

**ADVENTURISM: SINGAPORE ADVENTURE TOURISTS  
IN THE NEW ECONOMY**

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## Summary

This thesis offers a qualitative approach to the study of Singapore adventure tourists and the new economy. Drawing upon critical concepts in tourism studies and plugging into what has been proclaimed as the ‘cultural’ turn in tourism geography, this study examines the environmental subjectification and tourist performance of Singapore citizens during the city-state’s major economic re-structuring. Based on multi-site ethnography of five adventure tour groups between 2002 and 2004, particular attention is paid to the shaping of their adventure travel motivations in relation to specific economic discourses, their tourism experiences as schemes and programmes to realise effective and productive workers in the new economy, the role of the visual in their tourism experiences and their deployment of post-trip adventure narration in their everyday lives.

The thesis posits a rise of a new form of self-government and self-regulation in what may be termed ‘adventurism’. There are three components to adventurism. First, adventurism encompasses the gaze. Drawing upon John Urry’s (1990) insights on “the tourist gaze”, I consider the gaze as a way of seeing, a form of embodied practice and as well as visual consumption. Second, and this relates to the tourist gaze as a way of seeing, adventurism is shaped and organised in relation to specific economic discourses in society. This brings about the creation of new idealised subject positions. Third, and as a result of the formation of new subject positions in society in relation to

specific discourses, adventurism also encompasses the resultant proliferation of environmental and embodied practices in adventure landscapes.

Adventurism allows us to see that rather than being distinctively non-work practices, Singapore adventure tourists' travels are bound up with their aspirations to self-actualise as productive and effective citizens in a 'globalising economy'. I suggest that adventure tours have become means in which specific new economy values such as 'enterprise', 'risk-taking' and 'adaptability' are articulated and promoted. Following Michel Foucault (1988), the adventure tour is potentially "a technology of the self" for reconditioning the individual. Adventurism is geographical in that the tour as a technology of self-realisation is constructed in specific sites, environments and landscapes. Yet the geography of this is less area-bounded than relational. Adventurism is Singapore-specific and contextual but it also relates to and comprises of features of new economy found elsewhere. Instead of motivating a mapping exercise or a spatial model, pursuits core to traditional tourism geography, adventurism necessitates a geographical examination of the adventure tourist performances in travel environments. I conclude by considering the contributions of this work for tourism studies and geography and the significance of adventurism for understanding capitalism, freedom and new-economy Singapore.



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## **List of Abbreviations**

BOAT	11 <sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training Course
Bluewave	Bluewave Adventure Tours
CDC	Community Development Council
GRC	Group Representative Constituency
EDB	Economic Development Board
ERC	Economic Review Committee
HDB	Housing and Development Board
MCDS	Ministry of Community Development and Sports
MIR	Make It Real Student Mountaineering Project, National University of Singapore
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit
NAUI	National Association of Underwater Instructors
NUS	National University of Singapore
NS	Compulsory National Service
PA	People's Association
PADI	Professional Association of Dive Instructors
PAP	People's Action Party
Rovers	Rovers Adventure Club
SAC	Singapore Adventurers' Club
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces

SMU Singapore Management University  
STB Singapore Tourism Board  
SWCDC South West Community Development Council

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

## 1.1 From tourism in Singapore to Singapore(an) adventure tourists

When IT professional Josephine goes on a holiday, she does not head for Disneyland or shopping malls. The 25 year old would not be found touring in the air-conditioned comforts of tour buses and five star hotels. Chances are that she would be out in the ‘wild’ trekking, abseiling, kayaking, scuba-diving or backpacking with her fellow adventurers (Plate 1.1). The scuba-diving enthusiast has recently graduated from the 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training, been certified “Rescue Scuba-diver” and attained proficiency in “Level One” Abseiling. She goes to ‘rugged’ adventure places such as Mount Ophir and Pulau Perhentian in Malaysia and aspires to greater adventures in Nepal, Cambodia and New Zealand.



***Plate 1.1 Josephine and adventure friends at the start of Gunung Ledang Trail, Malaysia.***

To date, we are well-informed about tourism in Singapore. The key tourism agency in Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Board, provides quarterly figures of international tourists the island state receives and hosts using customs records (see [www.stb.gov.sg](http://www.stb.gov.sg)) and we have at least a quantitative sense of our international visitors and ‘guests’. We also have considerable scholarly research output providing systematic accounts of various tourism sights/sites and issues in Singapore. Sociologist Leong (1989), for example, has examined the commodification of culture for tourism by the Singapore state. Geographic efforts have focused on site-specific studies and urban tourist attractions (see Lew, 1986 for a pioneering effort). More recent geographical contributions include a study of an ethnic enclave and tourist destination “Little India” and its issues of “insider-outsider” contestations (Chang, 2000a), a study of Haw Par Villa, the re-vitalised theme park based on Chinese mythology (Teo and Yeoh, 1997) and research on Singapore theme parks more broadly (Teo and Yeoh, 2001). A macro-view of tourism spaces and their (re)configuration, development strategies and interconnections can also be found in Chang, et al (1996), Teo and Chang (1999), Chang (2000b; 2001; 2003), Chang (1997), Teo et al (2001) and Teo and Lim (2003). These research projects, in general, concern themselves with ‘flows’ of tourists *into* Singapore or the state of tourism in the city-state and its global ‘hinterland’.

From the social science of tourism (see for example Cohen, 1974; Coleman and Crang, 2002; Erb, 1999; 2000), we know that performing tourism and being a tourist are never straightforward and monolithic processes. However, we know little about tourists *from* Singapore and their travels outside their city-state. Peck's (1988) academic exercise on Singapore tourists' motivations is still the only academic piece exploring Singapore tourists. The best 'ethnographic' accounts of Singapore adventure tourists take the form of celebrity travel writings. Singaporeans are amongst the most widely travelled people in the world (Kau, 1996). Thus, it is surprising that besides Peck's work and popular Singaporean travel writings, there has been little scholarly attempt at conceptualising and investigating the subject of the Singapore tourist. Singapore has been accountable for over four million outbound departures yearly since the year 2000 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001; 2002; 2003) and market research firm AC Nielsen also found affluent Singaporeans to be among the most widely travelled in urban Asia (*Streets*, 30 December 2003). This makes the Singapore tourist a very important case for tourism studies.

Less still is known about Singaporeans' (such as Josephine's) practice of what is increasingly known as "adventure tourism". Conventionally, definitions of adventure tourism have converged on adventure recreation (Weber, 2001; Hall and Weiler, 1992; Sung *et al*, 1997). Hence, there is a need here to clarify what I mean by adventure recreation, before moving on to define adventure tourism and adventure travel. Adventure recreation infers activities and pursuits such as "backpacking, bicycling, diving, hanggliding, ballooning, hiking, kayaking, orienteering,

mountaineering, rafting, rappelling, rock climbing, rogaining<sup>1</sup>, sailing, snowshoeing<sup>2</sup>, spelunking<sup>3</sup>, trekking and sky diving” (Ewert, 1987: 5 cited in Weber, 2001 and Hall and Weiler, 1992:144). In addition to the role of adventure pursuits, most definitions of adventure tourism are also composed of notions of natural settings, travel and risk. One influential definition of adventure tourism belongs to Hall and Weiler:

A broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant’s home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience (1992:143).

Thus, conventional definitions of adventure tourism consider components such as activity, motivation, risk, performance, experience, and environment (see also Sung *et al*, 1997). This research extends Hall and Weiler’s oft-cited definition of adventure tourism. Attention is paid to adventures beyond what Hall and Weiler call “natural environment” for the conduct of adventure tours (see Weber, 2001 for a recent critique). In this research, I consider adventures conducted in settings that may appear seemingly ‘human-made’ and ‘urban’, in addition to the traditional emphasis on adventures in ‘nature’ and ‘the great outdoors’, an example being backpacking

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<sup>1</sup> Rogaining is the sport of long distance cross country navigation in which teams, usually of two to five members, visit as many designated locations or checkpoints as possible in 24 hours.

<sup>2</sup> Snowshoeing is an adventure sport in which participants walk, jog or run on specially designed snowshoes (resembling shorter and broader skis) on snowscapes.

<sup>3</sup> Spelunking is the practice and hobby of exploring caves.



adventure tours. Backpacking adventure tours take backpackers to urban centres as often as they bring them to the 'countryside' and 'nature'.

Defined this way, Singaporeans' participation in adventure tourism is increasing (Kau *et al*, 1993; Kau 1996; *Straits Times*, multiple issues). There are no official statistics on the exact quantity and market worth of Singapore adventure tourists at the point of writing. However, according to an industry estimate cited in a *Straits Times* (Singapore's main English language newspaper) article (2 September 2003), the Singapore adventure travel market now comprises approximately 5-10 percent of the overall travel market business and tour operators believe this number to be growing. Tour agencies handling adventure tours were reportedly making 10-50 percent growth in adventure tour business over the five year period until the September 11 attacks.

There have been three main approaches to the study of adventure tourism motivations and experiences. The first approach, characteristic of early researches, centres on investigations of the recreation and outdoor aspect of adventure tourism. These consider adventure recreation as the crucial component of adventure tourism (for example, Christiansen, 1990; Johnston, 1992) and focus research attention on the study of adventure pursuits. Relatively less effort, however, was expended on the study of the tourism component. These research efforts see adventure tourism as a mere extension of adventure/outdoor recreation and thus the tourism aspect's contribution is generally ignored (Weber, 2001). Furthermore, they allow for

researchers' preconceived notions (for example the 'obsession' with outdoor settings) to set the parameters within which adventure tourism is defined rather than considering the view of the practitioners themselves (Weber, 2001). As such, such studies ignored the ways in which adventure tourists construct their adventure travel experiences (Weber, 2001). Thus, moving away from the focus on adventure recreation in the study of adventure tourism, a second approach focuses on the psychological and behavioural 'inner' dynamics of the adventure tourist individual.

The second approach to the study of adventure tourism uses models and theories from psychology and argues that outdoor recreation and outdoor adventure often serve different needs, expectations and motivations (for example, Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989; Schuett, 1993). Ewert (1989) proposes that adventure tourism motivations should include the dimension of risk-taking. Ewert (1989) argued that the concept of risk-taking is essential to adventure travel activities and that one can predict that an absence of risk will result in a decrease in satisfaction and motivation. Risk is posited as the key component in identifying those outdoor recreation activities that are not 'adventure' based. Martin and Priest (1986) study adventure tourism by investigating the interaction of competence and risk. Walle (1997), using his model of "insight", argues that it is the search for insight and knowledge, as distinguished from preceding explanations of pursuits of risk, that characterises adventure tourism. He asserts that envisioning adventure tourism as outdoor activity where participants confront nature in order to experience risk creates models of adventure tourism which are ill-suited for easing adventure tourism marketing, particularly for adventure tours

that are “cultural” and “personal”. While studies such as Hall and Weiler’s (1992) involve research attention to risk-seeking, self discovery, self actualization, contact with nature, and social contact in adventure tourism, more could be done to address issues beyond the inner dynamics of the individual’s psyche and behaviour in adventure tourism, particularly the constitution of adventure tourism as a set of social practices in society and capitalism. Such concerns led to the emergence of a third approach.

