experience can be the first step in promoting change. The degree of this change is often dependent upon the past experiences of the individual. The stories of Cody and Mazie provided clear examples of the ways in which girls who participated in the canoe expedition challenged conventional notions of femininity. However, not every story has an easy and immediate outcome. For some girls, the canoe expedition offered an avenue through which to challenge social stereotypes, yet, upon returning home, they faced an internal struggle to define who they are in the social spheres in which they reside. Change can be a slow, complicated process sparked by an experience which serves as a place to begin, but not as a means to an end. The story of June illustrates this complex reality.

Description of June

June, the oldest member of the group, came to the program after her senior year of high school. Although she was older than the program goals of serving 14- to 17-year-olds, her desire and interest in participating in the program made her a likely candidate.

June had decided not to attend college immediately following high school and was seeking opportunities to try new things, travel, and explore.

June was originally interested in participating in the program when her mom read an article in the newspaper about the program. She said, “my mom read about it in the newspaper and she was really enthused about it. She was like you gotta go on this it would be a good thing for you. You love canoeing, all this stuff and all girls.” June felt her family and others encouraged her to apply and participate in the program. She also felt that her prior experience in the outdoors prepared her for the program. She said,

We live in the outdoors so all my life I have gone on lots of canoeing trips before. I used to go to this camp called Tim Mountain in New Hampshire and it was only like a week long, but we would go to different islands and canoe and camp and all that stuff.

June lives within 20 minutes of Portland, yet describes the area that she grew up in as “in the woods” and describes her youth as spending time outside. When asked to describe herself she said, “I am a positive person.” She also stated,

I don’t like to be pessimistic at all. Having an upbeat attitude when I walk into a room. I’m [a] honest person. I will try to give you my honest opinion. I don’t steal, lie or cheat and basic principles that my parents taught me I guess. And I like to treat people the way I would like to be treated for the most part.

June describes her family, her mother, father, brother, and two sisters, as “very religious. Well yea, a lot more than most people are.” She says that her “mom rules the household” and describes her brother as her “best friend.” She spoke extensively about the conflicts she has with her mother and the challenges that their relationship endures.

She feels that her “brother has always been the favorite in the family” and said that others say “oh you just think that but it is not the way it is.” However, she truly believes that “he is the favorite,” and that because of this, they are treated differently.

Currently, June is attending college and living at home with her family. She started school in the fall a year after graduating from high school and attending the canoe expedition. She stated, “college has been very positive for me. I feel I fit in there. It is definitely my scene way more than high school.” She finds that college is “liberal” and that she is “becoming more liberal.” She described her community not as her town but rather, “like my community is my circle of friends and like where I hang out and places that are comfortable for me and places where I relieve stress.”

Prior to the canoe expedition, June did not feel that she had significant relationships with other girls. Throughout high school she dated the same boy and spent most of her free time with him. Additionally, she felt uncomfortable around other girls and claims she didn’t know what to say or how to act. Despite this fact she was looking forward to the experience of “being with a bunch of girls.”

Building Relationships with Other Girls

One significant outcome of the experience for June was the relationships she built with other participants. Before the expedition, June spoke of how she had very limited experience and few relationships with other girls. She stated, “when I was around other girls I didn’t know if I had anything to say. I always feel like when I am around girls I feel like I am masculine or something.” When asked why she feels masculine she stated, “I don’t feel like I act like a girl and do all the things that you know chit chat, gossip and stuff like that. Cause I am not like that usually.” She further expressed that when she

was younger she didn't party and wasn't interested in drugs or sex and described herself as a very "bookish" child.

June felt her relationships with other girls changed after middle school. In middle school, June felt she had a lot of friends and an active social life. Other kids liked hanging out with her and she was able to communicate and have fun with her peers. In high school, she felt excluded from conversations because of her lack of interest in sex and drugs. She said, "that is where my turning point was in high school because I didn't even talk about sex and I didn't go out drinking and anything like that so it is almost like I thought that is all they [girls] talked about." School was a tangled web of social norms, one that June was not particularly comfortable navigating. She said,

I had wicked anxiety when I got around people and then on the trip I don't know girls talk about anything. We can say, "I just farted," or something like that and it was like "that's fine." It was fun. We got really relaxed and [I] discovered that not all you talk about is high school relationships and what you did on the weekends because that's private.

June's fondest memories of the expedition are her interactions and relationships with others in the group, and the times when she felt she was able to "act like a girl." She said,

I remember the whole night in the tent where we snuck into the other people's tent and all of us were having this like girlie-girl conversation. It was just really fun because it was just fun gossiping and talking about girl stuff and all those other things. I think that was one of my favorite nighttime experiences with people.

As a result of the experience she said,

I hang out with girls all the time now I'll just go dancing on weekends or hang out at someone's house and like I have things to talk about and say. So I feel a lot more comfortable with them [girls]. I think that probably had a lot to do with the trip because where else would I have gotten any assurance that I could do it?

On the expedition June was strong, athletic, and mentally more mature than most of the girls. She led the group in many ways as a motivator, and as a surrogate "mom." The girls described her as mom because they felt she "didn't take sides, listened to others" and that she was, "strong, nice, down to earth and when you told her something it was confidential." She was more, "like a big sister because she also fooled around." Most of the girls rallied for her attention and appreciated her for her strength and personality. She enjoyed this attention and felt that "the bonding with girls was really cool. That was a definite highlight."

