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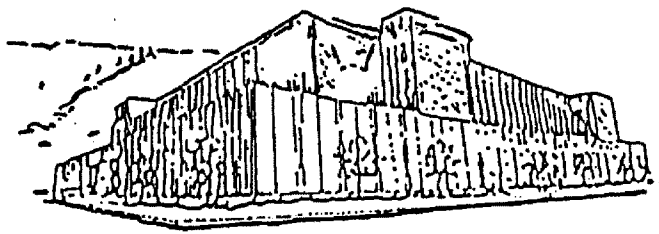
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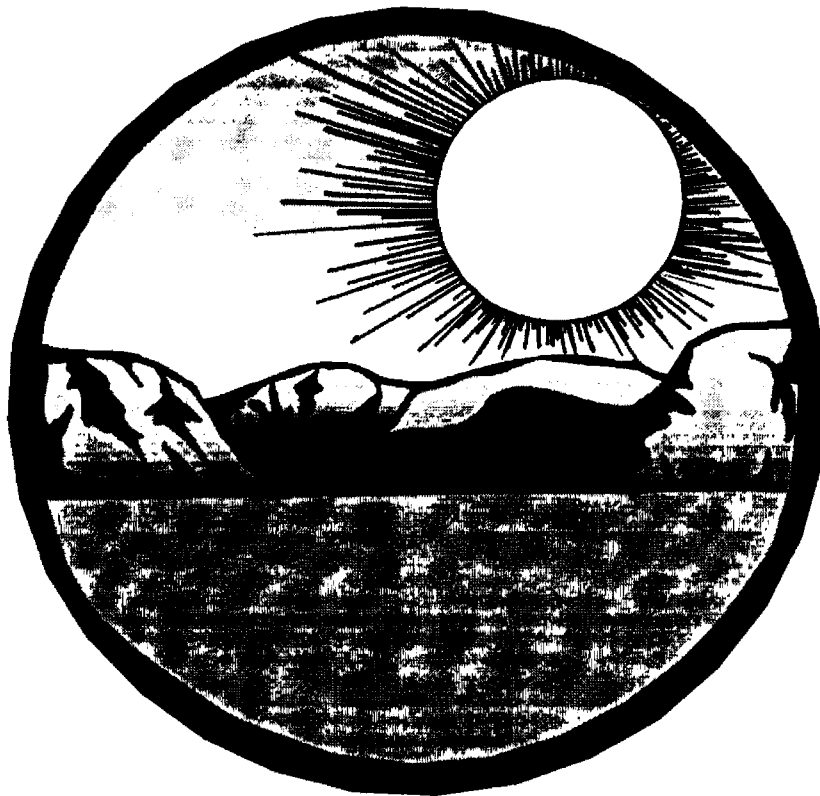
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Women, Wilderness & Everyday Life:

An Examination of the Connection between Wilderness Recreation and Women's Liberation



by Sarah L. Pohl
B.A. Philosophy, Colby College, 1994

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Wilderness Recreation Management

University of Montana, 1998

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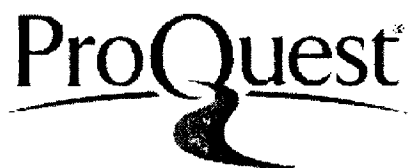


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Women, Wilderness, and Everyday Life: An Examination of the Connection between Wilderness Recreation and Women's Liberation

Committee Chair: Dr. William T. Borrie



The purpose of this study was to examine the connection between wilderness recreation and its potential to contribute to women's liberation. Women today suffer from a seemingly endless list of inequities and injustices. But since discrimination is often engendered, attributed to the culture and society in which we live, it is a possibility that women may break out of the *status quo*, become empowered and liberated, and in a sense reclaim their voices. One possible method through which women may do this is by participating in wilderness recreation. Although it has been suggested that the wilderness environment is therapeutic, and psychological studies have attempted to demonstrate that meaningful changes take place in a wilderness setting, conceptual frameworks for understanding *how* and *why* these phenomena occur are scarce. In response to the current gaps in the research, the potential therapeutic value of wilderness recreation, and the current situation for women in America today, the research aims to examine and clarify the connection between wilderness recreation and women's liberation.

In examining this connection, data were collected from twenty-four semi-structured qualitative interviews with women who recreate in wilderness. Interview questions focused on the meaning of wilderness recreation for women, outcomes of wilderness recreation, and ways in which these experiences and outcomes transferred into daily life. Analysis indicated that wilderness recreation can lead to self-confidence, self-sufficiency, problem solving skills, a shift in perspective, connection to others, and mental clarity. Furthermore, these outcomes counteract some of the oppression that women live with today. In addition, these outcomes contribute to personal and interpersonal empowerment. These results suggest that wilderness and wilderness recreation can contribute to our transformation of the broader social relations of gender within society.

The research provides recommendations to wilderness managers and recreation providers, in hopes of further facilitating recreational experiences and opportunities that lead to positive social change for women and society in general.

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I would like to express my appreciation to those who assisted in this study. In particular the twenty-four women with whom I interviewed, who gratuitously opened up and shared their stories with me. The richness of these narratives could never be captured in a project of this size.

I am especially grateful to Dr. William Borrie, thesis committee chair, for his encouragement, advice, patience, and support. I am thankful for the confidence he had in me from day one, and for the freedom he gave me to choose this project. In addition, I am appreciative of Bill's perpetual "why," his invariably open office door, his unmatched turn-over time, and his insistence upon "writing it down." Without his knowledge and support, this project would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

“All of my wilderness experiences have been very reinforcing that it’s O.K. to be a woman, that women are important and strong, and that we can do anything we put our minds to no matter what the society is telling us. And wilderness particularly, we don’t have those societal structures pointing fingers at us, saying that we shouldn’t be doing this, or we should be doing this instead. In particular I guess it’s how I see myself. You know, what is acceptable for me.”

Amanda Lynn, age 25

Wilderness¹ can potentially play a vital role for women in today’s society. In a climate of oppression, wilderness offers a ray of hope and opportunity and a chance to transform some of the broader social relations of gender within society. It offers women freedom of expression, opportunities to regain their sense of self, and can be one way that women can regain their voices.

Problem Statement

Throughout history women have been excluded from society, from the making of ideology, of knowledge, and of culture (Smith, 1987). This means that our ways of knowing, our experiences, and our interests have not been represented within the organizations of society. We have been marginalized from history, and have lesser economic, religious, and social authority. Our oppression is the result of countless systemic inequities and injustices working against us. Marilyn Frye (1983) illustrates this phenomenon with the imagery of a cage—although the individual spokes seem relatively harmless or petty, collectively they form a suffocating structure out of which it is

¹ The term “wilderness is used to denote wilderness settings (as designated by the 1964 Wilderness Act) as well as wildland settings similar to wilderness (backcountry settings, and vast areas of land such as National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, Forest Service land, and BLM land).

exceptionally difficult for the individual to break. Oppression may be defined as a “system of interrelated barriers and forces which reduce, immobilize and mold people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group” (Frey, 1983: 33). Historically, we have been and continue to be silenced by a world in which men have dominated, by a world which claims universality, but is in actuality centered upon men (Smith, 1987).

Wilderness recreation is one way that women can regain their sense of self and their ability to take themselves seriously. In this sense, we can regain our voices by expressing ourselves and our views of the world. To reclaim our voice, or to speak and be heard, entails exposing the ways in which we are confined by the masculine authority voice and also requires seizing authority for our own voices. “Loss of voice” occurs in two realms. First it pertains to the literal difficulties in speaking or being heard, and second it is symbolic for the oppression that women experience today. In this literal sense, Brown and Gilligan (1992) explain the importance of having a voice and the way our voices “change” depending on context.

Voice is central to our way of working—our channel of connection, a pathway that brings the inner psychic world of feelings and thoughts out into the open air of relationships where it can be heard by oneself and by other people... Voice, because it is embodied, connects rather than separates psyche and body; because voice is in language, it also joins psyche and culture. Voice is inherently relational—one does not require a mirror to hear oneself—yet the sounds of one’s voice change in resonance depending on the relational acoustics: whether one is heard or not heard, how one is responded to (by oneself and by other people) (p. 20).

Second, loss of voice is symbolic for the systemic oppression that paralyzes women in America today. These realms intermingle in the sense that literal loss of voice contributes to the oppression of women, affecting all areas of our lives—politically, socially,

psychologically, economically, spiritually, and physically. Brown and Gilligan (1992) characterize loss of voice by “the desire for authentic connection, the experience of disconnection, the difficulties in speaking, the feeling of not being listened to or heard or responded to empathetically, the feeling of not being able to convey or even believe in one’s own experience” (p. 5). In addition, loss of voice is reaffirmed and reinforced by unobtainable and undesirable images of female perfection (calm, controlled, quiet, unaggressive). It is the aim of the research to influence both realms of voice—to discover ways in which women can become more assertive and find self-worth and to find ways in which we may rectify some of the discrimination that women experience.

Sexism in America

This section is a brief discussion about the social, economic, political, sexual, and religious inequities that women face today. It is important to expose some of this discrimination in order to illustrate the fact that women today continue to suffer from a seemingly endless list of inequities and injustices. These injustices are socialized within society and lead to oppression for women and other marginalized people.

First and foremost it should be recognized that within American society, the male standpoint is represented as the norm. This is because many of the forms of thought and the images that we use within our culture are the product of the work of specialists occupying influential positions, and these specialists tend to be people in positions of power (i.e. men). Dorothy Smith (1987) addresses the outcome of having a one-sided standpoint.

As a result, the perspectives, concerns, interests of only one sex and one class are represented as general. Only one sex and class are directly and actively involved in producing, debating, and developing its ideas, in creating its art, in forming its medical and psychological conceptions, in framing its laws, its political principles, its educational values and objectives (p. 20).

This deprivation of authority for ourselves and for other women has made it difficult for women to treat one another as relevant figures. Furthermore, this male-standpoint-as-norm is given shape and is reinforced by our language, by our media, and by our universities. The outcome of women's deprivation of authority is systemic oppression, resulting in sexism and socialization. Sexism, according to Marilyn Frey (1983),

characterizes cultural and economic structures which create and enforce the elaborate and rigid patterns of sex-marking and sex-announcing which divide the species, along lines of sex, into dominators and subordinates. Individual acts and practices are sexist which reinforce and support those structures, either as culture or as shapes taken on by enculturated animals. Resistance to sexism is that which undermines those structures by social and political action and by projects of reconstruction and revision of ourselves (p. 38).

In addition, Frey (1983) offers a "promising" analysis of socialization. Within this promise is a hope for transformation or change within society.

Socialization molds our bodies; enculturation forms our skeletons, our musculature, our central nervous systems. By the time we are gendered adults, masculinity and femininity *are* "biological." They are structural and material features of how our bodies are (p. 37).

If this is the case, then our bodies (and minds) are changeable. Through constant practice and with deliberate regimens, we may "choose to change from 'women' as culturally defined to 'women' as we define ourselves" (Frey, 1983: 37).

Within all realms of their lives, the voices of women have been silenced. This silencing can almost wholly be attributed to a patriarchal standpoint which ranks the masculine higher than the feminine. This standpoint also ranks men over women, and this

is reflected in a number of systemic injustices, which reinforce the authority and equality that women and men are have (or do not have). As was pointed out earlier, this illogical manner in which we divide and rank our species along lines of sex results in gendered socialization (Frey, 1983). This gendered socialization or oppression can be sub-divided into the following four categories.

- lack of self-esteem,
- lack of authority for oneself and for other women,
- lack of freedom (of body, mind, and movement), and
- dependence on others.

Not only does this socialization manifest within the self, but also between all human relationships. The oppression of women may be separated into four facets:

- (1) *personal*—occurs within the individual
- (2) *interpersonal*—occurs between two individuals
- (3) *systemic*—refers to the larger structures that keep the oppressive system in tact
- (4) *level of action*—refers to the individual's ability to take action and improve their life's situation

These four facets are used in the research to highlight and elucidate the domains of manifestation and aspects of oppression that women experience. For example, oppression is actualized *personally*, as the individual fails to find worth in herself, in her opinions, and in conversation—resulting in lower self-esteem. In addition, the individual is unable to be who she truly is. *Interpersonally*, the individual feels she is not being taken seriously by others, is interrupted and silenced by others, and the individual defines herself by her relationships with others rather than as an individual agent able to make one's own choices. *Systemically*, we find that politically, economically, religiously, and educationally when women do not have a voice their standpoint is non-existent or hidden and their

agenda ignored. Finally, on *the level of action*, without assertiveness, equal systemic rights, and formulation of one's autonomy, one is relatively unable to make a difference in her society.

The following is a list of statistics to highlight some of the current social inequities and injustices that women in America experience today. This oppression occurs in all realms of women's lives and between all relationships that women have.

With regard to political representation:

- By far and large we lack equal political representation on National, state, and local levels. For example, as of 1990, two women sat in the 100-seat Senate, and only 29 of the 435 Representatives were women (French, 1992).

Within the domain of art:

- 51.2 percent of artists in the U.S. are women, 59 percent of Ph.D.s in Fine Arts go to women, 59 percent of trained artists and art historians are women, yet women artists' income is 30 percent that of male artists; 17 percent of works in galleries are by women; 5 percent of works in museums are by women; and approximately one-third of all NEA grants go to women (Blum, et.al., 1993).

Economically speaking:

- women have made only incremental gains at the top levels of business over the past 15 to 20 years. For example, of the top Fortune 500 companies, 1.65 percent of the Corporate Officers at the vice presidential level and higher are women (Spiller, 1993).
- In addition, two separate studies show that "women MBAs 'have always had less opportunity for management careers than their male counterparts'" (Spiller, 1993: 316).
- Based on annual earnings, for every \$1 of a man's pay, a woman can expect to earn 66 cents (Blum, et. al., 1993).

In regards to conversation:

- Men interrupt women much more often than they interrupt other men and they do so more often than women interrupt men or other women. This is pointed out by Dorothy Smith (1987), who identifies that “men control conversation through the use of interruption and by withdrawing active participation when women are developing their topics” (p. 33).
- In addition, Pamela Fishman found that conversational topics introduced by men “succeeded” 96 percent of the time, while those introduced by women succeeded only 36 percent of the time and fell flat the rest of the time (Ehrenreich, 1993).

Within the realm of work:

- The United Nations Study on women and work reported in 1985 that of the world’s population, women do 75 percent of the work, receive 10 percent of the pay, and own 1 percent of the property (Pharr, 1993b).

In terms of hate violence against women in the work place:

- Statistics say 50 to 80 percent of all women in the work place have been subject to verbal or physical harassment (Eason, 1993).

In the domestic realm:

- According to the FBI, there are several thousand women killed by their husbands and boyfriends each year (Pharr, 1993a).
- In addition, the agency estimates that only about 10% of domestic violence is reported to the police (Blum, et. al., 1993).
- It has been estimated that every 15 seconds a woman is battered in the U.S., and in over 95 percent of domestic assaults, the man is the perpetrator (Blum, et. al., 1993).
- These reports concentrate specifically upon physical violence, however, many women say that verbal violence causes more harm than physical violence because it damages self-esteem so deeply (Pharr, 1993).

In terms of health and medical inequities:

- 1 out of 8 women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, it is the most common form of cancer in American women, and 5 percent of the money spent for cancer research is spent on breast cancer (Blum, et. al., 1993). These figures are magnified by race and socioeconomic status.

Body image continues to affect the lives of women and girls.

- For example, in a survey of women aged 18-35, 75 percent believed they were fat, while only 25 percent were medically fat.
- It is no wonder that cosmetics are a \$20 billion industry worldwide and more than 2 million women have received breast implants in the U.S. (Blum, et. al., 1993).

The intricacies and interconnectedness of these forces mentioned above are effective in ensuring the silence of women, and unfortunately the list of statistics similar to these goes on and on.

These injustices and inequities start at birth and carry on throughout girls' and women's lives. A particularly formative period of time when girls are extremely vulnerable to discrimination is during adolescence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Adolescence can be depicted as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is a time of change—physically, emotionally, and sexually—when one moves into uncharted territory. It is at this time that girls learn to define themselves within the male-dominated society. And although one may draw certain parallels and similarities between boys approaching adolescence and girls approaching adolescence, one must also take into account that this experience tends to be far different and more damaging to girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). It has been observed that girls at this time tend to “lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves and their

character” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2). There are many reactions to societal pressures and stereotypes and may include loss of self-esteem, body image issues, emotional stress and depression, self-mutilation (such as picking at their skin or cutting themselves), attachment to others through inappropriate sexual activity, and substance abuse (Bedell, 1997). While this is not true for all, many girls then carry this loss of self into their adult lives. As women they may define themselves as living in connection with others, often times abandoning their sense of self for the sake of becoming a “good” woman and having relationships. With this effort, they essentially give up their voices.

Wilderness Recreation as Therapy

Since discrimination is often engendered, attributed to the culture and society in which we live, it is possible for many women to break out of the *status quo*, become empowered and liberated, and in a sense reclaim our voices. One possible method through which women may reclaim their voices is by participating in wilderness recreation. Descriptive analysis indicates a connection between adventure programs and increased self-esteem (Bedell, 1997). Outdoor recreation can offer girls and women a sense of liberation in various ways. When one is in the wilderness, one may feel self-worth and an absence of gender expectations (more so when recreating with all women). Henderson (1996b) explains how outdoor recreation is conducive to resisting traditional female roles, which may in turn lead to discovering a new sense of self. She says, “In nature, conformity to traditional female roles is not required. In the outdoors, women often discover aspects of themselves that they did not know existed prior to challenging themselves in this environment” (p. 196). Thus, wilderness provides a context where

women may go directly against the grain of what they have essentially been “trained” to be. Brown and Gilligan (1992) suggest that a particular image of women is reinforced in society. For example:

Voice-training by adults, especially adult “good women,” undermines these girls’ experiences and reinforces images of female perfection by implying that “nice girls” are always calm, controlled, quiet, that they never cause a ruckus, are never noisy, bossy, or aggressive, are not anxious and do not cause trouble, and also by implying that such girls exist and are desirable (p. 61).

In contrast, wilderness recreation provides an opportunity for liberation for women that includes the following attributes:

- (1) *A Sense of Escape* (from norms, from everyday demands, and from distractions)
- (2) *Opportunities for Challenge and Survival*
- (3) *New Experiences* (a new atmosphere with few rules, and opportunity to learn new skills)
- (4) *Mental Revitalization* (solitude, time to focus, and simplicity)
- (5) *Natural Awe and Beauty* (connection to nature and natural inspiration)

Some of these characteristics of wilderness and wilderness recreation are highlighted in the Wilderness Act [such as solitude and unconfined recreation (PL 88-577)], while others are summarized by Driver, Nash, & Haas (1987). These five particular attributes are focused on because of their relevance to this study, and their significance will be explained in detail in the Results section.

Research literature provides strong evidence that wilderness is an effective environment for facilitating liberating experiences, however, little is known about *how* that

phenomenon occurs (Bedell, 1997). Scherl (1989) describes a similar lack of knowledge concerning the connection between wilderness recreation and psychological well being.

Despite these claims and research results, there have been few conceptual attempts to explain how and why wilderness promotes psychological well being and why individuals change as a consequence of being in that setting. Investigators in the area have acknowledged a need for better understanding of the nature and dynamics of the wilderness experience (p. 123).

In addition, many people “compare the impact of the wilderness experience to electricity; we know it works, but we are not sure why” (Kimball, 1979 from Wichmann, 1991: 43).

For example, Bedell (1997) explains our ongoing ignorance of how changes in self-concept occur.

Priest (1993) identifies over twenty (20) studies conducted since 1982 utilizing adventure programs in which changes in self-concept have been evaluated. Yet, for all the descriptive research available on the positive influences of adventure programming, the question still remains as to why or how changes occur. The field of outdoor adventure programming has yet to explain the process by which these changes may occur (p. 15).

Furthermore, when addressing the issue of women and the positive outcomes of wilderness, research needs to focus on how those positive outcomes affect women’s everyday lives, and what that means for women and society at large. Thus this research sets out to clarify, examine, and critique the connection between wilderness recreation and the potential for women’s liberation.

Past Explanations for the Therapeutic Value of Wilderness

Although it has been suggested that the wilderness environment is therapeutic, and psychological studies have attempted to demonstrate that meaningful changes take place in a wilderness setting, conceptual frameworks for understanding how and why these

phenomena occur are scarce. Some theoretical frameworks that have been put forward include Csikszentmihalyi's (1982) flow theory (attention is concentrated on and absorbed by the activity, the anxieties of everyday life disappear, and self-actualization is the result), Bandura's (from Bedell, 1997) theory of self-efficacy (linking self-esteem with physical activity), and Haggard and William's (1992) theory of self-identification through leisure activities. In addition we find Scherl's (1989) suggestion of self-control as a concept that characterizes individual-wilderness relationships. Other explanations that have been postulated include: the theory that personal growth depends on receptivity (Hendee & Brown, 1988), that wilderness experience provides the opportunity for self-relevant, immediate feedback (Powch, 1994), and finally, Kaplan and Kaplan's (1982) theory that wilderness facilitates a clearness of perception, presenting no need or effort to process information that the environment provides, redirecting one's attention to that which is fascinating and valuable.

However, these theories fail to completely explain not only the full therapeutic potential of wilderness, but also the potential value of wilderness *in relation to gender*. With regard to women specifically, there are a handful of studies that discuss the therapeutic value of wilderness. Bialeschki & Henderson (1993) for example focus on the aspect of challenge encountered in outdoor settings. Successfully facing these challenges may help women rid themselves of self and societally imposed limitations, and going beyond these limitations contributes to higher self-esteem and self-reliance which, in turn, leads to a greater sense of personal empowerment. A further explanation of the connection between wilderness and empowerment for women is offered by Powch (1994). She argues that inherently a wilderness setting contributes to empowerment because it

offers immediate feedback, an evenhandedness of consequences, and spiritual healing by connecting with the earth. Other studies have focused on facilitating empowerment (Kohn, 1991; Mitten 1994). For example, Kohn (1991) provides a list of suggestions to increase empowerment such as including students in program designs, creating a climate that encourages risk taking, support and trust, having a democratic atmosphere, and allowing for a wide range of learning styles. Few studies attempt to explain *how* the positive influences of adventure programming take place (Bedell, 1997), and those explanations that do exist are sometimes elusive, contradictory, incomplete, or overly simplistic.

Aim of the Research/ Guiding Questions

Given the context of the potential therapeutic value of wilderness recreation and the current situation for women in America today, this research aims to examine and clarify the connection between wilderness recreation and women's liberation. The research focuses on understanding how women who recreate in wilderness comprehend liberating experiences. For example, is positive social change best understood by "empowerment" or are there other activities outside of this description that also lead to positive social change for women? The research focuses on understanding the causal factors of empowerment/liberation, and *how* the sense of empowerment/liberation transfers into the everyday lives of the interviewees. Guiding questions include:

- 1) What do wilderness experiences mean for women and how do they affect their lives?
- 2) Are wilderness and similar outdoor recreational experiences empowering/liberating for women?

- 3) Does “empowerment” encompass all activities that lead to positive social change for women or is there a more appropriate term (e.g. liberation, uplifting, etc.) of which empowerment is only a segment?
- 4) Does the empowerment/liberation accrued from wilderness and outdoor recreation spill over into women’s everyday lives?
- 5) Are empowering/liberating activities wilderness dependent?
- 6) What are the causal factors of wilderness and other outdoor activities that lead to empowerment/liberation for women?
- 7) How can wilderness recreation rectify some of the social injustices and inequities that women experience today?

Finally, it is the responsibility of recreation providers and wilderness managers to listen to and incorporate the voices of women which have largely been ignored in the past. It may be that women bring to outdoor recreation distinct needs that programs must acknowledge. Women may also bring a unique perspective to outdoor recreation (such as a more supportive atmosphere, consensus decision-making, down-playing dichotomous thinking, and relationship-building) that would be beneficial if incorporated in all facets of outdoor education and with all groups who participate in adventure education (Warren, 1996). An understanding of women, outdoor recreation, and liberation entails an increased knowledge and sensitivity that may allow recreation providers and wilderness managers to promote social change for women and society at large.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five parts. The above chapter is a description of the current context for women in America. In this chapter I make the claim that one way to transform some of the gender inequities that women experience is through wilderness

recreation. Following this chapter is an in-depth discussion and examination of the current literature relevant to the subject of women, wilderness recreation, and liberation. Chapter three is a detailed description of the interview process and analysis which were conducted and used to elucidate the above guiding questions. Chapter four is a extensive examination of the information that surfaced from the interviews. This Results chapter explores:

- How women describe their wilderness experiences.
- An in-depth description of the positive outcomes of wilderness experiences that may lead to liberation for women.
- Why a wilderness setting is particularly conducive to facilitating these positive outcomes which may lead to liberation for women.
- An explanation of what conditions or causal factors might lead to positive outcomes of wilderness recreation for women.
- An examination into whether or not the outcomes of wilderness recreation transfer into women's everyday lives.

Chapter five concludes with a discussion of what wilderness recreation can mean for women in terms of liberation and empowerment and offers advice to recreation providers and wilderness managers in hopes of facilitating positive wilderness experiences for women.

CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

This project draws on concepts of previous research from a number of different areas including gender research, leisure constraints, feminist frameworks to leisure², benefits of leisure and wilderness, the wilderness setting, wilderness and empowerment, and societal consequences of accruing benefits from leisure and wilderness recreation. This literature provided a conceptual background for the development of specific research questions and guided data collection and analysis. These sections build upon one another. Firstly, a discussion of prevailing gender research shows us that there is a need for concentrating on women and leisure and that there may be reasons for choosing leisure that are unique to women. Then we can see that not only are there gendered reasons for choosing leisure but also gendered reasons for *not* choosing leisure. These first two sections provide a justification for taking a feminist approach to the project, and that is described in the third section. Then the literature examines some of the positive outcomes or benefits of leisure and outdoor recreation so as to have a better understanding of the potential therapeutic value of these activities. In the fourth section, the literature highlights some of the unique attributes of a wilderness setting and similarly of wilderness recreation, and this allows us to see how wilderness, in particular, can be therapeutic and liberating for women (as explained in the fifth section). Finally, in the last section, this chapter examines some of the potential social implications of doing research on the

² Some of the following literature deals specifically with leisure and leisure activities, rather than wilderness recreation. This literature is included because of the similarities between these types of activities with regard to positive outcomes and constraints. It is also included because there is relatively scarce information with regard to women and wilderness, and in this sense it proved to be helpful in the generation of specific research questions. As will be discussed further in the Literature Review, in the Results, and in the Discussion, it should not be inferred that leisure activities and wilderness recreation result in the same outcomes.

connection between women, wilderness recreation, and liberation. From these implications, we can see that wilderness has the potential to transform some of the broader social relations of gender in our society.

GENDER RESEARCH

This section focuses on the issue of gender in the context of leisure research. By examining the literature and past research, one can approach a deeper understanding of the historical framework of gender scholarship, a justification for analyzing leisure according to gender, and the meaning of leisure for women.

Historical Background/Past Research

Until the early 1980s, women's leisure was an invisible area of study, lacking conceptual frameworks and theoretical background (Henderson, 1996a). Since then, the study of women, gender, and leisure has evolved through several stages. Henderson (1994b) offers five stages by which women's leisure experiences have been delineated. The *first stage* is characterized by male scholarship, which assumes a universal leisure experience exists and that women's leisure is like men's leisure. The *second stage* might be called "add women and stir," where a largely male scholarship attempts to compensate for the exclusion of women within leisure studies and acknowledges women where possible in conducting research. The *third stage* is termed "bifocal scholarship" and concentrates on the differences between males and females. These studies are useful, however, they function more appropriately as a starting point for discussion rather than the conclusion of the research. The *fourth phase* is referred to as "feminist scholarship,"

and focuses on the sociological context of women's lives and the oppression of women. Finally, the *fifth stage*, called "new scholarship" or "gender scholarship" is based on the premise that we all live in a gendered society, so our behavior can best be understood by examining our experiences within that framework. Although there are commonalities with regard to the oppression that most women experience in America (such as pay inequity, sexual violence against them, or lack of authority), gender scholarship acknowledges that the leisure of women cannot be universalized, and that no one female or male voice exists. It is in these last two stages that the current research falls. Because women have traditionally been marginalized from the wilderness literature, this research recognizes the importance of concentrating solely on women and doing feminist research. The research also recognizes the potential for wilderness recreation to transform some of the gender relations within society, and thus focuses on gender scholarship as well.

An Explanation of Gender Scholarship

Coupled with our understanding of gender and gender differences is the notion that leisure can contribute to the reinforcement as well as the deconstruction of gender-marking. The construction of gender focuses on how society creates differences between men and women and how the meanings of gender are used positively and negatively in the world (Warren, 1990). The deconstruction of gender involves focusing on the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the data observed and the texts written. With deconstruction, we begin to see the plurality of meanings and symbols of masculine and feminine. In regards to leisure, "part of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing gender is to examine how leisure produces gender relations by examining how females and

males interpret, experience, and submit to or challenge ideological messages about appropriate behavior in society” (Henderson, 1994b: 132).

It is also important to examine the impacts of other socio-demographic factors (such as class, race, ability level, and parenthood) as they relate to dimensions of women’s leisure. As we find differences between women and men, we also find differences that exist among groups of women. Furthermore, *sometimes* these differences may be greater than the differences between men and women. Thus the understanding of diversity and the social context in which individuals experience leisure may be a determinant factor in understanding meanings of leisure (Henderson, 1994a). This calls for the inclusion of multiple perspectives and mutual critique, allowing for a rich and comprehensive view of leisure (Fox, 1992). Thus, in coming to a better understanding of the meanings of wilderness recreation for women, this current project strives to incorporate diversity among the women interviewed for the project.

Understanding the Meanings of Women’s Leisure

It is important to understand the meaning of leisure for women because leisure and leisure activities may contribute to a quality of life that is the right of all women. As explained by Henderson (1990), “through leisure, women can learn to value themselves as individuals and obtain the confidence to challenge society’s gender role restrictions and stereotypes. Leisure involvement for women may be a means of liberation from restrictive gender roles and, thus, a means for empowerment” (p. 229).

There have been many attempts to define leisure, however some of these definitions may not be an appropriate measure or a very useful conceptualization for

women. For example, leisure is sometimes defined by time, however, many women do not feel they deserve or have time to engage in leisure. Leisure as defined by activity has also proved inadequate in understanding women's leisure because typical activity check-lists do not capture the kinds of activities that some women consider leisure (i.e. a bubble bath, or visiting with friends) (Henderson, 1990).

Other meanings of leisure include leisure as relaxation, enjoyment, and rejuvenation, leisure as choice, and leisure as change. Leisure as relaxation, enjoyment, and rejuvenation is to the extent that one is able to disengage or separate from pressures and demands (Freysinger, 1995). Leisure as perceived choice is based on the assumption that leisure is the perception or freedom to do what one wants to do and how one wants to do it. Leisure as change can be described as the need to disengage from everyday concerns. By shielding oneself from changes or by seeking novelty in change, separation or time away provides "space" to integrate experiences and feelings and to re-establish ego. This change can be time away or separation, and variety or difference. In addition change includes change in behavior or activity, in emotions, in environment, or in one's self or one's outlook. (Freysinger, 1995). It will be shown that each of these are important components of women's experiences in wilderness.

There are many other reasons people choose leisure: leisure as affiliation (interacting and sharing oneself with others), affirmation of and satisfaction with family (leisure is a way to maintain or develop closeness with family), development of children, development and maintenance of friendships, leisure as agency (separation and autonomy from others), self-expression (realization of aspects of the self that were not expressed elsewhere), learning and development (learning that leads to personal change), challenge

and accomplishment, and recognition and credibility (acknowledgment from others which enhances adults' credibility and self-esteem). In addition leisure provides a means of self-expression and identity development (Freysinger, 1995). As will be discussed in the Results section, a wilderness setting is particularly conducive to facilitating many of these reasons for choosing leisure (because it offers an escape, solitude, freedom from many societal constraints, connection with others, opportunities for challenge, and opportunities to learn new skills). In addition, such a setting often facilitates many of these outcomes simultaneously.

In conjunction with the above reasons people (women and men alike) choose leisure, Freysinger (1995) found that some of these reasons, such as perceived choice and relationships with others, were affected by gender. For example although perceived choice was important to all people, range of perceived choice differed by gender. In addition, women's leisure was shaped by an awareness and concern for others' feelings and wishes. In general, men did not discuss leisure this way.

LEISURE CONSTRAINTS

Just as gender affects reasons women and men choose leisure, it also affects reasons women and men *do not* choose leisure. A constraint to leisure is "anything that inhibits people's ability to participate in leisure activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of leisure services, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction (Jackson & Henderson, 1995: 31-32). The study of leisure constraints have proved to be an informative and productive area of research. As Henderson (1990) points out, in spite of

the diversity in women's lifestyles, overall they experience inequality in their leisure when compared to men.

Leisure Constraints for Women

To gain a better understanding of women's leisure and recreation, one needs to first understand those constraints that most women face in pursuing outdoor activities. It is argued that some women might be afraid to enter the wilderness because of the fear of rape behind every bush or things that creep in the night. Although this assertion is oversimplified, still there exist significant constraints to women's recreation.