The third approach focuses on tourism as a leisure activity and its relation to economy and society. Works in tourism studies have long investigated the leisure-work connection (Cohen, 1974; MacCannell, 1976; Rojek, 1985; 1995; 2000; Urry, 1990). The relationship between society and adventure has also long been acknowledged (for example, Simmel, 1971; see Kjolsrod, 2003 for a recent commentary). The exploration of this relationship is furthered in early works on backpacker tourism, most notably the pioneering works of Cohen (1972; 1973; 1974). Notions of “mastery over self and environment” (Vogt, 1976), re-joining the workforce after adventurous travelling (Riley, 1988; Elsrud, 2001), “self-developers” as one segment of four important identity groups in backpacking communities (Loker-Murphy, 1996) and adventure tourism as a means of acquiring what Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural capital” (Elsrud, 1998; Desforges, 2000; Richards and Wilson, 2004) are salient themes in backpacker research after Cohen. However, in recent adventure tourism research, this connection is relatively underdeveloped (with the exception of Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; McGregor, 2000 and Nimmo, 2001). This approach

examines themes of risk-taking, insights, self-actualisation and competency, not in isolation, but in relation to the economy and society, thereby furthering understandings of the connections between tourism practices and the society.

## **1.2 Adventure tourism and the new economy: The rise of ‘adventurism’**

A growing body of research considers Singaporeans who travel and how their travels reflect a changing Singapore society and economy. Most, if not all, of these centre on the subject of the Singapore expatriate worker. These studies look at the expatriate worker beyond the narrow confines of work and have uncovered rich insights into Singaporeans and their society. For example, some have investigated trans-national inter-connections in the understanding of Singapore society (see for example, Lam, 2003; Willis and Yeoh 2000, 2002; Kong, 1999; Yeoh and Willis, 1999). However, another avenue of such enquiry has so far been neglected: the Singapore adventure tourist. As prominent tourism academic MacCannell (1976:1) suggests, the tourist is both a middle-class sightseer and a person in modernity (or “modern-man-in-general”). In this thesis, the term ‘adventure tourist’ is used to mean two things. First, it is designed to capture the ‘actual’ adventure tourist who treks, scuba dives and/or backpacks in ‘rugged’ places. This is perhaps the adventure tourist as seen through the eyes of the tourism industry. However, I am also interested in the adventure tourist as a social individual living in contemporary Singapore. This adventure tourist is situated in a specific historical and political context and has emotions, personal experiences and life stories. An individual’s consumption of

adventure geographies is constituted in personal aspirations and broader societal concerns.

This recent growth in adventure tourism practices by Singaporeans has occurred in a period of major economic re-structuring in Singapore, particularly following the Asian Economic Crisis. Coping with personal and national crisis is widely seen as a condition of the 'new economy'. For instance, while not all agree to the ways in which companies and the state are coping with new economic conditions (for example, retrenchment and 'down-sizing'), many are beginning to believe that the uncertain job market, demise of job security and perpetual re-training are unavoidable aspects of life they have to cope with (see Sennett, 1998). Furthermore, Singaporeans are increasingly expected to venture beyond what is often heard in the media messages and state rhetoric as Singaporeans' "comfort zones".

Notions of 'venturing out' and leaving the comfort zones' are constituted within an array of existing state-sanctioned worker/citizen ideals in Singapore's development history (see Coe and Kelly, 2002 for a comprehensive commentary). Since the People's Action Party's (PAP) rise to power, industrial action and labour unionism has largely been restrained. Successful urban and economic planning created a safe and orderly city (Savage 1997; Savage and Kong 1993; Koolhaas 1995) free from communist insurgency and union unrests and conducive for 'footloose' foreign capitalists to invest in. Between 1979 and 1981, higher skilled and higher wage worker/citizens were promoted and as a result, wage policies were radically amended -

with 12-16 per cent increase each year. A Skills Development Fund was also set up to upgrade productivity levels so as to phase out the low value-added workers/industries (Coe and Kelly 2000:415). To sustain efforts at realising disciplined and capitalist friendly citizens who were free from 'western indiscipline and excesses' and to lend ideological edge to the continued regulation of increasingly affluent citizens, an 'Asian Values' ideology based on a selective reading of the Confucius philosophy was promoted by the state (Chua, 1995).

As a result of global and regional reworkings brought about by what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) calls "liquid modernity", what geographer Nigel Thrift (1998) describes as a new and 'soft' capitalism and what is more commonly talked about as the 'new economy', the existing citizen-worker subject in Singapore has been increasingly problematised as being too 'soft', not enterprising and lacking in creativity. 'Ruggedness', creativity and enterprise are ideals the New Economy discourse promotes. As such, discipline and 'Asian Values' were no longer enough for the Singapore worker. Thus, in the 1990s, flexible wages, worker training and industry technology upgrading were increasingly implemented (Coe and Kelly 2000:415). A programme of regionalization was also devised whereby Singapore relocates lower-end production to neighbouring Southeast Asian regions while retaining higher end facilities (Yeung 1998 and 1999). Organisations and measures were created to support Singapore workers to (ad)venture and actualise themselves as 'intrepid' expatriates in the less certain but potentially lucrative business environments of the region (Austin, 2001:273). In addition, the PAP advocated a "letting go" and Singapore workers were

urged to go entrepreneurial (*Straits Times* 5 June 2003) in a global economy. The global economy was seen in a very different way - one in which a new and a very uncertain economic terrain was anticipated. In their report presented to the Prime Minister, this new economic terrain had been described by the Economic Review Committee (ERC Report 2003) as:

...a major economic transition, possibly the most far reaching since independence in 1965. The economy is maturing. The environment has changed radically. Globalisation, the emergence of China and the problems of South East Asia all affect us. In addition, we have not yet fully recovered from the 2001 recession.

This Economic Review Committee (ERC) report is instructive for it represented the views of the elite in Singapore, including important Cabinet and Parliamentary members and more than 1000 Singaporeans and expatriates residing in Singapore and abroad. The consensus was for a “globalised knowledge economy” and the strategies include, most notably, “a creative and entrepreneurial nation willing to take risks to create fresh businesses and blaze new paths to success”. There was a greater emphasis on freedom (see Rose, 1999 for an expanded conception of freedom in neo-liberal political thought) in the management of workers. In such a capitalist environment, managers and workers are under the constant stress of high-performance and super (self) exploitation as they seek to remake themselves in accordance with a fickle and fast-changing workplace knowledge, environments and ethics. In these ways, the

workplace appears increasingly 'adventurous' and adventurous ideals and practices are increasingly valued. Furthermore, Bauman (2000) asserts that far from being 'soft', the new economy in general and 'soft' or knowledgeable capitalism are treacherous environments.

These new and treacherous economic environments necessitate that workers and institutions actualise themselves in increasingly adventurous ways in their realms of work. They also result in traditionally non-work activities such as the practices of adventure tourism becoming increasingly relevant to both what Coe and Kelly (2002) call "languages of labour" and, I suggest, in the actual conduct of workplace practices. The form of labour adaptation that took place in the face of economic recession and a regional financial crisis in the late 1990s - and especially the perceived requirement to lower wages and retrain workers to supply the labour needs of a new economy - has been documented by Coe and Kelly (2002). They also analysed the ways in which the Singaporean state has deliberately and largely discursively engineered this form of labour adaptation in the context of "local labour control regimes" (Coe and Kelly, 2002: 341). Clearly, the labour market is not the only place to locate PAP-statecraft and political practices. From de Certeau (1988), we know that travel practices are configured and harnessed to politics. Paraphrasing Soguk (2003: 29), travel practices are deeply political performances that operate through governmental projects and programmes. These seemingly innocent, curious and adventurous tours are, Soguk suggests, forms of governmentality and appropriations of people and places.



The politics of this recent rise in Singaporeans' participation in adventure tourism has largely been sidelined in 'explanations' from both research and industry. For instance, one industry 'explanation' is that "Singaporeans are moving out of their comfort zones to test their limits" (cited in *Straits Times*, 2 Sept 2003). Research 'explanations' from Kau (1996:12) state that:

Singaporeans generally live a stressful urban lifestyle. There are few opportunities available for outdoor activities, other than going to the beach or visiting the parks. As such, there is a growing appetite for soft-adventure, outdoor life.

Such 'common-sensical' statements appear to leave many aspects of this phenomenon unanswered. Obviously, adventure tourists travel beyond the familiar and subject themselves to certain challenges on these tours. However, many things remain unsaid. Why the "growing appetite" for adventures? I agree with Kau that Singapore lacks many tourism facilities and that this situation has the potential to bring about a rise in tourism related to those inadequacies. A lack of, say, heritage sites in Singapore, as a result of urban renewal, could bring about an increase in Singaporeans travelling out of the city-state for heritage tours - a point Kau also mentioned in the same paper. The idea that "many Singaporeans are moving out of their comfort zones to test their limits" also appears obvious to industry observers. However, there is more to this connection between a fast-paced life in contemporary Singapore and testing/realising oneself in and through adventure tourism. There are some forms of social and

environmental ‘conditioning’ here and these are brought about by the linkages between adventure tourism and the politics of the new economy. These environmental shapings become even more significant if we consider the various ‘allegations’ of Singaporeans being pampered citizens living in the “politics of comfort” (see for example, George, 2000)

There is more to this connection than alluded to by the industry and research ‘explanations’. This thesis endeavours to investigate these links. To do this, I draw upon literature in tourism studies and extend insights from workplace or labour governmentality into non-work and leisure spaces. I am concerned with the personal and everyday reworking of adventure tourism motivations, experiences and practices as a result of individuals coming to terms with the new economy and the major economic re-structuring in Singapore. As discussed earlier, such an approach draws upon insights and foundations of a critical perspective in tourism studies founded by seminal researchers such as Erik Cohen and Dean MacCannell (or what I referred to as the third approach to the study of adventure tourism earlier). These sets of personal and everyday adaptations are largely state-sanctioned. The Singapore state is, I argue, a key promoter of the new economy discourse. For one, it borrows neo-liberal ideas of ‘self-care’ common in advance ‘western’ societies and instils in citizens the need and responsibility to realise oneself in ‘healthy’, ‘fit’ and ‘productive’ ways.

The new economy context in Singapore, shaped in part by neo-liberal ideals from ‘western’ liberal societies, has constituted the rise of a form of self-government

and self-regulation I term, 'adventurism'. By adventurism, I mean the coming together of an assemblage of discourses and a set of environmental practices. This collection of discourses composes, in general, ways of thinking which lends weight to the alignment of work and adventure in everyday life in the new economy. This brings about the creation of new subject positions and the proliferation of sets of environmental and embodied practices. These are found most prevalently in adventure tourism.