On the canoe expedition, June's strength and interactions with other women were recognized and appreciated. In my journal on July 5th, I entered the following passage,

June is a never ending workhorse. She is much older than the girls and most of them see her as their mom. She often wants to push on and keep going but sometimes gets annoyed too. She's so strong, yet feminine, which is an important role model for the girls. It is important to see that we are physically capable no matter what our make-up is.

This conflicts with images of attractive women as passive and living in relationships to others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Instead, June is strong, and independent, characteristics associated with masculinity. She is able to maintain masculine traits

without disregarding her feminine characteristics—which for her includes beauty, wearing stylish clothes and make-up.

During the experience she gained valuable friendships based on her personality, not her physical features. This experience allowed her the opportunity to evaluate images of beauty, images that throughout her life she has adhered to and been appreciated and valued for.

Struggling with Images of Beauty

Externally, June exemplifies society's image of female beauty. Her petite frame, long blonde hair, blue eyes, muscular physique and small features are valued in Western society. Throughout her life, June has enhanced her natural beauty through various means of regular physical exercise, traditionally feminine clothing, accessories and make-up. Presently, she lacks the capacity to analyze that her physical appearance may have been a target for other girls. Often, girls resembling the desired image of femininity, "elicits the envy, competition, and disloyalty commonly associated with girls' and womens' relationships" (Brown, 1998, p. 140). The ideal girl is often isolated in her perfection (Brown, 1998).

June stated that from the canoe expedition she began to question notions of beauty and body image. She stated, "my self-body image is I am not like I wish I was this. I wish I was that. I just maintain what I got and you know I'm happy with that." On the canoe expedition June wore the same clothes for 23 days, carried the least amount of gear of all the girls, neglected her hair, and didn't shave her legs. Her personal goal during the

expedition was to rid herself of material possessions and to rough it. She even chose to leave her Thermarest¹⁸ at Chewonki, opting instead to lighten her load.

On the final day of the expedition, during the six-hour drive to Chewonki from the St. John River, we prepared for the public presentation¹⁹ and connecting with family members. After 23 days we were tired, smelly, and dirty. Prior to assembling for the presentation, June managed to change into clean clothes, and “beautify” herself. She stood out from the remainder of the group with her perfected image; unsoiled clothes, makeup, platform shoes, and coiffed hair.

A year and a half after the experience, June was still concerned about her looks in the real world. Traditional messages of body image and a male audience brought her back to what she knows and is comfortable with. When we planned to meet for our interview, June showed up in platform shoes, make-up, suede coat and purse, despite the fact that we had decided to walk around the Rachel Carson sanctuary.

Her beauty makes her ideal of femininity complicated. In a society where “women are often prized for their beauty” (Johnson, 1997, p. 6) external appreciation for beauty, either wanted or unwanted, exists. The reality is that June resides in an environment that has praised her beauty. Within the social constructs in which June lives, her family members, peers, and media all value women for their external beauty. Her mother often sends her mixed messages like, “why don’t you go into fashion, rather than science, you’re not good in science” or “you got to go to the gym because your butt’s fat.”

¹⁸ A thermarest is a small sleeping pad often used on camping trips.

¹⁹ The public presentation was attended by parents, friends, Chewonki staff, mentors, and the public. The girls shared stories, skits, poems, and journal entries about their experience.

Furthermore, June struggled with society's image of the ideal woman. She stated, "there is just too many images like there is too many opinions." She recognizes that in school they want, "girls to play with dolls and pretend to teach. You know characteristically feminine things," yet, she struggled with the notion that women feel they need to alter their femininity in order to maintain positions of power. She stated,

I don't like the image women think they have to portray because all the executive women are constantly in black. Black suits because it represents the power that they have. They can't wear soft pink and feel like they can come across as serious and I think that is wrong. It is so funny how colors are associated [with gender].

When asked what her ideal image of a woman is, she stated, "old-schooled." She would like her "husband to rule the household." Although June defines herself as old-school and finds it difficult to define the ideal woman, she discusses in detail the inequities of being female in Western society. She said,

I have noticed the push in school of different [traits] and they want girls to play with dolls and like the whole why don't you pretend to teach and do like teacher stuff you know and very characteristically feminine things. So that's cool though to be feminine and be in science and math too.

She then went on to describe a statistics teacher she has in college that is "very like analytical, she can just analyze things and just be like this is how it is" and further stated, "I have complete respect for women that do things that are not the norm." She also feels that "we [women] think differently and those could be strengths and no one gives chances

to women” and that it is unfair that the first woman president is going to have to work a lot harder. She said,

I think that is completely wrong to have to earn like respect. Like don't get me wrong like I am not going to give you respect if you don't earn it. But a woman you know it is like when I am talking about a white guy I wouldn't be like do you know John he is the white guy that works but if he was black you would say that you know? You'd be like he is the black guy that works over [there] and it is just like that shouldn't have to be said. I wish that we couldn't see colors and skin like that because of you know, impressions.

This passage illuminates June's struggle with the impressions that one makes based on one's gender or race. Yet, she is unclear as to how she as an individual can change people's attitudes. She is also supportive of other women's endeavors to be “different” but is hesitant to be overtly different herself. June struggles with the contradictory voices that tell her who she should be and how she should behave.

Summary

June came to this program with strength, perseverance, and opinions (voice) and from it she gained relationships with other girls and allies. She developed skills to interact with other women and now feels this is an important part of her life. She stated, “I am making all kinds of girlfriends now and like that is so important to me. Like ever since Chewonki it has just become more important.” From this experience she found that, “I get along better with girls than I thought I would.”