Being female or male may or may not be a constraint to leisure. As suggested by Shaw (1994), that which is constraining may be the way in which one's gender is interpreted and defined by one's surrounding society. Society, then, creates circumstances that may be perceived or experienced as being constraining. It is the cultural expectations of biological sex that tend to result in gendered decisions (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Examples of gendered constraints for women include gender role expectations (appropriateness), a dominating ethic of care (responsibility and commitment to others, including family and friends), an omnipresent concern for physical and psychological safety (transportation and safe environment), and lack of skills and opportunities (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993). Other gendered constraints (because they are embedded in and arise from the structural content of one's life) include fear and safety concerns (Ewert, 1989), being uncomfortable with one's body or insecure with body movement (Arnold, 1994; Gabert, 1997), not knowing where to participate, lack of transportation, not knowing where to learn, not being at ease in social situations, and being physically unable to

participate (Jackson and Henderson, 1995). In addition, women experience common constraints that affect all people such as lack of time, money, and awareness of opportunities.

Furthermore, constraints to leisure for women may be compounded by working both outside of the home *and* having domestic responsibilities. Researchers have found that women who worked outside of the home and had responsibilities as wives and mothers had little time for leisure. Furthermore, when they did engage in leisure, such activities often produced feelings of guilt—associating self-nurturance with selfishness (Stringer, 1997). On the flip side, researchers have found that women who did not work outside of the home felt they were not entitled to leisure (Henderson, 1990; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996).

Another gendered constraint to recreation is fear. Fear has different impacts on different people, thus treating everyone equally with respect to fear can oversimplify the matter (Ewert, 1989). Many findings suggest that women on the whole do not necessarily have more fear than men, but that they have different fears, such as “lack of control, letting themselves down, encountering demanding tasks, sexual harassment, darkness, fast or deep water, and venomous animals and insects” (Ewert, 1989: 22). In addition, females may be more likely to question their skill and abilities than males (Ewert, 1989).

Body image is an additional constraint that tends to affect more women than men in leisure (and nonleisure). Many women are not comfortable with their body size, sometimes subscribing to unrealistic role models, and visioning their bodies in a merely aesthetic (as opposed to functional) way. It has been argued that wilderness recreation can alter one’s perception of one’s body image, allowing for a comfort with diversity of

size, more realistic role models, and a reevaluation and reformulation of the norms for the female body (Arnold, 1994). The technical skills and physical activity allow women to experience their body in an active, functional way rather than an aesthetic one.

Leisure Constraints and Diversity

Although women tend to experience more leisure constraints than men (Henderson, 1990; Jackson and Henderson 1995), other socio-demographic factors can compound the amount of constraints that affect one from participating in leisure. This suggests a need to examine non-participation in terms of diversities and pluralities, rather than simply as dualisms and universals (Roberts & Henderson, 1997). There are further constraints for women of color such as stereotyping by race and gender, lack of role models, insufficient exposure to such activities, limited accessibility to outdoor recreation areas, lack of other people of color to recreate with, oppressive economic conditions, and under-representation of women of color in leisure research in the wilderness. If life for women of color is different, then we can assume that leisure pursuits for women of color are going to be different (Roberts & Drogin, 1993).

Leisure Constraint for Adolescent Girls

Most of our literature on leisure constraints deals with adults and older adolescents, not children or younger adolescents. However, it is important to understand the constraints of children, because many activities during these life stages help to shape the behavior and attitudes that lead to more permanent patterns later in life. As a result it can be suggested that wilderness recreation is sought out to compensate for the lack of

development opportunities through childhood. Two forms of sex-typed socialization become evident in early childhood that are of relevance to women, recreation, and liberation: 1) lack of exposure to a variety of activities and experiences, and 2) self-selection away from activities labeled as inappropriate (Stringer, 1997). Later on, interactions with peers and the school environment also play a significant role in children's socialization (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Furthermore, girls and boys are rewarded for playing with gender "appropriate" toys, and are punished for playing with gender "inappropriate" toys or playing in gender "inappropriate" ways (for example girls are allowed less physical freedom while boys are encouraged to be adventurous and play outside, and girls are given domestic toys while boys are given fighting toys) (Stringer, 1997).

While Kelly (1974) found that one-half of adults' ten most important recreation activities began in childhood, *lack* of encouragement from parents can negatively influence one's decision to participate in leisure activities. For example, Hultsman (1993) found that parental influence was perceived to be greater than any other agents in the decision for an adolescent (grade 5-8) not to join an organized recreation activity. Some reasons parents give children not to join an activity may be personal dislike for participation, keeping children away from other children of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, disliking competitive activities, and stereotyping by gender based on personal beliefs. Hultsman also found that perceptions about significant other adults (such as activity leaders) influenced adolescents' decisions to drop out of activities. Parental influence decreases as one moves into adolescence.

In regards to high school girls, self-esteem, and leisure constraints, Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford (1994) found that individuals with lower self-esteem reported a greater number of constraints, and that females were found to have significantly lower self-esteem and significantly higher amounts of intrapersonal and total constraints than males (intrapersonal constraints are those which are psychological or personal such as depression, stress, and body image).

Negotiating Constraints

Often, women are able to negotiate through constraints so that they may participate in leisure activities (Stringer, 1997). For example, women may utilize time shifting, or try to improve their financial situations, health and fitness levels, and change their interpersonal relationships in order to have more leisure time (Henderson et al., 1996). Some women are in privileged positions that allow them to take advantage of these strategies more easily than other women. In addition, negotiating leisure constraints can be empowering for women. For example, by participating in activities viewed as inappropriate for one's sex, one can resist stereotypes and labeling and offer new examples of behavior for others to see and emulate (Stringer, 1997). With regard to women of color, some of the solution in reducing leisure constraints lies in providing diverse role models, accounting for these individuals in national or state surveys and in interviews, transforming the image of the outdoors to be a place for all people, and transforming the scope of activities available within the outdoors beyond boundaries of the urban environment (Roberts & Drogin, 1993). In concluding this discussion of gender research, it can be seen that leisure may be a way for women to move beyond restrictive gender

roles within society. With regard to eradicating gender-marking through leisure, we find that the stakes for women may be higher than they are for men. Because female viewpoints have been relatively excluded from mainstream theories on leisure and outdoor recreation, it is also important and appropriate to focus solely on women. As stated by Henderson and Bialeschki (1995), “[h]istorically, women have been invisible in outdoor pursuits and/or inaccurately depicted because of the incompatibility between traditional perceptions about women’s roles and women’s participation in outdoor activities (p. 72). Thus a new approach to the study of leisure, a feminist approach, has proven to be particularly appropriate as well.

FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS TO LEISURE

Feminist theory has become pertinent to knowledge and the critique of knowledge. Its inclusion allows a more representative theoretical framework, which reflects female viewpoints and principles omitted from the traditional mainstream theories. Without the inclusion of feminist theory into social science and leisure theory, we find the implications to be a theory base devoid of representation, which in the end represents a limited perspective and therefore sets down an unfinished or illusionary version of “truth.” In short, “knowing” is incomplete without a feminist epistemology. “Research on and for women is necessary to more broadly understand the phenomenon of leisure” (Henderson, 1989: 235). Although all feminist theories are unique in their analyses of philosophy, epistemology, oppression, and methodology, there are certain commonalities among them as well. These are: “(1) an analysis of oppression, its interconnections, and existing canons that exclude women and other perspectives; (2) the creation of feminist

epistemology and methodology; and (3) a discussion of knowledge that empowers and liberates women and others who are oppressed” (Fox, 1992: 339). These three, thus, are part of the philosophical basis of the current project.

A Feminist Approach to Leisure

A feminist perspective to leisure calls for a commitment to putting women at the center of the research methodology. Thus, focusing solely on women allows researchers to correct the invisibility of women that has been evident in the leisure literature (Henderson, 1989). As a result, women and girls are seen as individuals with specific recreational needs (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985). One of the most obvious targets for a feminist approach to leisure to consider is outcomes of recreational opportunities. As will be seen, women have a tremendous potential to benefit from these activities.

OUTCOMES OF LEISURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, we find a significant increase in the number of women participating in sport and leisure activities (Stringer, 1997). Associated with this participation are benefits such as increases in self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, self-knowledge, self-actualization, a sense of well-being, camaraderie, friendship, belonging, and empowerment (Ewert, 1989; Mitten, 1992). It is important to understand possible outcomes of leisure and wilderness recreation, because some of these outcomes can affect women’s everyday lives and lead to social change for everyone.

Benefits of Leisure

An almost unending list of benefits of leisure has been recognized. These benefits range from physiological to psychological, from sociological to economic, and from spiritual to developmental (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991). Although much literature has focused on the perceived benefits and outcomes of recreation and leisure, little of this research has examined the role of gender. Feminist researchers call for inclusion of motivations, involvement, and satisfactions *as they relate to gender* (Henderson, 1994b). Some benefits that may lead to positive social change for women include those associated with personal benefits (such as identity affirmation, wellness, and self-esteem), health benefits, relational benefits, and societal benefits (discussed later on).

When our leisure is identity-affirming, we construct situations that provide us with information that we are who we believe ourselves to be. These then provide others with information that allows them to understand us more accurately. Leisure activities symbolize distinct sets of identity images, which may be seen as motivation for participation in specific leisure activities. One may select a leisure activity on the basis of this activity's ability to affirm aspects of one's identity (Haggard & Williams, 1992). In this sense, one may promote a strong identity by selecting activities that support that image.

Identity affirmation is an on-going process of self-definition, validation, maintenance, and enhancement undertaken by virtually all individuals. Freedom to choose one's leisure activity allows one to precisely control situations that will affirm the images one desires. For example, if one is a hiker/backpacker, she may perceive herself and be perceived by others as adventurous, carefree, outdoorsy, and relaxed (Haggard &

Williams, 1991). It may be inferred that self-affirmation is an aspect of leisure and also that leisure is an aspect of self-affirmation. Similarly, Samdahl and Kleiber (1989) found that public self-consciousness in nonleisure settings was accompanied by negative affect, however, public self-consciousness in leisure settings was accompanied by positive affect. So perhaps the discrepancy between the ideal self and the perceived self is not as great in leisure situations as it is in ordinary, everyday situations. It may be the case that the discrepancy between the ideal self and the perceived self in a nonleisure setting may be lessened by identifying with leisure in everyday life.

In an examination of adolescents, sports and identity affirmation, Shaw, Kleiber, and Caldwell (1995) found that the level of participation in sports and physical activities was positively associated with identity development for females, but not for males (even though females were less likely to self identify as “physically active”). In addition, the relationship between leisure and identity development seems to depend on both gender and the gendered nature of activities. In challenging restrictive gender-based prescriptions about appropriate behavior for women, Shaw recommended that girls participate in “nontraditional” or typically “masculine” activities.

With regard to well being, Ragheb (1993) found that leisure participation and leisure satisfaction were positively associated with perceived wellness. Wellness is described as a state of physical, psychological (mental, social, and emotional), and spiritual health (Ragheb, 1993). It is speculated in the same study that leisure and its enjoyment might prove to be a prerequisite for individuals’ perceived wellness. In the value of an activity is not only determined by frequency of engagement, but also by the attitude and state of mind of the participant (Ragheb, 1993). With regard to some recreational

activities in which individuals may find it difficult to participate frequently (such as wilderness recreation), this concept of wellness is particularly applicable.

Researchers have shown that leisure activities can have positive effects on the self-esteem of women and girls alike. A study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), found significantly low levels of self-esteem among adolescent girls, accompanied by a lack of confidence in sports abilities and other skills and talents. Other studies have shown a significant link between positive self-esteem in girls and sports participation (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992). Encouragement from others is one of the primary factors keeping girls active in sport (Hultsman, 1993).

Henderson, et. al. (1996) highlight some of the health benefits associated with leisure. Some of these outcomes include reducing physical health problems (such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems, and certain forms of cancer) and increasing physical strength and flexibility, allowing one to remain active and independent. Leisure can also contribute to mental and emotional health, which is important for women because they tend to have higher reported rates of mental disorders compared with men. Other studies show that leisure can contribute to a reduction in stress.

Some of the social or relational benefits of leisure include building and maintaining friendships, interacting with others, addressing major life transitions, and integrating in one's community (Henderson, et. al., 1996).

Thus there is significant evidence that leisure and recreation play a very unique and important role in women's lives. Elements of society's oppression may be overcome through leisure, and perhaps it is through wilderness recreation that more of those barriers may be overcome.

Benefits of Wilderness and Wilderness Recreation

Toward the end of the 1960s, studies began to provide some research-based information about values of wilderness to on-site users from which inferences to benefits could be made (Hendee et al., 1968; Knopf et al., 1973; Stankey, 1973). Additional studies began to surface that aimed to explain benefits to self-development (Burton, 1981). Further studies dealt with the therapeutic benefits of wilderness, such as Levitt's (1982) study on types of programs for problems such as juvenile delinquency and drug abuse. This section aims to highlight some of the major findings of past researchers who have described the benefits of wilderness and wilderness recreation.

There are three categories of benefits provided by wilderness: 1) those unique to wilderness—that can be obtained only in a wilderness setting, 2) those that can be obtained from both wilderness and nonwilderness, but for which wilderness is strongly preferred, and 3) those that can be obtained from both wilderness and nonwilderness, and there are no strong preferences for wilderness as the source (Driver, Nash, & Haas, 1987). It may be that some of the outcomes of wilderness recreation for women are dependent on a wilderness setting (such as self-sufficiency, challenge, or escape). If this is the case, this research provides a further justification for allocating wilderness resources.

According to Driver et. al., (1987), there are three different types of benefits: personal, social, and inherent or intrinsic. *Personal benefits* are characterized as psychological and can be realized by individuals whether or not they can be aggregated across individuals. Examples of personal benefits include developmental benefits, such as self-actualization or skill development, therapeutic/healing benefits, physical health benefits, self-sufficiency benefits, social identity benefits, educational benefits, spiritual

benefits, aesthetic/creative benefits, symbolic benefits (just knowing wildlands exist), commodity-related benefits, and nurturance benefits. *Social benefits* are realized by individuals collectively, and can be applied to society or subcultures of society.

These include historical/cultural benefits, preservation-related benefits, quality of life benefits, commodity-related benefits, and economic benefits. *Inherent or intrinsic benefits* include those accrued to plants and animals from resource preservation whether or not humans gain from those benefits.

The benefits that best aid advocates in politically defending wilderness resource allocations are:

- preservation of ecosystems and maintenance of species diversity
- spiritual values that capture the themes of natural cathedrals
- aesthetic values that capture the sublime, such as the notions of awesomeness and majesty
- inherent/intrinsic values
- historical and cultural values nurtured by wilderness, such as freedom, pride, and creative inspiration
- specific recreational uses that depend on wilderness settings, such as self-sufficiency, challenge and skill-testing, and recreation and therapeutic benefits that bring a sense of tranquility, serenity, primitiveness, and humility (Driver, et. al., 1987).

Wilderness and outdoor recreation can prove to be beneficial for women and girls alike. For example, studies have indicated that camping in a wilderness setting or natural environment can be therapeutic for emotionally disturbed girls. Levitt (1994) provides examples of personal, psychological, and cognitive outcomes:

1. Enhanced self-concept, confidence, and self-esteem
2. Improved social and school attitudes and behaviors
3. Decreased pathological symptoms
4. Enhanced patient-staff relations
5. Improved quality and quantity of social interactions

Women, throughout the course of their lives, may realize the benefits of outdoor recreation, from parental support as girls and adolescents (LaBastille, 1980; Jordan, 1988), to participation as young adults (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997), as affiliation, self-determination, empowerment and resistance (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992), as therapy (Henderson & Gardner, 1996), in middle-adulthood (Freysinger & Ray, 1994; Seligson & Motte, 1997), or in middle- to late-adulthood (Henderson, et. al., 1996).

THE UNIQUE NATURE OF WILDERNESS

There is much debate as to whether or not a wilderness setting contributes something unique to the therapeutic experience. Some have argued that the essential need is not so much for wilderness but for an unfamiliar environment. In this sense, a “wilderness” therapy course could be conducted in an unfamiliar urban environment (Powch, 1994). Powch (1994) argues *against* this assertion, and maintains that in order to call therapy *wilderness* therapy,

the wilderness setting must contribute something unique to the therapeutic experience. It is [her] contention that this is the case, that this ‘extra ingredient’ is an important element in empowerment of women, and that because of its historical roots, the traditional conceptualization of what constitutes wilderness therapy and related programs overlooks this more spiritual ingredient that [she] and others recognize as an important component of wilderness therapy (pp. 14-15).

Furthermore the very concept of wilderness sets it apart from society, it is relatively void of cultural norms, such as what one is supposed to wear or how one is supposed to look (in contrast to an urban “wilderness” setting), and some of these norms are paralyzing for women. Simply escaping these norms may be therapeutic in an of itself.

Other theories that attempt to describe the unique characteristics of a wilderness experience argue that wilderness allows for immediate and concrete feedback (Scherl,

1989) and also an evenhandedness of consequences (Powch, 1994). In this latter sense, nature is void of favoritism; what happens to one happens to all regardless of sex, race, or class. In addition, Powch (1994) argues that there is inherent potential for spiritual healing within wilderness. Effects of wilderness therapy include sustained increases in self-esteem, assertiveness, expectations that powerful others and chance would have less control in one's life, and significant reductions in trait anxiety (Ewert, 1988; Marsh, Richards, & Barnes, 1986). An additional explanation for how a wilderness setting might lead to benefits is that it is void of most of society's rules and norms. In this sense, one might be able to explore new aspects of herself, without conforming to traditional roles (Henderson, 1990).

Finally, as mentioned in the previous chapter, research literature provides strong evidence that wilderness is an effective environment for facilitating liberating experiences, however, little is known about how that phenomenon occurs (Bedell, 1997). The current lack of explanation for the therapeutic value of wilderness suggests a need to take a closer look at the characteristics of wilderness and how they relate to the benefits of wilderness recreation (and then how these benefits relate to gender).

WILDERNESS RECREATION AND EMPOWERMENT

One way of summing up the therapeutic value of wilderness is that wilderness recreation can lead to empowerment. Empowerment, as defined by Gutiérrez (1990) refers to a "process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situation" (p. 149). In this sense, empowerment involves transformations of power which can be personal, interpersonal,

social, and/or political in nature. In addition, empowerment can be mutual, relational, and simultaneous, rather than dichotomously focusing on the traditional definitions of “power over” or “power given to” (Surrey, 1991). Thus, we all have empowerment as a potential; it need not be viewed as a scarce commodity. Women have been socialized into believing that they are less skilled and less capable in pursuits of outdoor recreation, therefore going against this myth may be a source of empowerment and social stability for them (Mitten, 1994). Oftentimes, the benefits of recreation are recognized in retrospect, as women acknowledge their strengths, skills, and the self-esteem gained from activities. Women involved in outdoor recreation talk about their self-esteem in terms of increased self-respect and self-integrity. “In a society where being a woman is often perceived as a weakness, successfully facing challenges encountered in outdoor settings may help women rid themselves of self and societally imposed limitations. Going beyond these limitations results in higher self-esteem and self-reliance which, in turn, leads to a greater sense of personal empowerment” (Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993: 37). Other explanations suggest that wilderness recreation can transform body image, resulting in a reevaluation of norms, which can then be empowering (Arnold, 1994; Gabert, 1997). Similarly, although not limited to a wilderness setting, Henderson (1994a) suggests that the opportunity to control one’s body in leisure activities ultimately results in a heightened sense of control in other aspects of life (and thus, results in empowerment). In addition, many of these explanations are limited to the domain of wildlands (as opposed to everyday life), although a study by Yerkes and Miranda (1982) showed that women are less inhibited by gender roles in their everyday lives after returning from their all-women’s wilderness experiences.

Facilitating Empowerment

Some example approaches for facilitating empowerment for women through wilderness recreation include all-women's trips, solos, and ropes courses. Each of these demonstrates the unique role that wilderness recreation can play in strengthening and empowering women. An all-women atmosphere can be empowering for women because it: is relationship-oriented, is emotionally and physically safe, provides a comfortable environment in which to learn new skills, offers freedom to step outside of gender roles, addresses the values of feminine qualities, and removes the desire to compete with men and for men's attention (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987; McClintock, 1996). In addition, "the capacity to engage in such creative relational activity with a group of peers has been shown to have a major impact on women's empowerment" (Surrey, 1991: 171). It is important to recognize here that this vision of empowerment entails that both agents maintain their autonomy while simultaneously enhancing each other's resources. "Thus, one is both individuated and in connection at the same time, instead of being either an individual at the cost of connection or one connected at the cost of having a sense of autonomy" (Harris, 1993: 20). If this is not recognized, the individual may sacrifice her difference for the sake of belonging, sameness, and connection. Thus when she leaves the group, she is confronted again with her separateness, and the sense of power based on connection is lost (Harris, 1993). Angell (1994) suggests that solo expeditions can be particularly empowering for women because they reinforce self-esteem, self-love, self-worth, confidence, self-reliance, trust in intuition, and connection to the natural world (these, in turn, contribute to empowerment). Finally, because sexism and oppression create feelings of fear and mistrust for many women, ropes courses are sometimes an

effective means for learning and increasing self-awareness through trust and different leadership roles, for women in our society (Stopha, 1994; Hart & Silka, 1994). The all-women's ropes course experience provides an opportunity to explore one's fears, to develop one's leadership skills, and to build trust in oneself and others in a safe and supportive environment. In addition, women gain a new sense of possibility through seeing other women do what society says they should not be doing.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Women's leisure is public and also political in the sense that oftentimes its benefits spill over into other aspects of women's lives. Thus, participating in leisure and wilderness recreation may play a part in changing gender roles and improving the status of women in society in general (Henderson, et. al., 1996). Changing gender roles through leisure may occur when women take up "non traditional" activities, when women challenge traditional gender role assumptions and assert their right to leisure, and when leisure leads to liberation and empowerment in their everyday lives (Henderson, et. al., 1996). A number of women have expressed a need for leisure experiences as a means for expressing autonomy, self-definition, and choice not present in other aspects of their lives. This is highlighted by Henderson (1990), who says, "a better understanding of the leisure portion of women's lives may enable women to compensate for some of the socialization and sex role expectation that have been ingrained in the more traditionally valued aspects of life and may help researchers to understand the subjective phenomena of leisure" (p. 240).

Also, researching the gendered meanings of leisure is of no consequence unless it can be and is applied in practice to improve the quality of life for all people. Those benefiting include women themselves, policy makers, leisure service providers, and society in general (Henderson, 1994a). As explained by Henderson (1989), “research on and for women that addresses the invisibility of women, justifies the value of leisure for women, and transforms all forms of oppression in society cannot help but make life better for all people” (p. 237).

CONCLUSION

This literature review shows that there is a need for concentrating on women with regard to wilderness recreation. Past research has shown that there are gender constraints to leisure and recreation, but also that these activities can aid in our deconstruction of gender and gender-marking. In addition, because there is a present gap in our knowledge concerning women and wilderness, it is advantageous to take a feminist approach to the project. Although the literature examines some of the positive outcomes or benefits of leisure and outdoor recreation, we find that most of these explanations do not focus specifically on the realm of wilderness. Because wilderness offers a unique setting, it also offers unique outcomes, and the therapeutic value of these outcomes may be particularly beneficial for women. Other gaps in the literature revolve around an explanation for *how* wilderness recreation can affect one’s everyday life. Without this explanation, it appears as if benefits of wilderness recreation are limited to the domain of wilderness itself. It is the primary focus of this project to uncover some these positive outcomes that are beneficial for women, and then to explain how these outcomes might transfer over into

women's everyday lives. If these outcomes transfer into everyday life, it may be inferred that wilderness recreation can contribute to liberation for women. This entails an in-depth examination of the meaning of wilderness experiences for women, the outcomes of those experiences, and how those experiences spill into everyday life.

Feminist researchers suggest that women's lives can be made more visible through involvement in leisure, and the benefits of recreation (empowerment, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-actualization, life satisfaction, etc.) can spill over into other aspects of women's lives, resulting in a heightened sense of control of their lives (Henderson, 1994a). In this sense, "anatomy is not destiny" (Henderson, 1989). It may be possible that wilderness managers and recreation providers can facilitate liberating recreational experiences to girls and women, thus providing experiences for them to regain their voices.

The following chapter is an in-depth examination of the methodology, data collection, and analysis used in the project.

CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project is to explore and describe the connection between wilderness recreation and women's everyday lives. In examining this connection, I selected an interpretive paradigm using qualitative in-depth interviews as the means for data collection. Researchers such as Henderson (1991) and Howe (1985) have described the value in using an interpretive paradigm to identify patterns by exploring specific cases. "The interpretive paradigm allows us to view human behavior as a product of how people define their world and to see reality from others' eyes" (Henderson, 1991, p. 10). Thus I designed guiding questions and interview questions to allow women to talk freely about their lives and the impact that wilderness and wilderness recreation has had upon them.

In-Depth Interviewing

In-depth interviewing is a method of data collection that looks at the ways in which individual lives interact with cultural structures and social forces. It is an appropriate research method when the stories of individuals can help us explore cultures, new topics, new solutions, or social, political, and economic changes. In the analysis of women and their outdoor experiences, qualitative interviewing is particularly appropriate for three reasons. First, because the voices of women have been stifled in the past, it is of paramount importance that they tell their own stories, that they are viewed as the ultimate authorities on their own experience, and that we acknowledge the content and detail of their accounts. Secondly, qualitative interviews allow scrutiny of detail of this relatively uncharted territory. Finally, this methodology is appropriate because it is in accordance with a feminist agenda in the sense that the actual interview process/conversation may

prove to be politically and socially therapeutic for the women interviewed. Thus, the interview serves as both a product and a process. It just so happens that a few of the women interviewed commented on the therapeutic value of the interview process. Louise, age 41, explains how simply talking about her wilderness experiences allows her to access similar feelings that she has when she is in the backcountry.

“I mean, when I’m talkin’ about it right now, I’m there! I’m there. I picture the whole thing. And I can feel it, and that’s why I do it because it’s a nice feeling... And I need to have somebody like you come around once a week and make me talk about it, because I know I’m gonna feel good today. Because I’ve talked about it.”

In addition, in-depth interviews are ideal for a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where categories surface out of the data rather than preconceived (deductive) paradigms and mental structures. “The specific purpose of grounded theory is to arrive at abstract categories that constitute concepts which facilitate our understanding of a phenomenon, and that may have specific relationships to each other (which then are considered ‘theories’)” (Tesch, 1990: 140). A grounded theory approach is chosen for three reasons: first because little is known about the relationship between wilderness recreation to women’s liberation, therefore theory is emerging rather than preconceived; secondly, although individual interviews will be different, there may be common “patterns” and “themes” throughout the data; and finally, a grounded theory approach allows for more in-depth probing.

In-depth interviewing in conjunction with a grounded theory approach to collecting and analyzing data is *semi-flexible, iterative, and continuous* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In the sense that this approach is flexible, it calls for a design that takes shape gradually, adjusting along the way, allowing new ideas and themes to emerge during and

throughout the interviews. In addition, this methodology is adaptable from participant to participant, accommodating the individual in discussing what she prefers to discuss. This ease of redesign allows the researcher to hear what is being said without discarding the pieces that may not appear to fit into the initial conception of the research problem. During analysis, in-depth interviews and a grounded theory approach allow the researcher to come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon studied. The researcher starts with gathering all the themes provided by interviewees, then focuses on limiting and collaborating themes. Then the researcher is able to test and analyze her understanding as she puts the themes together. From this, she begins to form theories and is able to run them by interviewees and critical readers in the field. Finally, the methodology selected is continuous in that questioning is redesigned throughout the project, allowing a continual dialectic between data, analysis, and theory, exploring new topics while keeping the research focused and organized. This yields simultaneous flexibility and organization.

In addition, in-depth interviewing is a methodology to which researchers can apply further “rules” according to their research agendas. In this sense, in-depth interviews serve as a technique, but its application is guided by the rules or norms underlying a broader approach to science (i.e. a hermeneutics or a feminist approach). Fonow and Cook (1991) explain how applying a feminist approach to in-depth interviewing methodology might affect the data that one gathers. They argue that the “experience of oppression due to sexism can create a unique type of insight, involving the ability to [investigate] ‘official’ explanations and assumptions to grasp the underlying gender relations and their motor mechanisms” (Fonow & Cook, 1991: 1). And so feminist

research is influenced by patriarchal gender relations but is also guided by radical insight due, in part, to these gender realations. In this research, a feminist perspective is used as a lens through which to view the process of inquiry.

Fonow and Cook (1991) highlight five attributes of feminist scholarship. First, it can take on the *role of reflexivity*, where research is reflected upon, examined critically, and explored analytically. This provokes consciousness raising, which can lead to an emotional catharsis, an academic insight, and increased politicization and corresponding activism. Secondly, feminist research often results in a *heightened sense of awareness*, which can lead to effects on the researcher (where studying and presenting one's research raises one's consciousness), effects on the subjects of inquiry, and effects on research technique itself. Thirdly, feminist scholarship *emphasizes action*. In this sense, there is a political agenda in the research (i.e., the aim of feminist research is liberation). Action can involve playing an active role in the struggle for women's liberation, selecting research topics that serve the interests of the majority of women, and focusing on policy implications of specific research findings. A fourth major feature of feminist epistemology is its *refusal to ignore the emotional dimension* of the conduct of inquiry. Provocation of positive emotions often leads to an increased reciprocity and friendship developed between the researcher and interviewee, and possibly a therapeutic value of participation in the research process. Negative emotions and unpleasant interactions provoked need to be incorporated into the conclusions of one's inquiry, giving attention to these experiences and their meaning (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Finally, feminist scholarship *makes use of the situation at hand*, finding meaning in the ordinary, taken-for-granted features of everyday life. This allows for recognizing otherwise-hidden processes and is particularly effective

when studying nonreactive data, when subjects are in an already-given setting, having little control over the events either because they have not occurred or because they occurred for some reason other than the research. Making use of the situation at hand emphasizes the potential source of insight that can be found in examining everyday life. The connection between wilderness recreation and women's everyday lives (1) can be examined critically and explored analytically, (2) provokes consciousness raising for the researcher and the study participants, (3) emphasizes implications and future action (liberation), (4) entails an emotional reciprocity between the researcher and study participants, and (5) makes use of the situation at hand or studying women's everyday lives. It is clear therefore that an in-depth interview methodology, anchored within a feminist research approach, is most appropriate for this study.

The Interview

The purpose of the interviews was to discover the meanings women ascribe to wilderness recreation in relation to their lives as a whole. Striving to give voice to the women interviewed while also maintaining focus on the research questions, the interview questions were open and general, while probing was more specific. The general nature of the interview questions were posed in such a manner for two reasons: first to avoid "planting seeds" or begging the question, and second to have a better understanding of the way women describe their wilderness experiences. For example, if I were to ask one of the interviewees if she felt "empowered" by her wilderness experiences, she might answer "yes," and then think of a reason why, when in fact she might have described her experiences in a different manner if she had not been "fed" the word empowerment (for

example connecting to nature or feeling a sense of spirituality). It just so happens that one of the women interviewed supported this premonition. In the following quote, Amanda Lynn, age 25, discusses the danger of reclaiming words like “strength” and “empowerment.” She says,

“I kind of want to be cautious about buzz words...I never really know if it’s right to fight stereotypes directly by...taking on words and making them mine or doing the opposite. And so things like being a strong woman...that’s kind of like a new buzz word. Or empowerment, you know do I feel empowered after coming out of the wilderness? Well yeah I do, but I don’t know if that’s the best way of saying it...I’ve never talked with any other woman about how they deal with these things, so I’m not really sure.”

While the interview was directed, it also allowed for elaboration and digression (please see **Table 1** for an example interview guide used for this study). Thus, while following a general order, the sequence of and the exact questions used from the interview schedule varied somewhat from interviewee to interviewee.

Table 1
Interview Guide for Women and Wilderness Recreation Study

- 1) How long have you been recreating in wilderness?
 - 2) Could you tell me about your most recent wilderness trip?
 - (P1) What was it like?
 - (P2) What is it about that trip that stands out?
 - 3) How does that trip compare to your *favorite* trip?
 - (P1) Could you tell me about that trip?
 - (P2) How does your favorite trip compare to other wilderness trips?
 - (P3) Why was this trip so special?
 - 4) Do wilderness experiences carry over into your everyday life?
 - (P1) If so, could you explain how?
 - (P2) What do you carry back from your wilderness experiences?
 - (P3) What does it teach you?
 - 5) What does wilderness mean to you and your life?
 - (P1) Does wilderness shape who you are? If so, how?
 - (P2) Does it remind you of some aspect of who you are?
 - (P3) Does it change the way you live your life?
 - 6) Does wilderness let you express certain behaviors that are important to you and your life?
 - (P1) Do your experiences in wilderness change the way you act when you return from wilderness?
 - (P2) Are these lasting effects when you get back?
 - 7) (*Optional—if answers aren't revealing causal factors*) What conditions in a wilderness experience seem to lead to the most positive outcomes?
 - 8) (*If interviewee "found" wilderness later in life—Question # 1*) Tell me the story of how you first "found" wilderness. Because you mentioned that wilderness recreation has not always been a part of your life, have you noticed any changes or shifts in your life that are the result of wilderness and your wilderness experiences?
 - 9) We've been using the term wilderness throughout our conversation. What does that term mean to you? In other words, what's *not* wilderness, and how do you tell the difference?
 - 10) How do wilderness experiences differ from leisure experiences in *other* settings?
 - 11) Throughout the conversation I've been trying to understand how your particular wilderness experiences affect your life. Given what we've covered, is there anything else you'd like to add to help me understand the importance of wilderness to who you are?
 - 12) As a woman, do you feel like your wilderness experiences have affected you?
 - 13) Is there something that I should have asked you? Could you respond to that question?
-

Note: Probes were used in relation to most questions and are denoted by "P" above.