Using findings from multi-site ethnography of Singapore adventure tourists between 2002 and 2004 and other relevant sources, this thesis argues that rather than being a distinctly non-work practice, Singapore adventure tourists' travels are bound up with their desire to realise themselves as productive and effective citizens in a globalising economy. I suggest that adventure tours have become an avenue through which specific new economy values such as 'enterprise', 'risk-taking' and 'adaptability' are realised and articulated. The adventure identities which these 'adventure-citizens' acquire, as we will see, get re-deployed in their everyday lives, particularly in non-leisure spaces such as the office.

These issues motivate a critical geo-graphing of adventure tourism. Adventurism (and this thesis more generally) is geographical, not in the 'simplistic' area-bounded sense, but in relational ways. This study is Singapore-specific and contextual but it also understands adventurism as constructed in relation to discourses and practices found elsewhere. The international business community, global

management ‘gurus’ and neo-liberal political thought, as much as the Singapore state, continue to shape adventurism in Singapore. Instead of motivating a mapping exercise or a spatial model, intellectual pursuits core to traditional tourism geography (Britton, 1991; Lew, 2001), adventurism necessitates a geographical examination of the various embodied encounters in travel environments and the array of environmental “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988) via the conduct of sustained multi-site fieldwork.

### **1.3 The structure of thesis**

Following this chapter, a literature review is presented in which research efforts from relevant themes and disciplines are critically appraised. To understand the theoretical foundations and preceding contributions on tourist subjectivity, In Chapter 2, I review *The Tourist Gaze* - a text best known as the first and still most influential academic engagement with the tourist subject - and critiques of this work. On the one hand, I consider how tourism experiences are constituted in the visual, in landscapes and in geography. On the other hand, I caution against an over-emphasis on the visual and the neglect of tourist agency using MacCannell’s (2001) formulation of the second gaze - a more critical and reflexive tourist gaze. I then propose a tourism research framework that encapsulates Urry’s attention to tourist subjectivity and MacCannell’s (2001) concerns the tourist agency. My framework of adventurism draws upon Foucault’s later works on governmentality and technologies of the self. Operating within neo-liberal political thought, governmentality and technologies of the self offer

an expanded notion of freedom for political analysis. I thus envision adventurism to be a conceptual apparatus capable of understanding the ways in which adventure tourists' actions are guided and conducted within the field of their autonomy and agency. Such self-government is geographical and deploys adventure practices as uniquely environmental technologies of the self.

Chapter 3 details and documents the research methods and procedures, as well as the motivation and rationale behind their choice and the limitations and conflicts of their selection. I detail the selection of adventure groups and sites which constitute the field and demonstrate that their choice is based on the need to study linkages and connections between adventure tourism and Singapore society. I then illustrate the process of doing fieldwork with adventure tourists and its problems. Specifically, I discuss issues of gaining access, problems of betrayal, role of conflicts, difficulties of note-taking and data recording in the field and other sources of data used in this research. The chapter concludes with clarifications and reflections of representation and ethnographic writing.

The empirical discussion of this thesis is organised as a 'journey' – tracing adventure tourists' experience from pre-tour to tour to homecoming. Using findings from my ethnography and discourse analysis, Chapter 4 looks at the ways in which the gazes of Singapore adventure tourists are shaped. Adventure training sessions, expedition preparations and an economic forum provided ethnographic data. I investigate the promotion of adventure ideals and a specific subject position I term

‘adventure-citizen’ in relation to the rise of adventurism in new economy Singapore. The PAP-state is identified as a key promoter of the ‘adventure-citizen’. The PAP-state’s promotion of the ‘adventure-citizen’ is built upon preceding discourses of geopolitical and economic vulnerabilities of the island republic. The desire for ‘rugged’, ‘adventurous’ and ‘enterprising’ citizens necessitates a geographical imagining of adventure landscapes as spaces for reconditioning ‘weaker’ and ‘vulnerable’ citizens. My informants’ pre-trip anticipation of adventure places as what can be termed ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ and adventure tours as forms of ‘scheduled workouts’ demonstrates this.

After discussing how adventurism can be investigated at pre-trip by attending to discourses and the shaping of the adventure tourist gaze, I proceed to discuss, in Chapter 5, the embodied practice of adventure tour and the (ad)venturing and travelling tourist gaze. This inquiry is divided into two parts. The first section investigates my informants’ use of adventure landscapes as ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ and adventure tours as ‘scheduled workouts’. Building upon Foucault’s (1988) concept of “technology of the self”, I demonstrate that my informants’ adventure tour were ‘devices’ which permit them to bring about reconfigurations of their bodies and selves. Instead of constituting avenues merely facilitating freedom and escape, I posit that adventure tours are environmental technologies co-opted to for their self-government. Drawing upon Urry’s (1990) and MacCannell’s (2001) contributions, the second section investigates the visual in adventure tourism, describing the various ways of collecting visual signs during adventure tours, the types of signs collected and the

roles this 'shopping' for visual signs played in the constitution of their adventure tourism experience.

Having examined the workings of adventurism in the anticipation and conduct of adventure tours, I proceed to investigate, in Chapter 6, the ways in which adventurism continues to operate upon my informants' homecoming. I do this by examining their adventure narration and adventure identities in everyday life. Chapter 6 is organised in three parts. In the first part, I examine gender performances in adventure narration and how gender refracts informants' adventure story telling. Adventure tales are mediums in which tourism researchers can observe the gender dimensions of travel. In the second part, I investigate the emphasis and implications of the visual in these narratives. Many studies have examined the content of travel photography but I seek to extend beyond content analysis by illustrating adventure tourists' in-situ responses, their reflections on adventure and the role images play in their adventure narration. In the third part, I look at the telling of adventure tales in the workplace and their connections with adventurism. Influential tourism anthropologist Edward Bruner (1995) suggests in his fieldwork of American tourists that tourists do not have an audience for their tour-related stories and sights. However - and this is a specifically geographical contribution - I will show in this section that Singapore adventure tourists' adventure tales find their ways into the spaces of work as the workplace culture becomes increasingly 'adventurous'. Chapter 6 concludes with a consideration of how these adventure narratives constitute the tourist subject in everyday life in 'new economy'.

This thesis has been an endeavour at writing a tourism geography that attends to the governmentality of adventure tourist practices. In the concluding chapter, I draw conclusions by relating the findings and discussions of this thesis to broader intellectual themes and concerns.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

## 2.1 Introduction

...geographers are interested in the processes that create and shape the places where people live. The intimate workings of people's relationships and lives are fundamental to understanding those processes, so geographers are interested in tourist and traveller behaviour and experience, how these shape people, who in turn shape places. Just as important, however, are the social and economic processes that transect space and drive tourism, recreation and leisure, and the resulting impacts that these have on the creation of real places and spaces. (Lew, 2001: 113)

I quote Lew at length for this is one of the best attempts at defining geographers' 'struggles' and engagement in a field of study aptly described by Tribe as being "indisciplined" (1997). Tourism, travel, recreation, and leisure activities are well-established subjects of study by geographers (Britton, 1991:475). Uniquely geographical contributions to the social science and to the study of tourism centre on responses to questions concerning location (Aitchinson *et al*, 2000; Lew, 2001, Mitchell and Murphy, 1991:57; Pearce, 1979; Shaw and Williams, 1994). The 'essence' of traditional geographic writing on travel and tourism has been described as:

the description of travel flows; microscale spatial structure and land use of tourist places and facilities; economic, social, cultural, and environmental

impacts of tourist activity; impacts of tourism in third world countries; geographic patterns of recreation and leisure pastimes; and the planning implications of all these topics (Britton, 1991:451).

While geographers seem to have achieved consensus over what the geography of tourism has been, they diverge when they reflect on where the sub-discipline should be heading. While early and traditional tourism geography approaches inform policy and industry, Britton (1991:475) appeals for geographers to move away from what he describes as the “narrow scope and shallow theoretical base” - that characterises much of tourism geographic works - to engage meaningfully with “critical and political economy perspectives”. Such engagements would not only place the sub-discipline at the cutting edge of geographical research specifically but also contribute to the social science of tourism in general.

While many pioneering tourism geographers preoccupied themselves with spatial data via tourism mapping and modelling, work on tourism history, social and cultural impacts, host-guest relationships and tourist/tourism images and representations has focused on meanings and values. These studies have provided insights into the geographical worlds of tourists and their hosts but, until recently, have seldom been conducted by geographers. Anthropologists, sociologists and other tourism researchers have paid greater attention to the meanings and values of rituals and performances in the tourist environments than their colleagues in Geography.

Even when various sub-fields in Geography opened their geographical ‘lenses’ recently to investigate issues of culture following the ‘cultural turn’, tourism geographers continued to work with what Britton (1995) considered to be inadequate scope and theoretical development. Tourism geographers have taken longer than their colleagues in Economic Geography and Social Geography to be convinced of what an investigation into the ‘cultural’ can offer. Many tourism geographers appeared to find it difficult to place tourist-host interactions and other aspects of tourist culture alongside dominant themes of resort mapping and tourist-flow modelling in their studies.

There is now evidence that the cultural turn which has ‘swept’ the social sciences is beginning to shape Tourism Geography. Ateljevic and Doorne (2003a: 123), for instance, have proclaimed that “in recent years, there has been a paradigmatic shift articulated by the ‘cultural’ turn of tourism geography”. These geographers often draw upon post-modern frameworks and have increasingly realised the importance of paying attention to several crucial ‘cultural’ categories – citizenship, gender, disability, religiosity and ethnicity – in their study of tourism spaces (see for example, Ateljevic 2000; Crang, 1997; Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). Such perspectives regard tourism spaces, places and landscapes as fluid entities entwined in economy, politics, history and society. Together with the (re)conceptualisation of other geographic sub-disciplines, tourism geography has, for instance, seen an emerging ‘cultural’ theorisation of tourism which embraces arguments of ‘de-differentiation’ of the economy and culture (Amin and Thrift, 2000).

Besides connections between economy and culture, in-depth studies deriving from tourist interviews and ethnographies reveal many tourist/tourism subcultures whose interactions with other agencies (tourist and extra-tourist) are paramount to understanding the tourist worlds and tourists' wider effects on the world they travel in and return to. For instance, there has been greater engagement with issues of place and performance in tourism (see for example Coleman and Crang, 2002 and Ateljevic and Doorne, 2003b).

Reflecting this transdisciplinary nature of this increased engagement with the cultural are transdisciplinary efforts by geographers, sociologists and anthropologists at investigating the subject(ification) of tourists and their visual culture in tourism (Crouch and Lubben, 2003). These works connect to a recent interest in the visual in the constitution of the tourist subject and the tourism experience. In the next section, I examine this concern for the tourist subject and the gaze. In particular, I consider John Urry's (1990) seminal work *The Tourist Gaze* in terms of its cultural geography. On the one hand, I consider how tourism experiences are constituted in the visual, in landscapes and in geography. On the other hand, I caution against an over-emphasis on the visual and the neglect of tourist agency by reviewing Urry's critiques, particularly Dean MacCannell's (2001) arguments of "the second gaze". In the third section of the chapter, I propose a conceptual framework I term 'adventurism', guided by Michel Foucault's later insights of "governmentality" (1991) and "technologies of the self" (1988). I conclude with a summation of the key points discussed.