When removed from society and placed in a single-sex wilderness experience, June had no need to conform to images of beauty and she began to question her understanding of self and the assumptions that shaped her behavior. She stated,

The way I look at life, the way I analyze situations in my life, has just changed you know because you learn to adapt and talk about things like all the times that our group had a problem we just would sit down in a circle and pass the stick around and like talk.

June gained group interaction skills and the ability to talk about her problems. She also analyzes situations in her life and questions her beliefs. More specifically, she analyzed conventional notions of beauty and why she adheres to them. She said,

I think I learned that I want to live a different way than I had ever wanted to live before. When I got back I was like I could be all superficial. I remember I had my nails done going into the trip and I was like why did I do that?

She desires to live simpler but struggles with applying this simplicity to her everyday life. "I just like living a lot more simpler sorta. Just walking around in sneakers and not dressing up all the time."

During the trip, her peers saw beyond her appearance and valued her for many facets of her personality, strength, intelligence, and independence. During the expedition, she chose and was discouraged from enhancing her beauty. Without high heels, make-up, and a male audience, she allowed herself to contest the images of beauty to which she had grown accustomed. Freedom to position herself in a space where these things were not valued allowed her to focus on building significant relationships with other girls, her physical strength and personal growth.

Although June learned a lot about herself, gained significant relationships, and questioned conventional notions of femininity, particularly physical beauty, she returned to the social sphere in which she lives. That social sphere provides for her daily messages of how she should behave. Her story represents the complexity of change and the difficulties of maintaining this change upon returning to the “real world.”

June’s desire to change was complicated by the social spheres in which she lives. For June, the canoe expedition offered an avenue from which to challenge social stereotypes, yet upon returning home this awareness was not supported. June represents the complex reality that significant change is a slow process, which may or may not be sparked by an experience. For June, the canoe expedition served as a place to begin to challenge but not a place to end her constructions of conventional notions of femininity. It also suggests that an individual can be taken into the wilderness with the goal of transformation, but upon returning home may or may not find that transformation significant or easily maintained.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined how individual girls, who participated in an extensive wilderness program, challenged conventional notions of femininity. My analysis revealed the ways in which three different girls challenged or maintained conventional notions of femininity through their participation in the canoe expedition and in their everyday lives. The stories of Cody, Mazie, and June were used to illustrate the uniqueness and complexity of the experience for each girl.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Research Design

The goal of this study was to explore how participating in an all-female wilderness program challenged conventional notions of femininity. My research findings indicate that the girls did challenge conventional notions of femininity through their participation, yet, upon returning home, negotiated these understandings in diverse ways. Some of the girls continued to directly interrupt and challenge conventional notions through their actions while others struggled or reproduced notions that are supported and valued in their everyday lives. The intent of this study was to bring girls' voices—as opposed to women's voices—to the forefront in understanding the outcomes of participating in an all-female wilderness program. Furthermore, it sought to explore the intersections between girls' development and the ways in which participating in an extensive wilderness program altered or challenged their development.

The subjects in this study were nine 13- to 18-year-old girls, who participated in the 2003 Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls, sponsored by the Chewonki Foundation. This program seeks to serve low-income, adolescent girls throughout the state of Maine. Interviews served as the primary method used to gather data from the girls. Secondary sources consisted of a focus group, public presentation, parent surveys, journal entries, my personal journal, applications, interviews, newspaper articles, trip reports, and a graduate thesis which provided the framework for the program (George, 2002). Interviews were conducted twice, one four to five months after the experience and another 15 to 16 months after the expedition. The multiple interviews served as a

strength of this study as they allowed me to examine emergent findings and served as a cross reference in data analysis. Additionally, the methods used allowed me to uncover the diverse ways in which the girls utilized their understandings in everyday life and how these changes influenced their long-term decision making.

Utilizing feminist and qualitative data methods offered an avenue to examine girls' voices and to give meaning to their experience. Interviews, a focus group, and the public presentation were audio taped, transcribed, and coded. A case study analysis was conducted on each girl. This three step process provided a descriptive overview of each participant and allowed me to discover the ways in which these girls challenged conventional notions of femininity, both collectively and individually. From this analysis, the stories of three girls were told to examine the varying ways in which the experience challenged conventional notions of femininity and how the girls navigated these understandings in their everyday lives.

Summary of Findings

The data analysis of the nine participants revealed the following themes: 1) perseverance, strength and determination, 2) challenging assumptions of girls' abilities, 3) elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride, 4) questioning ideal images of beauty, 5) increased ability to speak out (voice) and leadership skills, and, 6) building significant relationships with other girls. These findings were similar to the research on the benefits of same sex experiences for women and the potential outcomes of participation (Arnold, 1994; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Henderson, 1994, 1996a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Henderson & Grant, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Perry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997; McClintock, 1996;

McDermott, 2004; Mitten, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000; Warren, 1996), yet, they add a significant contribution to understanding the experiences of adolescent girls.

Although the girls shared several similarities in the ways their participation challenged conventional notions of femininity, each narrative is unique. Understanding the distinctive experience of each girl adds complexity to the research, a complexity that is shaped by the nature of their experience and the outcomes. The canoe expedition served as an integral component for challenging femininity, yet, some of the girls came to the program with already altered notions of femininity and upon returning home received varying degrees of support in their new understandings. This is evident in the three stories of Cody, Mazie, and June who were examined to highlight the similarities and uniqueness of the experience for each individual.

For instance, Cody now uses her voice and maintains her leadership skills through extracurricular activities at school. She now serves as a leader in these activities and is confident in her abilities. Although she did not receive significant support from her community and family in constructing altered notions of femininity, she persists in her new understandings. She challenged the notion that her community supports the outdoors as a male sphere, and discovered the valuable rewards the outdoors can hold for women.