Before the interview began, participants were told that the purpose of this study was to examine the meaning of wilderness and wilderness recreation and how it affects women's everyday lives. The interview began with a question about how long the participant has been recreating in wilderness. This served two functions: to "ease" the interviewee into the discussion with a simple question, and also as a criteria for judging whether or not the individual has noticed shifts in her life before and after she "found" wilderness (this question was posed later in the interview if the participant had not been recreating in wilderness all her life). The next set of questions asked the participant to recall specific wilderness experiences: her most recent and her favorite. These questions served to bring the participant's memories to the front of her mind. In addition, they functioned to reveal certain components or ingredients that contribute to a good wilderness experience. The next set of questions revolved around discovering the meaning of wilderness recreational experiences to the individual, and how those experiences carry over into everyday life. Participants were asked if they were able to express certain behaviors in wilderness and if those expressions were lasting effects when they come back into society. At this point, because wilderness means different things to different people, interviewees were asked to define the technical term "wilderness," or the term to which they had been referring throughout the interview. Next, participants were asked how their wilderness recreation differed (if at all) from leisure in another setting. After this question, individuals were asked if they wanted to add anything that they felt was relevant to the interview, or anything that the researcher should know about their wilderness experiences and how those experiences affected their lives. With two questions

remaining, participants were asked if their wilderness experiences affected them *as women*. This question was posed at the end, to avoid its influence or bias on the rest of the interview. Finally, participants were asked another “wrap up” question, which allowed them to highlight and then respond to any question that they wanted me to ask that I hadn’t already.

Behavioral Reactivity

It may be the case that responses generated in this study, in part, reflect some of our preconceived notions of wilderness and what wilderness can provide. For example, when we think of social change through wilderness recreation, we may automatically associate that with notions of self-sufficiency, independence, challenge, and stewardship (Driver, Nash, & Haas, 1987). Because there are these effects of socialization and language, it is difficult to separate these effects from experience effects (Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 1996). In other words, how much of the described outcomes really result from wilderness experiences, and how much result from the interview and through our preconceived ideas about wilderness (assimilation effects)?

Although it is almost impossible to separate out the effects of the interview from the actual effects of wilderness, requesting specifics from the study participants is a way to bracket for these assimilation effects or sources of bias. First, although broad questions can yield assimilation effects (Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 1996), specific probing calls for study participants to validate their responses. In addition, soliciting specific examples and explanations helps to assess whether or not the interviewee has been socialized into answering a certain way or whether what she has said is truly part of her wilderness

experience. Although these are ways to reduce the amount of behavioral reactivity, study participants may already “know what to say” or “know how to respond,” and so the research is cognizant and cautious of this possibility.

Study Participants

A pool of potential interviewees was generated through a variety of sources, including recommendations from members of the field of recreation management (professors, students, wilderness rangers and Forest Service employees), from acquaintances of the interviewer, and by responses to posters placed at local outfitting organizations, outdoor equipment shops, and recreation facilities (i.e. climbing walls). A snowball technique allowed the pool of potential subjects to be enlarged, and then interviewees were screen from this potential pool of study participants. Screening of possible interviewees aimed for diversity (racial, ethnic, sexual preference, age, ability level, marital and family status, and socioeconomic status), individuals who could articulate particular phenomena under scrutiny, and finally women who have had moderate to great amounts of wilderness experiences (women who have recreated in wilderness for at least three years and who periodically go back into wilderness to recreate). Initially, three practice interviews were conducted to “test” and refine the quality of the research questions. Because these interviews reflected and revealed information about the guiding questions for the study, data from these interviewees is included in the results and analysis. After these initial interviews, twenty-one additional interviews were conducted, totaling twenty-four.

Salient to the study was allowing women to voice their personal wilderness experiences, to elucidate what was important to them, to determine what affected those experiences, and vice versa how those experiences affected themselves.

Sociodemographic diversity was important in the sample to allow for the *possibility* that certain factors might affect one's wilderness experiences. However to avoid presupposing difference and assumptions about how particular demographic factors might affect one's wilderness recreation, interviewees were not asked about any identifying factors outside of their age. This method allowed individuals to talk about their backgrounds only if they felt they were important or influential to their wilderness experiences.

The following is a description of some of the sociodemographic characteristics of the women interviewed.

Table 2: Age Range of Interviewees

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Number of Interviewees</u>
20-29	10
30-39	5
40-49	6
50-59	1
60-69	0
70-79	2

All other demographic data was either mentioned by participants, was known by the interviewer prior to the interview, or was visible to the interviewer. Of the twenty-four women, seventeen were of European-American heritage, two were Canadian, two were American Indian, one was Hispanic-American, one was Asian-American, and one was Asian. Twenty-two women were interviewed and living in Northwest Montana (chosen because of accessibility to the researcher), but of these twenty-two, only six were actually from the area. One participant was living in Maine at the time of the interview, and one

was living in Minnesota. Eleven of the women were single or divorced, and thirteen were married at the time of the interview. Eight of the women had children. At least twenty-two had a college degree. At least one woman is a lesbian, and at least one is bisexual. One woman identified herself as growing up with a physical disability in her foot.

The Dangers of a Self-Selecting Sample

Many of the women interviewed are from Montana or have chosen to live there. This entails certain characteristics about their lifestyles and preferences. For example, these women may be rustic, outdoorsy, and self-sufficient. And so having these qualities may influence their responses to questions that focus on the meaning of wilderness in their lives as well as the effects wilderness has had upon shaping their identities. It may also be that living in Montana provides outcomes similar to wilderness (such as self-sufficiency, connecting with nature, and desire to preserve nature). Caution needs to be exercised when making assumptions about the generalizability of the results in this study to women who live in other parts of America.

In addition to being attracted to Montana, many of the study participants had a feminist predisposition. Although the women interviewed were not specifically asked whether they were feminists, many responded in a manner that corresponded with a feminist epistemology and way of looking at the world. Because this standpoint does not represent all women, this should also be taken into consideration when making assumptions about the generalizability of the results of this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted during the months of December 1997 and January 1998, and took place in the homes of the interviewees, in the home of the interviewer, or at quiet coffee shops. The location depended on the preference of the interviewee. Interviews ran approximately one to one and a half hours in length. With permission of the interviewees, all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis by the author.

Analysis of the data occurred in four phases (Kvale, 1983)³. The *first phase* of the interviewing process took place during the interview and involved the participant's description of her life-world. A life-world is the subject of the qualitative research-interview and the interviewee's relation to it. The purpose of this phase was to describe and understand central themes that the interviewee experienced and lived towards. Generally this first phase is spontaneous and lacks special interpretations of what is said by the researcher and the researched. The *second phase* occurred when the interviewee saw new meanings in what she experienced and started to see new connections in her life-world based on her spontaneous initial descriptions. In the *third phase* the interviewer condensed and interpreted the meaning of what the interviewee said, allowing for the latter to "check" the researcher's interpretations. This stage incorporated data verification, as the researcher continuously summarized and probed for a better understanding. In the *fourth phase*, the interviewer attempted to interpret the transcribed

³ Kvale includes a fifth and sixth phase of interpreting data. The fifth phase would involve a re-interview. And the sixth phase involves action, where the interviewee, the researcher, and individuals who read the research may change their behavior based on insights they might have gained from the project, and the changes are brought by the actions in a broader social context. This latter phase is salient to the meaning of the research and to rectifying past social injustices toward women.

interview. An example interview is presented in the Appendix. This transcription is provided to illustrate both interviewer and interviewee responses.

There are three steps involved in the last phase of analysis, the interpretation of interview transcripts. In *step one*, the interviewer attempted to formulate what she understood as the meaning of what the interviewees described. This involved reading all of the transcripts multiple times. The interviews were initially read to identify and code possible meanings and outcomes of wilderness recreation. *Step two* involved a common sense interpretation of the data—going beyond the individual interviewee’s experience, attempting to draw in broader contexts and a wide knowledge of the topic investigated. Transcripts were read again to compare the initial codings across interviews to check if the data fit these categories. At this stage, analysis was a process of “cyclic interaction” (Miles & Huberman, 1984) between the data and the emerging framework of meaning. Common and distinct themes of wilderness recreation were sought across the context of these women’s lives. Data was reduced to categories and sub-themes, which was helpful in conclusion-drawing and verification. With data in a reduced state, patterns, discrepancies, causal factors, and explanations could be noted. NUD*IST software was used as an electronic means for categorizing and handling the data, and this was coupled with a manual organizing system (not automated or prescribed structure). NUD*IST is a computer package designed to aid users in handling unstructured data in qualitative analysis. NUD*IST software offers the researcher the ability to produce versions of the original data documents with coded and marked segments, and will also print out new documents in which all segments relevant to one category have been brought together. This is an efficient method for creating categories that are later built into theory.

NUD*IST was used in the project to index and search, while theorizing was handled by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to surpass some of the time consuming manual procedures (paper work, only having single copies, or committing to a classification system), while also remaining in control of the coding, classification, and theory building. In addition, strictly using NUD*IST for indexing and searching and relying in a manual organizing system for theory building prevents NUD*IST's "tree structure" tendency from occurring. This software package has a tendency to force categories and theories into linear structures that may oversimplify more multi-dimensional relationships. As will be explained in the Results and Discussion sections, the connection between wilderness recreation and women's everyday lives is complex and sometimes cyclical, so the decision to use a manual organization for theory building was appropriate. Finally *step three* (of Kvale's fourth stage) draws on more theoretical interpretations, where its validity will depend on a more general theory. In interpretive research, frequency of an incident does not necessarily legitimate a theme (although this may be one justification for including it). Rather, the centrality of a meaning to an individual's discussion of her understanding and interpretation of her wilderness experiences may justify it as a theme (Freysinger, 1995). Commonalities as well as differences existed across interviewees and these are reflected in the Results section.

Validation of the results manifested in two forms; as the interviews were being conducted the interviewer reaffirmed or reworded any ambiguous statements made by the interviewee, and secondly, after the data were analyzed, the interviewer's conclusions were taken back to the interviewees so the latter could express any concerns that she had with the analysis and affirm or deny whether or not she had been accurately represented.

The following chapter is an in-depth overview and inspection of the data as they relate to the guiding questions. These guiding questions include:

- 1) How women describe their wilderness experiences.
- 2) An in-depth description of the positive outcomes of wilderness experiences that may lead to liberation for women.
- 3) An examination into whether or not the outcomes of wilderness recreation transfer into women's everyday lives.
- 4) An explanation of what conditions or causal factors might lead to positive outcomes of wilderness recreation for women.
- 5) Why a wilderness setting is particularly conducive to facilitating liberation for women.

CHAPTER 4—RESULTS

Past research provides strong evidence that wilderness is an effective environment for facilitating liberating experiences, however, little is known about *how* that phenomenon occurs (Priest, 1993). Furthermore, given the realities and inequities confronting women within this culture (such as violence against them, discrimination in the workplace, inhibitions about their bodies, lack of authority, and lack of self-esteem), it is apparent that women and other marginalized groups, in particular, can benefit from positive, liberating wilderness experiences. The results focus on findings and outcomes that contribute to rectifying certain injustices against women.

Other gaps in our knowledge base concerning women and wilderness include:

- How women describe their wilderness experiences,
- an in-depth description of the positive outcomes of wilderness experiences that may lead to liberation for women,
- an examination into whether or not outcomes of wilderness experiences transfer into women's everyday lives,
- an explanation of what conditions or causal factors might lead to positive outcomes of wilderness recreation for women, and
- whether or not these positive outcomes are dependent on a wilderness setting.

Thus, the results section focuses on an explicit description of women's wilderness experiences, the positive outcomes they accrue from such experiences, what contributes to experiences that result in these positive outcomes, the effects wilderness recreation has on their everyday lives, and how wilderness and wilderness recreation can be particularly conducive toward providing women with such outcomes. In short, this results section is an in-depth and comprehensive explanation of the connection between women, wilderness, and women's everyday lives. This aims toward offering wilderness managers information and recommendations that may further facilitate liberating experiences for women.

***Nomothetic Level Versus Idiographic Level:
An Explanation for the Means by which the Data is Presented***

In reading this section and listening to the stories of the women interviewed, it is of paramount importance to recognize that the story the research tells is *only one story*, and by no means incorporates the entirety of the information gathered from the interviews. In other words, the results are a comprehensive account of many of the overriding and prevailing themes at a nomothetical level, however they should not be perceived as if they represent each individual idiographically. When I first set out to define my thesis topic, I had to narrow my focus (looking at how wilderness recreation can positively influence women's everyday lives), and unfortunately this means leaving out some of the richness of the stories that were shared with me.

In terms of the social impact of wilderness, almost all of the themes in the data are covered below. However, two outcomes of wilderness recreation that may possibly lead to social change are left out of analysis. These are the importance of wilderness for spirituality, and issues of fear and safety. Both are omitted from this paper because there is a missing link between these outcomes and change within the individual's everyday life. In terms of issues of fear and safety, we find themes such as fear of bears vs. fear of men, environmental fears, and wilderness serving as a "safety zone" for women. It may be that some of these themes exist outside of the realm of wilderness, carrying into women's everyday lives, however, more data is needed to make that assumption. With regard to spiritual outcomes, there is evidence in the data that wilderness is important for spiritual well-being, reconnection, and rejuvenation, however, *how* this spiritual outcome *transfers* into women's everyday lives and what that means for them is missing from the data.

Reasons for this missing link include the interviewees' difficulties in articulating these changes and lack of probing during the interview. If this missing connection is the fault of the interviewer, it may be that my preconceived notions about what wilderness can offer biased my ability to take into account this "harder to define" value (Driver, et. al., 1996). It may also be that I preferenced outcomes that have already been documented within the fields of women's studies, psychology, and sociology. In addition, we can see how an American perception of wilderness impacts responses and what we choose to preference in terms of social impact. This social impact preferences systemic changes in our patriarchal system in conjunction with personal changes within the individual. In the future I hope to go back to the wealth of information and expose these two themes as well as some of the many themes that thus far lack as much recognition as they deserve (for example connection to nature and a desire to preserve wilderness).

Transferable Outcomes

Wilderness recreation permeates all facets of the lives of the women interviewed, however, given the patriarchal society in which they live, some outcomes of wilderness recreation are more closely linked with women's liberation than others. The outcomes focused on here are considered "transferable," meaning that they can and often do carry over into women's everyday lives. Furthermore, these transferable outcomes can also be compartmentalized as being "more" or "less" uplifting for women. For example, we find that wilderness recreation can lead to an increase in self-confidence and also an increased desire to preserve wilderness and other natural resources. Although both are transferable outcomes of wilderness recreation and both result in positive social change, in terms of a

liberatory agenda for women, a heightened sense of self-confidence is more closely related to rectifying injustices that women face (and by this criteria is more worthy of analysis). Finally, as mentioned before, research aims at discovering and articulating gaps within wilderness recreation literature and knowledge, therefore well-documented outcomes such as historical-cultural, symbolic, educational, and physical health (Driver, Nash, & Haas, 1987) are for the most part omitted from analysis. Any overlap or repetition of past research is justified on the grounds that certain outcomes have been intimated, but their contribution to women's liberation has been fundamentally overlooked (e.g. self-sufficiency or confidence).

Because some of these "less liberatory" transferable outcomes comprise a large part of the stories told, it would be a disservice to omit them entirely from analysis. They are given brief attention at the end of this section. Outcomes that contribute to positive social change for women and for society are highlighted in bold type below and are clarified in detail later in the discussion. Equally, for those transferable outcomes that are discussed in detail it is not possible to present all of the data that illustrates each outcome.

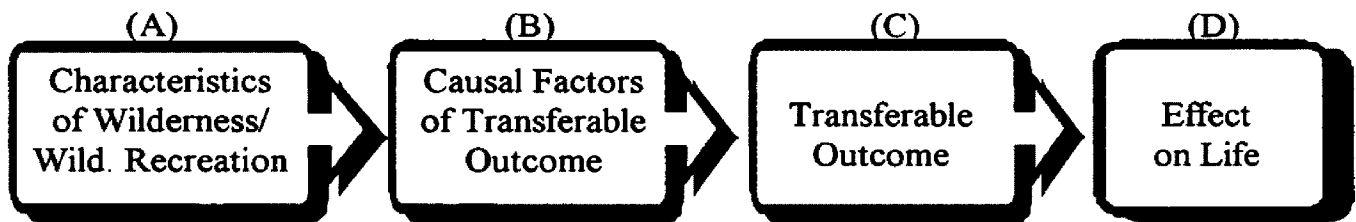
Transferable outcomes of wilderness recreation for the women interviewed can be broken down into the following eleven categories:

Table 3: Transferable Outcomes of Wilderness Recreation

Outcomes Contributing to Social Change	Well-Documented or Less Mentioned Outcomes
Self-Sufficiency	Intensified Preservationist Bent
Problem Solving Abilities	Physical Fitness
Self-Confidence	Choice of Friends
Change in Perspective	Patience with Others
Connection with Others	Creativity
Mental Clarity	

How They Work

The relationship between wilderness recreation and everyday life is often linear in character. That is, we find that the factors of wilderness and wilderness recreation lead to certain factors which contribute to an outcome that is applicable to everyday life. This is illustrated below.



In this diagram, (A) represents the characteristics of wilderness and wilderness recreation that contribute to (B) some of the causal factors of the outcome. These wilderness characteristics and their sub-components are discussed in the following section entitled “The Wilderness Setting.” They are escape (from norms, problems, distractions), challenge and survival (physical and mental), new opportunities (“woods wisdom” skills, and a new atmosphere with few rules), natural awe and beauty (connection to nature, stimulation of one’s senses), and mental revitalization (solitude, focus, slowing down, simplicity). These wilderness characteristics contribute to (B), some of the causal factors that then contribute to (C) the main transferable outcome. Finally from this diagram, one can see how the main outcome (C) can transfer into women’s everyday lives. This transferred effect is designated by (D). For example, we find that wilderness presents a *new atmosphere* (A) and therefore calls on different “woods wisdom” *skills* (B) in order to survive and be comfortable. These skills, in turn, contribute to *feelings of self-sufficiency* (C), which can build *confidence* (D) in an individual in her everyday life. This results section follows the above pattern (with the exception of problem solving) and discusses

the six transferable outcomes (confidence, self-sufficiency, problem solving, perspective shift, mental clarity, and connection to others) in terms of: (1) why a wilderness setting is particularly conducive to facilitating the outcome, (2) the conditions or factors that cause the outcome, (3) results of the outcome, and (4) how the outcome transfers into everyday life. Although these outcomes or categories are ends in and of themselves (contributing to liberation for women), they also interrelate with each other. Therefore, in addition to discussing these outcomes individually and linearly, discussion will focus on the connections and relationships between the outcomes. Before discussing the transferable outcomes in detail, a brief overview of the nature of wilderness is provided.

Interviewee Pseudonyms

All of the results in this section were analyzed using the data gathered from the interviews. In addition, the analysis is supported with extensive quotes from the interviewees. To insure confidentiality for the women interviewed, they either chose or were given pseudonyms. Correct ages for these women are given along with their pseudonyms. The following is a list of pseudonyms, ages, and races of the women interviewed.

Table 4: WOMEN INTERVIEWED

<u>PSEUDONYM</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>RACE</u>
ABBEY	23	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
AMANDA LYNN	25	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
ANN	46	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
BETH	53	AMERICAN INDIAN
BUFFALO WOMAN	48	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
CAREN	26	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
CATE	35	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
CEDAR	26	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN

CORINNE	43	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
HANNAH	40	CANADIAN
HEATHER	21	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
HEIDI	28	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
JUANITA	24	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
JUSTINE	71	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
KARA	40	AMERICAN INDIAN
KAY	39	HISPANIC-AMERICAN
LOUISE	41	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
LUKLA	35	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
LYDIA	78	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
LYNN	36	CANADIAN
MARE	31	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
MAKIKO	26	JAPANESE
PAIGE	21	ASIAN-AMERICAN
THERESA	23	EUROPEAN-AMERICAN

The Wilderness Setting

Although each wilderness area is different, and there will be variation from one wilderness trip to the next, there are fundamental elements and circumstances that wilderness and wilderness recreation can offer the individual. These elements are salient to future discussion of the causal factors of the transferable outcomes. In addition, these elements remained consistent from interviewee to interviewee. One will find that some elements of wilderness recreation facilitate particular transferable outcomes, while in contrast, *other* circumstances of wilderness recreation facilitate *different* transferable outcomes.

Wilderness presents a distinct setting, and wilderness recreation offers unique activities, providing the individual with opportunities that she oftentimes is unable to get elsewhere. These characteristics include 1) *escape*, 2) *challenge and survival*, 3) *new opportunities*, 4) *natural awe and beauty*, and 5) *revitalization*. As we move further into

the results section, we begin to understand why these attributes are particularly important in contributing to liberation for women.

There are three types of wilderness *escapes* found in the data: escape from norms and societal stereotypes, escape from everyday demands, and escape from distractions. Within wilderness, one can be who she wants to be, away from the judgment of others, often going beyond the expectations of others or what is perceived as “normal.” Makiko, age 26, explains how being in wilderness frees her from the judgment of others as well as holding the opinion of the masses.

“Cause nobody judges you [in wilderness]. That’s you, yourself. So nothing [is] wrong or right, you just do it...`cause nobody can see it. Society—it’s always somebody’s looking at you, somebody’s judging, or your mind kind of think there’s no way you can avoid or...think [the] other way. I think you be holding the general people’s idea. You be controlled by [them].”

In addition, wilderness allows one to leave the “hustle and bustle” of everyday life. Everyday demands from school, work, and family are put on the back burner when one is on a wilderness trip. Buffalo Woman, age 48, explains why solitude and escaping the demands of everyday life are so important for self-reflection and being her true self.

“I’m one of nine children, the oldest girl. I had a lot of responsibilities growing up... Then I spent eighteen years as a nurse taking care of others, lot of demands. I just like not having any demands on me at all, and being able to just be there. I mean just soak it up and be the wild person that I am and not have to deal.”

Finally in terms of escape, wilderness is free from many of the distractions of society, such as television, cars, people, and noise.

Wilderness offers *opportunities for challenge* and can entail encountering stressful situations. These challenges may be physical or mental and may involve split-second decisions or long-term focused absorption. Often challenge entails endurance, strength,

and courage. Furthermore, meeting and handling challenges is necessary for comfort and survival in a backcountry setting. Confronting these challenges involves preparation, planning, creativity, and innovation. Justine, age 71, explains how challenges in wilderness, rooted in isolation and expertise, are particularly satisfying for her.

“I think the outcomes are different because...the wilderness experience is more...it’s probably a more satisfying experience because of the isolation...So what’s the difference...? Wilderness travel takes more expertise, therefore it’s a greater challenge. I like the challenge.”

Recreating in wilderness offers one a *unique opportunity* in which *new skills* are required. Wilderness is unhurried, free from distractions, free from many of the rules in society, and relatively untrammelled by humans. The wilderness setting is entirely different from everyday life, but at the same time it is safe and familiar to the women interviewed. Wilderness is unlike any other setting and requires that one learn certain “woods wisdom” skills in order to survive in it. Hannah, age 40, describes how some of the skills she learned from living off the land contribute to her comfort and ability to survive (and help others) in the wilderness.

“I’d learned some, what I call woods wisdom. You know, from being, from living [off the land], that was, that’s part of my life I’ll always have, and I was thinking of those skills as I was coming down [the mountain], things I’ve learned and...how to use them I guess in this survival situation.”

These skills may include pitching a tent, learning about weather patterns, being prepared, carrying a pack, fishing or hunting, trusting your instinct, being able to navigate, and utilizing low impact skills. Some of these skills are explained by Beth, age 53.

“And you have to know all the elements that you’re dealing with...you have to read the signs of the weather. You can smell the rain, you know about when the snow is going to come...but you have to be aware of the stars, you know...That’s one of the other things that [horse packers] teach you too, watch your marks, watch your landmarks, watch your trails, watch everything.”

The *natural awe and beauty* that one finds within wilderness is unmatched by any other setting. This incorporates a connection to nature, a connection to place, and a connection to wildlife. In addition, the aesthetic appeal of wilderness provokes inspiration, humility, and a stimulation of one's senses. Mare, age 31, explains how wilderness invokes awareness and invigoration.

"It's the great feeling I get when I'm out in the woods. That there hasn't been another setting that I've come across where I can feel as equally invigorated and alive and...aware... You can...be asleep and go through life in town. But my awareness of what's goin' on and what life's about is hugely heightened when I'm 'out in wilderness, definitely."

An additional characteristic of wilderness and wilderness recreation is that it offers optimal opportunity for *mental revitalization*. This mental revitalization entails solitude, time to focus, and simplicity. The following quote from Kara, age 40, illustrates how time spent away from distractions contributes to revitalization and feeling refreshed.

"I think [spending time in the backcountry] helped me to unwind, because I didn't realize how stressed I was I guess, and I come back from the trip and people are telling me, oh Kara you look so good, you look so relaxed. And I told them I didn't realize I was...in such bad shape that they noticed...a couple days out. But it definitely is refreshing to get away."

In the pragmatic sense that outlook affects outcome, wilderness recreation is necessary for individuals to refresh, revitalize, and cope with everyday life. This revitalization is often described as a re-energizer or a stress reducer. Wilderness recreation can serve as a fuel, a grounding wire, battery for life, fertilizer for being grounded, and an escape. Kay, age 39, explains how wilderness recreation offers her a "slow shot," or a refuge that helps her function in everyday life.

“Once you’ve come out of the woods, you know, I’ve gotten my quiet shot, slow shot, you know ‘everything’s O.K.’ shot. And it’s like, all right, I can deal with life now.”

Finally, it is important to point out that wilderness recreation is different from other forms of leisure. This was expressed by 23 of the 24 interviewees. In addition to the above components (escape, challenge, new opportunities, natural awe and beauty, and revitalization), wilderness recreation is less structured and controlled. It can be a whole body experience, whereas leisure sometimes functions as a Band-Aid. Mare, age 31 explains how wilderness recreation entails a whole body experience.

“My leisure in the wilderness incorporates my whole being essentially. I’m getting exercise, I’m learning, sometimes actively, sometimes passively. Whether I’m going and trying to identify new plants, or if I’m just hangin’ out by the edge of a lake, soakin’ up what’s goin’ on and learning about life at that lake...and it’s a twenty-four hour thing. It’s all day long. It’s not a couple hours on Saturday night...Recreation in wilderness is a much more encompassing whole body experience. Whole being experience.”

Lynn, age 36, also explains how her leisure just barely sustains her.

“And then my leisure time sustains me, just barely enough. And...in the sense that [it] allows me to continue doing the things that right now are important for me to do and live in this kind of [city] setting.”

Similarly, leisure is sometimes explained as a subset of wilderness recreation. This is illustrated by Heidi, age 28.

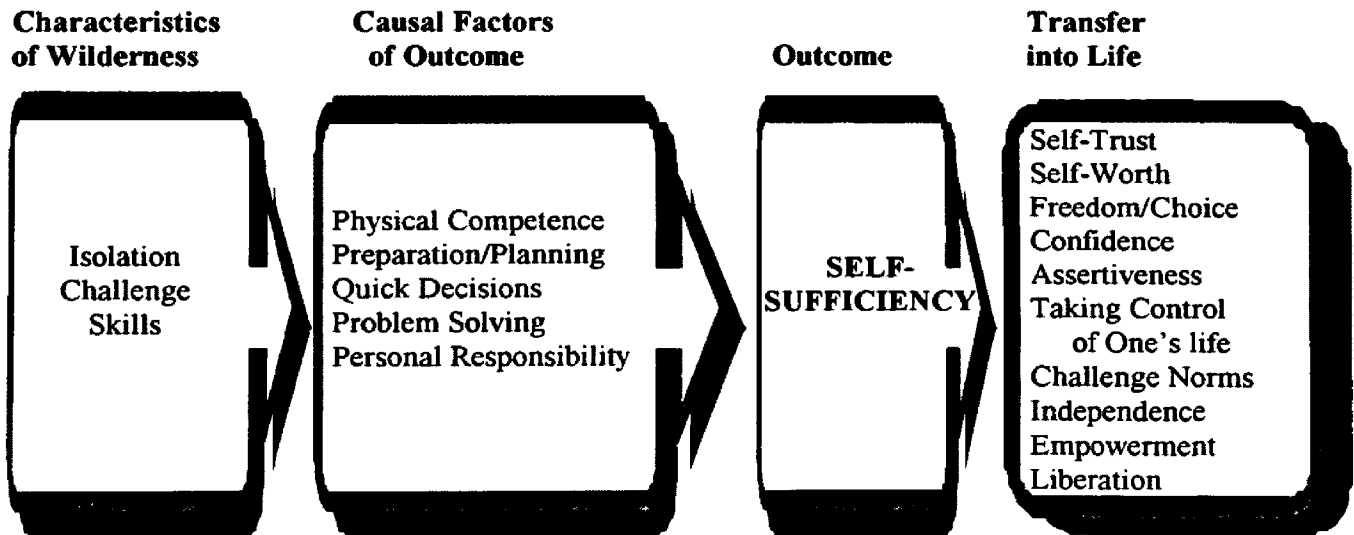
“I think that there’s certain things that happen during leisure activities like you can relax and...stress goes away. I think those things are a sub-set of the wilderness experience. In other words...maybe I’ll relax during some kind of leisure experience, or I’ll have time to bond with friends or things like that. And those are opportunities that are available for me in leisure, but the what’s available in wilderness is so much bigger. It’s so much broader.”

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

“I read and walked for miles at night along the beach, writing bad blank verse and searching endlessly for someone wonderful who would step out of the darkness and change my life. It never crossed my mind that that person could be me.”

Anna Quindlen, “At the Beach,” *Living Out Loud* (1988)

Self-sufficiency may be described as an individual’s ability to rely on her judgments, ability to provide for herself, and is necessary for her to fully actualize her autonomy. Because women are often defined, in terms of their connections with others (i.e. as a mother or as a wife), and in terms of their expected roles within society, self-reliance is particularly important in helping women rid themselves of self and societally imposed limitations. It is vital in assigning self-worth, creating a positive sense of self, and finding a true sense of self. Four themes relating to self-sufficiency are expressed in the data: (1) wilderness characteristics that are important in facilitating situations where one is required to be self-sufficient, (2) causation of self-sufficiency, (3), effects of self-sufficiency in the backcountry and (4) transfer of self-sufficiency into everyday life.



Self-Sufficiency and the Wilderness Setting

There are particular characteristics of wilderness that provide opportunities for reliance on self. In wilderness we find *isolation*, which may be necessary for feeling truly on your own. It is in the backcountry where it is impossible to call 9-1-1, that we see an increase in the sense of responsibility for self and self-trust. Because there is less provided for the individual in wilderness and there are harder *challenges* to face, the demands in the backcountry are greater, thus resulting in a heightened sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Justine, age 71, explains how the challenge and isolation in wilderness contribute to a heightened sense of self-reliance and competence.

“Because when you’re in the wilderness, you’re on your own and it’s a challenge between you and the mountains and nature and everything else, and...being able to take care of yourself. And when you run into too many people, it takes away that feeling of isolation and I’ve got the whole world to myself.”

Mare, age 31, describes how the challenge involved in wilderness and wilderness recreation offers an added sense of accomplishment and reliance that society does not generally provide.

“I’ve always been self-reliant in town I guess. To some degree. And I’ve always felt that way, that I could always take care of myself. But being able to do that in the woods is definitely another step beyond doin’ it in town.”

Finally in terms of a backcountry setting, Amanda Lynn, age 25, illustrates how *skills* gained in the backcountry allow her to be self-reliant and therefore independent. In addition, she makes the important distinction between needing help and being helpless. This sense of independence entails autonomy, but not necessarily separation or rejection from others.

“I don’t have to rely on a man to chop my firewood, I can do it myself thank you. I can bring my little stove and light it myself...and I’m a mechanical person

anyway, but it's nice to know that if I'm out by myself and my water filter doesn't work, I know how to fix it. And I don't need somebody else to help me. You know, I'm not helpless. There's times when I need help sure, but I'm not helpless."

Causal Factors of Self-Sufficiency in and out of the Backcountry

There are a variety of "woods wisdom" skills and tasks associated with backcountry travel that require and contribute to relying on one's own resources. This can be as simple as carrying a pack, gathering firewood, lighting a stove, foraging from the land, or perhaps shooting a deer. Cate, age 35, illustrates how *material subsistence and physical competence* are necessary for survival and exhilaration.

"I never imagined myself as being...this woman that puts on all her gear for a week and carries food, everything that you need to subsist for a week and go. And when I saw it, it really surprised me, and I thought, boy, I would have never thought that I could have done that, that I could have climbed all the way to the top of that pass and stood there."

Lynn, age 36, describes how escaping into wilderness and isolation require a *personal responsibility for self* that is necessary for self-sufficiency:

"You're constantly having to be taking good care of yourself so that you don't end up hypothermic or lost or sick. So there's a sense of responsibility, personal responsibility that is necessary..."