## 2.2 The tourist subject and the tourist gaze

John Urry's (2002, originally 1990) seminal work, *The Tourist Gaze*, is the first sustained effort at examining the tourist subject and the subjectification of the tourist in contemporary times. Urry analyses the fundamentally visual nature of the tourist/tourism experience and illustrates how changes in tourism practices could be related to the ways in which people/tourists perceive objects and places. In *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry posits that anticipation of intense pleasures - either on a distinctive scale or relating different senses from those routinely encountered - shape the selection of places to be gazed upon by tourists. Such expectations are configured and maintained through an array of everyday non-tourist practices, including "film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos" (Urry, 2002: 3). These non-tourism avenues, Urry posits, construct and strengthen the tourist gaze. Thus, Urry's conception of the tourist gaze implies a specific tourism structure which shapes tourist behaviours. Tourists' perceptions are conditioned by various discourses in society and disseminated via and organised by TV, travel guides, tour operators and tourism developers. Discourses of education (as in *The Grand Tour*), health (as in 'rejuvenating' and 'restorative' spa tours), group solidarity (as in Japanese corporate tours) and play (or what is commonly referred to in tourism studies as 'liminal tourism') all shape and reinforce the tourist gaze.

In *The Tourist Gaze*, the tourist's world and particularly the organised ways in which the tourist views his/her tourism places are not unlike the medical spaces in which Michel Foucault's (1976) *Discipline and Punish* is situated and the ways this medical subject (re)views medical 'pathologies':

When we "go away" we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter. And this gaze is as socially organised and systemised as is the gaze of the medic. Of course it is of a different order in that it is not confined to professionals "supported and justified by an institution". And yet even in the production of "unnecessary" pleasure there are in fact many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists. (Urry, 2002: 1)

The privilege and dominance of the visual in Geography and the Western social science is well-documented (Sidaway, 2002). In tourism studies, the pursuit of pleasure in European travel has also been suggested to have shifted from the travellers' ears to the travellers' eyes by the end of eighteenth century (Alder, 1989:7). Tourists can also be likened to sophisticated 'shoppers' and 'collectors' of signs, images and landscapes for "visual consumption is not a simple and straightforward process" and "views are not literally seen" (Urry, 1992: 172). For example, "when a small village is seen", Urry (p. 172) suggests, what is registered through the tourist gaze is a "sight of 'real olde England'". Similarly, the notion of "timeless romantic

Paris” is evoked when a couple is spotted embracing in Paris. There are two other types of signs the tourist or ‘visual shopper’ can collect: “the seeing of a wholly unique object” (p. 172) and the other the sighting of mundane objects, such as road signs, plaques and labels, which indicate that “some other object possesses remarkable properties even if visually it appears not to be” (p. 173). Indeed, expert and tourist photography is a key technology for the practice of visual consumption and tourism (see Crawshaw and Urry, 1997 and Lenman, 2003 for connections between professional photography and tourists’ perceptions).

Thinking geographically about the tourist gazes requires a consideration of the connections between the visual and the environment. The ‘western’ concept of landscape is a good starting point. Beginning as a term to mean “natural inland scenery”, it is transformed to mean a particular tract of land seen from a specific point of view as though it were a picture and finally, it came to signify the “whole natural scenery” (Urry, 1992:179). The work of cultural geographers is instructive here. Traditionally, cultural geographers have focused on the mapping of cultural landscapes. These studies commonly regard the landscape as a basic and essential unit of culture in society (see for example, Jackson, 1980). There is a great emphasis on the visual in these studies, as a means of mapping, classifying and analysing landscape ‘data’. Cultural geographers influenced by leading French structuralists and poststructuralists also likened landscape as ‘texts’, further illuminating the gaze of the analyst and ‘reader’ (see for example, Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988, Duncan and Duncan, 1989, Duncan and Ley, 1993) and also highlighting the role of domination



and power in ‘authoring’ landscapes and spaces in society (Cosgrove, 1998 and Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993). Insights from non-representational theory motivated cultural geographical studies of landscape to venture beyond the interpretative. Non-representational theory (Thrift, 1996) posits that what matters and what ought to be studied is that of the practical, effective and relational aspects of landscape. Thus, the visual and the eyes of the cultural geographer are used not only to ‘expertly’ discern landscape meanings but also to attend to landscape’s relational effects and implications (see Matless, 1998 and Bunnell, 2004). Recent attempts have also been made to study landscapes without privileging the visual (Law, 2001). Of course, the gaze and (visual) ‘consumption’ of landscapes are not the monopoly of geographers and academics. Modern-day tourists, Urry has shown so well, are the ones who popularised mass landscape appreciation.

Such tourist landscape appreciation can also be seen as an extension of the Fordist society, having transformed itself from an elite consumption to one of mass consumption from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the elite was the only class possessing the ability and power to appropriate nature culturally - mainly through their practice of landscape painting, and to a lesser extent, travel (Barrell 1972, 1980 cited in Urry 1992: 179). In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, more people travelled as the upper and middle classes were also increasingly mobile, and according to Urry (1992:179) “travelling to not just spa towns, seaside resorts, and areas such as the lake district in Britain” but to the “Mediterranean, especially to Italy and the French Riviera”. They returned with “memories, souvenirs, and increasingly photographs of

landscapes lit by qualities of quite unfamiliar heat and light” (p. 180). What is crucial in this ‘trajectory of development’ or “democratisation of tourist gaze” is that:

...everyone in the “West” is now entitled to engage in visual consumption, to appropriate landscapes and townscapes more or less anywhere in the world, and to record them to memory photographically. No one should be excluded except for reasons of cost. To be a tourist, to look on landscapes with interest and curiosity (and then to be provided with many other related services), has become a right of citizenship from which few in the “West” are formally excluded. (p. 180)

Such a democratisation of the tourist gaze has, of course, ‘liberated’ the travelling gazes of many affluent tourists from beyond what is traditionally thought of as the “West”. The desire to capture the photogenic and memorable has ventured beyond geographical sites in the ‘West’ and into the privileged and well-to-do classes in almost every ‘modern’ society.

Considering the geographies of contemporary tourist gazes involves not only attention to the spatial extent of which such ‘photographic desires’ travelled but also the changing forms of landscapes desired in tourist photography. Changes in technology, for instance the ‘rise’ of colour photography, have placed greater demands on the geographies and environments of tourist places and destinations. Landscapes ‘ought’ to be free from various forms of visible pollution (see Matless, 1998) such as

“machinery, motorways, power stations, workers, polluted water, smog, derelict land” (Urry, 1992:180). This motivates drives to keep landscapes ‘pristine’ for tourism development. Yet, the very attention tourism developers pay to these ‘pristine’ places often sows the ‘seeds’ of their eventual contamination for increasing tourist visitations and the intensity of these tourism developments often place excessive stress upon these environments.

The tourist gaze can also have an uneasy relationship with what geographers call “sense of place”. Tourists’ disappointment in never being able to capture the ‘aura’ of the tourist attractions is all too frequent. While aesthetics play a part in their collective disappointment, what is ‘lost’ in the pictures may be the tourists’ own affective notions or their perceptions of how natives and locals feel for the marketplace, townscapes and beaches.

Urry also describes tourist motivation as one of “forever searching for ever-new places to visit and capture” thereby “converting nature into place of leisure” (p. 181). Such conceptions of nature as places of leisure or as a resource for recreation founded various forms and schools of outdoor education and outdoor experiential learning. These, of course, form a crucial part of the discourses shaping not just tourism in general but also adventure tourism specifically.

Besides bringing about the development of what Urry terms “visual resource management”, the tourist gaze also has connections with interesting moral geographies:

First, there is the environment that is visually contaminated because matter is out of place. Material objects are present that can be interpreted as “inappropriate”. Examples are the viewing of a nuclear power station on an attractive coastline (such as Heysham nuclear power stations on Morecambe Bay), factory buildings in an otherwise charming river valley (as in much of the Basque country), farm buildings by a high-technology science park... (p. 181)

As such, it is crucial for aspiring tourist spaces to remain free from ‘inappropriate’ objects, cultures and even peoples, ‘matters’ deemed out-of-place by tourist gazes. What is in-place and what is out-of-place, of course, is contingent on the discourses the tourist is conditioned by and the forms of tourist gaze he/she holds. For the romantic gaze, the Heysham nuclear power stations would appear as ugly concrete domes of an industrial age destroying what would have been an ‘edenic’ beach, but the same domes may be very appropriate for the collective gaze of a busload of geography students on a fieldtrip. A city slum or squatter may appear as ‘polluted environments’ and the urban poor can be captured as ‘social pollution’ by the gaze of affluent packaged or mass tourists, but to tourists holding an “anthropological tourist gaze” (p. 184), they are part of the urban-scapes one sees upon “sustained immersion”.

Urry’s work has generated much debate in tourism studies and related fields. Here, I consider two main criticisms. One key criticism of the tourist gaze - as Urry

has himself acknowledged - is that as a concept which seeks to explain the range of tourist experience, it appears as “somewhat one-sided” (Urry, 1992: 172) for ‘obviously tourists do all sorts of things while “away”’. The tourist gaze, according to Veijola and Jokinen (1994), does not adequately encapsulate the tourist experience since it marginalizes the physical and corporeal aspects of the tour (for specific arguments on mountain trekking, see Jokinen and Veijola, 2003). Clearly, Urry has never intended to deny the existence of the other senses in tourism. Rather, he suggests that the increased stimulation of other senses - feeling the chill of snow, tasting exotic spices, hearing tribal music, encountering strange smells and so on - are significant to the tourist experience only in so much as they are situated in ‘spectacular’ visual environments (Urry, 1992: 172). It is the uniqueness of landscapes, Urry demonstrates so well in his seminal work, which gives the activities within which they are conducted special qualities: sunbathing on an idyllic beach, dancing with hill tribes and trekking in a tropical rainforest. The seemingly most routine and everyday of performances and practices – involving one or more of the other senses – appear spectacular when conducted in what tourists regard as ‘awe-inspiring’ visual environments.

The second main critique of Urry’s work concerns the alleged determinism and structuralism of his tourist gaze. MacCannell (2000) argues that Urry fails to live up to the promise of formulating a less deterministic theory of leisure and travel. Urry’s attention to the tourist subject and subjectification, MacCannell (2000:366) asserts, does not recognise the agency and autonomy of the tourist individual:

What we gaze upon may have been arranged for us in advance; we may go there precisely because other tourists have gone before us; but we remain free to look the other way, or not look at all. And we can disrupt the order of things. We can tour Europe before we tour our own country and construct for ourselves a distinctive arrangement in consciousness of what is familiar to us and what is foreign. Paris is familiar to me and Kansas remains foreign. Even if the global system of attractions is a fixed grid, it need not function to determine tourist priorities and tourist behaviour.