For Mazie, the canoe expedition did not alter her perceptions of conventional notions of femininity. Rather, she came to the experience with an already altered sense of the ideal woman. She did however, find a place, which supported her construction of femininity and helped her gain advanced skills for a nontraditional career in the outdoors.

Lack of skills is often a limiting factor for women in gaining access to nontraditional professions and the canoe expedition allowed her to gain the skills needed to pursue an outdoor career.

June's experience illustrated the complex nature of transformation and suggested that the experience for her was the first step in promoting change. June challenged conventional notions of femininity by gaining significant relationships with other girls and questioning ideals of conventional notions of beauty and body image. However, her story does not offer an immediate transformative outcome. Rather, June struggled to define herself as an individual in the social constructs in which she lives. These social constructs provide her daily messages of how she should behave, and lack of support from others has made it difficult for her to maintain this change upon returning home.

The stories of Cody, Mazie, and June illustrated the significant role that others have in shaping one's gender identity. All three narrated the ways in which their families and friends influenced their development. Cody received mixed messages from her immediate family members, with her father and mother contradicting one another. Support from female mentors in her life also contradicted the larger social environments in which Cody lives. Her community, which she recognizes as having a large impact on shaping men and women, sees the outdoors as a male sphere; a sphere designated for men's recreation, not women's. Mazie's story differs in that she has been supported by those closest to her in defining an altered image of femininity. She recognized that her parents helped shape her to be different, and she has received support from teachers, friends, and recently her supervisor at work. June's story is more complex in that she received from her family and friends, images of the way women should behave and these

images are not congruent with her new understandings. This lack of consistency causes June to cautiously balance herself in multiple spheres.

This study indicates the value of recognizing the complex relationships and social spheres that shape one's identity. Although the wilderness and outdoor programs designed for girls and women may challenge social stereotypes, participants return to the social constructs that have significant influence on their development. As these systems are slow to change, it is imperative that we recognize girls' struggle "into the sea of Western culture" (Gilligan, 1991a, p. 37) and help them negotiate their flow back into the culture.

Another interesting outcome of the girls' participation in the canoe expedition was the way in which it helped them reconfigure their aspirations and life goals. The experience helped them look beyond traditional roles to see themselves as capable in various fields. Mazie's story provides a clear illustration of this outcome. Other examples include the ways in which the girls speak of their outdoor recreational abilities. When asked if they saw themselves as an outdoorswoman, only two identified themselves as such prior to the trip, yet seven girls felt they were after completing the expedition. One girl enjoyed the experience so much that she attended a five-week hiking trip through Chewonki the following summer. During our interview she spoke of how she feels she could become a trip leader if she wanted and is now considering ways to purchase gear and prepare for a future in outdoor recreation.

Limitations

The small number and selection process of the girls participating in this study constitutes a limitation of the study. Only nine girls participated in the study and all nine

of the girls participated in the 2003 expedition, the second year the program was implemented. The selection of participants was not random; rather, they were selected based on the year they participated in the program and the year I served as a trip leader for the expedition.

A second limitation of this study is the lack of diversity among the girls. The canoe expedition is designed for low-income, adolescent girls who reside in Maine. While the canoe expedition seeks to serve girls from various cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds only one participant in the study was not Caucasian. While this is representative of Maine demographics, it is also a limiting factor in understanding how participation in an all-female wilderness program challenges girls' constructions of femininity from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, this study focused only on girls from poor and working-class families from Maine and does not represent girls from other states, countries, or socioeconomic backgrounds. It also examines the experiences of adolescent girls, ages 13 to 18, and does not examine younger girls and women in early, middle, or late adulthood.

A third limitation of this study is that the program, the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls, seeks to recruit poor and working-class girls who are willing to challenge themselves physically and mentally. The fact that the girls chose to participate in a program that centers on an extensive wilderness experience indicates their interest and desire for shaping their development or identity in unconventional ways. Despite the fact that the outdoors is still predominately viewed as a masculine sphere, the girls were willing to challenge social norms and beliefs and to claim the wilderness as a place for

females. This interest was supported by their families and many of the girls came to the program with altered notions of femininity.

Additionally, research on girls' development indicates that girls from poor and working-class families tend to construct femininity in diverse ways and tend to disregard a white, middle-class notion of femininity. The fact that these girls all came from poor and working-class families who support the girls' constructions of femininity to include diverse roles may influence the research findings. To truly understand how participation in an all-female wilderness program challenges conventional notions of femininity for adolescent girls, research with girls from various socioeconomic backgrounds would provide a more comprehensive view on the ways in which one's experience challenges or does not challenge femininity.

A fourth limitation of this study is the time period in which it was conducted. To truly understand how their experience influences their long-term decision making—life choices, ambitions, and goals—future research conducted with the same girls should be conducted. Ideally, the girls would participate in interviews three, five, and ten years after their participation. This longitudinal study would provide a significant understanding of the influences of the girls' experiences in their long-term decision making.

Future Research

Prior to the 1980s research conducted on girls' and women's experiences in the outdoors was minimal. The 1980s brought about systemic change in offering outdoor recreational programs designed solely for women. Since then a variety of programs have been developed focusing on program planning for women and girls, which reduces or

removes limiting factors and constraints for girls' and women's access to outdoor recreation. The Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls is one such program which offers opportunities for girls and removes a constraint often limiting females' participation—a lack of financial resources. As programs develop which foster girls' experiences, continued research on girls' is necessary in order to add their voices to the literature on the benefits and outcomes of same sex outdoor experiences.