In the backcountry, it is necessary to have knowledge of certain skills in order to be self-sufficient. Furthermore, they are required for addressing problems, enjoying oneself, and surviving. Some of these skills include *preparation and planning*, as explained by Caren, age 26. Similar to Amanda Lynn above, Caren discusses the importance of being able to rely on herself, while simultaneously depending on and working with others.

"When you're out there you rely on yourself and the people that you're with, and the things that you brought. So it requires planning, and then actually doing whatever you've gone out to do and problems arise throughout those activities."

Finally in terms of factors that lead to self-sufficiency, Beth, age 53 explains how dealing with *problems*, and in particular making decisions are a part of one's wilderness experience. Tackling these problems as they come is a necessity for survival, and oftentimes one must rely on her own resources to get her out of a sticky situation.

“Right because [in the backcountry] there was nobody [else] to saddle up our horses. That's just like when... Aunt Justine's horse threw a shoe... and we always carry all of our tools and everything, our alligators and what have you. So I just got off the horse, and there again I didn't think about it, you know, I just jumped off my horse, picked his foot up, put the nails in. But there again I never thought about it...”

Effects of Self-Sufficiency

Knowing the wilderness skills necessary for self-sufficiency (sometimes referred to as “woods wisdom”) results in the *freedom* to choose where to recreate, the freedom to go anywhere and the freedom to do anything. This is illustrated by Beth, age 53:

“That's it, that's the whole point there. You can go anywhere or do anything, because you know that you have the knowledge to do it.”

Being on your own in wilderness can lead to *innovation, adaptability, and flexibility*, as explained by Justine, age 71.

“On a real wilderness [trip], when you're on your own... you have to find your way around, and if you forgot something you have to make do, or if you break something you have to fix it.”

In addition, self-sufficiency can also lead to *personal satisfaction* and *feelings of being in control*, as explained by Juanita, age 24.

“And it's kind of cool when you can just go out there and like I'm in control... I built, made this campsite. I did it all myself, I didn't get a grade for it, I didn't get money for it, I didn't get anything. I just got my own satisfaction. And that's kind of cool because nobody else can take that away.”

Heather, age 21, explains how the knowledge and the ability to do things on her own make her *confident* in wilderness. This confidence in herself allows her to feel comfortable hiking with other people (even if they are faster than she) and comfortable separating from others and hiking *independently*.

“I can camp. I can do it myself. I know what I need to bring, nobody has to tell me how to do it and you know, I can probably keep up if you’re not hiking super fast and if not, I can find my way there and...I think it’s a lot of like just confidence in general...I don’t feel like I’m holding anyone back. Or I don’t have to just because I’m there. I don’t have to hold `em back. Like we can do it together or not.”

An additional outcome of self-sufficiency in the wilderness, especially if traveling alone, might be becoming more *safety-conscious*, as explained by Justine, age 71.

“[On a solo trip] you can’t depend upon anybody else but yourself. You’re much more cautious and safety-conscious. You get hurt out there and you’re on your own.”

Self-Sufficiency and Everyday Life

Wilderness recreation often demands self-sufficiency from women in the backcountry, and this reclaimed sense of self can filter into women’s everyday lives, resulting in a healthy *independence from others*. Ann, age 46 explains how confronting her fears in the backcountry, including the fear of being alone, allows her to reevaluate her strengths and her dependency on others. This sense of independence does not entail a rejection of others, but rather a sense of confidence that if she were to be alone, that she would be able to handle it. For example:

“I’m sure [wilderness recreation] influences my relationship in life too,...just because of the rootedness...and the self-confidence...I’m sure it does with my marriage...influence that, because probably seeing myself as independent, certainly

able to be independent, not threatened by someone leaving me...in terms of a relationship.”

This sometimes entails a *critique and a rejection of societal norms* and standards of women, as illustrated by Heidi, age 28.

“I think that as a woman, in our culture, I’m not expected to—I wouldn’t go so far as to say not allowed, but not expected, maybe in some sectors not allowed—to do some of the physical and self-sufficient activities that men do.”

And so, for women, self-sufficiency can be especially positive in terms of *going beyond norms* and *instilling self-confidence*. Heidi continues to explain how wilderness activities can be particularly liberating for women.

“But I think as far as our culture in general is concerned, we’re not...supposed to do those kinds of things. So in some ways I think it’s really liberating to break out of that mold,...sort of gives me an added sense of accomplishment to be able to do it and do it as a woman, because it’s not expected and...in some...sectors not condoned. So I think that that comes into play with the confidence...the...competence outcomes and other stuff like that.”

Cate, age 35, explains how the skills required for self-reliance in the backcountry can be directly applicable to daily life.

“In the sense that...I can manage on my own. That’s carried over to, for instance when I travel and go do shows and stuff like that, you know so I slip my stove and my sleeping bag and my water filter and all that in the back of my truck and I go. And I don’t stay in a hotel,...I go find some place that I can throw out my sleeping bag or if it’s raining I can crawl in the back of my truck...”

Similarly Justine, age 71, explains how skills accrued in wilderness allow her to take care of her needs in society.

“I live alone. I take care of the old house. If there’s a nail to be pounded in or whatever, I can do it. So I feel pretty self-sufficient, self-confident. And I think the wilderness experience has taught me how to have the confidence, the ability to do things.”

In addition to self-confidence and going beyond societal norms (as mentioned above), accruing self-sufficiency skills in the backcountry can contribute to *assertiveness*.

Caren, age 26, explains how self-reliance learned in the backcountry allows her to be more assertive and comfortable with her ideas in society.

“I think because I have done a number of trips with other people and on my own and have learned self-reliance that is required for enjoying yourself while you’re out there that I’m fairly outspoken. I’m confident in my abilities, so I don’t hesitate to speak up and offer to do things or to provide ideas for others. `Cause I feel pretty sure of where I am and what I think I believe.”

Cedar, age 26, explains how self-sufficiency can lead to *self-trust, empowerment, and liberation*.

“I try as much as I can to maintain that concentration of trusting myself [when I’m back in society] and understanding that I’m completely capable and competent if I choose to know how to take care of myself without some... things... I think it’s such a great experience to learn how to trust yourself. My mom and dad aren’t around. I’m alone. And then it’s so liberating and exciting... Like whoa I can do whatever I want!”

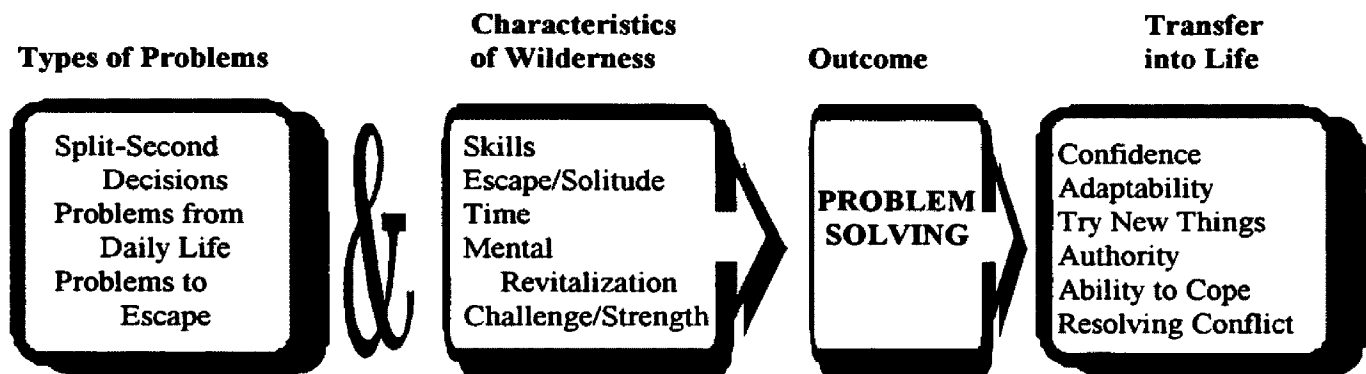
PROBLEM SOLVING

“Innovators are inevitably controversial.”

Eva Le Gallienne, *The Mystic in the Theater* (1965)

The ability to identify and solve problems is salient in assigning self-worth as well as contributing to the worth that others attribute to the individual. With the resources and capacity to solve problems, one is able to identify solutions and take action to improve one’s life situation. Hence, problem solving can function as an intricate component in fostering voice and empowerment. Furthermore being adaptable, innovative, and encountering significant events in the wilderness contributes to one’s ability to survive in everyday life. Four themes revolving around problem solving surface in the data: (1)

reasons wilderness plays an important role in fostering situations in which one is able to solve uncertainties, (2) *types of problems or causes of problems* that may be addressed through wilderness recreation, (3) *outcomes* of one's ability to address and solve problems, and (4) ways in which problem solving capacity can *transfer into one's daily life*.



Types of Problems or Causes of Problems Addressed Through Wilderness Recreation

Problems addressed in the wilderness are manifested in three forms: 1) *split-second decisions* which are associated with obstacles that are the direct result of being in the backcountry (i.e. weather, wildlife, disagreements with others), 2) *problems from daily life* that are addressed in wilderness, including processing significant life events (such as death of another), and 3) *problems that one is able to escape* through wilderness recreation. Wilderness recreation, like daily life, presents its own set of obstacles and decisions that must be resolved for the individual to survive and move through the backcountry. Furthermore, these obstacles often involve making split-second decisions. Addressing these impediments cultivates one's ability to be adaptable and innovative and to be a leader in and out of society. Beth, age 53, describes how she was forced to make a split second decision involving a possible life or death situation.

“We went up to shoot a grizzly bear for a guy...and what happened was the bear was on the trail,...he stood up and he spooked the horses...And I tried everything that I could to hold on to him...but it was raining, the storm had come up really fast, it was slippery, and finally I just had to cut `em loose, you know... But there again, that’s one of the things, that you have to make a decision now... And in thirty seconds I weighed and measured the whole thing of O.K., I’m gonna’ have to cut him, because if I don’t, my horse is going to go over,...and I had to do some`in’ right now. So I just cut `em loose, in order to save my horse and myself.”

Caren, age 26, describes additional problems that are the direct result of being in a wilderness setting. Dealing with these dilemmas forces her to be creative, and furthermore allows her to become a better problem solver in all facets of life.

“So because you are...in a...shut-off or closed-off situation,... [wilderness] forces you to become creative in how you deal with problems that may arise...And how you can handle them...with the things that you have, and so I think for me...it’s made me a better problem-solver wherever I am. In all facets of life—work, and play, and fixin’ equipment, anything like that.”

Corinne, age 43, explains how she goes to wilderness to mentally process problems within her daily life. In this case, she is referring to coping with her mother’s death.

“[Wilderness has] given me all of that time and space to really sort through things in my life and events that have taken place, and how I process significant events like, you know, my mother’s death, and the wilderness was a very...spiritually healing place for me to be... When you lose someone very close you just never know when you may burst into tears. And that I could walk...a lot of the sadness away and just...feel the comfort and warmth of my surroundings. And I never feel alone...in the wilderness.”

Lukla, age 35, elaborates further on dealing with problems of everyday life while in wilderness. She is able to process, prioritize, and face challenges that may be awaiting her.

“I find myself thinking a lot when I’m hiking or boating, about what I want to do with my life. It allows me to...put all the cards on the table and figure out what I want to prioritize, or what direction I’m heading, or how I want to approach a challenge that may be awaiting.”

Finally, in terms of dealing with types of problems, wilderness provides an opportunity for one to *escape* some of the problems of everyday life. Kay, age 39, explains how wilderness allows her to shed some of her worries, resulting in rejuvenation and a new perspective or way of looking at life.

“It’s like out of sight out of mind, you know and out of hearing, and...it’s just rejuvenating. It’s really quite wonderful...You’re just there and you’re just living, and you know if you shed you’re worries...you know it’s a lot more like I think life should be lived.”

Amanda Lynn, age 25 explains how her mindset when she goes into wilderness is related to the outcomes she accrues. If she is able to recreate while clear of daily stresses and problems at work, then she is able to feel more rejuvenated. For her, having that mindset is when “everything works.”

“It depends on the mood that I carry with me. If I go into it and...I’m doing it because I’m really bothered by something in my work life, my school life, I’m gonna’ carry that with me, and I’m gonna’ keep churning on it, even though I’m in a gorgeous place. But if I can...go into it with a mindset that, ‘O.K., I’m gonna’ accept whatever comes at me while I’m here, and I’m gonna’ leave everything else behind,’ then...that’s when everything works...I get a lot out of it. It’s not just a way to exercise, it’s not just a way to spend a day...I get kind of revitalized, I get in a better mood, I feel stronger, spiritually stronger.”

Problem Solving and the Wilderness Setting

To resolve problems one may need *skills and knowledge, strength and endurance, inspiration and courage, mental revitalization*, in some cases *time*, and *escape*.

Wilderness recreation offers one the ability to accrue skills involving creativity, adaptability, and innovation, which are all important components in being able to effectively resolve conflict. Caren, age 26, explains how an isolated wilderness setting forces her to be creative and flexible in dealing with problems that may arise.

“Because you are...in a...closed off situation...[wilderness] forces you to become creative in how you deal with problems that may arise. And how you can handle them with...the things that you have. And so I think for me...it’s made me a better problem-solver wherever I am. In all facets of life—work, and play, and fixin’ equipment, anything like that.”

Another characteristic of wilderness that provides opportunities for problem solving is *challenge*, which can result in strength and endurance. Kay, age 39, explains how this challenge of solving one’s own problems can be exciting.

“[Wilderness is]...a challenge, it’s exciting...But it’s like O.K., think...and you know, you get out of it, and...it’s a great feeling. You’ve solved your own problem...bears didn’t eat you, a scorpion didn’t bite you, whatever it was, you know! Yeah, the challenge is great!”

As discussed earlier, wilderness entails *natural awe and beauty*. This natural awe and beauty can provoke feelings of inspiration, which can lead to tackling problems. Corinne, age 43, discusses how this inspiration helps her tackle challenges in her everyday life.

“[My wilderness experiences mean] inspiration, courage to tackle what may seem to be insurmountable challenges and obstacles in this road of life, in the world of academia...”

In addition, wilderness is an ideal environment for solving problems because it can offer *solitude* and *mental revitalization*. This is explained by Abbey, age 23. In her case, peace and quiet involved in solitude contribute to her mental revitalization, allowing her to come to meaningful decisions that might change her life.

“By entering a wilderness area...it’s finally quiet, and it allows you more freedom to just like move into your own head and your little brain and...process all this stuff that goes on each day, and come out with some meaningful conclusions. Or if you have something very, I find that a wilderness experience can be very important if I have a big decision to make, something that’s going to change my life.”

Lynn, age 36, further describes how solitude and escape can lead to clarity and answers.

“Just to be on your own time, your own place and be alone up there is... a different experience. And whether it’s something that’s going up there for your own contemplation and reflection on things or on your life and get some clarity in a place that may sort of help provide answers for you or give you that clarity.”

Another characteristic often involved in wilderness recreation, *time*, can offer one an ideal environment for focusing on problems. Amanda Lynn, age 25, explains how time allows her to process life events and also escape smaller problems at work or school.

“If I’m out thinking about life on an afternoon stroll, I’m not gonna make such a big change or such a big decision as I would if I was out thinking about life on a week’s long camp. It’s a time when I can process whatever has been happening to me. It’s the time when I can let go of all the petty little things that happened at work or school.”

This notion of an extended period of time conducive to solving problems that one may have from everyday life, contrasts with split-second decision making, where one is forced into making a decision without warning. Both types of problem solving can have a positive influence on women’s everyday lives. However, the amount of time one has to contemplate a decision affects what types of problems one will be able to address while in the backcountry.

Finally, the wilderness setting is unique and particularly valuable for resolving conflict in that it is an *escape* from the daily grind, from constant distractions—thus allowing one to process information. This notion of escape is conducive to making important decisions about life and is also ideal for leaving behind some of the smaller problems of life. Addressing or reconciling the former type of problem is illustrated by Makiko, age 26.

“Usually when [I’m] stuck, I go there and when I get from those places I’m at ease, I’m not, I don’t feel I’m stuck anymore. I have to just move on.”

Amanda Lynn, age 25, illustrates how wilderness recreation can assist her in distinguishing important problems from unimportant problems, and further, how wilderness gives her the confidence and energy to attempt to solve those obstacles.

“Wilderness kind of gets rid of all the bullshit of life. It takes all those little problems that seem so big away. And so when you come back to those little problems, you realize that it’s really not such a big deal, and of course you can get by them. Of course I can fix this problem, of course I can do this. And I’ve got a lot more energy to do it if I have that confidence.”

Outcomes of Problem Solving

Accruing ability to solve problems can result in *empowerment*, as is discussed in more detail in the Discussion chapter. As explained by Gutiérrez and Nurius (1994: 33):

The skills of problem solving are especially important in an empowerment approach [to social work practice]. Ultimately, the aim is to help people to think and act differently, not only in solving personal problems, but in dealing with the ever-connected problems of oppression on personal and political levels.

In addition, problem solving skills can lead to *confidence, adaptability, preparedness, increased ability to cope, creativity, and being taken seriously by others*.

Cate, age 35, explains how the expectation of problems in the wilderness creates a “Boy Scout attitude” of being prepared within her backcountry travel and within her everyday life.

“You have to be prepared when you go out into wilderness. And I think in being aware of the problems before they hit, you’re much more likely to be able to solve them if they do. So it’s kind of given me that Boy Scout attitude, of be prepared... And I think I carry that over into my life a lot.”

Justine, age 71, illustrates how dealing with the challenge of minor emergencies that occur in wilderness require creativity, flexibility, and coping.

“[Wilderness teaches me] if you forgot something to make do, or to be creative enough to be comfortable in the wilderness. And if a minor emergency comes up like a storm or a flood or whatever, you can adjust to meet that.”

An additional result of solving problems is being viewed as an *authority figure* and being taken seriously by others. Beth, age 53, explains how the knowledge and skills she learned growing up in the backcountry helped her treat approximately 800 American-Indians and an additional fire crew with dysentery. Although some of the fire crew doubted her knowledge at first, in the end her persistence and adaptability helped her solve the problem.

“They said oh there’s no way, you know. I said just keep drinking it. [Bitterroot tea is] a terrible thing, but just keep drinking it. And...it stopped `em. But there again... everything is in the backcountry, everything that I’ve learned to use, you know. That when you don’t have anything else to... fall back on,... you just use what’s around you.”

Further, addressing problems in a wilderness situation can *reduce one’s fear of new experiences anywhere* as is explained by Beth, age 53.

“Sure all of it I would attribute to the backcountry, because I mean, it’s like [my husband] said, I have no fear of anything. I’ll try anything once. Now I’m not saying I’m gonna’ keep it up, because I might not like it, but I will try it. Or I’ll figure out how to make something easier, because when you’re back there, you’re always thinking all the time, O.K. now how am I gonna’ make this easier on me?”

Moreover, many of these consequences lead to positive social change for women in their daily lives.

Problem Solving and Everyday Life

The three types of problems found in wilderness (addressed earlier)—problems from everyday life addressed in the backcountry, split-second decisions, and escape from problems—all play a role in women’s everyday lives. Women are able to *reconcile their*

problems of everyday life while they are recreating in wilderness, and many times these resolutions are brought back into society, offering tranquillity and closure. As mentioned earlier, wilderness can nurture the ability to adapt and make quick decisions while back in society. Beth, age 53, explains the parallel between being able to deal with problems in the backcountry and being able to tackle problems at work.

“When the choices come up, you have to be able to make a snap decision on anything, at any time, no matter what the condition is. You come [back into society], basically you’re doing the same thing. When you’re working with people, or say I’m up there at S---- in the kitchen, and all of a sudden, like they did last year, threw three weddings in on us. O.K., I don’t have time to mull this over and write it down. I have to make a snap decision right now. And that’s where it parallels! Because backcountry I had not a problem making a decision. Even when I was in construction down there in Nevada, I had not a problem. I had the ability to make a decision right then and there. And that comes from makin’ `em back there, and that’s the parallel. And that’s what makes me the person I am.”

In terms of temporarily escaping problems, wilderness offers one energy and revitalization to deal with conflicts when one returns to one’s daily life.

Furthermore, wilderness serves as an excellent environment for humans to connect with other humans and to deal with conflict with others in the backcountry and in society. Lukla, age 35, explains how wilderness forces her to confront conflict with others in the backcountry and how this skill can enhance her ability to communicate with others in everyday life.

“I mean that other person’s right there, and you really are forced to have to communicate, to have to work together... So I think... it really brings people fairly close together... And I think that’s really important because life, that’s life, and we will encounter people that we will not agree with. It may be your landlord, it may be your mailperson, it may be your professor, it might be your sister or your parents... so it goes not only for having those skills, being able... to deal with people that are immediately in your life, but also those people that are on a more distant... level. We all need to work together, and if we don’t... we’ll be dysfunctional.”

In addition, Caren, age 26, explains how the isolation of wilderness offers a set of circumstances more extreme than those found in everyday life. If she can tackle problems in the backcountry, then she feels those found within civilization will be even easier to handle.

“Because I’ve had successes and been able to handle those problems and those situations, new experiences aren’t as scary for me. I figure...there’s a solution somewhere. And...if you’re in the civilization, there’s all sorts of resources for you! So if you can handle it here, you can handle it anywhere really!”

Finally, Beth, age 53, explains how the solitude and spiritual connection she finds in the backcountry help her to cope with everyday problems.

“The solitude up there is a lot different than just being down here...But to get back up there, it’s just like grandfather’s with you, you know it’s just like you’re just kind of walking hand-in-hand, and you can really get the feeling and you feel so much better. That way you can come down to the cities...or be among people and cope with it.”

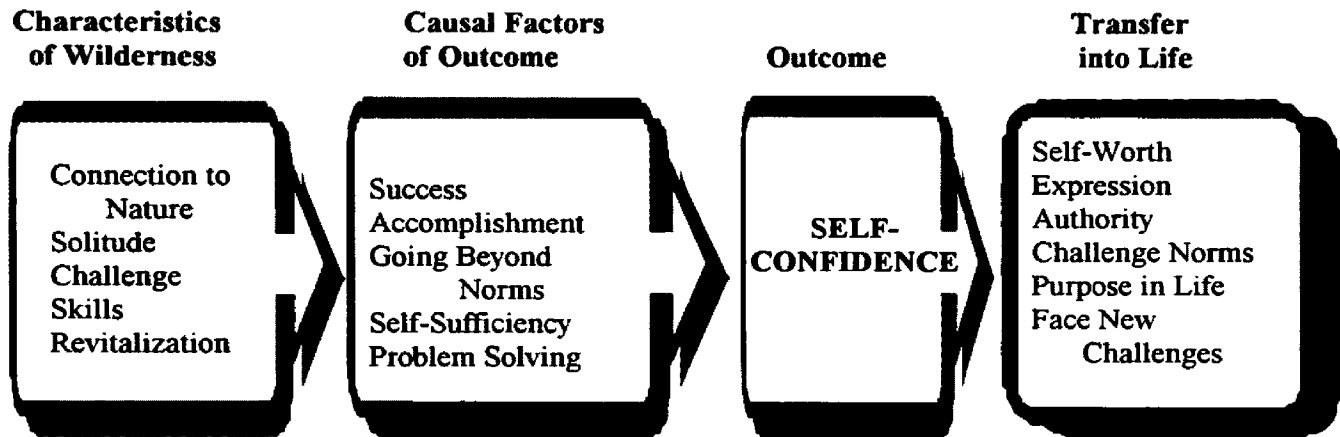
CONFIDENCE

“Self-esteem isn’t everything; it’s just that there’s nothing without it.”

Gloria Steinem, *Revolution from Within* (1993)

Confidence entails believing in oneself or in one’s powers and resources and having certainty in one’s ability or knowledge. Self-confidence allows one to contribute to conversation, to take oneself seriously, to act as an authority figure, and to face old fears and attempt new challenges. Wilderness recreation can facilitate opportunities to reclaim a more positive sense of self, thus leading to self-confidence. In addition, self-confidence contributes to self-worth, the ability to speak out, finding competence in one’s abilities, and taking control of one’s life. In this way, wilderness and the confidence accrued from wilderness recreation can contribute to gaining of voice and empowerment. Four themes revolving around confidence are discussed: (1) *why a wilderness setting is particularly*

conducive to building self-confidence, (2) what components lead to confidence, (3) what confidence can do for the individual, and (4) how confidence in the backcountry transfers over into everyday life.



Self-Confidence and the Wilderness Setting

As mentioned earlier wilderness offers a setting that is particularly conducive to facilitating confidence for women in that it requires learning *new skills*. Acquiring these skills promotes freedom, self-sufficiency, ability to survive and therefore results in feelings of pride and self-certainty. Hannah, age 40 describes how accruing new skills in the backcountry contributes to feeling self-sufficient, and this has helped her reclaim a lost sense of confidence in herself.

“Well I think that it is a confidence-builder and I think that women, including myself, struggle with self-esteem, and recognizing my own worth, and ability to accomplish whatever I set out to do. Somewhere along the line I lost some of that. And I think it had to do with that relationship I was describing. I used to be that way, ... and I just had this attitude like, if it’s meant to be it’ll be and set a dream out there and go for it. And not letting anything get in your way. And it happened that way, I didn’t let anything else control that, and then like I said in that relationship I think I lost some of that, and slowly working hard to get it back, and wilderness, and being in the woods and knowing how to build a fire with one match, and get a fire going when it’s cold and wet.”

Similarly, Theresa, age 23, describes how finding wilderness and *connecting to nature* instilled pride within herself and contributed to breaking away from the expectations of others and away from the outside pressures that were limiting her.

“Before my whole revelation and my finding wilderness and everything, I was what a male society would expect. You know I was the skirt, with the cute little tights on, and you know, everything else. And...now...I am who I want to be, and I don’t think I could have gotten there. I guess I am who I am in my heart and I never have been that before...that’s more of an issue than wilderness. That was a life thing with me, you know. And just finding this connection and finding this love for wilderness has really made me feel more competent about myself...in every realm, you know, in motherhood,...my family, in my professional career, in my school, in everything. It’s really instilled that confidence in myself.”

Wilderness offers *solitude*, which can contribute to self-reflection, providing opportunities to decide who it is that one wants to be and what it is that is important. From there, women can be comfortable with who they have chosen to be, thus resulting in a heightened sense of esteem and confidence.

In addition, wilderness recreation can entail *physical and mental challenges*, providing opportunities for success, accomplishment, and learning experiences. Kay, age 39, explains how challenge and self-sufficiency “breed confidence.”

“[The challenge] breeds confidence. Oh yeah, it’s great. I think wilderness is great for women. But...yeah it breeds confidence. Yeah, I can do that, I got lost I got out of it, or I can make my own meal...it feels great you know!”

These physical challenges can be complimented or enhanced by going beyond societal stereotypes and expectations that wilderness might not be appropriate for women or that women simply do not recreate in wilderness. This is pointed out by Heidi, age 28.

“But I think as far as our culture in general is concerned, we’re not sort of supposed to do those kinds of things. So in some ways I think it’s really liberating to break out of that mold...sort of gives me an added sense of accomplishment to be able to do it and do it as a woman, because it’s not expected and...in...some sectors not condoned. So I think that that comes into play with the

confidence...the sort of competence outcomes and other stuff like that.”

Causal Factors of Self-Confidence

Oftentimes confidence in and outside the backcountry is sparked by activities that involve opportunities for success and accomplishment. It is important to note, however, that success does not necessarily entail finishing first or accomplishing rare tasks. This is highlighted by Caren, age 26.

“But succeeding at the jobs that I’ve wanted to do that have been in the outdoors has also helped build that self-assurance as well. And I guess learning from the mistakes and the failures as well.”

Challenging opportunities such as *problem solving*, tests of physical fitness, and reconciliation between individuals can increase, facilitate, and rejuvenate one’s ability to feel sure of oneself. Heather, age 21, illustrates how *accomplishment* can lead to feelings of confidence.

“Yeah, like sitting there like verge of tears like “I’m gonna die, I’m gonna die.” I mean seriously, I was so scared like shaking and it was like a beautiful trip, we got down and camped and like was so glad that I did it and like so proud of myself that I did it.”

In addition, developing skills and capabilities often leads to feelings of *self-sufficiency*, which can lead to self-confidence. For example Heidi, age 28, draws the connection between self-sufficiency and confidence.

“I also think that just being out there and...the whole self-sufficiency of it, you know making your own food and taking care of myself in that way...also makes me feel really good about myself.”

Similarly, Justine, age 71, describes how self-sufficiency and finding her way around wilderness can provoke feelings of intellectual confidence.

“Well I suppose it’s an ego trip. You know, am I good enough to find my way around here? If I’m stuck in the middle of nowhere can I get out? And, you do enough outdoor activities: backpacking, canoeing, wilderness travel, that sort of thing... you become quite ingenious. You have to.”

Although not wilderness-dependent, backcountry travel often entails *physical fitness* and getting in shape. Ann, age 46 tells how learning new skills and physical fitness builds self-confidence that carries into the rest of her life.

“[W]hen I feel good about what I’m doing physically, or just learning new skills, then that builds self-confidence, and that carries over... to the rest of my life.”

Outcomes of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence for women can be particularly liberating in the sense that it can lead to *personal empowerment* (i.e. self-trust, self-esteem, and self-worth). Lukla, age 35, explains how her wilderness experiences have allowed her to address her fears, and thus give her pride and strength.

“It makes me feel very strong. It, I think I reflect upon myself, and we all have our insecurities and weaknesses, and I think it allows me to feel really strong, and I have a real positive outlook of who I am, and I feel like I’ve gained a lot of confidence through my outdoor experiences.”

Lynn, age 36, explains how confidence in oneself is reflected in society by one’s comfort in being an *authority figure* and being able to lead groups in the wilderness (thus taking oneself and being taken by others seriously).

“I think it gave me a lot of... self-confidence over the years, and my ability to talk to groups, lead groups, make decisions, things that I might not have learned for a long time, not have the opportunities for being a leader in an environment that is sort of dominating, demanding, interpersonal.”

In addition, self-confidence can nurture gaining of voice by cultivating *assertiveness* and strength. Justine, age 71, suggests how the confidence she gets from backcountry travel has made her more assertive.

“Has my wilderness affected me as a woman? Sure, because, again, I have to go back to the same answer... It has made me a stronger person, a more self-sufficient person, a more confident person. I don't have to take assertiveness training!”

Furthermore, self-confidence can result in *reevaluating undesirable norms* such as unachievable body images which can serve to help one find tranquillity in a healthier image of self. Stepping into wilderness often allows the individual to step away from many of the rules and norms of society, and the demands of wilderness promote a more natural body image, emphasizing function over aesthetics. Finally, confidence in oneself can be intrinsic to developing a *purpose in life* and finding reason to live. This is described by Louise, age 40.

“I'm not out there to conquer. I'm not out there to prove anything, but when you're at peace with yourself, you believe in yourself too, and maybe those are two different things. But I believe it reaffirms your self-esteem, your worth, your reason for existence...”

Self-Confidence and Everyday Life

Self-confidence accrued in the backcountry can spill over into one's daily life. This transfer is often expressed in terms of developing *self-pride* or feeling good about oneself, in terms of *being and feeling able to solve problems* while in the frontcountry, in attempting and being *unafraid of facing new challenges*, in *freedom of expression and assertiveness*, and finally in *critiquing and rejecting societal constraints*. Lynn, age 36, explains how her wilderness experiences have contributed to her self-confidence and her ability to be comfortable with a more natural appearance.

“I felt comfortable... not wearing makeup and not shaving my legs and just being me, and I think it gave me a... really tremendous growth of self-confidence over the years, and my ability to talk to groups, lead groups, make decisions, things that I might not have learned for a long time...”

Caren, age 26, explains how her experiences in wilderness have led to self-reliance and thus assertiveness, confidence, and being a leader in everyday life.

“I think because I have done a number of trips with other people and on my own and have learned self-reliance that is required for enjoying yourself while you’re out there that I’m fairly outspoken. I’m confident in my abilities, so I don’t hesitate to speak up and offer to do things or to provide ideas for others. ‘Cause I feel pretty sure of where I am and what I think I believe...”

Ann, age 46, explains how the confidence she gains from knowing how to do things well encourages her to *attempt new challenges*.

“Knowing that... there’s things I do well in life... that gives you confidence to try other things. The first time I went to buy my own car, I found out that automatics cost on the whole,... 500 dollars more than standard cars.... and I thought... I don’t know how to shift a car... And I lived in Seattle with a lot of steep hills. And then finally,... I think I just said it to myself,... this is really stupid!... I’m certainly as smart and capable as many other people out there driving stick shifts, I guess I can learn to drive a stick shift. Whether the outdoors was a piece of that or not I don’t know... I can backpack for three weeks in the Cascades, I can probably drive a stick shift car in Seattle... there’s sometimes little reminders like that when I’m feeling real unsure about something. It’s like wait a minute, you’re a capable person, you can do this and that.”

Justine, age 71, explains how confidence can lead to *assertiveness* and reclamation of voice.

“Well, again the confidence that you have in yourself. If you’re in a committee meeting and there’s six people that have an opinion of one thing, I’m not afraid to state something the opposite. And does wilderness help me do that? Yeah, I think so. Because it’s all part of developing self-confidence in your own abilities.”