In suggesting that the ways in which tourist behaviour is shaped by a numerous but finite number of discourses, MacCannell argues that Urry's conception of the tourist gaze is still trapped within the grids of determinism. The tourist, in Urry's conception, is only 'free' in so far as to choose between a fixed and finite array of discourses arranged and organised by the tourism industry and society. Urry's formulation of the tourist gaze, MacCannell argues, does not allow for the possibility of tourists seeing 'differently'. For MacCannell, a tourist world shaped by all-powerful discourses permits no tourist agency and autonomy.

In turn, MacCannell proposes a refinement of Urry's work by introducing his own version of the gaze - a second gaze. MacCannell argues that Urry has got only half the picture right. There is a second gaze, one which is the function of the first and

“which can be radically different from, even opposed to” (p. 379) the gaze Urry envisions. This second gaze, MacCannell (2000: 379) suggests:

...is always aware that something is hidden from it; that there is something missing from every picture, from every look or glance. This is no less true on tour than it is in everyday life. The second gaze knows that seeing is not believing.

By formulating the second gaze, MacCannell gives tourism studies a critical gaze and one which belongs to self-reflexive and self-critical subjects. These critical tourist subjects have in view “the Foucauldian subject, or the tourist subject a la Urry” (p. 374). The second gaze allows for the tourist subject to be conceptualised as self-representing rather than one ‘duped’ by representations in tourist brochures, travel guides and tourist attractions. The second gaze-tourist may also be interested in the attractions themselves, in ways shaped by anthropological, geographical or sociological imaginations.

MacCannell’s critique opens up a fascinating debate on the nature of visual consumption and tourist subjectification. On the one hand MacCannell is right in pointing out the deterministic tendencies of Urry’s framework which draws upon Foucault’s earlier ‘structuralist’ works in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1976) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977). On the other hand, Urry did point to a multiplicity of gazes including an “anthropological gaze” which bears resemblances to MacCannell’s

version of the second gaze. MacCannell's 'critical' and 'reflexive' second gaze-tourists who seek to go beyond touristic representations may not be that different from Urry's anthropological gaze tourists - tourists shaped by 'academic' discourses (1992: 184 see Ateljevic and Doorne, 2003b for brief reflections of "researchers' gaze"). Indeed, since Erik Cohen (1979), tourism researchers are cautioned that multiple tourist gazes, subjects and experiences exist. Thinking critically about tourist behaviour need not entail a complete 'overhaul' of Urry's tourist gaze or a rejection of MacCannell's second gaze. MacCannell has admitted that Urry's gaze is "a function of a second gaze" (MacCannell, 2000: 379) and that his conception of the second gaze is meant to build upon Urry's groundwork. Thus, MacCannell's critique of Urry's tourist gaze has never been one that claims Urry has got it wrong. Rather, he feels Urry has left half of the tourist story unsaid and unexplained.

So how can one endeavour to conceptualise a tourism research framework which can best encapsulate Urry's attention to the tourist gaze and tourist subjectivity and MacCannell's concerns for tourist autonomy and agency? Foucault's later works promise an expanded conception of freedom. In the next section, I develop a conceptualisation of the tourist gaze as a form of environmental self-government I term 'adventurism' - drawing upon Urry and MacCannell's contributions - within the theoretical context of Michel Foucault's later insights of "governmentality" and "the technologies of the self".



### 2.3 Governmentality, technologies of the self and adventurism

Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how *an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of the self*. (Foucault, 1988:19) (emphasis added).

The early works of Foucault have been criticised for privileging the structures and organisations of society. As a result, Foucault allegedly lost or marginalised the human-subject in those analyses. Urry's concept of the tourist gaze is founded upon the same theoretical architecture as Foucault's early works and, as discussed in the previous section, been criticised for 'suppressing' the free will and autonomy of tourist subjects. Some recent adaptations of Foucault's early ideas of power in tourism studies (see for example Cheong and Miller, 2000) also privilege 'structure' at the expense of the human subject. Here, I highlight Foucault's later works on governmentality and technologies of the self as these were his own efforts at returning to the human subject (see also Rabinow, 1994). So what exactly does Foucault mean by governmentality and technologies of the self?

In Foucault's work on governmentality, pathways for analysing power are constructed away from the traditional concerns of state. Rather, routes for political analysis are defined in terms of government. By government, Foucault means the

“conduct of conduct” and encompasses “all endeavours to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others” (Rose, 1999:3). This brings political analysis out from the confines of the state and international relations and into realms of the corporation, firm, family and territories. Government can also be directed ‘inwards’ - towards oneself. This involves the ways in which one might be persuaded to “bridle one’s own passions, to control one’s own instincts, to govern oneself” (Rose, 1999:3). Rather than framing studies around the state or politics, Foucault reminds us that it is even more effective to examine the “formation and transformation of theories, proposals, strategies and technologies for the ‘conduct of conduct’” (Rose, 1999: 3). Such studies would address the “rationalised schemes, programmes, techniques and devices” that have their aims in shaping conduct to attain certain ends. This brings me to Foucault’s conception of the “technologies of the self”.

The “technologies of self”, according to Foucault (1988:18), are schemes, programmes, techniques and devices that allow individuals to bring about by their own means or with help of professionals “a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being”. The goal of this, ultimately, is to effect transformations in themselves so as “to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”. Bestselling self-help or motivation literature and ‘high-impact’ achievement seminars by celebrity ‘success coaches’ demonstrate contemporary societies’ obsession with the techniques of self-regulation and self-government. Foucault’s concepts are also best understood in terms of the social context and intellectual terrains of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal political

thought (see for example, Lemke, 2001). For technologies of the self to work, there must be a desire towards self-calculation, self-knowledge and a degree of self-renunciation, motivating the creation of a new subject position in neo-liberal societies. Nikolas Rose (1992: 146) terms this “the enterprising self”. It is a subject that will:

...make a venture of its life, project itself a future and seek to shape itself in order to become what it wishes to be...a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that works upon itself to better itself (Rose, 1992: 146).

This is a subject which self-governs through technologies of the self. It demonstrates self-knowledge or a desire towards greater self-knowledge. It also implies a certain degree of self-renunciation for as much as it seeks to work upon itself, and is likely to allow the help of others to work upon itself, thus periodically denying itself. It will permit for ‘rational’ economic calculations, scientific assessments and expert advice to shape its life venture, its goals and the ways in which it aspires to better itself, whether these are better office relationships, increased productivity, fitter bodies, purer souls, better sex or smarter investments.

In the spaces of workplace governmentality, self-regulation in the ways described above has brought (ad)venture and work closer than before. In his study of managerial culture in office spaces in the New Economy, influential geographer Nigel Thrift (2000:674) describes an economic terrain in which:

Firms now live in permanent state of emergency, always bordering on the edge of chaos, and no longer concerned with exercising bureaucratic control. Indeed through a variety of devices - cultivating knowledge workers, valuing teams, organising through projects, making better use of information technology, and flattening hierarchies - they will generate just enough organisational stability to change in an orderly fashion while maintaining hair-trigger responsiveness to adapt to the expectedly unexpected... Managers must become “change agents”, able, through the cultivation of new disciplines and skills, to become the fastest and best.

Thrift’s observations are no longer unique to neo-liberal societies of the ‘west’. Today, adventure metaphors have been used considerably in themes such as recession, investment, skills upgrading, retrenchment, retraining, and pay cuts and so on in Singapore’s workplace culture. Increasingly, a worker is seen as ‘responsible’ for his/her retrenchments and paycuts. Neo-liberalism’s championing of ‘self-care’ takes increasingly exploitative tendencies for a fired or ‘off-loaded’ worker is made to see himself/herself as not ‘rugged’, ‘adventurous’ or ‘flexible’ enough and deemed to have done too little or acted too late to realise himself/herself appropriately (see also Coe and Kelly, 2000; 2002 for Singapore-specific discussion). This, of course, creates stress and anxiety in everyday living in contemporary society. Clearly, themes of stress and anxiety often recur in discussions and practices of tours. Tours and particularly adventure tours are often portrayed as avenues for escape and freedom - channels which rejuvenate the ‘worn-out’ and (borrowing Karl Marx’s term)

“alienated” worker. These ‘escapist’ and ‘freedom’ attributes of adventure tours are of significance particularly since major economic restructuring or “new capitalism” has created anxieties in personal lives (Sennett, 1998). In the Singapore context, Appold (2004) has considered this anxiety by making a timely examination of the (un)employment situation of graduates in the new economy. It should be noted that such self-actualisations and anxieties occur in the context of some ethnic/region-specific work performances. A strand of work about how Chinese and East Asian firms, capitalists and workers relate to one another has provided some insights into the functioning of Chinese and East Asian businesses (see for example Yeung, 1997). This strand of literature argues that the Chinese business system (having wider implications in East Asia as a whole) is traditionally, and even in contemporary times, based on interpersonal trust and family relations. This familial tendency in Chinese management has been said to have created relatively stability-seeking and risk-adverse firms. *Guanxi*, a Chinese term which literally means relationships, has also been popularly used to explain the unique ways in which Chinese firms, capitalists and workers relate to one another at work and business. A conceptual tool to investigate these ‘self-care’, ‘anxieties’ and “personal consequences” (Sennett, 1998) in the Singapore adventure tourist subject against the backdrop of ideas of *guanxi* and Chinese and East Asian performances of work and business is proposed.

Drawing upon the above-mentioned theoretical and contextual concerns, a framework and conceptual apparatus I term “adventurism” is proposed. Broadly speaking, adventurism signals the convergence of adventure and work emerging in a

time of major economic-structuring in Singapore. There are three overlapping and entwined 'mechanisms' in adventurism.

The first 'mechanism' is the work and effect of discourses. This first 'mechanism' highlights the ways in which specific (adventure) practices and aspirations are shaped and organised in relation to specific discourses in society. This brings about the creation of new idealised subject positions. New subject positions that are promoted and specific society-sanctioned adventure practices (as opposed to say 'deviant' adventures in sex tourism) such as adventure courses, seminars, lectures, trainings, expeditions, races and tours are offered as avenues for realising these new adventurous selves. While many of these practices are promoted at a national level by the PAP-state, most of the governmental work and the shaping of what may be termed 'adventure-citizens' - rugged and flexible citizens for the new economy - are directed inwards and towards oneself. This involves the ways in which the adventure tourist might be urged to manage her/his own emotions, to rid of her/his known weaknesses, to govern herself/himself, so as to achieve a higher-performing trek, race or dive. Self-government in adventure tourism, like self-regulation in slimming and anger-management, requires specific technologies, techniques and schemes. The practices of the adventure tourist self, I will show, are environmental and geographical. The adventure tour, I argue, is a technology of the adventure tourist self and this brings me to the second point.