Additionally, research that examines the intersections of wilderness experiences and girls' development can offer program planning strategies that consider the complex nature of girls' developmental theories. Continued research that explores the ways in which girls' wilderness experiences challenge conventional notions of femininity and how the girls navigate these changes in their everyday life should be conducted in order to provide a comprehensive examination of the ways in which participation in an all-female program challenges girls' constructions of femininity. It would also add an avenue for examining how the girls navigate their understandings upon returning to their everyday lives.

Another potential area of research is with girls and women in varying age groups. This study focused exclusively on 13- to 18-year-old girls and studies with younger girls and women may offer different results. As adolescence is a critical period of development, the girls in this study may have been more influenced in the long-term than adult women who undergo a similar experience. Additionally, most of the girls in this study already had prior experience in the outdoors indicating that more and more families are spending time with their daughters outside. This may not hold true for older women, in early, middle, and late adulthood. This raises some interesting questions about

generational differences in regard to exposure, access, and perceptions of the outdoors as a place for young girls, teens, and women.

Another area of future research is with girls from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. This research focused solely on girls from poor and working-class families. Future research from a variety of socioeconomic groups would help to examine the ways in which participation in an extensive wilderness program challenges or does not challenge girls' constructions of femininity. As constructions of femininity tend to be focused on white, middle-class notions of femininity, girls from poor and working-class families tend to shape their femininity in different ways. This was evident throughout the study in the way the girls describe the ideal woman, their future goals and aspirations and the ways in which their families support their endeavors in the outdoors. While this was not a comparative study, research from different class backgrounds may indicate that girls from different socioeconomic groups may challenge, maintain, and adhere to conventional notions of femininity in diverse ways. Upon returning home, they may disregard or maintain their changes or understandings and navigate their way back into the social locations that shape their development differently.

Future research that examines girls' experiences from various racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds is essential in examining the experiences of girls from different social locations. Recent research on girls' development stresses the importance of understanding girls' experiences from various backgrounds as the experiences of girls may differ based on one's racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic status, as well as the location of one's community—rural or urban. All of these factors influence girls' identity development. Understanding the unique experiences of girls from different

locations would add a complexity and richness to the data, and allow practitioners to understand the complex nature of each individual's identity. It would also offer strategies for program implementation and planning that focus on the diverse and complex identity struggles experienced during adolescent development.

Implications of the Study

Traditionally, girls' experiences have been grouped simultaneously with those of women and their voices have been excluded from the research on participation in wilderness programs. Women convey feelings of increased self-esteem, self-respect and self-integrity through their participation in outdoor recreational programs (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Parry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997). Additionally, women report that recreating in the outdoors allows them to shed self- and society-imposed images of women (Mitten, 1992). The benefits of participation are numerous and extensive research has been conducted on the rationale of women's programs (Arnold, 1994; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Henderson, 1994, 1996a; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Henderson & Grant, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998; Hornibrook, Brinkert, Parry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997; McClintock, 1996; McDermott, 2004; Mitten, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000; Warren, 1996). Lacking in the research are the voices of girls' experiences.

The purpose of this study was to include girls' voices in the examination of same sex experiences for females. This study sought to include the voices of adolescent girls and to explore the ways in which their participation challenged conventional notions of femininity. Furthermore, the research explored the ways in which the girls negotiated these findings upon returning home. This added a significant addition to the research on

same sex experiences for females, particularly girls, and offered insights into the diverse outcomes of their participation.

While this study validates research on all-female wilderness experiences—for instance, increased self-esteem, self-respect, self-integrity, and the shedding of self- and society-imposed images of women—it adds voice to a population of females who have primarily been underrepresented. By investigating the ways in which the girls' participation challenged conventional notions of femininity, I was able to examine the ways in which their participation promoted change and the impacts their change had on their everyday lives.

Through their experience, the girls gained perseverance, strength, determination, increased ability to speak out (voice), leadership skills, and significant relationships with other girls. They questioned conventional notions of femininity by challenging assumptions of girls' abilities and questioning ideal images of beauty. Their experience allowed them to value food and to view food as a source of strength—not a desire that must be controlled. They ate voraciously and didn't concern themselves with how many calories they were eating, how much fat, and dieting. This allowed them to view food positively rather than negatively and questioned conventional notions of women who control their appetites.

Several of the girls developed a desire to work in nontraditional fields and reevaluated their future goals and careers to include nontraditional occupations. This is evident in the story of Mazie who through her experience discovered that she could seek employment in an outdoor occupation—historically a nontraditional field for women. Through her experience she gained advanced skills in outdoor recreation and leadership,

which is often a limiting factor for women's access. Mazie's story, while the most unique, is at a period in her life where she is working full-time. Mazie participated in the expedition when she was 17 and 18, the period in her life where she was most extensively analyzing her future career choices. For the younger girls this is not an immediate concern in their lives and future research would be necessary to examine their upcoming choices. Despite what decisions the girls make about their future employment, the experience allowed them to consider a variety of options—options that have historically been considered a nontraditional option for women.

The girls also spoke extensively about how they draw on the experience in times when they are having difficulties. For instance, several of the girls spoke about how the experience helped them academically. They rely on the feelings they gained through their experience when life is challenging and they need reassurance that they can accomplish a goal. The ability to draw on the strength, determination, and perseverance that they gained through their participation has implications for their future as women. Characteristics of strength, determination, and perseverance tend to be associated with male personalities. The girls in this study have learned and experienced the feelings associated with these characteristics and will be less likely to adhere to stereotypes of women as passive, inefficient, and vulnerable. Instead, their reality consists of an understanding of their abilities and a strength and determination for accomplishing their goals.