Interrelationships Between Problem Solving, Self-Sufficiency, & Self-Confidence

Although ability to solve problems, self-sufficiency, and self-confidence function independent of each other, at times they have interrelationships as well. It is important to recognize, however, that some of these outcomes can catalyze each other, and they do not always lead to a predictable, linear outcome. For example, we find that the ability to solve problems in the wilderness and in everyday life can offer one skills in adaptability, coping, and functioning independently from others, hence contributing to being able to rely on oneself. On the flip side, we also find that solving problems can result in resolving conflict between two individuals, which does not necessarily entail enhanced self-sufficiency (but perhaps compromise or working together).

In addition, there can be a connection between solving problems and gaining self-confidence. For example, one may be forced to make split-second decisions while in the wilderness, and making decisions like these may lead to believing in oneself or having confidence in oneself when faced with similar dilemmas. As a comparison, one may be forced to tackle problems while in the backcountry, and this may result in one's ability to cope or adapt, but this would not necessarily be perceived as an increase in self-confidence (but rather patience or compromise).

A relationship between the above three categories exists between self-sufficiency and self-confidence. Relying on oneself and one's resources and feeling comfortable being on one's own may nurture the confidence one has in herself to face future challenges. As a comparison, being self-sufficient may contribute to rejecting societal stereotypes about the acceptable level of independence for women, but this does not always result in an

enhanced sense of confidence (but may entail feelings of isolation, or being disgruntled with society).

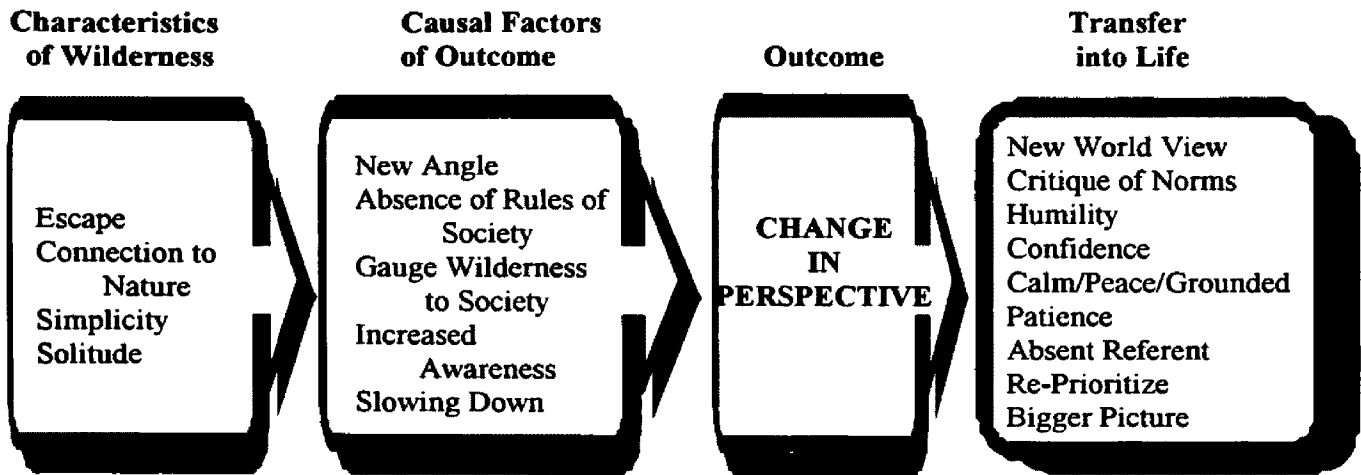
Other interrelationships between the above transferable outcomes and the following transferable outcomes (change in perspective, connection to others, and mental clarity) highlight the role they play in *facilitating empowerment* and contributing to *rectifying some of the social injustices* that women experience today. These relationships are more complex and will be discussed in detail in the Discussion chapter.

CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

“Nothing puts things in perspective as quickly as a mountain.”

Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time* (1951).

A shift in perspective is necessary for a reevaluation of societal norms, of the self, and what is deemed important to the self. It is a critique of the *status quo*, and complimented by other positive outcomes of wilderness recreation such as empowerment, confidence, and problem solving skills, it can lead to social change for women and society. Generally, for a shift in perspective to occur, something must change: a sudden event, a removal from one’s daily environment, or perhaps an influential person enters one’s life. A wilderness setting and wilderness recreation offer one the chance to step away, reevaluate, prioritize, and act. The data revolves around four themes of a change in perspective: (1) why a wilderness setting is conducive to a shift in perspective, (2) the causal factors of perspective change, (3) what a change in perspective can do for the individual, and (4) how this shift is applied to one’s daily life.



Perspective Change and the Wilderness Setting

Oftentimes in wilderness, because of its *simplicity* and *lack of rules*, the individual challenges the state of society by “*gauging*” or *comparing society to wilderness*, which may seem more “real” or “the way life should be lived.” This is explained by Lydia, age 78.

“I think it gave me a little perspective of what I think’s important in life and what I don’t, ... I use that as ... criterion to measure other things that [I] do.”

Lydia goes on to explain how the simple, *distraction-free* quality of wilderness contributes to creating her own values, and she uses wilderness as a standard by which she can measure other experiences. This standard allows her to reevaluate and prioritize that which is important to her.

“It has its own atmosphere of the world and your physical world and your mental world and ... what you care about. You’re not caring about what’s goin’ on at home and the telephone ringin’, ... you’re in a new world ... It doesn’t involve other people ... it’s a different atmosphere, and if a person’s concerned about what other people think that’s not part of the scene there. You’re on your own and your values of what’s important are a little bit different there ... You’re thinkin’ of other things ... You just don’t think about other people most of the time ... Just the immediate surroundings of the place, the experience, and it’s different ... I think you do use ... that experience as a gauge in the satisfaction you’re gathering from your daily life ... because [wilderness] is quiet and unhurried and unpeopled, whereas your daily life is frequently hurried, complicated, and peopled.”

In addition, wilderness provides an optimal setting for inducing a shift in perspective because it offers one *escape* and reprieve from daily life. This escape results in an *increased awareness* about the world. Cate, age 35, explains how this reprieve of stepping into wilderness allows her to examine her everyday life with “new eyes.” In this sense, she is able to see the “bigger picture.”

“I almost feel like I’m a spectator on this society when I come back. And I look at it in the same way that I described standing on top of a mountain. You kind of have a bigger picture of things because you’ve had a reprieve from it. And I don’t think you can truly know something until you walk away from it and turn around and look back at it. I mean that is the best way to rationalize out anything in life in my mind, you know.... And so when I go into the wilderness and I come back I feel like I have stepped away from it, and I come back and look at it with whole new eyes.”

Similarly Heidi, age 28, illustrates how wilderness recreation, because she is able to *step back from many of society’s standards*, results in a reduction of the judgment of others and allows her to reevaluate societal norms and values. In turn, a release from these norms can be liberating.

“I think to some extent... especially on longer trips there’s... a sense of gaining some perspective... on our societal norms and values... and sort of having the chance to step back... and go, huh, that’s kind a screwy thing that we do. Maybe I don’t like that, maybe we shouldn’t do it back here. And when there’s other people involved... people sort of take and leave different parts of our social roles and norms and values and... I think that that’s really positive, and... it can be really liberating for people... to be able to shed some of those rules for a certain period of time. You know run around camp like a crazy person and sort of break down barriers between people that would normally have barriers between them.

Finally, wilderness is an important environment for a shift in perspective because it facilitates a deep *connection with nature*. As Kara, age 40, explains, this connection with nature allows her to reevaluate her position within society. Understanding that she is only one individual, she finds satisfaction in her accomplishments, no matter how big they are.

“I think [when you’re inside] you kind of lose focus on exactly where you’re at... [My backcountry experiences]... help me to center myself, and... refresh myself and become more focused, and have a better understanding of where I’m at... I’m not above anybody else, or even nature in itself... and I can make changes out there... and I need to realize that in my job that I can influence things, but I can’t make a whole lot of big changes... I have limits, but I can accomplish things if I just take my time in it, and not get overwhelmed with things... and if I just back off of things, and look at the whole picture, I’m better off.”

Finally, wilderness can provide opportunities for a change in perspective, because traveling through wilderness is often very slow, forcing the individual to “see more.” This *slowing down* stimulates the senses, allows for close examination of detail, and encourages one to experience more. As explained by Cedar, age 26, this slowing down allows for self-reflection and trusting her instinct, both of which are suppressed in her everyday life.

“Stopping to look at things, looking down at the ground, or when I’m walking through and smelling and feeling. There’s so many sensations that happen when you’re in the woods that you don’t normally have, I think, than when you’re just doin’ the grind. [It’s] very much of an increased awareness... Sometimes I have... tunnel vision... I don’t notice where I am... I need to slow down... I need to pay more attention without concentrating on it... with just having it come to me... I just have to kind of let it go, and then I can see things better... Being able to listen to... a sixth sense... [In society] it’s so different... I feel like my attention is demanded all the time, and I have very little time to reflect on myself, I have very little time to take slower steps and to [truly experience]... So I think staying in touch with myself and the things that I feel are right, and that I feel are wrong is really important for me to take a direction in my life of where I want to end up... It’s important for me to understand that the feelings I have are justified and validated by my experiences. And to understand those feelings more, and not necessarily research them more, but just get more in touch with them, by taking myself out and putting myself into a situation [like wilderness].”

Causal Factors of Perspective Change

Perspective change caused by wilderness recreation occurs when one steps away from one’s daily life and steps into an *entirely new set of rules* (or lack thereof) and environment. As mentioned above, by *escaping or removing oneself from society*, one is

able to “see more” by *slowing down* and looking at life’s bigger picture. A *different angle* leads to a deeper understanding and oftentimes a critique of what is considered acceptable or standard. This concept is further explained by Amanda Lynn, age 25.

“You know you can’t see a lot of times what’s in front of your nose because you’re too close to it, but if you can step back and look at a bigger picture or a different angle, you get to see a different perspective of it, and you get a deeper understanding of it. And so...just from being able to step away from social, cultural life for a few days I can come back to it and see things a little differently.”

In addition to looking at things from a different angle, a change in perspective can be catalyzed by *connecting to natural processes* and seeing the source from where resources come. Kay, age 39, explains how her wilderness experiences have contributed to a political *awareness* not only about what she is eating, but where resources, such as wood, come from. This, in turn, gives her a broader perspective on life when she comes back into society.

“[My wilderness experiences have] made more politically aware I guess of what’s happening to the world... It just makes you kind of aware of... when you build a house and use two-by-fours, gee where do they come from? And being out in the woods, having friends that are hunters... and I see the cycle of things... more. I’m just a little [more] in tuned I think than people that don’t go out and see those first hand... I think it gives you a broader perspective on life.”

Outcomes of Perspective Change

Gaining a new perspective influences personal, interpersonal, and societal relationships. Illustrated in the above section, a shift in perspective can result in feeling *calm, confident about one’s place in the world, free to express oneself, an increase in sensation or a fuller experience, and at peace*. In addition, the individual may feel more *grounded or rooted*, as explained by Heidi, age 28.

“I feel more grounded after being in the backcountry for awhile. And it seems like the length of time matters to some extent so the longer I’m in the backcountry, the longer I have this sort of effect afterwards. The sense of...feeling more grounded, feeling calmer and more confident and,...not as easily frustrated,...relatively little anxiety sort of a sense of perspective about life.”

In addition, a shift in perspective can lead to a *reevaluation of what is important* in life.

This is explained by Heather, age 21. Her wilderness experiences relax her and serve as a reminder or gauge to which she can compare her everyday experiences as a translator.

“I translate all the time and that is a really...anal thing too...So [wilderness] makes me think of a less uptight setting...I need to calm down a little. Like this isn’t so important. Maybe it’s made me realize...all this stuff doesn’t matter so much. You know, we think it does, and...it’s important and I want to learn things and be educated...but there’s no need to get uptight about it. It’ll all go.”

Similarly, Lukla, age 35, explains how connecting with the land can lead to a perspective change about what is important in life.

“I feel, [wilderness] allows me to feel really connected with the land and with other people and so it provides me a place to go to...really realize what’s important and to escape the hectic chaos that I think happens in our communities.”

In addition, Lynn, age 36, explains how discovering wilderness at age seventeen fundamentally *changed her world view*.

“When I was seventeen was...my big formative [wilderness] experience. That... certainly changed my life in a direction that it wasn’t headed... So it fundamentally changed I think my world view,...and where I was heading, and my priorities, a lot of things.”

Sometimes gaining a new perspective can result in *humility*, as explained by Theresa, age 23. This humility comes from reevaluating her position as a human in the world, and in society.

“One thing [wilderness] does for me is it really puts things in perspective. You... go out and you see things that are so much more powerful than you. And so much more dominant than you are and you think, how insignificant am I. You know it really put things into perspective. It puts you in your place, and kind

of knocks you off your high horse for awhile... And I think if a lot of people that are stuck up on that high horse would actually get out once in awhile, it might do some good!”

Finally, gaining a new perspective on life can result in a *critique of societal norms*. These norms may refer to suppressing expression, body image (as explained below), materialism, and the quick pace of society. By comparing bathroom fixtures and a hole in the ground, Lydia, age 78, explains how the simplicity in wilderness allows her to put into perspective that which is important in life. For her, this simplicity is preferable to being concerned with aesthetic commodities.

“Well you prefer the quiet and the solitude and the simple, the simple things in life... Gold-plated bathroom fixtures are not part of the scene, it’s rather a large hole in the ground (laughter)!”

Change in Perspective and Everyday Life

A perspective change coupled with self-confidence and an ability to solve problems can result in a contribution to social change for women and society. Changes to the individual spill over into everyday life, and oftentimes the individual is able to contribute to changing her environment as well as its rules and expectations. Some transformations to the individual include a *change in appearance* (more natural, ceasing to shave, a healthier conception of body image), *a freedom of expression*, *a change in priorities*, and *self-understanding*. Amanda Lynn, age 25, explains how her experiences in wilderness contributed to a change in perspective about how she is supposed to look and how she sees herself.

“I didn’t really wear that much makeup anyway, but I just decided that that was really phony and it wasn’t me, and I started to show up to work with my hair wet,...I’d wear wool clogs,...more casual style. People started calling me nature girl, I liked it (laughter). In particular I guess it’s how I see myself. You know,

what is acceptable for me, ... and it's things as simple as knowing what's the right size and shape for my butt... You know if you're hikin' around, you're thighs are gonna' get huge because you're stronger that way. Your arms are gonna' get thicker because you're using yourself more... and that's O.K. You know if you're out in the woods for a few days, your legs are gonna' get hairy whether you shave them regularly or not. It shows you kind of a more natural self... Personal body image is not much of an issue with me at all and... if I hadn't have had that step away experience to take a look and see what culture is normally like, I don't know if I would have gotten free of that. But there's a lot of image training that goes on with young women and, well, women no matter what stage of life they're in, and in wilderness none of that really matters."

Other changes to the individual and her everyday life, as a result of a shift in perspective, include a more *positive outlook on life, peace of mind, and patience*. Perspective change can result in reevaluating and *re-prioritizing one's problems* when she goes back into society. Kara, age 40, illustrates how her backcountry experiences *rejuvenate* her, give her a better understanding of where she is at, and help her *gain focus of what is important* and what is not.

"Having a different outlook... on what I'm doing. It's... realizing that my everyday work isn't... the end of the world if I don't get it done. Or if it is something that I think is important, it might not be so important, once I get back. But sitting in an office and not being in the backcountry and enjoying something like that, I think you kind of lose focus on exactly where you're at, in this whole world... [My backcountry experiences] help me to center myself... and... refresh myself and become more focused, and have a better understanding of where I'm at."

In addition, perspective change allows the individual to *solve daily problems, problems with others, and reject questionable norms*. Paige, age 21, illustrates how a change in perspective can contribute to a reevaluation and a deeper understanding of one's world.

"Instead of accepting, when we go through our daily lives without ever really considering what it means to us to be alive, in our every day actions, ... I think that when you're faced with something that is unknowable, it really makes you consider what it is for us to be alive and also to have a greater understanding of what's going on around us. Whereas it's... easy to simply accept everything as it is, without questioning why things occur as they do."

A change in perspective can lead to a better understanding of life and a better understanding of human relationships, and in this sense see the “*bigger picture*.” As explained by Ann, age 46, seeing a mountain from a different angle serves as a reminder to look at her relationships from a different angle.

“To remove myself from my everyday life and be able to get more perspective on it... I think that really then ends up having a big influence on me and what goes on. I remember [one particular trip], it was either from morning to afternoon or one day to the next looking out at this, this mountain, this particular landmark mountain in the distance and... the next day... I realized it was the same landmark, but how... incredibly different it looked. And... it felt like one of those highs that just kind of was, ‘Wow!’ And... I remember thinking if I could just remember this everyday of my life, that how just a little different place, a little different way of looking at something, how completely different it could be. And to be able to carry that over into... disagreements with people or just getting locked into something and... to remember that maybe you just have to turn around once or take a few steps backwards or take ten deep breaths then it might look completely different. And I think if we can do that, we learn a lot more about what life puts in front of us.”

Similarly, Amanda Lynn, age 25, explains how stepping into a wilderness environment can give her a new perspective about diversity, thus leading to an *increased tolerance of difference* between others.

“You get out of the regular environment that you’re in all the time, and you get out of it enough that you start to question things that happen during your regular life... was it right for me to have that assumption about that person because he or she looked that way? Well no, it wasn’t and now thinking about it, I see that and make changes. It’s taught me about keeping an open mind... not to make too many expectations or too many assumptions.”

A change in perspective can also entail reevaluating the world and our place in it.

The connection to natural processes and the desire to provide for oneself can result in reinstating what Carol Adams refers to as the “*absent referent*” (1996). In this sense, our society linguistically and then mentally removes that to which we are referring (an animal) by renaming it (e.g. meat or veal) transforming it into food (packaged in cellophane),

permitting us to forget about the animal as an independent entity, and failing to accord the absent referent its own existence (Adams, 1996). Cedar, age 26, explains how individuals can fall into the trap of not understanding from where their food comes:

“You get all your groceries at the store, you don’t have to get your fingers dirty, . . . you don’t ever see where it comes from, where it’s been. You unwrap it and throw it in the garbage and then cook it, or open can, or pull it out of the freezer, . . .”

And although not necessarily resulting in vegetarianism as Adams proposes, wilderness recreation can in effect contribute to one’s ability to acknowledge what is being eaten and what is being purchased, taking more responsibility for one’s actions. Hannah, age 40 illustrates how her hunting experiences have taught her to more fully respect that which she is killing and later eating.

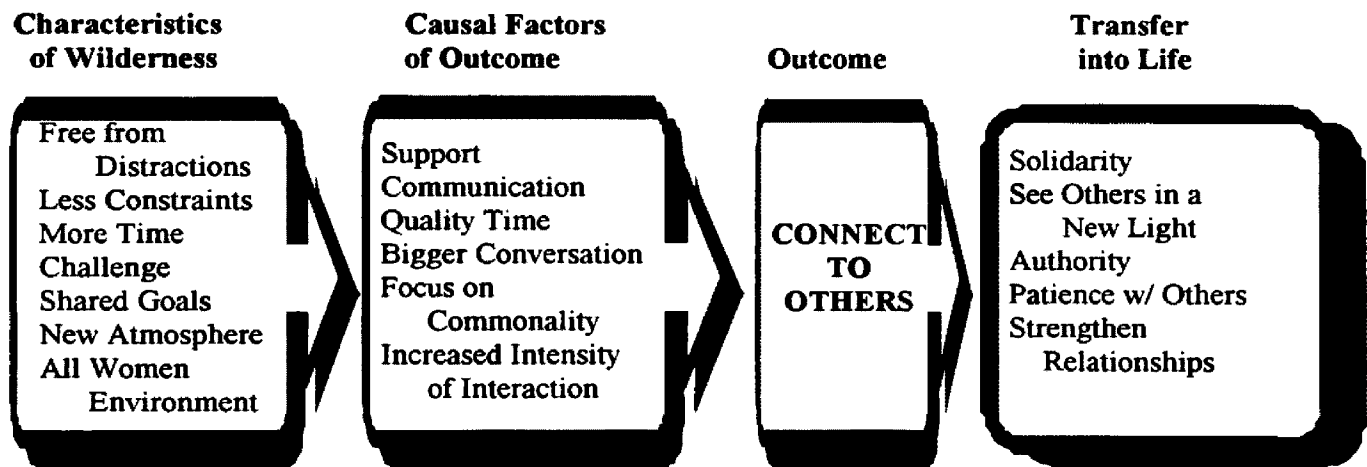
“Hunting is a very spiritual experience. It takes a lot of planning, spiritually, mentally, to prepare to kill something. . . And at the same time it’s such a real connection. . . and. . . knowing how the animals is taken, is in a good way, that it died quickly, that there was no fear or. . . anxiety or anything like that going on for the deer, . . . and. . . because I give to them and I have a visceral connection. . . you just can’t go to the store and buy meat and feel that way about it, and so you know that experience of knowing I could do that entire thing on my own, and survive if I needed to. . . I felt very connected to the [animal], and even more what we eat is in part a reflection of who we are.”

CONNECTION TO OTHERS

“Female friendships that work are relationships in which women help each other belong to themselves.”
 Louise Bernikow, *Among Women* (1980)

Maintaining authentic connections with others is essential in regaining voice. As mentioned earlier a “loss of voice” may be characterized by “the desire for authentic connection, the experience of disconnection, the difficulties in speaking, the feeling of not being listened to or heard or responded to empathetically, the feeling of not being able to

convey or even believe in one's own experience" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Wilderness recreation for women can contribute to regaining voice in that it supports 1) relationships with others that increase comfort with oneself and others, 2) relationships centered on healing and bonding with others, and 3) relationships where one is able to speak and be listened to. These relationships may be between women and men, between women, between friends, and between dating or married partners. In regards to connecting with others, four themes are discussed: (1) why a wilderness setting is an ideal place for facilitating bonds between people, (2) contributing factors to connection, (3) outcomes of authentic relationships, and (4) transfer into everyday life.



Connection to Others and the Wilderness Setting

As mentioned by Hannah, age 40, wilderness's ability to promote a *distraction-free environment* is often ideal for connecting with others. Here she explains how wilderness can help rejuvenate her relationship with her husband.

"We'd been having some, just problems that sometimes happen to relationships, and who knows why, outside pressures that get to you, and so we went for two days and camped out and I remember writing in my journal about how much healing I got from that and how much it helped us, in our relationship... And so we gained some insight just from being in a place where the phone couldn't ring

and we didn't have things to do...and when you're back there, you just have to communicate, sleep, and you know, keep throwing little bits of wood on the fire or something...so you have the time to just take and to get to know each other better."

In addition to escaping many societal constraints, wilderness is particularly conducive to promoting group connection and growth in that it often *incorporates shared goals, and a shared experience*, leading to *a supportive atmosphere*. Makiko, age 26, explains how relationships with others are strengthened in wilderness because of group goals, increased honesty, facing common problems, and being aware of each other.

"If you're with somebody [in wilderness], you get really close, you be more honest in those places. If you face a problem or danger, you have to help each other. You have to think of other people. I think most people will be kind of scared to be alone there too. That's kind of same in the society, but...there you... can't see those relationship clearly sometime. But [in wilderness] you see more. You see what's a problem and you see lots of good things."

In addition, the *time* factor commonly involved in wilderness recreation can increase the intensity of the interaction. Paige, age 21, explains how being in small groups, spending time together, and having a shared goal contribute to listening to each other and bonding.

"I think generally when you're in the wilderness, you're in a small group of people, and things are so much slower. If you take the time to all cook a meal together or spend...large amounts of time together doing one particular thing,... or people's goals are focused towards one thing...and often I think a lot of times people are a lot more open and listening to each other and discussing."

Finally, wilderness recreation can involve a physical *challenge*, which can result in group support and communication. Heidi, age 28, explains how a physical challenge, freedom from distractions, time, and a shared experience can strengthen the bond she has with her friends.

"Because there...aren't these fast-paced distractions coming at you, there's actually time to be with other people. And then I think there's that whole common experience of sharing a common experience of nature together with someone else.

And then a... physical common experience of getting there, and the strenuousness of that.”

It should be noted that 9 of the 24 women interviewed mentioned that conversation and connection with women is different than conversation and connection with men while on wilderness trips. They felt that sometimes there is more open communication between women, that women are more egalitarian with each other, more willing to show emotion, and less willing to take over. Lynn, age 36, explains some of the differences between the way women and men communicate.

“I think [when] women [are] together...it’s O.K. to break down, to cry and to laugh and to moan about your body and things aching and... conversation is certainly different. Not that it’s necessarily a better or worse type thing. It’s just different, a different way of being out there, and a way of being together and sharing, and I think there’s...potentially...more team work, more camaraderie.”

In addition, they felt this connection is different in an all-women’s atmosphere than when traveling with men or in mixed groups. Some of the reasons given for this are that an all-women’s atmosphere is less focused on dominating nature or “getting to the top,” there is a higher comfort level when with only women, and women tend to be more supportive and more sensitive with each other. Lukla, age 35, discusses how support and communication between women can nurture confidence and lead to empowerment.

“I’ve found that all-women trips have been very empowering and very close as far as support and communication, and...I’ve seen a lot of growth take place on those trips where various women gain confidence...I think that what comes up on women’s trips is a lot of issues related around gender and coming together as a group becomes very insightful and powerful and... women walk away with a real sense of accomplishment.”

Causal Factors of Connection with Others

Connection with others through wilderness recreation occurs because (1) oftentimes individuals are *forced to communicate*, (2) a *different atmosphere* allows individuals to see each other in a new manner, (3) *groups work together* more to accomplish group goals and tasks, and (4) *quality time is increased* thus leading to more significant conversation topics. Some of the women interviewed explained that connection with others is possible if not inevitable because placing two or more people together in the wilderness is much like “confining” them. Lukla, age 35, explains how the isolation and time factors involved in wilderness recreation almost forces individuals to communicate and reconcile any differences they might have.

“So because of the time factor of being with those people—eating, sleeping, traveling together—and of course you have opportunities to go off on your own. But basically you become fairly self-reliant and on each other...and I think that you build really strong relationships...And you don’t have the distractions of going to the T.V. or turning on the radio or...running to the movie to escape. I mean that other person’s right there, and you really are forced to have to communicate, to have to work together. And when you don’t it then creates another challenge for that experience. So I think it, it really brings people fairly close together.”

In addition, connection with others through wilderness recreation can be the result of groups working together for a *common objective*. This *shared experience* promotes group support, understanding, and communication. In addition, a number of the women interviewed noted how some of their strongest relationships or friendships revolved around sharing periodic trips with each other in the wilderness. Lydia, age 78, explains the importance of sharing wilderness experiences with her husband and family. These experiences and their memories continue to be an important part of their lives.

“And opportunities to build... a store house of experience shared with your first friend. Now a first friend to me is a husband, you know or a wife if you happen to

be a husband, a lover... and your children. And you go with them, and you share these experiences with them all their lives, 'cause we still talk about our trips."

Finally, connection with others through wilderness recreation can result from the increased quality time that people have with each other when they are in the backcountry. Small talk no longer becomes the focus and more meaningful conversations can take place. This is described by Paige, age 21:

"Also another example is when you're in the wilderness there's no, in terms of relationships with other people, small talk is pretty much eliminated because there's no point in having small talk with people that you're seeing all the time and doing the same thing with, and so what people end up talking about when they do talk, which may be they don't do as much, is um, meaning that people don't always talk just for the sake of talking, but oftentimes those ways you talk about with people are so much more relevant or you're talking about things that are very important."

Outcomes of Connecting with Others

As wilderness travel can enclose people, this can lead to an *increased intensity of interaction and immersion* with others. Furthermore, wilderness's unique setting allows for individuals to *see each other in a different light* or manner. Concentrating on the necessities of life (food, shelter, travel route) can *bring people closer together*, as they begin to *focus on the commonality* rather than the differences in each other. As mentioned earlier, sharing an experience and common goals in wilderness can lead to better communication and listening skills, thus giving authority to the speakers and their ideas. Backcountry recreation can promote an open atmosphere, away from the constraints of society, and this can lead to more *open conversation*. Buffalo Woman, age 48, explains how a wilderness trip and being removed from societal distractions can facilitate a stronger bond between a parent and a child.

“I have parents say this is the most quality time I’ve ever spent with my child, on your trip. It’s the first time we’ve ever talked, you know...and I’ll say and why is that, and they’ll say well, you know, friends, computers, T.V.s, telephones, [and] getting away like that with their kids without any of those distractions, was the first time that they’ve really actually communicated with their child. And they weren’t...talking constantly, they were just oohing and ahing and taking care of themselves together in the wilderness, you know.”

Connection With Others and Everyday Life

Connection to others through wilderness recreation can spill over into women’s everyday lives in the sense that they may seek out groups of people with whom they can have relevant conversations. Paige, age 21, explains how she attempts to emulate her wilderness friendships when she comes back home. These friendships entail listening to and discussing with each other.

“Having had those experiences [in wilderness] really makes me crave those types of relationships here as well. So I seek out interactions in small groups and also being able to explain things...clearly to other people, or just to have those types of relevant conversations.”

Sometimes individuals express that they are more *patient* with others when they have come back from a wilderness trip. The commonality they find on wilderness trips leads to an *increased tolerance of difference* in others within society. In addition, daily relationships or bonds are greatly strengthened between individuals who go into the wilderness together. Cedar, age 26, explains how sharing a wilderness experience with her husband affects their relationship in and out of the backcountry.

“When we [recreate in wilderness together] it’s just amazing how much our relationship clicks. We understand each other more, we can kind of forget about what it is that you didn’t do to help me out, or what it was that I didn’t do to help you out, or what needs didn’t get met...”

In addition, bonds can be strengthened when one individual, while in the backcountry, thinks about another individual who might be in an entirely different location, as explained by Makiko, age 26.

“I think more about...my position and other people, and where I stand with my family. I think I feel more connected to other people.”

Similarly, Ann, age 46, explains how she is able to connect with her ancestors (or simply other humans) by witnessing their presence in her wilderness travels.

“And then both because of somehow feeling some ancestral connection, not necessarily my own personal one, but just as a human, feeling that connection and just feeling so incredibly privileged to be part of it, to be able to witness it.”

MENTAL CLARITY

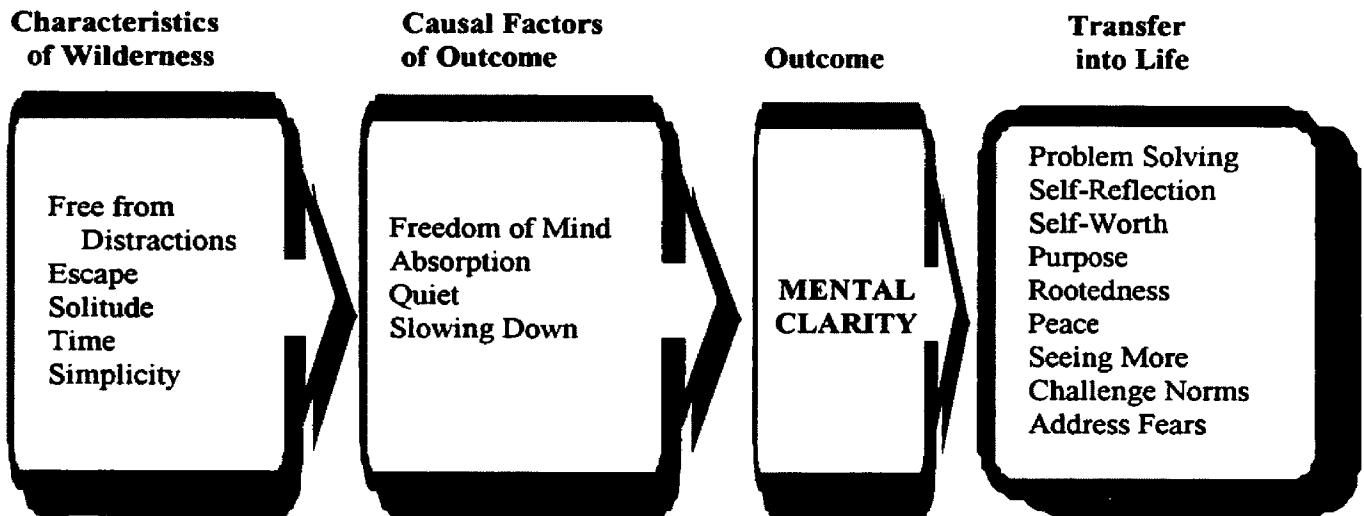
“Anger and worry are the enemies of clear thought.”

Madeleine Brent, *The Capricorn Stone* (1979)

When one travels into wilderness, one experiences an overwhelming sense of intellectual clarity or a heightened sense of mental awareness. This awareness may refer to self-awareness, understanding of the world, or contemplation and reflection about daily problems. Mental clarity is described in terms of *mental cleansing*, *mindfulness and mindlessness*, *freedom of the mind*, and *mental health*. In addition, we may describe mental clarity as *philosophical fitness*. Philosophical fitness often entails coming to know the world and coming to know the self. Charles Kingsley (from James, 1961) illustrates this phenomenon.