As a result of the formation of new subject positions in society, a second ‘mechanism’ of adventurism is constituted - the proliferation of environmental and embodied practices in adventure landscapes. Adventurism motivates the use of adventure tours as an environmental technology of the self. The adventure tours are schemes that allow adventure tourists “to effect by their own means or with help of ‘expert’ others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being” (Foucault, 1988: 18). We can identify these adventure rationalisations and operations in the ways in which forthrightness, peer-assessment, self-scrutiny are enrolled into the adventure process. Adventure tours, while being essentially leisure activities, often come with clear and established goals and targets. Triumphs and failures in the adventure process motivate self-knowledge, self-renunciation, self-reflection and ultimately attempts at self-reformation. The goal of adventure tours and the adventure experience, ultimately, is to effect transformations in adventure tourists so that they can achieve, borrowing Foucault’s words, “happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (1988:18). Celebrity adventurers have entered the self-help or motivation publishing and ‘success coaching’ markets, demonstrating adventure tourism’s key role in contemporary societies’ fascination with and fixation on the techniques of self-regulation and self-government. Unlike other ‘success’ stories, achievements and ideals in adventure are ‘forged’ in particular environments - in the sublime geographies of potentially treacherous terrains. Thus, what I observe is not merely a technology of the self, but an environmental one constituted in geography and one motivating specifically “geographical practices of self” (Matless, 1994).

The last of this ‘mechanism’ of adventurism is ‘the gaze’. Building upon John Urry’s (1990) insights of “the tourist gaze” and Foucault’s (1991) governmentality, I understand this gaze as a way of seeing (shaped by discourses), a form of embodied practice (trekking and backpacking in inspirational settings) and a form of visual consumption (sightseeing and photography). The interesting intellectual debate between MacCannell and Urry on the nature of visual consumption and tourist subjectification can be attended to by considering the tourist gaze as a form of self-government and an environmental technology of the self. In-situ and ethnographic observations of Urry and MacCannell’s tourist gaze can provide the empirical basis of such an inquiry. Discourses and ways of seeing which construct and reinforce Urry’s version of the tourist gaze can be examined by paying attention to not just the popular media and other non-tourism avenues identified by Urry but also specific economic discourses in society. Emphasis can be placed on identifying subject-positions and ideals of specific state and society-rationalised programmes, schemes and techniques at realising rejuvenated, productive and effective citizens/workers through adventurism. MacCannell’s second gaze will be shown through investigations into citizen responses to these discourses and idealised subjects.

Adventurism allows me to investigate the ways in which these gazes operate via embodied and environmental engagements. These “geographical practices of self” bring about the formation of foreign adventure landscapes as what I term ‘outdoor gymnasiums’. Like the air-conditioned gymnasiums Singaporeans are used to training



in, adventure landscapes and the ‘great outdoors’ help tone and shape fit and trim bodies. However, unlike air-conditioned ones, ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ operate on an array of new economy discourses and performances that emphasise the abilities to cope with contingencies and champion ‘risk-taking’ – ideals traditionally associated with expert adventurers. Thus, more than merely building and maintaining muscle groups and promoting aerobic fitness, ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ re-condition adventure tourists to become adventurers in their everyday life, or transform into subjects I term “adventure-citizens”. Identity narration upon homecoming can be investigated to provide clues to the ways in which adventure ideals are mobilised in everyday and routine life, demonstrating adventurism’s ‘reach’ and relevance beyond adventure tours proper. Adventurism permits the inquiry into the relevance of adventure identities in the workplace and the gender implications of such idealised subjects.

These three components of adventurism - the tourist gaze, discourses and embodied tourist practices - are entwined and work together to motivate the practice of adventure tourism as a form of self-government in new-economy Singapore. The constitution of this framework warrants some qualification. While the writing strategy of this thesis implies a certain order between conceptualisation and immersion in the field, I would like to stress that this framework is derived ethnographically. It is not formulated by self-proclaimed ‘objective’ hypothesis testing and research formulation created without fieldwork and field understanding. Adventurism is formulated in-situ. It is also perpetually reworked by informants’ words and acts and the changing social and discursive terrains throughout the research process. Adventurism, clearly, is also

subjected to disciplinary/academic shapings and my own 'authority' throughout research, particularly during analysis and writing.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

To understand the theoretical foundations and preceding contributions on tourist subjectivity, I reviewed *The Tourist Gaze*, still the most important academic engagement with the tourist subject and analysed its critiques. On the one hand, I have considered how tourism experiences are constituted in the visual, in the landscapes and in geography. On the other hand, I have cautioned against an over-emphasis on the visual and the neglect of tourist agency. The key critique of Urry's concept of the tourist gaze derives from MacCannell's formulation of the second gaze, a more critical and reflexive tourist gaze. MacCannell has criticised the deterministic tendencies in Urry's concept and has sought to bring tourist agency back into tourism research.

I have attempted to conceptualise a tourism research framework to study tourist subjectivity and tourist agency. My framework of adventurism draws upon governmentality and technologies of the self - concepts which focus on the human subject. Governmentality and technologies of the self offer an expanded notion of freedom and I have envisioned adventurism to be a conceptual apparatus capable of understanding the ways in which adventure tourists are self-governed. Such self-government is geographical and deploys adventure practices as uniquely environmental technologies of the self.

Uniquely geographical contributions of adventurism go beyond consideration of the “geographical practices of self” (Matless, 1994). The geography of adventurism can also be found in the ways in which adventurism motivates travels across national territories. To realise oneself as an effective, productive and enterprising Singapore citizen, urban Singaporeans travel to the ‘rural’ and leisure spaces of ‘other’ territories. Thus, spaces are not regarded as homogeneous backdrops but distinctive agents intertwined with the work and performance of people. Adventurism is also relational, having drawn from international business think-tanks and global markets for its discursive strengths. The relational aspect of adventurism can also be found in the ways in which adventure is often constructed and promoted as performances and practices in ‘treacherous’ and ‘sublime’ foreign territories away from the routine-ness and mundane-ness of home. Adventurism also exists and performs in the intermediary spaces of the workplace, shopping malls and other spaces adventure tourists venture into in their everyday life, connecting adventure ‘destination’ and ‘home’.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology: Researching Adventure Tourists**

### **3.1 Introduction: ‘New’ geographies of ethnography**

In this chapter, I consider ethnography as a key method for researching Singapore adventure tourists. As the culture of tourists is very mobile, it necessitates a different form of geography – multi-sited, multi-locational and often transnational - for an ethnographic project. Ethnography is ill-defined in the social science. The situation is exacerbated as its definition overlaps with ‘qualitative method’, ‘interpretative research’, ‘case study’, participant observation’, ‘life history method’, ‘ethogenics’ and so on (Hammersley, 1990).

Yet this ‘fuzziness’ of definition is no cause for abandoning ethnography as this may be said to signal its broad utility and relevance. As a research genre, ethnography possesses diverse strands (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) but the consensus is that it builds upon principles of participant observation - a method whereby the researcher spends considerable time ‘hanging out’ and interacting with a social group. To research Singapore adventure tourists, I joined adventure groups and followed my informants as a co-adventurer and fellow tourist. My fieldwork process entails full participation in their treks, hikes, expeditions, scuba-dives and training sessions.

The strengths of ethnography are well-rehearsed and I shall focus my discussion on features which are particularly useful for tourism and geography. Applying ethnography in tourism studies is extremely practical. Tourism is inherently

a multi-sited phenomenon and tourists often move very fast. Tourists interact and move in ways surveys and interviews conducted at single-sites cannot capture. Depending on positionality, rapport with tourists can be relatively easy to establish as compared to marginalised groups in society and there are few practical barriers. Meaningful extended conversations and observations can be made by becoming a fellow tourist. The researcher can participate, observe, talk and hear in the complete range of tourism activities as opposed to the mere handing out of survey forms. There are also strengths on the basis of geographical inquiry. Having philosophical roots in naturalism (Evans, 1988), ethnography can serve as a viable critique and alternative to the positivism dominant in tourism research. Tourism anthropologists, via their ethnographic work, have made significant contributions to tourism studies (see for example, Graburn, 1977; Smith 1989; Errington and Gewertz, 1989 and Erb, 2000).

Ethnography has been largely neglected in the discipline of Geography (Herbert, 2000). “Unreplicable insights into the processes and meanings that sustain and motivate social groups” can only be uncovered by ethnography and the sidelining of this methodology is harmful (Herbert, 2000). Ethnographies are also rare in tourism geographies. For instance, in the eight issues of the journal *Tourism Geographies* between 2002 and 2003, there was only one article (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2003a) that employed ethnography. In general, qualitative methods have been underused in tourism studies (Riley and Love, 2000).

More importantly, there are new geographies of ethnography waiting to be investigated. To study the culture of ‘western’ tourists, Bruner (1995) worked as a tour guide for a tour agency operating a high-end tour for affluent Americans travelling in Indonesia. As a tour guide, he travelled with the tourists and was able to observe and interact with them at multiple sites. These included the various destinations, routes and nodes of their tour in Indonesia. In doing so, Bruner traced the tourism practice and discourses that connect these otherwise mundane sites and saw them from the eyes of the tourists. While Bruner did not get to socialise with these two groups of tourists when he was back in America, he did have a chance to interact with a group of tourists of similar demographic profiles at a reunion party. Bruner’s study alludes to the potential value of studying tourists by following the entire tourism ‘cycle’ – from home to destination and home, or from pre-trip to post-trip. Bruner’s tourism anthropology demonstrates a new geography of fieldwork, from single site to multi site and from static to mobile.

Tourism research with a marketing ‘slant’ has also engaged with this new geography of fieldwork. Bowen (2003:4), in writing about participant observation as “a creative solution” to gauge tourist satisfaction, also advocated fieldwork that is multi-sited. The geographies of his participant observation connected the ‘colonial’ nodes of United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore. Following long haul soft-adventure tourists, Bowen argued that such multi-sited participant observation is a better gauge than static single-site questionnaire surveys.

The intent here is not to provide an exhaustive review of multi-sited tourist studies. Rather, I wish to illustrate that many tourism ethnographers have done geographical work - using ethnography of tourists - but have not reflected sufficiently on these intriguing geographies. Geographers, while not leading the 'discovery', can contribute by not only 'reclaiming' the geographies of multi-sited ethnographies but also using our geographical training to provide innovation for the methodology. My application of multi-site ethnography entails becoming a fellow tourist to groups of Singapore adventure tourists travelling and ad-venturing in the adventure destinations of Peninsula Malaysia. Utilising this form of multi-site ethnography as my research strategy, I depart from the 'classical' anthropological model of single-site fieldwork to follow groups of Singapore adventure tourists from pre-trip to transit route and to destination and back home.

In the next section, I detail the selection of adventure groups and sites which constitute the field. I will argue that their choice is based on the need to understand linkages and connections in adventure tourism and Singapore society. Then I account for the process of doing fieldwork with adventure tourists and its attendant problems. I elaborate on issues of gaining access, problems of betrayal, role of conflicts, difficulties in note-taking and data recording in the field and other sources of data used in this research. I conclude with clarifications and reflections on representational issues and concerns of ethnographic writing.