These feelings have prompted for them elevated self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and pride. While these characteristics tend to be masculine traits the girls have learned to gain these feelings while working in collaboration with others. A

goal of the program is to help Maine's adolescent girls discover their inborn capacities for perseverance, courage, compassion and insight, and to provide girls opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with peers and adult mentors (George, 2002). Mentors include adult women in the girls' community who have committed to developing relationships with the participants, meeting and conversing with the girls prior to and after their participation in the canoe expedition.

While the girls learn leadership skills—such as decision making and taking charge—they also develop skills which include cooperation, nurturance, and considering the needs of others. Conventional leadership tends to be viewed as direct, authoritative and status-derived rather than democratic, collaborative and interpersonally oriented (Freeman & Bourque, 2001). This so called “feminine style” tends to be neglected and devalued in traditional models of leadership and therefore often limits girls' access and participation in leadership positions. The girls in this study were able to gain valuable leadership skills while maintaining attributes traditionally labeled as feminine. This was evident in the story of Cody who was first apprehensive in her abilities to serve as Queen—the group leader of the day—yet found the experience rewarding. Cody's strength as a leader included listening to and helping others. Through her experience, Cody was allowed to redefine leadership to include compassion and collaboration, skills that were previously not valued in her everyday life. She is now using her skills to lead groups at school and is less intimidated to speak in front of others, make decisions, and work with and lead peer groups.

This experience also allowed the girls to build significant relationships with peers. This was an important outcome of the experience as prior to the expedition most of the

girls felt uncomfortable and unsure of how to interact with other girls. This was evident in the story of June, who prior to the trip felt that she didn't have significant relationships with girls her age. She also spoke about how she had felt uncomfortable interacting with females. This was a consistent theme for many of the girls and their participation in the canoe expedition allowed them to break down stereotypes of others girls—as masculine, girlie-girl, or snob—and to interact with those they wouldn't normally have associated with. The girls have learned at a crucial age in their development how to cultivate significant relationships with other girls and to build allies with other women. This connection can offer valuable skills for maintaining positive relationships with other women as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Another significant finding was that most of the girls spend or have spent a significant amount of time outdoors. Whether this is consistent for girls from Maine, girls primarily from poor and working-class families, or girls nationally is unclear. Further research on this would need to be conducted to examine if this is consistent with girls in general, girls from particular geographical areas or socioeconomic class.

Most of the girls with a predominant male figure in their lives—a father or stepfather—had extensive experience in the outdoors, especially with recreational experiences traditionally labeled as masculine such as hunting and fishing. For other girls, they had extensive experience with either their mother or another adult female but their skills were predominately in kayaking or camping and included more group activities with family members or friends. Despite which recreational activities girls and parents chose to do together, most of the girls had experience in the wilderness prior to the expedition, reducing the fear of the outdoors as a “scary or intimidating event”

(Warren, 1985). Even for the two girls who live in families with limited outdoor interests, they both had previously attended camps that focused on outdoor skills that helped to reduce their fears about being in the outdoors.

The benefits of an all-girls program, particularly at adolescence, allow girls to experience the outdoors and the wilderness with other women and to view the outdoors as a feminine sphere. The girls in this group were able to align the outdoors as a place in which they could accomplish goals and tasks—tasks deemed as masculine or feminine—with women. They were able to place themselves in two domains—being in the wilderness and being a girl. For instance, one evening myself and a few of the girls sat on the shore watching the sunset and painting our toenails. We were able to break down the assumptions of what it means to grow up in a culture that identifies the outdoors as a masculine sphere and that women who recreate in the outdoors are unfeminine, weird, deviant or a lesbian (Loeffler, 1997). The girls in this study were uninhibited and sought out interactions with each other that supported their femininity, yet allowed them to challenge stereotypes.

This study also reinforces the research on girls' development which suggests that girls from poor and working-class families tend to challenge white, middle-class notions of femininity. What I discovered is the way in which poor and working-class girls from Maine negotiate middle-class femininity is complex. This validates prior research on poor and working-class girls from Maine (Brown, 2001 & 2003; Madden, 2001), which indicates that girls from poor and working-class families tend to disregard traditional notions of white, middle-class femininity and instead affords the girls “a wide range of physical and verbal expression” (Brown, 1997, p. 685). With the support of their

families, the girls tend to resist the dominant social construction of femininity (Brown, 1998). This study validates these findings as the girls spoke extensively about the ideal woman as someone who is “intelligent, powerful, independent, creative, courageous, strong, fun, outgoing and smart.” Additionally, they spoke extensively about real women in their lives—mentors, bosses, aunts, sisters, mothers, and teachers—as helping to shape their femininity in diverse ways. They also tended to ignore the larger social constructs that define femininity, such as the media, and instead adopt a portrayal of women as capable, independent, strong and believing in themselves. Although they are aware of the traditional notions—especially regarding beauty and body image—they tend to disregard or ignore them.

One significant contribution to the research on poor and working-class girls from Maine is the way their participation in an outdoor recreational program offered an avenue from which to challenge traditional notions of working-class. For instance, Mazie speaks extensively about how she has discovered a desire not to live life “like a drone” and has learned she wants to work not merely to “put bread on the table,” but to work in an environment that is also personally fulfilling. Mazie was able to expand her aspirations without losing her working-class values and roots—which include working hard and paying the bills. Mazie does not reject her working-class values but rather just a certain aspect of it—working like a drone—and instead is consciously aware of her social class and location and disregards what has been accepted by others, particularly her family, as “life.” Instead, Mazie is interested in finding a career that not only sustains her financially but also physically and emotionally. This consciousness raising has allowed

Mazie to seek employment in a setting that will make her “happy” and to further her education in order to obtain her goals.