“When I walk the fields, I am oppressed now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning, if I could but understand it. And this feeling of being surrounded with truths which I cannot grasp amounts to indescribable awe sometimes...Have you not felt that your real soul was imperceptible to your mental vision, except in a few hallowed moments?” (p. 303)

As with the above “transferable outcomes” of wilderness recreation, four themes in regards to mental clarity surfaced in the data: (1) why wilderness is particularly conducive to facilitating opportunities for mental clarity, (2) what leads to mental clarity, (3) what the outcomes of mental clarity are, and (4) how mental clarity accrued in wilderness carries over into women’s everyday lives.



Mental Clarity and the Wilderness Setting

The unique setting of wilderness can be especially conducive to offering opportunities for clarity of thought and philosophical insight. First, wilderness offers one an *escape from society* and serves as a refuge. Abbey, age 23, explains how wilderness is a refuge from the pressures of everyday life. By escaping these stresses momentarily, she is able to gain clarity and decide how she will approach her problem when she returns.

“It’s like I go out there and I don’t necessarily think about [a decision I need to make] at all, but it just gives me space to not think about it, and it’s a very relaxing...it’s like...a lifting of the stresses, the pressure you feel on your shoulders and in your head and...however you perceive the pressure on you. And I can come out and I’m much more able to think about things in an objective pattern, or however I need to think about them, whether I need to get emotional about them or not.”

Secondly, wilderness is *free from distractions*. These distractions may be one's problems, other people, or technology (such as the phone, T.V., or cars). Once free from distractions, one can focus in-depth on more meaningful topics of inquiry. This removal or escape allows one to let down one's guard, open up, and gain a new perspective of the world. In a sense, this escape can lead to a mental cleansing. Kay, age 39, explains how this happens.

“And then when all [technological distractions are] gone and you're left with nature, you know that's...when all your cares fall away. And then that's when...that physical plane allows me to do the mental trip of letting it all go too. You know, it takes a couple days for me to finally let go of everything...back home waiting. But then when it does, it's so rewarding, just you and nature, you know. I mean that's wilderness for me.”

Thirdly, wilderness offers optimal *opportunity for solitude*, and this time spent alone can lead to self-reflection and can give one energy to deal with daily life. Makiko, age 26, explains how solitude leads to self-reflection.

“I can concentrate more on myself...I think I can hear more when I'm alone. But if you are with people...you have to talk or you have to do something with these people. So it's, I think it's different.”

This absorption is enhanced by spending an extended period of *time* in the backcountry.

Finally, because wilderness is often viewed as a *simplistic* environment, one is able to become fully absorbed in the moment, and truly experience that which is going on, thus “seeing more,” and “knowing more.” Lynn, age 36, explains how simplicity leads to mental clarity and self-reflection.

“Another great thing [about] spending time outside is life is simplified, it becomes very simple and you're taking care of your basic needs...[and it] gives you great clarity. There's repetition and...It's when I do lot of good thinking, so I guess I come back clearer too. You know of purpose and of empathy. It's more centered on myself.”

Causal Factors of Mental Clarity

Aristotle argued that leisure should result in excellence of the soul and mind, this result being much higher than skill development, social interaction, escape, and other values sought in leisure (Driver, et. al, 1996). It is interesting to note, however, that some of the values that Aristotle would have considered “lower” in pursuit are those which directly lead to attaining mental clarity. These catalysts may revolve around *solitude*, *freedom* (of the mind, of expression, and from distractions), *absorption*, *quiet*, and *escape*. For example, freedom from distractions (such as other people and daily obligations) can lead to freedom of the mind and therefore time to reflect. Lydia, age 78, explains why this is so important.

“When you’re around people it interferes with your own inner thinking about yourself, . . . self-examination of your motives or your feeling of anger towards someone . . . sadness or something . . . That’s a major thing, and I think most everyone I’ve ever known who is a . . . person who really keeps after wilderness realizes that, and that’s a major thing to get away from the things, your own kind, and a world that’s different.”

In addition, *solitude* and being alone can lead to *self-reflection* and *understanding about self-purpose and self-worth*. This sense of solitude or quiet can lead to mental freedom and also peace. Louise, age 41, explains how freedom from distractions can lead to mental freedom and then inner peace.

“And so you’re able to choose what you want to think about, what you don’t want to think about. Whatever you think about when you’re out there really doesn’t matter, because it’s not there with you. The reminders aren’t there . . . It’s peace, because you have nothing around you but nature.”

Absorption in the environment and *slowing down* can allow one to become fully involved in the moment, experiencing everything, and in the Buddhist sense, “seeing more.” This notion of knowing more by experiencing more is explained by Hannah, age 40.

“Well it teaches you about yourself, and it it’s a form of deep satisfaction... with my life, with who I am... and... so often... the rest of what we do... we’re not here we’re on our way somewhere. And we’re already there in a sense because we’re not here... and so we forget to really experience who we are and where we are at the moment. A lot is lost by that. We’re always moving, we’re always going to... never experience what we’re in the presence of doing.”

Outcomes of Mental Clarity

Mental clarity can lead to positive outcomes associated with the self, which can include *self-reflection and analysis*, leading to a *validation of one’s feelings, of one’s worth, and one’s beliefs*. This can entail confronting oneself and *addressing one’s fears*.

Juanita, age 24, explains how solitude and silence cause her to confront her fears.

“The quietness makes you think more within yourself, and... the loneliness makes you confront your own loneliness, like your own fears, and you realize it’s not really the trees that you’re afraid of or the sounds, it’s... the fear of the emptiness inside you that you hold or hide.

In addition, mental clarity can result in a sense of *rootedness, groundedness, or self-centering*. Lynn, age 36, explains how this occurs.

“Another great thing [about] spending time outside is life is simplified,... and you’re taking care of your basic needs but [it] really, gives you great clarity... It’s when I do lot of good thinking, so I guess I come back clearer too. You know of purpose and of empathy. It’s more centered on myself.”

Clarity of thought can lead to an *ability to rationalize future decisions*, enabling one to *decide what is important, to mark passages*, and to rationalize or *process significant life events*. Furthermore, mental clarity allows one to examine one’s motives and to *validate one’s feelings and experiences*. This is described by Lydia, age 78.

“When you’re around people it interferes with your own inner thinking about yourself, you know, self-examination of your motives or your feeling of anger towards someone or sadness or something.”

Finally, wilderness, because it is free from everyday demands, can contribute to *freedom of thought* and *peace*, as explained by Louise, age 41.

“And so you’re able to choose what you want to think about, what you don’t want to think about. Whatever you think about when you’re out there really doesn’t matter, because it’s not there with you. The reminders aren’t there...It’s peace. Because you have nothing around you but nature.”

Mental Clarity and Everyday Life

The mental clarity that women accrue from being in the backcountry or from wilderness recreation can filter into their everyday lives. This may transfer in the form of *problem solving, self-analysis* (and either validation or change), *future goals, confronting daily obstacles, the desire for additional solitude*, or a *quest for the Good Life*. As illustrated earlier, wilderness recreation can offer women the ability to confront and tackle significant problems from society while they are in the backcountry, and then they are able to apply those solutions to their problems when they return. This phenomenon occurs because wilderness serves as refuge from distractions, as a place for mental inspiration, and as a place to meditate upon one’s problems. Furthermore, many of the women interviewed expressed a desire for additional solitude in their everyday lives, acknowledging the energy and mental inspiration they get from being alone in wilderness. This parallel is illustrated by Heather, age 21.

“I get my energy from spending time by myself. Like when I’m in town, my big thing will be to take a bath, read a book, light some candles...I think it’s important to know yourself, and if you don’t spend any time alone, it’s hard to know yourself.”

Self-reflection or self-analysis resulting from mental clarity gained in the backcountry carries further into women’s everyday lives in the form of being *comfortable with oneself*,

sometimes allowing one to *move beyond societal expectations* or norms (i.e. with physical appearance, rejecting consumerism, or trusting instinct). Many women expressed that wilderness offers them a place to *make important decisions* and that wilderness allows them to think about what they want to accomplish and who they want to be in the future.

Paige, age 21, explains why she chose to celebrate New Year's in the Three Sisters Wilderness Area.

“It was just a good way to celebrate with my surroundings, rather than with a bunch of other people. It really gave me a lot of time to think about the past year and then what I wanted to accomplish or put my energy in to this coming year.”

In addition, mental clarity gained in wilderness can assist one in *reevaluating her worth*, *her reason for existence*, and sometimes results in a *change of perspective* or a *reevaluation of the Good Life*. Cate, age 35, explains how wilderness recreation shifts her perception of the way life should be lived.

“When I compare the quality of life that people are choosing and the quality of life that I live when I'm on the trail, it's just such a contrast, and I don't agree with the quality of life that some people want today... You know, I need something a bit more real and satisfying than that. And so, in a way I come back with patience,...[in] other ways I come back impatient going, why can't you see (laughter). It's like...when I'm at the top of a peak, how can you get that from you know your Saturday night sitcoms? I don't get it.”

Finally, Mare, age 31, explains this phenomenon further and illustrates how her experiences in wilderness contribute to a less-humanist conception of purpose and also of ecology.

“[Wilderness] teaches me what life is about, what humans, what our role is...on the earth in the grander scheme of things. It daily...teaches me lessons of life and how plants and animals interact and how it's all interconnected.”

OTHER TRANSFERABLE OUTCOMES OF WILDERNESS RECREATION

As mentioned earlier, wilderness recreation can result in many other outcomes that can be applied to everyday life. Because these outcomes are a significant part of the stories of some of the women interviewed, they need to be recognized as being important. Nevertheless, they are omitted from detailed scrutiny for two reasons: (1) they were not frequently mentioned by the interviewees (inspiration, choice of friends, patience with others, and creativity), and (2) past research has already focused on such outcomes in detail (increased desire to preserve wilderness and other natural resources and physical fitness).

Infrequently Mentioned Outcomes

Choice of Friends—occasionally, interviewees mention that wilderness recreation and their love for wilderness can affect who they choose to spend time with in the frontcountry. These friends are typically outdoorsy, like-minded people who also share a love for wilderness. This is explained by Kay, age 39.

“You know, it affects who I like... all my friends go backpacking, and so here, at least most of them do. So it doesn’t necessarily limit my circle of friends, but I definitely have a favorite group of people to hang out with!”

Patience with Others—because wilderness offers a reprieve and an alternative perspective of how things can be, some of the women interviewed expressed that their wilderness recreation makes them more patient with others and with society when they return. This patience offers them tranquillity, a sense of calming, and peace of mind. Cate, age 35, explains how the patience she gains from recreating in wilderness contributes to her ability to change the world and make herself happy.

“Sometimes [recreating in wilderness]... makes me more impatient, but most of the time it makes me more patient where I can just say, this is the way it is here... Do what you can to change it and to make it the way that you want it to be and what’s going to make you happy.”

Creativity—wilderness recreation can influence one’s creativity in terms of freedom of artistic expression (such as singing, journaling, drawing, and drumming) in the backcountry. This creativity can carry into one’s everyday life in the forms of writing, body movement, and drawing. Cate, age 35, explains how her experiences in wilderness guide and shape her artwork and what she chooses to create.

“Creatively, oh boy, if I could show you some of the artwork that I’ve created... I think you would see the reflection of the natural world in what I do... I think that defines me in my art, because that’s what I do.”

She goes on to say:

“Without wilderness in my life, I just don’t think I would be a productive human being. I don’t think I would be creative. I think that my art, which is my livelihood... would be... much more mechanical.”

Outcomes Discussed in Previous Literature

Desire to Preserve Wilderness and Natural Resources—wilderness and wilderness recreation oftentimes affects one’s preservationist stance in terms of environmental philosophy and stewardship (Kellert, 1980; Leopold, 1949; Marshall, 1930; Muir, 1938). This spills into everyday life in the forms of daily choices (recycling or buying organic food), maintaining a healthy land ethic (inside and outside of the wilderness), gaining information about wilderness issues and sharing it with others (carrying capacity, solitude, land degradation), staying involved in local, national and international political issues (choosing representatives, staying informed, fighting for wilderness, feeling obligated to act, and human population issues), and feeling responsible for protecting wilderness (for

recreation, wildlife, and future generations). Lynn, age 36, explains how wilderness recreation reinforces the interconnectedness of everything, and often inspires her to look closer to home.

“I think certainly [my wilderness experiences] make me aware of what’s going on environmentally around my area... and looking at my own back yard and what’s going on with that and how things are being protected or not protected... so it affects that part of me as well... it’s just a constant reminder that sometimes... less is better.”

Physical Fitness—wilderness recreation can lead to good health and longevity

(Paffenbarger, Hyde, & Dow, 1991), cardiovascular benefits (Froelicher & Froelicher, 1991), psychophysiological benefits (Ulrich, Dimberg, & Driver, 1991), and even philosophical benefits (Osterhoudt, 1973). Wilderness recreation can make one feel better and can contribute to having a positive outlook on life. Physical fitness can lead to mental clarity, confidence, and feeling efficient and alive. Lynn, age 36 describes how she feels upon returning from a backcountry trip.

“The feeling your body has when you come back from a long trip, you’ve been out on the land a long time, you feel... healthy and fit and strong,... you’re clear, your head’s clear.”

Table 5: Summary of Transferable Outcomes

Outcome	Wilderness Factors	Causal Factors	Transfer to Life
Self-sufficiency	Isolation Challenge New Skills	Physical Competence Preparation Quick Decisions Problem Solving Responsibility (Self)	Self-Trust/Self-Worth Freedom/Choice Confidence Assertiveness Control of Life Challenge Norms Independence Empowerment Liberation
Problem Solving	New Skills Escape/Solitude Time Mental Revitalization Challenge/Strength	Types of Problems Split-Second From Life Problems to Escape	Confidence Adaptability Try New Things Authority Ability to Cope Resolve Conflict
Self-confidence	Connect to Nature Solitude Challenge New Skills Revitalization	Success Accomplishment Go Beyond Norms Physical Fitness Self-sufficiency Solving Problems	Self-Worth Expression Authority Challenge Norms Purpose in Life Face New Challenges
Perspective Change	Escape Connection to Nature Simplicity Solitude	New Angle Less Societal Rules Gauge Wilderness to Society Increased Awareness Slowing Down	New World View Challenge Norms Humility Confidence Grounded/Calm/Peace Patience Absent Referent Re-Prioritize Bigger Picture
Connect to Others	Less Distractions Less Constraints Time Challenge Shared Goals New Atmosphere All-Women Environment	Support Communication Quality Time Bigger Conversation Commonality Increased Interaction	Solidarity See Others in New Light Authority Patience w/ Others Strong Relationships
Mental Clarity	Less Distractions Escape Solitude Time Simplicity	Freedom of Mind Absorption Quiet Slowing Down	Solve Problems Self-Reflection Self-Worth Purpose Rootedness/Peace Seeing More Challenge Norms Address Fears

The following chapter is a discussion and analysis of the transferable outcomes elucidated in this chapter. It focuses on what wilderness recreation can mean for women in terms of liberation and empowerment and offers advice to recreation providers and wilderness managers in hopes of facilitating positive wilderness experiences for women.

CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION

Introduction

In examining the results from this study, it is evident that the stakes we have in wilderness are even higher today than ever before. Women might rely on wilderness for finding self-worth, taking control of their lives, challenging norms, addressing their problems or fears, and reclaiming their identities. The following is a brief summary of the positive outcomes that women accrue from wilderness recreation and some of the affects these have on everyday life.

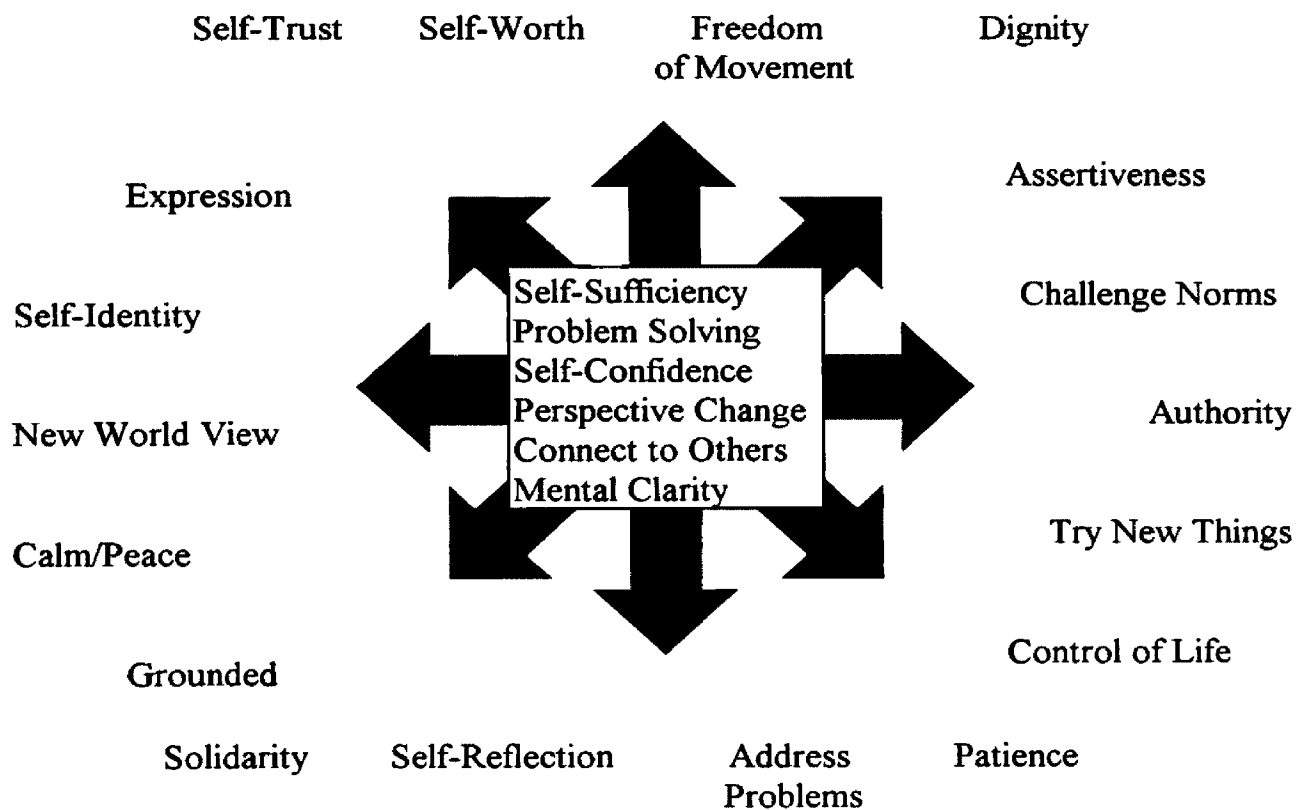


Illustration 1: Transferable Outcomes and their Effect on Everyday Life

These outcomes affect women personally, interpersonally, systemically, and on a level of action. For example, we find that *personally*, women accrue confidence, self-trust, and self-worth. *Interpersonally*, wilderness recreation strengthens bonds between individuals and it promotes having meaningful conversations. *Systemically*, wilderness recreation can contribute to our transformation of the broader social relations of gender within society, because it can promote challenging norms and a new world view. *On a level of action*, wilderness recreation contributes to assertiveness, freedom of body and movement, and trying new things. Also, we find that the personal is political, and many of the personal and interpersonal outcomes of wilderness recreation are actualized on the systemic and political levels.

In addition, these outcomes contribute to empowerment and rectifying some of the injustices and inequities that women experience today. It is one of the goals of the research to better understand how empowerment can result from backcountry travel, however, it should be noted that empowerment too narrowly defines the realm within which women can experience liberation from wilderness recreation. The transferable outcomes discussed in the previous chapter contribute to empowerment, but they should not be viewed only as a means to an end. In other words, they are valuable in and of themselves. After discussing empowerment and other means toward liberation for women, recommendations for recreation providers and wilderness managers are listed.

Past Explanations of Empowerment

Wilderness and wilderness recreation can be empowering for women in the sense that the very act of participating in wilderness recreation allows them to go beyond

societally and self-imposed limitations (Stopa, 1994; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993). Past research has shown an all-women atmosphere can be empowering for women because it is: relationship-oriented, emotionally and physically safe, provides a comfortable environment for one to learn new skills, (McClintock, 1996), gives one freedom to step outside of gender roles, addresses the values of feminine qualities, and removes the desire to compete with men and for men's attention (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987). Angell (1994) suggests that solo expeditions can be particularly empowering for women because they reinforce self-esteem, self-love, self-worth, confidence, self-reliance, trust in intuition, and connection to the natural world (these, in turn, contribute to empowerment).

A further explanation of the connection between wilderness and empowerment for women is offered by Powch (1994), who argues that inherently a wilderness setting contributes to empowerment because it offers immediate feedback, an evenhandedness of consequences, and spiritual healing by connecting with the earth. Other explanations suggest that wilderness recreation can transform body image, resulting in a reevaluation of norms, which can then be empowering (Arnold, 1994; Gabert, 1997). Although many of these explanations are limited to the domain of wildlands, a study by Yerkes and Miranda (1982) showed that women are less inhibited by gender roles in their everyday lives after returning from their all-women's wilderness experiences. As mentioned in the Introduction, few of these studies attempt to explain *how* the positive influences of adventure programming take place (Bedell, 1997), and those explanations that do exist are sometimes elusive, contradictory, incomplete, or overly simplistic.

WILDERNESS RECREATION AND EMPOWERMENT

“Silence and invisibility go hand in hand with powerlessness.”

Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (1980).

“Power in the hands of particular groups and classes serves like a prism to refract reality through their own perspective.”

Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973).

The effects of wilderness recreation can be lasting and can change women's lives personally, interpersonally, and if incorporated with recreational planning, can also contribute to political change. One explanation for this positive social change is that wilderness recreation can be empowering for women. Empowerment, as defined by Gutiérrez (1990) refers to a “process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situation” (p. 149). In this sense, empowerment involves transformations of power which can be personal, interpersonal, as well as social and political. Empowerment is expressed in feelings of personal control, of increasing existing strengths, and at the level of ideas about self worth (Rappaport, 1985). In addition, empowerment can be mutual, relational, and simultaneous, rather than dichotomously focusing on the traditional definitions of “power over” or “power given to” (Surrey, 1991). Thus, we all have empowerment as a potential; it need not be viewed as a scarce commodity. Finally, on a social and political level, it can be considered a heightened sense of awareness and a focus on the equity in the distribution of resources. This entails a mobilization of the energies, resources, strengths, and powers of each person (Surrey, 1991).

Wilderness recreation can lead to empowerment for women on both the personal and interpersonal levels. For change to occur on a political level, where wilderness can serve as an ideal backdrop for dialogue, active and conscious planning needs to be

incorporated by the women and/or recreation providers involved. Wallerstein (1993) highlights some of the reasons empowerment is important for women and other marginalized groups of people:

- It can foster an enhanced community social network and community participation interventions, which in turn can lead to community interaction and development.
- It can lead to health enhancement such as lowered incidence of heart disease, chronic stress, and various physical, behavioral, and psychological health problems.
- It encourages people to question the critical issues of the day and challenge forces that keep them passive.
- It is a movement toward better quality of life and justice in our communities.

In discussing the link between wilderness recreation and empowerment for women, a thorough analysis and description of facilitating empowerment is necessary. The process of gaining empowerment through wilderness recreation is not always linear in nature. For example we may find that *wilderness recreation* can lead to a *change in perspective*, which can lead to an *ability to solve problems*, resulting in *self-confidence*, which in turn can be *empowering*.

Wilderness → Perspective → Problem → Confidence → Empowerment
 Change Solving

We may also find that because one is *empowered* she may feel that she has more *confidence* to try new things or *solve new problems*, thus resulting in *self-sufficiency* and feelings of being competent to *travel into wilderness*.

Wilderness ← Self- ← Problem ← Confidence ← Empowerment
 Sufficiency Solving

In contrast to this linear explanation, a more appropriate way of explaining the connection between wilderness recreation and empowerment for women requires an examination of current sociological techniques of facilitating empowerment. Focusing on the work of Friere (1973), Gutiérrez (1990), and Parsons (1991), we can identify practice strategies which promote and facilitate empowerment. Furthermore, many of these strategies are implemented by the outcomes of wilderness travel, and these outcomes can transfer into everyday life. Hence, by using a sociological framework, it will become apparent that wilderness trips can lead to empowerment both in and out of the backcountry.

The process of empowerment involves five components; (1) developing attitudes and beliefs about one's efficacy to take action, (2) developing critical thinking about one's world, (3) acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to take action, (4) supporting others and having mutual aid of one's peers, and (5) taking action to make change (Parsons, 1991). *Developing attitudes and beliefs about one's efficacy to take action* involves developing a more positive and potent sense of self. This is illuminated by Amanda Lynn, age 25.

“There's an art exhibit up in the, the drama dance building. And there's three plates, ceramic plates, and on each of the plates it says 'I am the strongest woman you know.' And that's how I felt on my first trip. And not just that, it's that it's like I am the strongest *person* you know.”

This assessment of competency can be facilitated and enhanced by wilderness recreation because it provides opportunities for problem solving, self-sufficiency, challenge, confidence, and revitalization. With the resources and capacity to solve problems, one becomes more confident, authoritative, and more willing to try new things. This leads to enhanced self-esteem and validation of self-worth. Makiko, age 26, explains how

escaping some of her daily problems and re-prioritizing those problems can lead to a sense of power and confidence.

“Like sometimes you face problems in daily life, and...you think that’s a really big problems, but those time I try to get away, go to the mountains... somewhere I can be alone. I can calm down myself. I feel more, a kind of power. I think that’s not the problem so much...I feel more confident in myself.”

In addition, wilderness often demands and promotes self-sufficiency, and this in turn instills self-confidence. The desire to provide for oneself and the ability to do it successfully is important in helping women rid themselves of self- and societally-imposed limitations. Thus in doing so, it can promote ideas about self-worth, a positive sense of self, and finding a true sense of self. Juanita, age 24, explains how she is able to find strength in self-reliance and freedom—in being able to choose where to camp and what her route will be.

“I think that one of the most powerful trips I’ve had is when I went camping by myself for the first time... it was really cool, `cause...I made my own fire and...it was really powerful for me spiritually just because I had... all my own thoughts and could sing songs to myself, I could just do whatever,...I just relied on myself and I succeeded. I mean it was something I was really scared of, and in the end I didn’t want to leave.”

In this sense, Juanita has found a clearer sense of her own efficacy to rely on herself and survive from her experiences in wilderness. In addition, change within a community “best occurs when people choose short-term winnable goals which build their belief they can make a difference and which can alter the balance of power....As people evaluate and celebrate the successes of their actions, they will identify what they’ve gained and what they have been unable to attain through the particular action” (Wallerstein, 1993: 224-225). This notion of self-efficacy and empowerment is further illustrated by Kara, age 40.

“I can accomplish things if I just take my time in it, and not get overwhelmed with things..., and if I just back off of things, and look at the whole picture, I’m better off...[Wilderness lets] me know my limits and [allows me] to enjoy accomplishments that, just the fact of going out and making it to the top of the pass or something...that alone is an accomplishment. And I think those things help [everybody]...become...stronger.”

Kara is describing how wilderness puts her limits into perspective, thus allowing her to get a better sense of her efficacy, which gives her a new sense of accomplishment. Success and accomplishment contribute to personal empowerment for women, and this is often achieved by experiencing a physical challenge (which in turn reinforces one’s ability to solve problems and take control of one’s life). Physical challenge and solving problems (which can take place thorough solo and group trips) can result in pride, immediate feedback, positive identity affirmation, and competence. Cedar, age 26, and then Heather, age 21, explain how tackling a physical challenge in the wilderness gives them the feeling that they can do anything in life.

“And that, once you get over the initial, you know, at first I would get mad and I’d get frustrated, and I’m like God, you know I can’t keep up and I don’t want to say that I can’t keep up, because that would be humiliating, and I don’t want to you know...And all the sudden something just moves in you, and...I remember thinking, if I can do this, if I can get up over this pass, I can do any, you know, college is not going to be a problem! You know, getting along with my roommate isn’t gonna’ be a problem. Which later proved to be false! But it was a nice thought at the beginning! (laughter).”
Cedar, age 26

“I’ve built a ‘I can do anything’ [attitude]...like I can do a lot of things. And so not just...with camping or backpacking or whatever, but..a lot of stuff that you come up to, like “God, you know, can I take Greek 300? Or am I gonna die?” (laughter)...Will this like bury me in homework? And yeah, I can do that! And I think...it takes a physical challenge like that to be like, O.K., I made it through this and I can do anything as long as I really like work at it and...I think I really realize that...anybody can do anything.”
Heather, age 21

The confidence that these women can gain from wilderness recreation offers pride, self-trust, self-esteem, and self-certainty. Finally, in terms of developing a positive attitude

about self-efficacy, wilderness recreation offers women a sense of revitalization, which affects both outlook and outcome. Connection with nature can prove to be revitalizing and energizing as one's senses are heightened. This is described by Makiko, age 26 and also Lukla, age 35.

“I think [nature's] energy and my energy get together...I think sometimes because there's no time or [structure] so you are there, but you just live with the sounds...It's nothing at all. I just feel...energy's coming into myself. I don't know why or how. I just stay there and looking at what's there with me, really, everything it's all your senses you sharpen.”

“I think it's...just a very energizing feminine...feel. Some of it might be related just to the canyons themselves, the flow of water, the color of the rock, it's very red and yellow, very vibrant....I feel...very at peace in the canyons. It speaks to my heart, and I...also feel a very powerful energy that I would relate to feminine energy.”

Also on a personal level, *critical thinking about one's world* is necessary for empowerment. This involves a consideration of norms, an examination of one's situation within society, an analysis of the injustices that affect oneself, and a healthier perception of self. Wilderness recreation is particularly conducive to providing this critical perspective because it offers an escape from many social constraints, a change in perspective, mental clarity, and revitalization. As discussed earlier, a removal from society or examining life from a different angle can result in a critique and a reevaluation of norms. Amanda Lynn, age 25, explains how wilderness recreation and its lack of constraints has allowed her to re-define (and then find strength in) what it means to be a woman.

“All of my wilderness experiences have been very reinforcing that it's O.K. to be a woman, that women are important and strong and that we can do anything we put our minds to no matter what the society is telling us. And wilderness particularly, we don't have those societal structures pointing fingers at us, saying that we shouldn't be doing this, or we should be doing this instead.”

To her this is a stronger sense of self, and a freedom to be who she wants to be. In conjunction with the above sentiment, many women feel that the wilderness is outside the realm of what society permits them to do. In that sense, by going into wilderness, women are breaking societal standards and going beyond norms of what is permissible for women. In reference to her grandchildren, Lydia, age 78, points out how doing something beyond the ordinary can instill pride in oneself.

“That’s one of the things I noticed about the girls, when they come out of a backpack, they’re sweaty and dirty and... fatigued but very proud that they carried their packs and, you know did their share, and... get a little satisfaction that’s... unique. In fact they tend to brag on it, when they’re around other girls (laughter)!”

By escaping societal rules and changing their perspective, women who recreate in wilderness can come to a more critical conception of their expected roles in society, they may have a healthier perception of self and self-worth, and they may excel beyond self- and societally- imposed limitations. In the results section it was seen that wilderness recreation can promote consciousness-raising such as revising false beliefs, identifying thinking patterns, and believing in one’s own opinion. This is important because Kara, age 40, explains how her wilderness recreation has made her stronger and nurtured her ability to trust herself and validate her opinions, and in this scenario, allows her to confront what might be the popular opinion.

“I’m definitely one to say if I can’t cross something or if I think it’s going to be hazardous... I’m not going to push myself to the edge and take a chance of getting hurt, or of getting somebody else hurt. I’ll be right up front with them and say well I’m gonna’ get a different route to go around it, and I think that helps me to become a better, or a stronger person because I acknowledge those things and it’s not something that I’m holding in.”

Paige, age 21, explains how a change in perspective accompanied by a reevaluation of societal expectations can be very empowering for women. This entails thinking critically about stereotypes, breaking them down, and rejecting them.

“Um, it’s empowering. And I’m sure that it definitely...improves self-confidence, and also...it changes how...we view those things. There’s so many stereotypes...that our society’s based on, but we’ll begin to break those down, which happens a lot of times in wilderness. Then I guess...we could bring back that understanding into society, and to know how...we don’t have to be. We don’t have to accept those things in our society...even though they’re definitely gonna influence how we are.”

Critical thinking about one’s world can also entail critical thinking about oneself. From the results section, it was seen that wilderness recreation can lead to self-reflection and analysis (resulting in enhanced self-worth and a healthier perception of self), confronting one’s fears, and moving beyond societal expectations and norms. Lukla, age 35, explains how confronting her fears allows her to reassess her self-worth, which in turn gives her strength.

“It makes me feel very strong...I think I reflect upon myself, and we all have our insecurities and weaknesses, and I think it allows me to feel really strong and I have a real positive outlook of who I am and I feel like I’ve gained a lot of confidence through my outdoor experiences.”

In addition, rejuvenation from wilderness recreation gives one the “fuel” to tackle problems in everyday life. It is a reminder of that which is important, and it can renew one’s purpose in life.