### **3.2 The field**

In this study, I follow the tourist from the ‘home’ region to the ‘transit route’ and to the adventure destinations. By ‘home’ regions I mean the various briefing places, meeting places and many places in Singapore where adventure people socialise. These include everyday spaces such as cafes and fast food restaurants where we meet to exchange photographs, plans and stories. The transit route includes journeys on buses, boats and other modes of transport plus transport nodes including jetties, lobbies and stations. These are important places to understand tourists’ anticipations and reflections on the tours. These fields were constantly (re)constructed by our passage through them. Most of these sites appear to be very common everyday spaces, but they become meaningful places to Singapore adventure tourists through various passages and encounters. Adventure landscapes including the mountains, beaches, coral reefs and jungles, resting points and campsites are studied to understand how adventure tourists come to terms with, interpret and consume adventure landscapes.

The field is also composed of non-tourism sites that help shape my informants’ travel motivations. These include adventure exhibitions in shopping malls and even the university library. Forums and seminars on the new economy and employment issues also make the list. These sites are not permanent but they produce real effects and real spatial practices relevant to the study. In addition to following adventure tourists on their training and travels, I investigated other cultural works that potentially

condition and shape the field: the new economy discourse, state-sanctioned rhetoric, PAP-endorsed ideals and other discourses.

In this thesis, informants' names are replaced by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality but the names of adventure clubs are real (see Appendix 1 for a profile of informants observed). The first group is a group of 59 trainees and instructors from the three-month long 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training (BOAT). BOAT prepares trainees with basic adventure skills such as: kayaking, rock climbing, navigation, trekking, camp craft and expedition planning. It was organised by a Community Club in central Singapore. Community Clubs are PAP affiliated organisations with the primary aim of promoting racial harmony. The objectives of the adventure club are, amongst others, "to develop organising abilities and leadership skills amongst trainees" and promote "self improvement by self discovery through experience" (11<sup>th</sup> BOAT course handbook). Conducted by adventure experts, these courses provide them with many key adventure skills. Trainees also go on practice expeditions in various adventure destinations in Peninsula Malaysia.

The second group is the Rovers, a university adventure club. The Rovers conduct various adventure tours to destinations in Singapore and beyond. These include, amongst others, night cycling in Singapore, scuba dive trips to Pulau Aur in Malaysia, trekking trips to Nepal and Silk Road backpacking. The objective of the club is to introduce 'adventure' to a broader student community. Adventure clubs like

the Rovers are significant for these are extremely popular clubs in Singapore universities and polytechnics.

The third group comprises of 12 independent scuba divers from Singapore who signed up for a dive tour with Bluewave adventure tours to Pulau Perhentian in Peninsula Malaysia. They are young professionals aged between 23 to 28 years old. Bluewave provides the dive masters-cum-tour guides, books the transport and accommodation and provides a site for the divers' very own underwater photography slideshow and photograph exchange upon return. Singapore scuba diver is an important group as it forms a large and growing community. Scuba diving is increasingly popular with young professionals. Statistical sources are not available but my informants estimate that there are a total of 45, 000 certified scuba divers in Singapore and of these 10, 000 are active divers who go on at least three dive tours a year.

The fourth group is made up of a group of Singapore backpackers who went on a 16 day budget tour of Peninsula Malaysia and Thailand. The tour was organised through a network of friends. They travelled overland and were involved in adventure pursuits such as trekking, snorkelling and scuba-diving. One characteristic that sets this group apart from the rest is that it is made up of tertiary students who were graduating. Hence, career and employment was a dominant theme for this group of adventure tourists.

The fifth and last group is the Singapore Adventurers Club (SAC). Established in 1963, it is Singapore's first all-volunteer adventure club. It has a current membership of more than 500 and members draw from a wide age range and occupational spectrum. Trekking constitutes its key activity but the club is also involved in a range of adventure travel and pursuit.

These groups do 'softer' adventures which require less technical skills and lower cost of participation such as forest trail trekking, camping, backpacking, snorkelling and scuba-diving. They are more accessible and have very broad-based appeal as compared to adventures such as sky diving, technical and ship-wreck diving and mountaineering. These groups were chosen because this study is concerned with linkages and connections in tourism and Singapore society. While these groups ranged from independent backpackers to established adventure clubs, the aim has not been one of strictly achieving representation of the growing Singapore adventure community. Rather, these groups offered me the opportunities to follow and observe the linkages and connections between sites.

The multi-sited nature of this fieldwork warrants elaboration. Site in this case, refers to both geographical location and the groups studied. The sites - from meeting rooms to coral reefs - are linked with one another in such a way that connections and relationships between them are as important as those within them. The field is not a mere amalgam of many local units. Nor is my field constituted by the various groups a simple adding together of adventure clubs. As Hannerz (2003:206) suggests, "one

must establish the translocal linkages, and the interconnections between those and whatever local bundles of relationships which are also part of the study”. A major linkage between sites is clearly the bond between home and destination sites (as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters). These linkages distinguish the present study from extant ones which are generally comparative endeavours of localities.

### **3.3 Doing fieldwork and problems in the field**

I am already a part of the adventure community and a member of two of these groups before the research process. Thus, I have a relatively easy access to my informants and their adventure world. By accessing my field site in a ‘casual’ way, I managed to avoid entangling with gatekeepers. Gatekeepers often affect ethnographic studies in that the ethnographer is often to be seen as closer to or part of the elite group gatekeepers often belong to and not to the commoner informants (Evans, 1988:206). I do not ask powerful insiders for favours in the field. Thus, I was both able to retain my research autonomy and also to participate as a fellow adventurer. However, this easier access does not warrant the glossing over of some of the pertinent issues of friendship, betrayal, power and conflict in the field.

Bound up with the concerns of access are those of the field relationship that I establish once within the field setting. The role that a researcher plays (and the extent of choice in adopting that role, and whether indeed it is the role of the researcher) will affect and define the nature of field relations (Evans, 1988: 207). I was, to a large

extent, in control of the ways I managed my relationships with my informants (for example, as a detached observer, as an associate of powerful gatekeepers or as a friend in the field). As mentioned, I entered the field as a fellow tourist and trainee for it is practical and advantageous for me to be a friend to my informants as compared to being a tour guide or trainer. I also entered the field as an overt researcher who informed friends in the field of my research intentions. This establishment of friendship paved the way for access into conversations, gossips and not to mention a generally enjoyable time in the field. It must be stressed that while ‘ulterior’ research motives fuelled my initial initiative in making friends in the field, genuine friendship often took over as fieldwork progresses. With common interests in various adventure pursuits and travels, I bonded with my informants. While certainly an inappropriate item to be filled in the section on “research deliverables” in fieldwork reports to be submitted to bureaucrats, most ethnographers will agree that ‘friends in the field’ who lingers in your life as ‘friends’ are almost always the most significant outputs of ethnography. These friendships, however wholesome they might be, complicated my research. Friendships in the field create the problem of ethnographic betrayal.

The first form of betrayal derived from the extent of research objective disclosure. It was impossible to tell everyone or make sure everyone on these tours/groups knew and understood my research objective. Furthermore, to stay valid to observations in the field, objectives in field research were always changing and there could be no way everyone in the field could be updated. New members were sometimes introduced into the group. It was impossible for me to keep everyone

informed of my research on a regular basis. Honesty potentially complicate the data collected. To this, Gans' (1967:440 cited in Evans, 1988: 208) message is enduring:

If the researcher is completely honest with people about his activities, they will try to hide actions and attitudes they consider undesirable, and so will be dishonest. Consequently, the researcher must be dishonest to get honest data.

Between being an honest researcher who collects dishonest data and a dishonest one who collects honest data, I chose the latter. By circumstances or by choice, not everyone in the field knew the full research objectives I had (and besides, my research objectives have changed as fieldwork progressed). Yet, every effort had been made to ensure confidentiality and that friends in the field were not hurt or disadvantaged as a result of my ethnography. Furthermore, I thought carefully about the implications of disclosing and re-presenting the honest data collected from the field.

At times, betrayal could not be prevented. Despite my repeated confessions, many informants had the impression that I am trying to write a pleasant piece of adventure travel writing. Some informants saw me as a National Geographic type who went in search and in documentation of interesting places and exciting adventures. Some informants misunderstood - at various stages of my fieldwork - that my multi-site ethnography was meant to study beach geomorphology, forest biodiversity or catchment hydrology. Updating, informing and sharing my views of what constitutes our adventure tourism motivations are, at times, at odds with staying sociable. More

often than not, my views destroyed my informants' romantic conception of adventure tours. It would also make me a very unpopular or even impossible person to endure in the field. Who would want to venture with an 'unhappy' geographer when one paid for a good holiday? Back in Singapore, extra efforts were made to update, inform and share my views and insights with friends in the field and some of them began to have a better understanding of my tourist ethnography.

It was also difficult to record data in the field. In my ethnography, I relied mainly on covert note-taking. Due to the nature of adventure tours, most of my observations were recorded upon reflection rather than on-the-spot and in real time. For example, scuba-diving in underwater environments at the depths of fifteen metres did not permit the use of Dictaphones or even research diaries. In order not to intrude on their tourist pleasure, I observed and took notes in as discreetly as I could during most parts of the adventure tours. Photographs and videos my informants took helped support my note-taking by and re-presenting scenes I have missed out or providing details I have failed to remember. In addition, I also record scenes using my own still photography. I have done some overt note-taking for field interviews whenever informants informed me that they did not mind my note-taking. Some of these note-taking were hastily done on pieces of paper I could find on the tour bus, ferry or at the resting points of treks. These field interview notes were rare because many informants were uncomfortable with and did not agree to overt note-taking. Even on the rare occasions when I did get to scribble as they narrate their adventure experiences, overt note-taking on bumpy roads and choppy sea were difficult tasks. On most occasions,



these note-taking practices on the move induced motion-sickness. Thus, most of the impromptu interviews in the fields and the many conversations during adventures were recollected from memory and recorded whenever I get the privacy and break from adventure tasks and duties. These breaks and note-taking opportunities often took place when fellow adventure tourists had fallen asleep. This night-time note-taking strategy is more difficult during the BOAT training as instructors would insist I wrap up my diary writing early. Comparatively, friends and co-travellers were more indulgent. Upon homecoming, internet chats ('ICQ' or 'MSN Messenger') were conducted with informants and these served as very meaningful and convenient sources of data. They were valid sources of adventure narration as internet chats were increasingly popular spaces for communication in Singaporean's everyday life. They were also very good means for 'talking' to people while they worked in their offices, yielding most of the data to be presented in the last section in Chapter 6.