Another finding consists of the ways in which participation in an all-female wilderness program offers girls the opportunity to resist social stereotypes and promote positive gender identity development. Researchers studying girls’ development have termed these places a “hardiness zone” (Brown, 2003; Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999). Outdoor programs that provide girls interaction with caring adults, opportunities to take risks and challenges, time away from the media and society, and where girls work together and depend on each other for support, encouragement, and strength provide girls an avenue where they can challenge stereotypes and conventional notions of femininity. Additionally, this research indicates that all-female wilderness programs can encourage positive relationships between females and challenge girls to take themselves and other women seriously.

[H]ardiness begins to define areas of knowledge, skills, and support that an individual can develop to resist and transform stresses. Through this perspective, relationship and educational contexts in which girls find themselves can be assessed in terms of their capacities to facilitate hardiness, that is, to be a ‘hardiness zone.’ Thus, for adolescent girls to develop capacities to resist stresses that lead them toward negative risks and poor long-term life prospects, they need experiences in which they can exert control over more than their bodies, sexuality or appearance; can connect to their own worth, to a positive belief system, and to others who will commit to them; and can experience support and encouragement

to learn and persist in the face of struggles. (Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999, p. 190)

Unfortunately a “hardiness zone” does not consist merely of a programmatic intervention aimed at girls but rather a systematic change in which girls can experience greater control, commitment and challenge (Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999) in their everyday lives. This is often furnished through relationships with parents and other adult women—mothers, friends, teachers, and counselors—as well as in their communities and schools. While these systems are slow to change, it is through programming that offers girls opportunities to use their bodies and in which girls can experience strength, courage and the chance to critique narrow social conventions of femininity (Brown, 2003) in which practitioners who work with girls can provide a “hardiness zone.”

Luckily, for most of the girls in this study, they returned to families who serve as a critical arena for the development of hardiness (Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999) and significant relationships with adult women—their mothers, aunts, teachers or other chosen mentor—help them to continue to build relationships and critique social stereotypes. Though their participation in the canoe expedition offered them the opportunity to critique social conventions, exert control over their bodies, connect to their own worth, and provided a sense of purpose, connection to others and a place in which to feel challenged and mobilized rather than defeated (Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999) this space does not necessarily exist in their everyday lives. While certain experiences can provide a “hardiness zone,” the ultimate goal is that these places will exist in the girls’ everyday lives and will be fostered by parents, teachers, and

communities, allowing girls the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and create social change. Until systematic oppressions are removed from the larger social environments in which girls live, opportunities that allow girls to connect to their own worth, exert control, build significant relationships with other girls and women, critique narrow social conventions of femininity, and promote the girls to use their bodies physically (Brown, 2003; Deobold, Brown, Wessen & Brookins, 1999) should be offered.

Practitioners of outdoor programs which consider the diverse needs of girls' development in program planning and implementation can offer spaces in which to provide a "hardiness zone." Designing all-female wilderness programs—as opposed to coeducational programs—offers the greatest opportunity for girls to experience a variety of outcomes. This study illustrates the desire girls have to work with other girls and the desire they have to challenge traditional notions of femininity. Each participant stated, "I liked the fact that it was all girls," and they valued the opportunity to work with and develop significant relationships with other women. Adolescence is a critical time in girls' development (Gilligan, 1991a) and any opportunity where adults can provide girls a safe avenue in which to explore their femininity and social constructs is essential in promoting healthy development. This research indicates the value of providing outdoor recreation programs that follow the suggestions laid out by feminist scholars in promoting female-friendly models of outdoor programs for adolescent girls.

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APPENDIX A**INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE:
INTERVIEW #1**

What were your feelings about the trip prior to going on the trip?
What were your feelings during (beginning, middle, end)?
What made you decide to go on the trip?
What do you most remember about the trip?

What were your experiences with the outdoors prior to going on the trip?
Would you have considered yourself an outdoor adventurer prior to your trip?
If not would you consider yourself an outdoorswoman now and if so how?

What skills did you gain or learn?
How do you apply the skills you learned at home/school/work?
What was the most challenging part about the trip?
What was the most rewarding part about the trip?

Tell me about paddle-making weekend? Was this beneficial and how?
Tell me about your solo experience.
Tell me about being Queen for the day and the various other jobs/roles.

What did you learn about yourself while on the trip?
Did your experience change you in any way? If so, how?
Did it change your outlook on life? If so, how?
Is there anything you changed about yourself after the trip? If so, what?

How was it living in such a close community?
What can you say about the people you met and your interactions with them?
What did you learn about working in a group?
Have you been able to apply this to your everyday life?

Is there anything you felt changed while you were on the trip? If so, what?
Did anything seem strange when you first came home? If yes, what?
Is there anything that still seems strange?

What were the best components of the program?
What were your least favorite components?
What would you change about the program to make it better?

How have you worked with your mentor? How often? What do you do?
What do you think about this part of the program? How helpful has this been to you?

What advice would you give to someone going on her first trip?
Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience?

APPENDIX B**GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP**

As a group let's talk about the trip as a whole.....what do you remember most about your experience?

What stories do you tell friends and family about your experience?

What was the hardest part of the trip?

What do you miss most about your experience?