On an interpersonal level, empowerment requires the *acquisition of skills and knowledge needed to take action*. This involves identifying and building upon existing strengths, identifying sources of potential power (such as forgotten skills and personal qualities), and teaching life skills and interpersonal skills (such as assertiveness, social

competency, and self-advocacy). Because wilderness recreation can lead to self-sufficiency, problem solving skills, and mental clarity, it promotes acquiring new skills and knowledge along with the ability to apply them. Self-sufficiency gained from backcountry recreation can result in feelings of freedom to go anywhere, do anything, and try anything. These can be freedom of expression (such as voice and body movement), freedom of movement, choice (of route, where to camp, what to eat), and freedom from daily problems. Corrine, age 43, explains how freedom of movement is related to exhilaration and how important it is to foster those feelings of freedom in other women.

“As a woman and...it kind of ties back into because of my comfort and ease of movement in the wilderness. I hope to emulate that, share that, nurture that within other women...I hope that the absolute joy and satisfaction, peace, and knowledge that I’ve gained from wilderness...I hope that many other women may also share in that gift and exhilaration.”

In addition, in order to be self-sufficient, one must learn certain “woods wisdom” skills to be comfortable and to survive. These skills teach independence, innovation, adaptability, assertiveness, self-worth, and resourcefulness (all of which can be applied to daily life). Beth, age 53, explains how learning backcountry skills promotes independence (in this case from men), assertiveness, and confidence.

“Because the men wanted to be manly. And they had the idea that they were going to help us. No way,...we were very arrogant. Because we’d already been there, done that. And there’s nothing that they could do to help us, except get in our way! So we’d give `em a fishing pole and send them to the crick, and that’s how we got rid of the men. Because...I mean we’d already done that. We had our own routine down...so what did we need a man for? We didn’t! So I guess maybe that is kind of arrogant (laughter). That’s O.K.”

The problem solving techniques along with the ability to make split-second decisions required in the backcountry are also transferable to everyday life. The mental clarity

acquired while in the backcountry allows one to reflect upon and deal with problems of daily life.

Also needed for empowerment on an interpersonal level is *support and mutual aid of one's peers*. This involves collectivity and the perception of commonality. Often this is enhanced by small group work and raising consciousness. As explained earlier, wilderness recreation and a wilderness setting are particularly conducive to bonding with others. This connection or shared experience can lead to feelings of solidarity, tolerance of difference, and support. In addition, connection with others (men and women) can involve positive effects on communication such as enhanced listening skills, open conversation, and focusing on important conversation topics. Authentic connection with others, including mentors, in wilderness and through wilderness recreation can provide women with support, open communication, and mutual opportunity to grow and work together with others. Lukla, age 35, explains how connecting with other women (because of a supportive and communicative atmosphere) can be empowering.

“I’ve found that all-women trips have been very empowering and very close as far as support and communication, and...I’ve seen a lot of growth take place on those trips where various women gain confidence...I think that what comes up on women’s trips is a lot of issues related around gender and coming together as a group becomes very insightful and powerful and...women walk away with a real sense of accomplishment.”

This notion of bonding with other women is salient in the following discussion of facilitating political empowerment through wilderness recreation.

Recommendations for Facilitating Political Empowerment

It is on the personal and interpersonal levels where wilderness recreation is especially instrumental in facilitating empowerment for women. Change on a political level requires personal and interpersonal empowerment, but also *taking collective action to make lasting social transformations of political and economic institutions*. Such action might involve campaigning, legislative lobbying, policy development, community organization, and social planning. It involves motivation to make change and mobilization of resources, information, and advocacy to affect change (Gutiérrez, 1990). It calls for an integration of fundamental, macro-level change strategies and actions with individual empowerment agendas and programs. Wasserman (1995) points out that we cannot just work from a micro-level where the problems of women are couched in individual terms and analyzed in relation to a specific situation. This involves going to the source and working with others to change the environment which perpetuates oppression. In addition, working strictly on a micro-level oftentimes fails to address the real nature of the problem and promotes a false sense of empowerment.

Social change on a macro-level through wilderness recreation might best be reached through small groups and within an all-women atmosphere. All-women's trips can be particularly empowering in that they offer more opportunities for leadership free of gender-stereotyped expectations, and they often offer a supportive environment conducive to communication. Heidi, age 28, explains how she finds it more empowering and more fulfilling to approach a physical challenge in an all-women environment.

“I really like to take backpacking trips with all women, and I think there's something really fulfilling about that. There's just a different dynamic. And... when I used to rock climb, I used to like to rock climb with all women too.

And there's something about being in... a physically challenging position with no men around, that is rewarding for me. Because there seems to be a different kind of dynamic in terms of pressure to perform. There seems to be a lot less pressure to perform in a group of women for me than, as opposed to a group of men and women,...and so that's really rewarding."

Women can take the initiative and come together, and leisure service providers can offer wilderness trips with a curriculum focused on social change for women.

Recommendations for facilitating social and political empowerment include:

- *Fostering dialogue where women can come together* for the purposes of organizing and acting, which will enhance individuals' comprehension of their situation of political realities and injustices, which are susceptible to transformation (Friere, 1973). A supportive, democratic atmosphere is conducive to sharing ideas and listening to others. From the results section, we can see that wilderness and wilderness recreation can promote connecting with others, concentrating on "larger" conversational topics, focusing on commonality, and listening to others.
- *Consciousness raising and sharing information with others*—dialogue which promotes challenge to the environmental conditions which give rise to powerlessness in the first place. This involves developing a heightened awareness and knowledge base about social injustices and situations of oppression. This includes providing each other with information of our current context for women as well as ideas solutions that can contribute to social and political change. This should also include providing each other with information of our current context for women as well as ideas solutions that can contribute to social and political change.
- *Identifying thinking patterns, revising false beliefs, devising adequate ways of dealing with internal and external oppression.* It was seen from the results that wilderness recreation can be particularly conducive to changing one's perspective, challenging norms, problem solving, and developing a new view of the world.
- *Instilling motivation which corresponds with incentives and rewards.* These motivations may be explaining the social implications of empowerment for women. In addition, the data show that wilderness recreation can support self-efficacy or one's ability to believe in her ability to accomplish things. Motivating women with the belief that they can make a difference may be another way to facilitate political empowerment for women.
- *Organizing groups, agendas, and newsletters* focused toward community organizations which promote rectifying situations of oppression, social planning, and campaigning. Wilderness recreation fosters creativity and collectivity and these may aid in the development of newsletter and agendas. In addition, ideas, group meetings,

and information distribution should take place outside of the wilderness and in the realm of society.

The social and political level of empowerment, referred to as “community empowerment” by Wallerstein (1993), “becomes a social action process that promotes participation of people, who are in positions of perceived and actual powerlessness, towards goals of increased individual and community decision-making and control, equity of resources, and improved quality of life” (p. 219). Because wilderness offers excellent opportunities for bonding with others, shared experiences, solitude, time, mental clarity, isolation, and freedom from societal rules and norms, it can be an extremely effective atmosphere in facilitating empowerment for women on a political level.

WILDERNESS RECREATION & SOCIAL INJUSTICES AND INEQUITIES

Past explanations of understanding how wilderness recreation can contribute to transforming the broader social relations of gender within our society focus primarily on the empowerment that women can accrue through wilderness recreation, and much of the preceding discussion has focused on that. Suggesting that empowerment is the *telos*, or goal, of wilderness recreation can be overly simplistic, however. Through an examination of some of the ways in which women are discriminated against today, we find that the outcomes of wilderness recreation affect social change in women’s lives in other manners as well.

In addition to facilitating empowerment for women, wilderness recreation is also beneficial in rectifying some of the oppression that women experience today. As discussed earlier, women and girls continue to suffer from a seemingly endless list of social injustices and inequities within society. We have been excluded from the making of ideology, of

knowledge, and of culture, and our ways of knowing, our experiences, and our interests have not been represented within the organizations of society (Smith, 1987). We have been obliterated from history, and lack political, economic, religious, and social authority. These injustices are socialized within society and lead to oppression for women and other marginalized people. As summarized in the Introduction, this socialization results in:

- a lack of self-esteem,
- a lack of authority for ourselves and for other women,
- a lack of freedom (of body, mind, and movement), and
- a dependence on others.

Furthermore, this oppression is perpetuated as individuals continue to accept these systemic injustices as regularities.

The data gathered from this research suggests that wilderness and wilderness recreation are particularly conducive to facilitating liberation for women in the sense that wilderness experiences contribute to recognizing our importance and rejecting some of the institutional regularities that oppress us. A closer examination of the injustices that women experience and the outcomes of wilderness recreation allows us to see the link between wilderness and women's liberation.

Lack of Self-Esteem—Wilderness recreation can improve self-esteem for women because it can lead to confidence, self-reflection, and self-worth, as was demonstrated in the results. Confidence can lead to pride and strength, thus resulting in a positive view of self or self-esteem. In addition, we find that the mental clarity gained from backcountry trips can result in self-reflection and being comfortable with oneself. Finally, wilderness recreation can contribute to revitalization, mental clarity, and problem solving, thus improving ideas about self-worth and self-trust.

Lack of Authority—Wilderness recreation can contribute to feelings of authority about oneself and about other women, because it can result in leadership, self-sufficiency, and connection with others. Problem solving and gaining new skills and confidence allows one to be a leader and role model in the backcountry and in everyday life. In addition, the confidence and self-sufficiency gained in the backcountry can help women become more assertive, thus giving them authority. Women are able to connect with others in wilderness through wilderness recreation, and if this connection entails improved listening skills and important dialogue, it can contribute to women's abilities to see themselves as authority figures with knowledge. In addition, if this connection occurs between women, they are able to see one another as authority figures and take each other seriously. Through self-reflection, women can formulate positive ideas about self-worth. This sense of self-worth combined with assertiveness can lead to an ability to take oneself seriously and be taken seriously by others.

Lack of Freedom—Wilderness recreation offers women freedom of body, freedom of mind, freedom of movement, and freedom *from* societal constraints. This freedom of body might be viewed as being comfortable with a healthier version of self. Wilderness recreation can contribute to a healthy change in appearance, to an ideal of body function over body fashion, and a rejection of norms about the way one should look. Freedom of mind is achieved through mental clarity, solitude, focus, absorption, and freedom from the distractions of everyday life. Freedom of movement for women occurs in the backcountry and is important for women because it entails choice (of route or physical duration and strenuousness) and goes against the expectation that women should take up as little space as possible. Iris Young (1990) illustrates the way in which women

in our society typically conduct themselves and move differently from the ways that men do.

Women tend not to open their bodies in their everyday movements, but tend to sit, stand, and walk with their limbs close to or closed around them. [She] also observed that women tend not to reach, stretch, bend, lean, or stride to the full limits of their physical capacities, even when doing so would better accomplish a task or motion (p. 151).

Wilderness recreation and its impact on body movement may be one way that women are able to reject inhibitions about body orientations and movement. Corinne, age 43, explains how the freedom (away from societal constraints) that she experiences in wilderness can give her freedom of bodily movement. Additionally, she hopes to share this sense of freedom she finds in wilderness with other women.

“I think it provides an absolute free arena for spontaneity and that can be... both internally or externally... there just are not the societal expectations or regulations, relatively speaking, in wild places... I can howl at the moon... in the wilderness... and... that goes back to that restraint, that I don't feel constrained in wilderness... As a woman... it kind of ties back into because of my comfort and ease of movement in the wilderness. I hope to emulate that, share that, nurture that within other women.”

Finally, freedom from societal constraints leads to a perspective shift, a critique of norms, and possibly a reevaluation of what is important in life.

Dependence on Others—Wilderness recreation can promote self-sufficiency, problem solving, learning new skills, and authentic connection with others. Self-sufficiency and relying on oneself gives one freedom to be alone and freedom to be independent. In addition, learning new skills and solving problems in the backcountry further promotes independence and often contributes to a willingness to try new things and tackle problems in life. Given that women oftentimes define themselves by their relationships to other people, independence can be a positive outcome of wilderness

recreation. As women define themselves as living in connection with others, they sometimes abandon their sense of self for the sake of becoming a “good” woman and having relationships. At first glance it may appear that connection with others may foster dependence on others. However, this relationship is not one of dependence, but rather one that is healthy, mutually empowering, and supportive. Wilderness can offer women autonomy, subjectivity, and creativity, along with opportunities to work and bond with others.

Which Came First...Wilderness or Personal Growth?

As discussed in the above section on empowerment, personal growth is not simply a result of wilderness recreation, but may also be the cause of one going into wilderness. As demonstrated in the Results section, wilderness recreation can lead to self-sufficiency, problem solving abilities, confidence, connection with others, perspective change, and mental clarity. Some of these outcomes or a desire to further attain these outcomes can drive one back into wilderness. It may also be the case that one already attained some of these outcomes from experiences outside of her wilderness experiences. For example, one may have gained self-confidence from doing well on her softball team, self-sufficiency from growing up on a farm, or perhaps mental clarity from studying philosophy in college. It may be that having some of these qualities allows one to feel comfortable going into the backcountry. These qualities, in turn, are perpetuated or stimulated by wilderness recreation. In other words, wilderness recreation and personal growth function reciprocally, causing and affecting each other.

Typically, perhaps, gaining positive outcomes from wilderness recreation is not a “one shot deal.” Although this research shows that wilderness recreation can have profound life-long effects on the individual and her identity, this “wilderness effect” begins to wear off as one re-enters society. There is, perhaps, a need for continuous renewal from wilderness. Whether this means taking a wilderness trip once a year with close friends, working as a wilderness ranger for the summer, or building one’s house right outside of wilderness—the relationship between wilderness and the women in this study was life long. Beth, age 53, explains how her relationship with the backcountry is long term, continuous, and almost an addiction.

“It’s like anything else, you have to keep it up... You can’t just say, O.K., I went back there one time and I felt this. But when you go to backcountry, you want to go back and back and back. Because... in your mind, you know that that is a release for you, and you know that if I just get back there one more time. And that’s why I think we have so many return people that come back to go in the backcountry.”

Maintaining that “backcountry effect” suggests an on-going need for the allocation of wilderness resources.

How Important is a Wilderness Setting?

It may be argued that women can accrue some of the outcomes focused on in this study (self-sufficiency, problem solving, confidence, connection to other, change in perspective, mental clarity) from other forms of recreation or leisure in a setting alternative to wilderness. For example, women may be able to gain confidence through a challenge such as skydiving. Other women may be able to bond with others through Friday night potlucks. What is it about wilderness, then, that makes it so special?

As mentioned earlier, there are characteristics unique to a wilderness setting, and these characteristics function together to contribute to outcomes that one cannot get elsewhere. Some of these characteristics, such as solitude and unconfined recreation, are explicit in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577). Other characteristics surfaced from the interviews, many of which are dependent on a wilderness setting. These include spending an extended period of time in the backcountry, being in a situation where one is forced to cope, being able to escape, isolation, elements of survival, intense natural beauty, learning new “woods wisdom” skills, and simplicity. And so it may be the case that one is able to connect with others through Friday night potlucks, however connecting with others is raised to another level when it is couple with extended periods of time, being forced to communicate, and dealing with challenges (i.e. characteristics of wilderness). It seems that there is an intensity gained from the unique combinations that wilderness facilitates and inspires.

The above notion of the special nature of wilderness parallels the sentiment of many of the women interviewed. This was discussed in terms of both how important wilderness and wilderness recreation was to these women’s lives, and also in terms of the differences between wilderness recreation and everyday leisure. To many of the study participants, wilderness serves as a fuel, as a fresh start to life, and as a revitalizer for their everyday lives. Lukla, age 35, explains how wilderness is almost like a drug that she needs in order to function in life.

“I know when...my little fire is starting to burn low and I need my fix. It’s almost as if wilderness for me is... a drug. And I would say that it really brings a lot of rejuvenation. It recharges my batteries so to say, when I go out into the wild. It’s a big part of my life and if I had to be... bound to a chair behind a desk and never

have the opportunity to go out there, I would be really sad and depressed and I don't think I'd be able to probably function at as high a level that I can when I am able to go out there."

Significantly, twenty of the twenty-four women interviewed expressed that they could not find outcomes in their everyday leisure that compare to those that they accrue when recreating in wilderness. Heidi, age 28, for example explains how her leisure is subsidiary to her wilderness recreation.

"There's certain things that happen during leisure activities like you can relax and... stress goes away. I think those things are a sub-set of the wilderness experience. In other words... maybe I'll relax during some kind of leisure experience, or I'll have time to bond with friends or things like that. And those are opportunities that are available for me in leisure, but what's available in wilderness is so much bigger. It's so much broader."

So although leisure is a positive influence on one's life, many times it cannot compare with wilderness recreation.

It should be remembered that just as women derive different kinds of benefits from different settings, different women derive different benefits from various settings and activities. Not every person enjoys being in the woods, confronting wildlife, or being in sometimes difficult situations. It may be that one gains more from a weekend getaway at the spa, from eighteen holes of golf, going to a movie, or taking a bubble bath. But to the individual who is searching for solitude, escape, freedom from distractions, time to focus, and many of the other unique characteristics of backcountry travel, it is important that wilderness and wilderness recreation remain an option to her. It may be that part of her identity depends upon it. Wilderness recreation may not be ideal for everyone, however, but for some people it is irreplaceable.

“Changing the Foot”

In *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (1983), Gloria Steinem questions, “If the shoe doesn’t fit, must we change the foot?” This section briefly address the notion of “blaming the victim” or internalizing the problem inside women rather than changing the society that oppresses them. In addition, it touches on the efficacy of wilderness recreation in changing society.

There is still a current need for social change, and although wilderness recreation can offer hope in terms of the transformation of the broader social relations of gender within our society, it is by no means the full solution to this change. There are three justifications for going beyond personal change through wilderness recreation. *First*, personal change through wilderness recreation may not always lead to political change. Instead it may be the case that although one experiences personal change, she may not be driven to act politically or socially. In addition, wilderness recreation may lead to changes within the individual that actually *limit* her political effectiveness. For example, ceasing to shave, being outspoken, or being independent may go against social taboos to the point where she may become further marginalized. *Second*, there are detrimental ramifications for suggesting we should change the oppressed rather than the oppressor. This entails that there is something wrong with women. Furthermore, it implies that if one continues to have a lack of self-esteem, lack of authority, lack of freedom, or dependence on others, that she has simply chosen to remain that way. Societal pressures may still limit any possibility of expression and development of such traits. *Third*, there is a larger problem at hand, that being the patriarchal system in which we live, and microcosmic changes within the individual fail to fully address the macrocosmic power relations within society.

In other words, personal change through wilderness recreation does not address the systemic root of the problem.

What wilderness recreation *can* do for society, in terms of changing a patriarchal system laden in power relations and discrimination, is to provoke our desire and efficacy to act, change our modes of communication, and change what we see as desirable. Wilderness recreation (because it contributes to self-sufficiency, confidence, problem solving, change in perspective, connection with others, and mental clarity), contributes to an assertiveness, a challenging of norms, and to gaining a new world view. This in turn, can catalyze one's desire to change the world and can contribute to how effective she believes herself to be. In this pragmatic sense, outlook can affect outcome.

For example, wilderness recreation can change our modes of communication. Because wilderness recreation contributes to connecting with others (men and women), and therefore listening to others, and giving others the authority to speak and be heard, it can change our power relations within conversation. These types of sharing relationships can resonate within all realms of society. For instance, a democratic conversation about what to cook for dinner in the backcountry can transform into a democratic conversation about division of household duties or perhaps a democratic style of conducting a committee meeting.

As another example, wilderness recreation can contribute to what we see as desirable in terms of human qualities and relationships. This may be illustrated with a brief discussion of all-women's trips vs. mixed gender trips. Although wilderness recreation can contribute to connecting with both men and women, nine of the twenty-four women expressed that they found all-women's trips to be more supportive, open, mutual, and

oftentimes empowering. Characteristics of these all-women trips were a greater tendency toward open conversation, support, trust, and use of refined listening skills. In terms of connecting with men, those qualities were also sought out. It may be the case then, that the women interviewed are seeking out those types of relationships with both women and men. We find both separatist and less radical approaches being taken. Some women favored recreating with only women, while others were able to connect and recreate with men. The commonality between these approaches is that the same sorts of open and supportive connections are being sought. It may be the case that both women and men are seeking and adopting connections that are supportive and open, a norm characteristically found in all-women's trips. In this sense, it seems that men are adopting women's norms as a result of recreating with women in wilderness.

Along the same lines, women seem to adopt "masculine" norms by recreating in wilderness. For example, some of the outcomes discussed in the Results section, such as authority, autonomy, independence, and confidence are those that are characteristically masculine in nature. On the flip side, other outcomes seem more "feminine" in nature, such as connecting with others, connecting with nature, self-reflection, and heightening of one's senses. This might suggest that women are integrating both masculine and feminine characteristics by recreating in wilderness.

An interesting future study would be to pose the same questions to men that this study asked to women, to examine whether they too are integrating more holistic characteristics within themselves by recreating in wilderness. This might allow us to differentiate that which we consider to be feminine and masculine norms of wilderness recreation. A better understanding of this dichotomy may yield further insight into our

preconceived notions of wilderness, what we value in wilderness, and what wilderness can provide in terms of what it means to be human.

In understanding the presence of both masculine and feminine norms within wilderness and wilderness recreation, it may be that our “Rooseveltian” conception of wilderness (Nash, 1967: 150) is changing. As discussed in the Methodology section (p. 49), we have preconceived notions of what wilderness means and what wilderness can offer. This vision may include opportunities for self-sufficiency, self-confidence, autonomy, and stewardship—as was encouraged by Roosevelt, and most of which can be considered masculine norms. This research shows that women are integrating these norms, *in conjunction with* other norms such as connection with others, perspective change, mental clarity, and introspection. Thus, wilderness offers the possibility for a more holistic conception of what we value and furthermore what it means to be human. Future research may be to pose the same questions to men that this study asked to women, to examine whether they too are integrating more holistic characteristics within themselves by recreating in wilderness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

As women continue to recreate in wilderness and accrue benefits from wilderness recreation, perspectives will shift and more women will participate in such activities, thus contributing to our transformation of the broader social relations of gender within our society. With the intention of promoting wilderness recreation for women and girls, the following sections examine the past literature and focus on recommendations for recreation providers and wilderness managers.

Recommendations to Recreation Providers

The following is a list of recommendations created for outdoor adventure organizations, Parks and Recreation Departments, and any other backcountry recreation providers in hopes of offering more quality opportunities for girls and women to recreate in wilderness. The women interviewed continue to recreate in and have a love for wildlands, however, there are many other girls and women that have never been exposed to wilderness and who may never pursue backcountry recreation without an initial catalyst. These recommendations reflect the current literature on women and recreation and incorporate the results from this study. They fall into four categories: (1) Research and Understanding, (2) Marketing, (3) Skill Development, and (4) Developing Role Models and Leaders.

Research and Understanding

- Understand physical activity programming—Because there has been a decline of physical activity among girls and women (Robinson & Godbey, 1993), recreation programmers and providers need to understand and consider how physical activity programming is conducted and how it can be improved.
- Understand and be sensitive to constraints affecting girls and women—such as skill level, exposure to certain recreational activities, societal expectations, money, and safety.
- Determine the needs and interests of girls and women—examine the types of activities that exist for women and girls in wilderness in relation to the benefits desired.

Marketing

- Increase the availability of wilderness recreation to girls and women—this will in turn contribute to freeing girls and women from constraining stereotypes (Shaw, 1994). This could entail promoting healthy images of women and girls in brochures, distributing more information, and offering free or low-cost recreation to women and girls.
- Encourage girls to recreate in wilderness early in life—of the 24 women interviewed 17 said their initial interest in wilderness was catalyzed by their parents involving them in such activities, 3 others grew up on a farm or in an open space upon which their parents encouraged outside activities, and an additional 3 developed an interest in wilderness from Summer camps or Girl Scouts.

Skill Development

- Provide skill training classes—local recreational organizations may provide opportunities and training for women who may lack perceived skills, abilities, or resources to participate. Classes should be provided to women of varied skill levels, encompassing a comfortable and collective learning environment.
- Provide safety tips and interpretive explanations of safety concerns—can be displayed at trailheads and outdoor equipment stores.

Role Models and Leadership

- Encourage female leadership and role models—when women see other women who are competent in the outdoors, they too are more likely to feel comfortable.

Recommendations for Wilderness Managers

This research shows that wilderness recreation can contribute to our transformation of the broader social relations of gender within wilderness and within society. Wilderness and wilderness recreation can advance individuals towards justice in our communities and a better quality of life. Thus there are substantial ramifications for women and for protecting the integrity of wilderness. The “transferable outcomes” discussed in this research are: self-sufficiency, problem solving, self-confidence, a shift in perspective, connection with others, and mental clarity. Managers need to protect these values to insure liberating experiences to women and perpetuate social change within society. Furthermore, failing to protect these values targets a particular segment of the population (women) and may be viewed as discriminatory.

Listed below are the six transferable outcomes in this study. They are coupled with (A) recommendations and measures for wilderness managers to take in insuring their protection, along with (B) examples and consequences of what might happen if wilderness managers failed to take action to protect these values. This section is followed by recommendations for perpetuating future social change through wilderness recreation.

Protecting Self-Sufficiency

- (A) Important wilderness characteristics that contribute to self-sufficiency for women are being isolated and experiencing challenge. Because both isolation and challenge in wilderness may rely upon encountering relatively few other people, managers need to take into account the continued provision of outstanding opportunities for solitude. They may do this through measures such as issuing permits, monitoring for maximum encounters and/or limiting the number of users in particular areas. In addition, isolation and challenge may rely upon pristine settings and primitive settings, void of the presence or evidence of human activity.
- (B) If managers fail to manage for isolation and challenge, opportunities for self-sufficiency will diminish. For example, if one encounters too many people on a trail, she may feel that if she really needed help, she could just ask someone else, thus perpetuating a reliance on others rather than on oneself. In addition, if managers do not monitor for evidence of other humans at campsites and on trails, one may get the feeling that many other people have done what she is doing, thus diminishing the uniqueness, challenge, and importance of her experience.

Protecting Opportunities for Problem Solving

- (A) Important wilderness characteristics that contribute to problem solving are being able to escape, finding solitude, spending an extended period of time in wilderness, and facing challenges. Some of these characteristics (escape and solitude) rely upon having relatively few encounters with others and not confronting the presence of others. For example, managers may protect opportunities for escape from everyday distractions by monitoring for aircraft and motorized equipment and monitoring for

trash and campsite destruction. In managing for spending an extended period of time in wilderness, managers might provide or continue to provide at least four-day permits (as specified by many of the study participants) to users.

- (B) If managers do not manage for opportunities for escape, solitude, spending an extended period of time in wilderness, and challenge, chances to solve problems will diminish. For example, if one is constrained to day-use only wilderness trips, she may find it difficult to fully address a problem (such as making an important job decision) that she has brought into wilderness to deal with.

Protecting Self-Confidence

- (A) Some characteristics of wilderness that are important in facilitating self-confidence for women include connecting with nature, solitude, and challenge. Managers can contribute to opportunities for solitude and challenge by monitoring and maintaining standards for user encounters, campsite destruction, and trail maintenance. Limitations on time and location of wilderness experiences (such as prescribed campsites, designated travel routes, and seasonally restricted use) will detract from a sense of freedom and self-control. Sense of accomplishment is relative to the individual, and if one feels relatively isolated in wilderness, she may take pride in going beyond norms or feeling that not many other people have done what she has done, thus gaining self-confidence.
- (B) If managers do not protect opportunities for escape, solitude, spending an extended period of time in wilderness, and challenge, opportunities for gaining self-confidence will diminish. For example, if one encounters a challenge such as going down a set of rapids, but then witnesses a stream of other users accomplishing the same challenge,

she may feel less confidence in herself and her success. Similarly, the provision of an abundance of information concerning conditions, tactics, and recommended behavior will reduce self-sufficiency, and the sense of encountering wilderness “on its own terms.”

Protecting Change in Perspective

- (A) Important wilderness characteristics that contribute to a change in perspective are escape, connection to nature, simplicity, and solitude. If managers protect the opportunity to escape everyday distractions, one may be able to gauge wilderness to everyday life. For example, wilderness managers may monitor and uphold high standards for aircraft and motorized distractions, campsite destruction, and trail maintenance. One may find the wilderness lifestyle ideal, and she may attempt to live her everyday life more simply, thus conserving resources and re-prioritizing that which is important.
- (B) If managers fail to provide opportunities for escape, connection to nature, simplicity, and solitude, opportunities for perspective change will be reduced. For example, we may find that some management strategies can be obtrusive and relatively complex. If one’s wilderness experience is complicated by permits, too many restrictions, and a constant reminder of managerial presence, she may feel that the simplicity and escape she was looking for in wilderness is gone. Thus, for her, wilderness no longer serves as such a contrast to everyday life.

Protecting Connection with Others

- (A) Characteristics of wilderness that are important to facilitating connection with others are freedom from distractions and constraints, spending an extended period of time

with people, and challenge. One way that managers can insure opportunities that allow people to connect with each other is by allowing longer periods of stay (at least four days as preferred by many of the study participants) in wilderness. If individuals spend these days together, they will have opportunities to bond, support each other, and accomplish group goals.

- (B) If opportunities for freedom from distractions and constraints, spending an extended period of time with people, and challenge are not protected, it will be more difficult for individuals to connect with each other through wilderness recreation. For example, if managers do not restrict the number of users and parties in a particular campsite, solidarity, group goals, and reliance on each other will diminish. This occurs because when one's party is alone, the group is forced to rely on each other's resources. However, if there are many other users in the same area, one may become distracted or she may leave her group all together.

Protecting Mental Clarity

- (A) Some characteristics of wilderness that are important in facilitating mental clarity for women are freedom from distractions, the ability to escape, solitude, spending an extended period of time in wilderness, and simplicity. Many of these characteristics rely on having relatively few encounters with others (escape, freedom from distractions, solitude, simplicity). For example, if managers provide an atmosphere that is simple, free from distractions, and relatively void of other users, one may be able to become absorbed in thought about herself, the world, and her place within the world.

(B) If managers do not protect values such as escape, freedom from distractions, the ability to spend an extended period of time in wilderness, and simplicity, then opportunities for mental clarity will be reduced. For example, if one is limited to single night stays at one particular campsite, she may not be able to slow down and become absorbed in her experience, the result being the inability to “see more,” or gain mental clarity about the world.

Recommendations to Perpetuate Future Social Change through Wilderness Recreation

Encouraging women’s participation in wilderness recreation can be liberating to women, and also to wilderness. Understanding this human dimension of public land management can result in perpetuating future social change, gaining a larger wilderness constituency, and it can lead to an increased respect among people for nature. Possible changes within management include: (1) managing for the needs of women, (2) marketing strategies, (3) managing for the integrity of the resource, and (4) managing for wilderness outside of wilderness.

Managing for the Needs of Women

- **Do not make assumptions** about what women can and cannot do—although simplistic, practicing this axiom contributes to freeing girls and women from preconceived and constraining stereotypes. The data in this study has show how wilderness provides a unique opportunity for women, and managers should not act counter to these forces.
- **Seek public input and involvement** from women—researchers and managers may be able to do this by consciously selecting women to fill out surveys and questionnaires and by calling on women during public participation meetings. This increases the reliability of management decisions and offers women more authority in wilderness management decisions. Women have important needs met by their wilderness experiences and it is beholden upon managers to insure their voices are heard with equal authority and impact.
- **Provide training and awareness for managers** about issues of safety, constraints (such as not knowing where to participate, issues of safety, and lack of exposure to wilderness opportunities), gender inclusive language, social stereotyping of women,

access to women, and confrontations between female wilderness users and managers—this may involve seeking public input from female managers and also female wilderness users to examine whether or not there is a need for further employee training sessions. If these women indicate that certain gender issues need to be addressed, then agencies can offer workshops and awareness training to both male and female employees. This affects dynamics within the workplace and in the backcountry.

- Hire more women in leadership, decision making, and managerial positions—this promotes female role models that other women can see and emulate, and this may also increase the level of comfort that female wilderness users have with managers.

Marketing

- Realize the potential for marketing and promoting the resource to different users—this acknowledges the diversity among wilderness users and increases the constituents in favor of wilderness allocation and stewardship.
- Promote healthy images of women partaking in wilderness recreation in brochures, at trailhead signs, and in other publications—as mentioned before, this provides images that women can look to for role models, and it can change constraints that revolve around social appropriateness of wilderness recreation for women.

Protecting the Integrity of the Resource

- Because many of the positive outcomes of wilderness recreation are dependent on a wilderness setting, managers need to protect the integrity of the resource—supporting values such as freedom from societal constraints, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for challenge, freedom from distractions, escape from society, learning new skills, relaxation, and isolation. Some of these values (such as solitude, escape, and freedom from distraction) may be protected through management strategies such as Limits of Acceptable Change and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. Managers can monitor for standards such as maximum encounters, campsite destruction, assuring primitive and semi-primitive environments, surveying about the quality of one's experience, and researching constraints such as displacement and lack of participation (to see if these constraints can be rectified through management strategies).

Managing for Wilderness away from Wilderness

- Work for ways to bring wilderness closer to home, encouraging users to maintain the “wilderness effect”—many of the women interviewed stressed the importance of being able to access wilderness when they are in back in society. This was especially the case for individuals who could only take a few (or less) wilderness trips each year. Managers can educate constituents about local ecology and encourage other ways to access wilderness (such as journaling, photographs, drawing, and reading). Although management strategies for bringing wilderness closer to home are also the responsibility of wilderness users, managers can assist these efforts by promoting this idea to visitors and by suggesting activities that people can partake in and books that people can read. This will prolong the effect of many of the positive outcomes of wilderness in women's everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

This study verifies that wilderness and wilderness recreation is even more important today than ever before. Through wilderness recreation, women are able to accrue self-confidence, self-sufficiency, ability to solve problems, a change in perspective, mental clarity, and they are able to connect with others. In addition, these outcomes are not only actualized while in the backcountry but also transfer into women's everyday life. Analysis of these outcomes shows that they contribute to empowerment and they counteract some of the social injustices that women experience today. Thus there is potential for women's liberation through wilderness recreation. Furthermore, women might rely on wilderness for finding self-worth, taking control of their lives, challenging norms, and addressing their problems or fears. In this sense, wilderness may be *necessary* for reclaiming their identities.

Researching this connection between wilderness recreation and women's liberation is of no consequence unless it can be and is applied in practice to improve the quality of life for all marginalized groups. It is hoped that recreation providers and wilderness managers can apply the above suggestions into programs and management decisions. Those benefiting from the application of this research include women themselves, policy makers, leisure service providers, and society in general (Henderson, 1994a). Wilderness recreation can contribute to liberation and empowerment for women as well as a alleviation of gender-marking for all people. Transforming gender oppression in society cannot help but make life better for everyone. Thus coming to a better understanding of wilderness recreation and its impact on women's liberation is beneficial to women and men alike. With a better understanding of the positive outcomes of wilderness recreation,

wilderness managers and recreation providers can more effectively perform their jobs while simultaneously promoting social change for women and society at large.

Feminist researchers suggest that women's lives can be made more visible through involvement in wilderness recreation, and the positive outcomes of these experiences can spill over into other realms of daily life, resulting in a heightened sense of liberation and empowerment in their lives. In this sense, "anatomy is not destiny" (Henderson, 1989). It may be possible that wilderness managers and recreation providers can continue to facilitate liberating and empowering recreational experiences to girls and women, thus providing experiences for them to regain their voices.

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APPENDIX DESCRIPTION

POSTER:	165
This poster was used to advertise the project. It was hung at local outfitting organization, outdoor equipment shops and recreation facilities (i.e. climbing walls).	
LETTER OF CONSENT:	166
All interviewees signed this letter of consent, allowing the researcher to tape record and transcribe interviews.	
EXAMPLE INTERVIEW:	168
This is an actual interview conducted with Heidi, and is included in the Appendix to illustrate the interview process.	
POST LETTER SENT TO INTERVIEWEES ALONG WITH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION CHAPTERS:	181
These were sent to Interviewees so they could comment on the research and express any concerns that they might have had.	

Wilderness Women

Needed to Interview

Abstract: I am interested in your wilderness stories, recollections, and experiences!! My graduate thesis work focuses on women and wilderness recreation, and in particular examines the connection between wilderness recreation and how those experiences affect your lives.

Who: Looking for women who recreate in wilderness or wildland settings

What: Your stories will be documented and taped

When: One 1 to 1½ hour interview during the month of December or January

How: Please call Sarah for more information at: 542-4770

This is a replication of the poster used to advertise the project. It was hung at local outfitting organizations, outdoor equipment shops, and recreation facilities.

Hello !!

Thank you for considering to participate in this research. Your involvement and insights are greatly appreciated. I would just like to explain a little about the research, how the data will be used, and what your rights are as an interviewee. These consent forms are a requirement by the University of Montana. Please feel free to ask any questions that you might have at any stage during the research.

I am particularly interested in documenting the story of your wilderness experiences. By doing this research, I hope to gain a better understanding of the relationship between wilderness recreation and positive outcomes to women. The project is aimed at understanding and facilitating recreational opportunities that may lead to uplifting experiences for women. I do not foresee any risks by participating in this project. Our conversations will last approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length and will take place in either your home or my home (depending on what you choose) or over the telephone. I would like to have your permission to tape record our conversation to provide better recollection of your comments.

All efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality. I will be responsible for the project and will be the only person able to identify you throughout the process. The recordings of the interview will be written out in full (transcriptions), and you will be given a "false name" in these transcriptions and in the written thesis. The transcriptions of the interviews will be modified so they do not contain any descriptions that would identify who you are. Tapes will be destroyed after the thesis has been written. Also, you are free to withdraw your consent or to discontinue participation in the project at any time.

Although there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in the research, the University of Montana requires the following paragraph:

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims Representative or University Legal Counsel.

If you agree to participate, please sign the attached form. You may keep this cover letter.

Thank you. Sincerely,

Sarah Pohl, Project Coordinator
Graduate Student, University of Montana
Science Complex 460
Missoula, MT 59812
(406) 243-6422

Bill Borrie, Assistant Professor
University of Montana
Science Complex 405A
Missoula, MT 59812
(406) 243-4286

Women, Wilderness, & Everyday Life

I have read the preceding cover letter and understand the project. I understand that our conversation will be tape recorded, and I agree to participate in the research.

(Signature)

(Date)

Heidi

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN RECREATING IN WILDERNESS?

In designated wilderness or just sort of generally wilderness.

IN YOUR MIND, WHAT YOU,

I guess um, when I was, when I was a young girl in elementary school and junior high school I did a lot of stuff for the girl scouts. And is certainly wasn't intense wilderness experience. For the most part it was, you know, hiking a couple miles and camp for a while. Or some horse packing in wilder places than, it was further in. But then in high school and the beginning of college I really didn't do any wilderness recreation at all. And it wasn't until a year or so into college that I started doing a lot of backpacking.

O.K. THAT'S NOT YOUR AVERAGE GIRL SCOUT TROUP.

Yeah, yup.

WE MADE BROWNIES.

We did a lot of that too, and sewing.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOST RECENT WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE?

I guess my most recent wilderness experience was probably the F----. Um, as far as backpacking goes. If you don't count hiking and W---- and, I mean day hikes. I'll count long overnights, that's what would come to mind. Um, which was a ten day trip...

WHAT WAS THAT TRIP LIKE?

It was, it was wonderful. It was really, a really wonderful experience. We had great weather, so it was particularly beautiful time, and it's just the, that place...is so, um, so sort of spectacular and sublime and surreal. It was really a...

DOES ANYTHING STAND OUT IN YOUR MIND ABOUT THAT TRIP?

Um lots of stuff. It's different going with the [participants] than a normal trip because it, I'm so aware of their experience too. And so that certainly influences me a lot. So, sort of their impressions of everything make a big impression on me. You know, them, some of them haven't ever been backpacking before, and it's so, it's so fulfilling to be able to go out there with them and have them be so amazed that they're carrying all their gear on their back and that they're out there for... days. Uh, sitting out at the camp fire and just

the, all the new experiences that they have out there it sort of makes it feel new to me again too.

Yeah. And um, I guess the, what comes to mind when you say does anything stand out, there was a really beautiful afternoon where a couple of us were sitting at camp, and we're watching the clouds come, it was right at dusk and the clouds were just coming over the ridges so fast. It was amazingly beautiful and um, we all just sort of sat back and awe of the shapes and the different layers that, there was sort of one layer going really fast and one layer going slower and the patterns were really beautiful.

HOW DOES THAT TRIP COMPARE TO A FAVORITE TRIP? DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE WILDERNESS TRIP?

Oh gosh, I don't know what I would pick. Um, I don't think I would have a favorite trip that I could think of!

THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE IS SAYING!

Do they? I can compare it to the trip I took right before that, which was,

WAS THAT A GOOD ONE?

Yeah, it was really good. I went with two friends of mine, both women, into the Olympics. Um, for five days. And we went, it was really neat because the forest is just so different there and I hadn't been in the Pacific Northwest for awhile and I just forgot how towering and massive the trees are. And the, just looking at the Doug Firs and we look at our sort of little Doug Firs here and then these just huge Douglas Firs and um, a lot of cedar and hemlock and it was just such a beautiful forest and the light filtering through. And that was a really neat experience.

It was really much more low key than going with the [participants], much more easy going and it was, that was a really, a nice time for us, I think together. Not only being in that place, but for the three of us to be together in that place. It was really good for, for our friendships. Two friends that live far away and we get together once a year and go backpacking.

WHY DO YOU CHOOSE TO GO BACKPACKING TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION?

I guess 'cause it's such a good way to have that quality time and that common experience. So it's really different from visiting each other, having to sort of deal with work and work schedules and city life and all that. So I think we all really like sharing that common experience and we all like having that time together. The quiet time and the, going through you know, hiking up the pass, a really hard pass together and having that experience of accomplishing something together.

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

It seems to somehow facilitate our bond. It seems to sort of provide some glue that other experiences don't. Or a different kind of glue perhaps.

WHAT MAKES THAT A GREAT TRIP?

I guess, so many different things. Um, the experience of just being in that place would be the, what comes to mind first. And then uh, the experience of being together in that place, being able to have that time together. Um, and sort of renew, renew our friendship in a way.

And also we spent, we spent a couple nights at the same lake which was really nice because I felt like we were able to take the time to really be at that place for awhile. As opposed to just hiking from one spot to the next spot, and sort of always being get to the next place mode, which was really nice.

HOW IS THE MODE OF MOVING DIFFERENT THAN THE MODE OF BEING IN ONE SPOT?

I think that they are relatively different, for me, from my experience. Um, moving is, for me, moving is hiking with a backpack on. It's meditative in a way. It's, it's sort of a groove or a rhythm you know of a passage and I'm aware of the landscape in a different way than when I'm in one place for awhile. And it's more of, I'm aware of the landscape in a way that I'm passing through it and observing it. But I'm, I'm passing through it. Whereas when I'm in one place, camping in one place for a couple of days I feel like I sort of live there for a little while. It becomes home and there are favorite places to go to the bathroom or go for a view or go to pump water, and um, just that familiarity comes. Whereas I guess moving there's the newness of that experience, coming up on the ridge and seeing the view that, that new experience or that sense of discovery, whereas the being in the same place seems, for me, to have a really comfortable sense of familiarity, in a real positive way.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU CARRY BACK YOUR WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES WITH YOU, OR THAT YOUR WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES SPILL OVER INTO YOUR LIFE?

Yeah, I would definitely say that, yeah.

IN WHAT WAYS?

'Cause I feel, I feel more grounded after being in the backcountry for awhile. And it seems like the length of time matters to some extent so the longer I'm in the backcountry, the longer I have this sort of effect afterwards. The sense of being, feeling more grounded, feeling calmer and more confident and, um, not as easily frustrated, not as, relatively little anxiety sort of a sense of perspective about life.

WHY IS IT THAT WHEN YOU GO OUT FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME YOU FEEL MORE GROUNDED?

I don't know, I think that's a really good question. Maybe just, the, just being there that length of time I get, because of changes that take place in me from that experience sort of happen in a deeper way or, you know, the length of time has something to do with the depth of the experience or something.

EXPLAIN THOSE CHANGES.

I guess it's that sense of feeling more grounded and having that perspective and um, feeling kind of just, I'll try and articulate it. Feeling like, like letting life be is O.K., rather than like oh my gosh, I've gotta' do this, this isn't turning out the way I wanted it to and this sort of stress of modern life.

THEN AS THE DAYS GO ON, THAT FEELING BECOMES MORE INTENSE OR AS THE DAYS GO ON THAT FEELING SORT OF BUILDS, OF BEING GROUNDED.

Uh, huh. Yeah, and I think the other thing is I have a real sense of, um the first couple of days on a trip I'm getting used to being back there. And then the middle of the trip there's sort of, even if it's a sort trip, even a five day trip or so, there's sort of this sense of um, of getting used to it in a real positive way, like this is the mode of operation, I'm in the backcountry. And then the last day and sometimes even the day before the last day are sort of going out. O.K., I'm leaving, I'm going out, especially the last day hiking out I really have a really different feeling than hiking in. And um, so I wonder if that length of time of just being there and being real used to being in that mode has something to do with it too. A longer trip, have more of that.

MORE OF THAT POSITIVE MODE.

Yeah.

HOW DOES WILDERNESS MAKE YOU CONFIDENT?

I don't know, I think some of that has to do with feeling. I think it's psychological, but I also think it's physical. I think that after I come off a really long trip I feel like my body is working, it's working the way it's supposed to be working and, uh, and that feels really good.

And then I also think that just being out there and being sort of the whole self-sufficiency of it, you know making your own food and taking care of myself in that way. Um, also makes me feel really good about myself.

And then, there's, relaying all that, sort of just the peacefulness of the, the spiritualness of connecting with that place and with nature, that I think affects me psychologically or spiritually too.

AND SO YOU FEEL ALL THESE THINGS WHEN YOU'RE IN THERE. YOU MENTION THAT YOU FELT CALMER AND MORE CONFIDENT AND LESS FRUSTRATED AND SELF-SUFFICIENT. DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY, ARE THESE LASTING AFFECTS OR DO THEY JUST GO ON OUT THERE?

I'm not quite sure. I think they last for awhile, for me. For me they last for a while afterwards and sometimes they last longer than other times. And I don't really know why. But I'd like them to last a really long time (laughter)! That'd be really nice.

FOREVER.

Yeah, and I think, and those are, there are certainly experiences in the frontcountry that I can have that also bring about those feelings but I think it's, they're qualitatively different somehow. And I don't know if I can articulate the difference, but there's something different about the feelings generated from a backcountry trip that are different from frontcountry experiences.

WHAT DO YOUR WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR LIFE?

I don't know if I could, I don't know how to answer that one. Let's see

YEAH THAT'S A HUGE ONE.

Yeah, what do they mean to me? I guess, I guess they mean a real, sort of a blessing or an opportunity to be able to, to go to a place and have an experience that I can't have anywhere else. That I couldn't have unless I was in a wild backcountry setting. And so it's an opportunity to, for me to, for so many things: to learn more about a place, to get in better shape, to reconnect with the natural world, to feel more self-sufficient, to bond with other people. I mean, I feel like it's so multi-faceted, there's so many different parts of it that are important.

WHY IS WILDERNESS CONDUCIVE TO BONDING WTH OTHER PEOPLE?

I think because there aren't, well in some ways there aren't distractions in the sound bite sense. In other words, there may be things to observe, but there aren't things coming at you really fast like T.V., or in a bar with loud music, or uh, or uh, and there's nothing else that you can do. And that's the thing too, is you know, if you were to come over and we were to hang out here, you know, you know we'd probably say oh let's do something, let's go get something to drink and go see some music or something like that. And um, or, or in the frontcountry I might think oh I can't go do anything with some friends 'cause I really have x, y, z to do. But when I'm in the backcountry I can't do x, y, z. I can't clean the house or work on the computer or do anything.

So I think because there isn't, there's only so much that you have to do, the basic survival camping stuff. And then because there isn't, aren't these fast-paced distractions coming at you, there's actually time to be with other people. And then I think there's that whole common experience of sharing a common experience of nature together with someone else. And then a common experience of a physical common experience of getting there, and the strenuousness of that.

DOES WILDERNESS SHAPE WHO YOU ARE?

Yeah, I think it does. I think it, think going out into the backcountry even if it's only, even if I only do you know a few trips a year or a couple long trips and a couple short trips, still it's part of my identity. That it's a piece of myself that I, when I think about myself that's one of the things that forms my identity.

WHAT IS THAT PIECE?

Hummm, (laughter) good question... Let's see, I guess it's the piece that, it sort of has two, two sides to it: the side that I'm able to do that and that that's part of my identity and that I do do it, it's important to me and then the side that uh. And then the other side is the part that allows me to reconnect or connect more with the natural world, with nature and learn about it and experience it. So it's kind of like the opportunity and then the capability at the same time.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO PHYSICALLY GO THERE.

Yeah and to experience it and then the capability and the will and the desire to do it.

DOES WILDERNESS ALLOW YOU TO EXPRESS CERTAIN BEHAVIORS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Yeah, I guess it does. You mean when I'm back in wilderness, express these behaviors, or what,

YEAH I MEAN BACK THERE AND THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU AND CAN YOU EXPRESS THEM WHEN YOU GET BACK HERE OR ARE THEY, JUST OCCUR BACK THERE?

I think, let's see, I'll do the back there part first. I think to some extent, um, especially on longer trips there's, for me there's a sense of gaining some perspective, so personal perspective on our societal norms and values. Um, and sort of having the chance to step back from it because it's not so ever-present that you can sort of step back from it and go, hum, that's kind a screwy thing that we do. Maybe I don't like that, maybe we shouldn't do it back here. And when there's other people involved I think that happens on a group level too. That people sort of take and leave different parts of our social roles and norms and values and um, I think that that's really positive, and it's almost, I think it can be really

liberating for people in a way, depending on the group dynamics. But I think it can be, can be very liberating to be able to shed some of those rules for a certain period of time. You know run around camp like a crazy person and sort of break down barriers between people that would normally have barriers between them.

Um, and I think it does translate to some extent in the frontcountry, coming back. I think, like the other things I was talking about that sort of last for awhile, I think that lasts for awhile too and then it sort of, society's sort of ever-present rules, which I certainly wouldn't give up, you know, for total anarchy, but, but they sort of seep back in, the expectations and norms start to seep back in after awhile.

SO YOU SAID THAT THAT CAN BE SORT OF POSITIVE OR LIBERATING FOR SOME PEOPLE. DO YOU INCLUDE YOURSELF IN THAT CATEGORY?

Yeah, yeah I think so, yeah. I think leading trips, and you've probably experienced this, it's different in a way because at least for me personally. When I go on a backpacking trip with some friends, oh my gosh, it's so easy. It just, you know I think about it in terms of I don't have to be the first person to get up, I don't have to be the person who makes sure the fire's going, somebody else might take care of that. Maybe we'll get up at 11:00, maybe we'll have cookies for breakfast (laughter). There's just all this sort of, it becomes now I really, it's almost as if backpacking with my friends is such low-maintenance compared to backpacking with the [participants] and always being aware of, O.K., there's that one activity I want to do, when am I gonna' fit it in? Am I gonna' fit it in this evening? Gosh what would be the most appropriate thing to talk about tonight at the circle? Gosh, you know, I wonder if they're working on...all the stuff that goes along with it can be kind of not as liberating. But, I still think it's liberating even leading the trips.

DO YOU EVER TAKE ANY SOLOS?

I've never gone on a solo.

I WAS WONDERING IF THAT WOULD FIT INTO ITS OWN CATEGORY.

I think it would. I've taken lots of long solo hikes, and I've done some solo car camping, but I've never gone on a solo backpacking trip before. I think it would fit into its own category, yeah.

YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD ALWAYS, WELL YOU HAD EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU WERE IN GRADE SCHOOL WITH BEING OUTDOORS AND THEN YOU SORT OF HAD A LULL THERE. AND THEN YOU REALLY STARTED BACKPACKING AFTER YOUR FIRST YEAR IN COLLEGE. TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU FOUND THAT OUTLET.

I think it had a lot to do with school. It was when I'd started my, uh, I was a psychology major and then I added environmental studies. And I think that that's when I started

meeting people who were more interested in backpacking. And that, I think had a huge impact on me.

Um, and it was almost like finding, it was really nice to find people who I had such common interests with, that I almost didn't, sort of re-discovered in myself.

Um, and that was probably the, that and then the course work I was doing in environmental studies were probably the two main impetuses for getting into the backcountry more.

WHAT WAS THAT IMPACT ON YOU?

I think, oh it was really refreshing. It almost like discovering what it was like to be out there. And I'd been doing a little bit of hiking but nothing extensive. And growing up in L---, and even my first year at S---, my peer groups were sort of, oh let's party, let's go shopping, you know (laughter) that sort of stuff. And so I think that was only fulfilling for so long. It was like O.K., this fun, *but* what am I really getting out of this? So I think it was really refreshing to sort of re-discover that part of myself or discover that part of myself.

BECAUSE YOU KNEW WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE WITHOUT THAT EXPERIENCE AND THEN YOU FOUND IT, DID YOU NOTICE SHIFTS IN YOUR LIFE?

Yeah, I think I definitely did. And all these things sort of happened at the same time. I worked for an environmental group, who was working on, we were working on pesticide reform and then I was, uh, added the major environmental studies and then, and then I started doing more backcountry stuff too. So all these things sort of combined really changed the way I thought about my life, the way I thought about the world and our culture, the way I thought about um, nature, the way I thought about any kind of personal actions.

You know, whether everything from what I consumed and how I lived my life to sort of more political activities. And I think that sort of all meshed in being out in the backcountry more. And that it all happened simultaneously. I also, this is probably not relevant, but

YOU'D BE SUPRISED! SOMETHING TRIGGERED IT!

I also went through this phase, we're hoping it was a phase, um, where about that time right when I was finishing up school, um I became very, very self-righteous. I went through this period of time where I was like, I can't believe that anyone could not value this kind of experience. I can't believe people, everyone doesn't do this, it's such a ridiculous and sort of a, a phase where I can remember telling my friend Jessica, I can remember standing there with her. We were walking, we were actually hiking down this canyon. We had gone to E---, we were in G---. Just going on this monologue for hours about blah, blah, blah, people I can't believe, how could people possibly be whole people if they didn't do this and that and the other and these things that I like to do. And I remember her saying, Heidi, some people don't like to do those things. What! Well,

there's something wrong with those people! It just, really, being like this was *the right path*, you know, and sort if things like that. And I think that it took me awhile to move out from that place where I felt like I would like to see, I think it is really good for people to get out to the backcountry and to even just experience nature in any kind of way, but I don't feel like I'm on my soapbox anymore (laughter). I've tried to come down from the soapbox...

SO WE'VE BEEN USING THE TERM WILDERNESS IN OUR CONVERSATION, SO TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, WHAT DOES WILDERNESS MEAN TO YOU.

I interpret the term much broader than designated wilderness. So in some senses to me it means you know roadless, undeveloped areas that aren't really changed by modern culture, modern society in any direct way. Course they're all sort of changed in an indirect way. Um, by the lines drawn around them and global climate change and whatever else. Um, so I guess I would, it's hard.

I think wilderness is really, really difficult to define. So I sort of struggle with the terminology myself, but I would say more on the continuum of natural and sort of highly developed, modernized industrial areas, wilderness being on the more natural end of things and um, where there's opportunity for you know, evolution and processes like fire and where there's, native species are present. Um, you know where there's not, where there's, but not in a static sense where there's an opportunity for ecological change too.

SO I'M TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WILDERNESS MEANS TO YOU, TO YOUR LIFE AND THE EFFECT THAT IT'S HAD ON YOU LIFE. AND SO GIVEN WHAT WE'VE COVERED, IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT TO ADD?

Let me think about that for a moment and see if anything comes to mind. I guess I think that the one thing that is really hard for me to articulate, and I don't know if this is true for a lot of people, is the spiritual element of, of wilderness experiences. And it think it's, I think it's hard to find the words in our culture. I can find them in sort of an academic, intellectual sense, but it's hard to find them on a personal level.

Um, to describe that and, but I think that that is a really, a fundamental part of it, for me in my experience this sort of sense of wonder and almost a loss of self at times. Um, about losing a sense of, losing my sense of self for awhile in sort of, I don't know, a Buddhist sense or whatever, where I'm suddenly not so aware of, so much aware of myself as a distinct being. But sort of aware of everything sort of messed together for awhile and in a sense those are only fleeting moments, but they certainly seem to come more often in wild places.

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

I think it's really fulfilling. Very fulfilling in a way that um, that I crave. And maybe it's fulfilling because it's, it doesn't come that often. And so it's unusual, at least for me.

SO HOW IS WILDERNESS RECREATION DIFFERENT FROM LEISURE IN ANOTHER SETTING, LIKE YOUR SHOPPING?

Or even going on, sort of a boat across F--- or something, you know a motor boat full of people. Um, I think, I guess, I think that there's certain things that happen during leisure activities like you can relax and um, you know stress goes away. I think those things are a sub-set of the wilderness experience. In other words, you know, maybe I'll relax during some kind of leisure experience, or I'll have time to bond with friends or things like that. And those are opportunities that are available for me in leisure, but the what's available in wilderness is so much bigger. It's so much broader.

A SQUARE IS A RECTANGLE, BUT A RECTANGLE IS NOT A SQUARE.

Yeah, uh, huh.

SO AS A WOMAN, DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES HAVE EFFECTED YOU?

That's a good question. I think that as a woman, in our culture, I'm not expected to, I wouldn't go so far as to say not allowed, but not expected, maybe in some sectors not allowed to do some of the physical and self-sufficient activities that men do.

I think in... it's different, but I think generally speaking in American culture it's not as acceptable for women to be dirty, be grimy, sweaty, hiking up a pass, um, for them to want to be allowed to carry forty-five pounds on their back, to um, to, you know, be away from the home for ten days and the family for ten days, to I just, I think that we're pretty lucky, and we're definitely extremely lucky in... and then lucky in... that, I don't think women are, are pigeon-holed as much here.

But I think as far as our culture in general is concerned, we're not sort of supposed to do those kinds of things. So in some ways I think it's really liberating to break out of that mold. Um, sort of gives me an added sense of accomplishment to be able to do it and do it as a woman, because it's not expected and sort of in some area some sectors not condoned. So I think that that comes into play with the confidence, um, the sort of competence outcomes and other stuff like that.

But I do think that, on some level, people who don't backpack, especially don't understand that as a woman, I'm leading trips, you know leading people into the backcountry and stuff like that. They're kind of, huh? They get confused and don't really understand how a woman would be capable of that and that's kind of an interesting, I'm sure you've experienced that.

OH YEAH, AND ON TRIPS. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BEING TREATED, AS A FEMALE, YOU KNOW AS A LEADER AND AS A WOMAN DIFFERENTLY FROM THE PARTICIPANTS?

Um, I think that there certainly have been a couple of [participants] who I've had who have had issues with either women in general, women in the group, or women as leaders

that they clearly didn't have with men. And it wasn't explicit like they said, oh I have a problem with women, but it was behavior that was only observed toward women and never observed toward men. And um, and that was really interesting for me... And I know that it had something to do with the gender issue going on there, because it was behavior that was never, never happened to any other, it happened to other females, all the females on the trip and none of the men, including the leaders. So that's um,

WHAT KIND OF BEHAVIOR WAS THAT?

Oh just smarting off, back talk, what, we have to do that?! You know blah, blah, blah. Um, kind of snide remarks, just general bad attitude sort of behavior and comments... But I think being in the backcountry setting, it's so much more intensified, because you're with that person for ten days straight and you, it's in your face... I've been really blessed to have great male co-leaders and so I've, I've never led a trip where my co-leader as a male treated me in any way that I felt was sexist. Um, but I think that that's not, not every woman's experience at all. A lot of, I think a lot of woman leaders that I know have had really bad experiences with male co-leaders who treated them in different ways because they were female. Treated them like they couldn't navigate or they couldn't take charge of their medical emergency or they couldn't do certain things. And it seemed so consistent that it seemed to have a lot to do with being female. It's funny, I want to ask you a lot of these questions back, Sarah.

I KNOW.

Oh well, what about you?

IT'S FRUSTRATING BEING ON THIS END WHERE I HAVE TO BE QUIET...

I'll ask you afterwards.

THE LAST QUESTION I HAVE IS, WAS THERE A QUESTION THAT I DIDN'T ASK YOU THAT YOU WANTED ME TO ASK.

You know I had one more thought on the women... what was it. Um, do you mind if I just sort of make some random comments about women recreating in wilderness.

NO, THAT'S MY THESIS!

(laughter). It may tie in and it may not. Um, I think I don't know if a lot of women have experienced this but when I really like to take backpacking trips with all women, and I think there's something really fulfilling about that. There's just a different dynamic. And I also, um when I used to rock climb, I used to like to rock climb with all women too. And there's something about being in sort of a physically challenging position with no men around, that is rewarding for me. Because there seems to be a different kind of dynamic in terms of pressure to perform. There seems to be a lot less pressure to perform in a group

of women for me than, as opposed to a group of men and women. Um, and so that's really rewarding.

What's interesting is that I've often gotten comments on the trail when I'll be on the trail with, for instance my two friends, we take this backpacking trip every year, where people will be coming down the trail. They'll say, oh look three girls! I just have a sense that they probably don't walk up to the next group and go, oh look two boys! Two men! You know? And just, in a way where people take note of it and, um, and I think that that's interesting and I don't, in... which I find interesting, I don't see that many groups of all women in the backcountry. I usually see either guys together or mixed groups and then very rarely do I run into groups of women, that are just groups of women.

But in W---... I see just tons of women all in a group and tons of women in their sixties with their cross-country ski poles that have been out for five days. Just a group of four women. And I thought that was interesting and I don't know if, that's just anecdotal, so I think that's what's goin' on there.

But I do find it interesting that people make comments specifically about women going out without any men in a group as if, oh gosh this is a big deal! They don't have a man to start the fire! Or, I'm not really sure what they're saying 'cause they're not that explicit, but.

YEAH, WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY'RE SAYING?

I think they're surprised because it's not the norm. And I think that they, they have expectations that women don't go out to the backcountry without men. And I'm not sure they're necessarily saying that oh my gosh, you can't do this, what are you doing back here? But they're just sort of surprised, like oh, huh, no guys! It's interesting.

I also, the other thing I was gonna' say about it too was that um, there's, I think that the element of fear or danger that's present for women in the frontcountry exists for me in the backcountry too. And so what scares me in the backcountry is people. So if I'm, have a fear, if I'm worried about something, it is like the two bad drunk guys wandering in camp with their shot guns sort of thing that comes to mind. It's not like the grizzly bear ripping into the tent. It's the possibility of, you know murder or rape or whatever, but a man, just because I don't envision women doing that, of course it's possible, but that's just not what comes to mind. Um and so I think that that is, in some ways that's limiting. I think that I would go alone into the backcountry a lot if I didn't have that fear, that worry of doing that.

I don't know if you've read Leslie Ryan's essay when she talks about when she camped, would go by herself, she would go off the trail, you know and not make a fire, and sort of hide.

YEAH I HAVE A GREAT QUOTE OF THAT ARTICLE.

Oh you do? You'll have to tell me when it's over... But I think that's definitely present, so I feel like that impacts my experience. I could have a richer experience if there wasn't, if we didn't have problems like that, of violence against women in our society. I could have a richer wilderness experience.

UM, I DID WANT TO TOUCH ON, YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU PREFERED TO HAVE A PHYSICAL CHALLENGE WITH OTHER WOMEN AROUND. WHY IS IT PREFERABLE TO HAVE JUST WOMEN AROUND FOR THAT PHYSICAL CHALLENGE? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT'S JUST WOMEN AS OPPOSED TO MIXED COMPANY?

I find that it's a lot less competitive and a lot more supportive, and that may not be the other women's experience, but that's definitely been mine and my women friends who do backcountry recreation, that there's a lot more of the, oh you're tired, let's sit down, have something to eat, you can do it, oh we'll just slow down. Rather than the huh, come on, come on, you can do it, what's wrong, are you O.K., we'll meet you at camp. You know?

And so I think that because of that I feel a lot less pressure to, you know hike really fast or to um, and what's funny for me, I think that results in like a better physical performance actually when I don't feel the pressure to perform up to par, I don't think about it at all. I don't think about, oh gosh am I hiking fast enough or you know will I be able to keep up with so and so... (tape cut) I just was saying it seems to me, my perception is that it actually affects my physical performance, but I don't really, if that's just a perception, of if that's actually a physical reality.

SO THAT WAS IT.

Great, that was really fun.

THANKS!

April 6, 1998

Hello There!

It's hard to believe that after two years my research is finally coming to a close. With just about six weeks remaining, it seems like a sprint to the end, rather than a test of endurance. At any rate, I cannot express how much my body and mind look forward to a summer leading canoeing and kayaking trips in the sun.

I wanted to send everyone a draft copy of my Results and Discussions chapters for my thesis. When reading these, please take into consideration three things. *First*, these chapters are still in their rough form. I apologize for the typos, grammar errors, and any lack of cohesiveness that you may find. *Second*, these two chapters are just two of the five I will be presenting in my final copy. They follow an Introduction (explaining why I have chosen to focus on women and wilderness recreation), a Literature Review (a close examination of all the relevant background literature), and a Methodology Chapter (explaining how I went about collecting information and why I chose this method). A final, bound copy of my thesis will be available at the University of Montana Library in six months to a year. *Third*, I have incorporated many original quotes from the interviews that I feel illustrate the main themes in the data. In most cases, these quotes are only representative of what many people were saying. Please do not feel that your words were somehow less worthy of quoting if they are not used as regularly in these two chapters. *Finally*, (and most important), these two chapters by no means represent the entirety of the data that I collected from the interviews. When I first set out to define my thesis topic,

I had to narrow my focus (looking at how wilderness recreation can positively influence women's everyday lives), and unfortunately this means leaving out some of the richness of the stories that you shared with me. In the future I hope to go back to the wealth of information and expose some of the many themes that thus far lack as much recognition as they deserve (for example connecting to nature, desire to preserve wilderness, and issues of fear and safety).

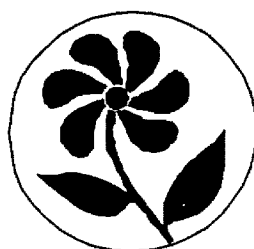
I encourage you to read these two chapters and let me know how you feel (especially if you feel you have been inaccurately represented). Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, and remarks that you may have.

Thank you again for helping me with my research project. It has truly been inspiring to hear your stories. Next time we meet, may it be on the trail!

Sincerely, Sarah Pohl

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