What do you miss least about your experience?

What skills did you gain or what did you learn about yourself while on the river?

Let's spend some time talking about the various roles that we filled on the trip, such as navigator, cook etc.

Did anything feel strange when you got home and if so what?

How do you feel about yourself as an individual and as a group for completing this expedition?

APPENDIX C**SAMPLE OF PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS**

What is your relationship to the participant in the canoe trip? _____

What did you hope your child would gain from participating in the canoe trip?

What were her reactions to the trip after returning home?

Did you notice any changes in your child upon returning from the canoe trip? If yes, what were those changes?

Do you feel the experience helped her in any way? If yes, how?

What do you think could be made to make the program more beneficial to girls who participate in the future?

What changes do you think could be made to make the program more accessible to girls?

Please include any other comments you wish to share.

APPENDIX D

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE: INTERVIEW #2

Participation in the Canoe Expedition

1. Did people think you could complete the canoe expedition? Did anyone doubt your ability? Who and why did/didn't they? How did this make you feel?
2. What drove you to apply and complete this experience? How has completing the experience made you feel?
3. Can you describe your first experience in the outdoors? When did you first become interested in the outdoors?
4. If you had to describe the canoe expedition to someone who didn't know about it what would you say?
5. What would you tell others about your personal experience?
6. Can you describe a time when you think about or remember something (reminisce) about the canoe expedition?
7. What stories do you tell your friends or family about the experience?
8. Can you describe what you remember about the experience, how it made you feel, how you feel now about your participation?
9. Can you share with me any skills you gained or learned from the experience that you are able to use in your life?
10. Can you describe anything that you learned about yourself from your experience? Can you provide an example?
11. Did the experience change you in any way? Can you provide an example of how?

Background Information & Self-Descriptions

1. Can you tell me how you would describe yourself? How would people who know you describe you?
2. How would you describe your family? Your community, school, friends?
3. Tell me something about what your life is like right now? What do you care about, think about? (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986)
4. What stands out for you in your life over the past year?
5. Do you like high school/middle school? Why or why not? What are/were the positive things about your high school experience and your middle school experience? The negative things? (Fine & Weis, 1998)
6. Can you tell me a story about your education, something that stands out for you?
7. How did school prepare you for your experiences on the canoe expedition? Did they support or not support you in this decision?
8. How has school ever made you question your abilities? Provided you with opportunities and challenges that have ever stimulated you or held you back? If so, can you provide an example?

Gender

1. Think about the women and men in your neighborhood. Tell me about the images of women and men in this community. What are the kinds of things they do? What are the expectations of for women/men? How do you feel about these? Do you meet them? (Fine & Weis, 1998)
2. What is society's image of the ideal woman? (Steiner-Adair, 1986)
3. What is your image of the ideal woman? Are there any differences between society's image and your image? (Steiner-Adair, 1986)
4. What would you tell others about being a girl doing this type of experience?
5. What would you say others would say about girls rather than boys doing this experience?
6. Has your sense of yourself been changed by this experience, and if so how?
7. Has your sense of yourself as a young women been changed by this experience, and if so how?

Individual Questions

These questions are designed based on their prior interview answers. They will serve as follow-up questions or clarifications of statements previously made. Some examples have been provided, but will be altered as needed for each individual.

1. In our previous interview you spoke about _____. Can you elaborate on this topic?
2. During our last interview you mentioned _____. Do you still feel this way?
3. I am a little unclear about _____. Can you explain what you meant?

Aspirations

1. Who do you look to as a model or mentor of becoming a grown-up?
2. When you think about yourself in the future, how do you image your life? What would you need to be successful? (Steiner-Adair, 1986)
3. Where do you aspire to be ten years from now?
Is there anything (or anyone) in your life that has guided this aspiration?

Closing Questions

1. Are there any stories of final remarks you would like to share with me about your experience?
2. Are there any questions I haven't asked you that you think I should include?
3. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX E**TRANSCRIPTION SUMMARY FORM**

Interview conducted with: _____

Date of interview: _____

Date of Transcription: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you while transcribing the interview?
2. Which research questions/or target questions did the interviewee most discuss?
3. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) from the interview?
4. Discuss any emerging themes of points of interest noticed during the transcribing process?
5. Note any problems with the audiotape or transcription.

APPENDIX F**INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM**

Interview Type:

Visit _____

Phone _____

Contact with: _____

Site: _____

Date of Interview: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you during this interview?

2. Which research questions/or target questions did the interviewee most discuss?

3. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) from the interview?

4. Discuss any emerging themes of points of interest noticed during the interview?

5. How did the interviewing process go?

6. Were there any distractions during the interview?

7. Anything to consider for the next interview?

8. Any other comments?

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Anja Whittington was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on June 8, 1975. She graduated from Newfound Regional High School in Bristol, New Hampshire in 1993. She received her Bachelor of Science in Forestry from the University of New Hampshire in 1997 and a Master of Education with a concentration in Science Education in 2001 from the University of Maine. In the spring of 2002, she enrolled in an individualized program integrating coursework in gender studies, adolescent development, curriculum development and instruction to examine outdoor recreational programs for adolescent girls. While completing her studies Anja served as the director of a wilderness program for urban youth, and a co-instructor for the Canoe Expedition for Maine Girls. She has worked in a variety of outdoor settings including environmental camps and forestry research. At present, Anja is a certified Maine Guide in Recreation and is teaching courses in educational psychology at the University of Maine. She is a candidate for the Doctor of Education degree Individualized in Girls' and Adolescent Development from The University of Maine in May, 2005.