I have tried to avoid conflicts in the field, but on hindsight, some conflicts illuminated and aided my conceptualisation while in the field. One informant was ostracised in the course. On top of being anti-social, he failed to meet course expectations of physical fitness and 'flexibility' to change. His exclusion and frequent conflicts with course members (including myself) reminded me of the unwritten norms and rules in adventure groups. Also, some informants were unhappy with the 'over-selling' of ideas of 'flexibility', 'teamwork' and 'contingency' in adventure training. These disagreements prompted me to consider how discourses from the economy and new capitalism have been shaping Singapore adventure. The internalisation of new

economy ideals was observed to have shaped these unsafe and unnecessary 'emergency' drills. This helped me to see how new economy rhetoric is shaping adventure and how adventure - via adventure courses - is re-articulating such discourses. It also reminded me of the existence of various 'alternate' subject positions and motivations of adventure. One conflict almost discontinued a particular fieldwork. In one of the backpacking trips with the Rovers, the group lost a substantial amount of money. The theft was believed to be an 'insiders' job and the Thai police was called in to search everyone in the group. The Thai police left and the tour resumed when the money was not found on anyone of us. The involvement of the Thai police and the general happiness caused by the search nearly ended the tour. One member of the group was 'ousted' from the tour when members of the group found him increasingly suspicious. This unfortunate episode, however, helped highlight themes of self-development in dangerous/dishonest backpacking landscapes amongst young Rovers backpackers.

Other forms of data were also collected. Words and their worlds are never entirely separate and divorced. Analysis was carried out for both the actual content and the ways in which various textual sources and rhetoric presented in adventure tourists' lives shaped and constituted their imagination and practice of adventure tourism. My informants were not passive recipients of text but were active authors. They have been, in many cases travel writers, avid photographers and great storytellers. These tourist-authored text and discourses - photographs, travelogues and narratives - are analysed. These materials are valuable sources in that they tell us a lot

about how adventure tourists see themselves, their practice of adventure tourism, and how these relate to their personal lives and their anticipation of future travels. Other 'textual' sources such as public seminars have also been examined.

### **3.4 Writing and re-presenting the research**

Tourism anthropologist/ethnographers and geographers have the responsibility of being self-reflexive about their positionality and being forthright about the situatedness of their knowledge production (Galani-Mountafi, 2000; McDowell, 1992 and Rose, 1997). Here, I lay out my positionality in this ethnographic project and make known the situated nature of my production of geographical knowledge. A 27 year old ethnic Chinese Singapore male citizen and a part of the 'community' my informants belong to, I have been subjected to most of the citizenship and national discourses my informants have been subjected to. My life history and trajectory do not differ significantly from my informants/friends in the field.

Keeping a critical distance is not easy as my informants were not an 'exotic' tribe or a strange culture to me. On the contrary, my informants were groups of people I have always associated myself with, with or without the research project. I have been doing adventure tours 3 years prior to my ethnography and am an 'insider' to their cultures. I have many jobless and retrenched friends and, at the final phase of my research, I will be a job seeker. Thus, I have paid particular attention to labour rhetoric and new economy discourses. Rather than being cleanly divorced from my 'scientific

endeavour', my personal biography, my everyday experiences and the consequences of new economy on my personal life constituted this research. As such, I empathise with my fellow adventure tourists as a committed ethnographer rather than an 'objective'/neutral participant observer.

In addition to empathy and validity, I am also capable of understanding Singapore-specific 'lingos', slangs and most of the languages conversed. As best as I can, in this research, I reproduce and re-present quotes from adventure tourists the way they were spoken. This entails a proliferation of Singlish in general and Singapore army-speak for male informants. Singaporean males are required to serve two years of National Service. Thus, performing National Service in various brigades and vocations in the Singapore Armed Forces has created an 'army culture' of its own and a 'lingo' or 'army-speak' that my male informants relates to. This 'army-speak' is based on an amalgam of swear words and vulgarities from diverse languages (mainly the Hokkein dialect), southern Chinese dialects, 'broken' English/Singlish and Malay. Most female informants were acquainted with the lingo but they were less inclined to employ the less 'refined' language.

I am capable of faster note-taking and diary keeping in English. Thus, most of the Mandarin and its dialects have already been translated in my research diary. The remaining Chinese characters scribbled were translated in the final write-up for examination purposes. I am not competent in the use of Malay and other languages but

as very few of my informants communicated in these languages, the loss of information is not significant.

Power issues between the observer and observed - frequently exacerbated by funding agencies and interest groups - are often ignored and even erased by some ethnographers. Most of my field encounters were friendly and leisurely and I have discussed the unique problems friendship for instance has brought about. While I studied a familiar culture and my informants were not individuals in socially and economically marginal positions, unequal relationships exist in the research process as I have the authority to re-present what goes on in the field. Ethnography has, of course, been said to have undergone a crisis of representation (see for example, Clifford and Marcus, 1986 and Marcus and Fisher, 1986). The issue concerns the lack of self-reflection on the part of ethnographers about their activities and observations. Rather than the being too 'unscientific' ethnographers are sometimes criticised for hiding behind the hypocrisy and safety of science and glossing over power issues of their research design and practice.

Furthermore, there are concerns that ethnography is presenting a tidier world than what is actually happening out there. This neater and more settled world is shaped by the academic norms and ideals for systematic knowledge production. Textual conventions imposed by the university, research institutes, publishers and the scientific community are often more important than the 'messiness' of the field for publication driven ethnographers. In my case, the need to satisfy examination criteria

might have tempted me to fit adventure tourism realities into the neater and tidier textual spaces of a Master's Thesis shaped by rigorous and uncompromising scientific conventions. In the broader methodological spaces, feminist geographers (McDowell, 1992; Rose, 1997) have led the charge for greater research reflexivity and recognition of geographical knowledge as being situated enterprise and pertaining to ethnography specifically, Herbert suggested that geographers in general can attempt to rectify these 'evils' by being forthright, reflexive and modest. One way to do this is to account for the writing and re-presentation process.

I am unable to replicate the kind of 'lush' and 'thick' descriptions some prominent anthropologists do but I use 'confessional' and descriptive passages from my research diary to allow readers to feel some of the adventures, as well as see the way I fumble in the field (see Van Maanen, 1985 for review of what he terms "confessional tales"). I still believe in helping readers to see and feel the tours by presenting passages from my research diary, albeit done without the story telling skills of James Clifford or Edward Bruner. I present these accounts in a different font (comic sans MS) with an indent from the left.

I also present interview quotes derived from field interviews. These were collected through covert and overt recording in the field. These interview quotes were based on dialogues in the adventure landscape, conversations at both pre-trip and post-trip gathering and internet chats during office hours and in office space. The names of my informants have been replaced by pseudonyms and their adventure group or other

affiliations were disclosed only when deemed useful for the discussion in the empirical chapters.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The multi-site ethnography I have deployed is vital for this research. I argued that it is not possible to study these linkages and connections between tourism and society using questionnaire surveys and interviews. It is essential to study Singapore adventure tourists in their ‘natural environments’ or *in-situ*. To do this, I have chosen to follow my informants on their adventure tours and participated in not only their treks, dives and backpacking, but also studied their pre-trip and post-trip gatherings. I have selected the groups that allowed me to follow specific linkages and although the groups are representative of a small and growing Singapore adventure community, it has never been my objective to use these adventure groups to test ‘scientific’ hypotheses about the nature of the Singapore adventure scene. I have aimed to use these groups to derive in-depth qualitative details about their tourism experiences and practices.

Several issues and problems arose from such an ethnographic approach - gaining access, problems of ethnographic betrayal, conflicts in the field, difficulties with recording data and note-taking – and I have discussed the ways in which I have tried to mitigate or resolve these. This fieldwork has also been complemented by textual sources such as adventure tourists’ travelogues, photographs and videos. I have

also investigated relevant seminars and fairs. I also discussed issues of writing, positionality and representation. Specific concerns such as the use of Singlish and ‘army-speak’, my closeness to the adventure scene and researcher-researched power relations were discussed. I have also clarified my use of ‘confessional’ descriptive passages from my research diary and my use of field interview quotes in the empirical chapters that follow. In the next section, I proceed to discuss the shaping of the adventure tourist gaze by specific discourses in the new economy.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Shaping the Gaze in the New Economy**

## 4.1 Introduction

Before we embarked on a backpacking trip, my backpacking leader Andy stressed that we would find ourselves in a new environment - one which would be less orderly than Singapore. Our travel would not resemble the organised or packaged tour. There would be no fixed itinerary to follow and no tour guides to usher us around. We were expected to become modern-day explorers adept at responding to contingencies and the unexpected. Essentially, we ought to be *gung-ho* (daring) and independent. He emphasised that we were to become adventurers and travellers. In a way, the kind of adventure and backpacking subject Andy envisions resembles geographer Nigel Thrift's (2000:674) "change agents" and "fast managerial subjects" and sociologist Nikolas Rose's (1992:146) "enterprising selves". Andy's independent and daring adventure subject, like the enterprising self and the fast subjects, is shaped by discourses of adventure and risk-taking in the new economy.

For members of that backpacking tour, our adventure was not simply a non-work practice. It was meant to prepare us for a fast-paced and uncertain working life. From Urry, tourism researchers know that the tourist gaze and tourist motivation are shaped by different discourses. The European Grand Tour for education, spa tourists for health and wellness, Japanese corporate tours for group solidarity and so on. Such a gaze is constructed and sustained by 'non-touristic' cultural forms such as the movies, books and pop-music we listen to. While not denying the work of these

cultural products in shaping our tourist gaze, I argue that adventurism shapes Andy and his fellow backpackers' tourist gaze - even at the pre-trip stage.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that adventurism is a form of self-government and self-regulation emerging in Singapore's major economic restructuring. This chapter also describes the creation of a new subject position I term 'adventure-citizen'. The adventure-citizen is the idealised imagined outcome of adventure practices such as adventure courses, seminars, lectures, trainings, expeditions, races, tours and compulsory military service. The PAP-state in Singapore is presented as a key promoter of adventurism and main 'shaper' of our adventure tourist gaze. Uniquely in Singapore, the PAP-state is almost omnipresent in the nation-state's cultural landscape (see Coe and Kelly, 2002 and George, 2000). I will also show that self-government in and through adventure tourism, like self-regulation in wealth management and slimming, require specific technologies, techniques and schemes. My informants' adventure tours, as will be shown, were promoted as technologies capable of transforming citizens into adventure-citizens. This environmental technology of the self motivates a geographical imagining of outdoor settings as what may be termed 'outdoor gymnasiums'.

#### **4.2 Political shaping and sites promoting adventure discourses**

I thought our people should understand how vulnerable Singapore was and is, the dangers that beset us and how we nearly did not make it. (Lee, 1998)

Most members states of the United Nations take their independent existence for granted; at least, most of the time. Despite the complex security problems addressed by the world body with mixed success, it is the great exception rather than the rule for its member states to be confronted continually by the prospect of political extinction...The government of Singapore, however, has never taken the island-state's sovereign status for granted; a supposition which has been registered in a practice of foreign policy predicated on countering an innate vulnerability. (Leifer, 2000: 1)

Both Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's most enduring politician and 'master architect' of First World Singapore, and Michael Leifer, the late and prominent London School of Economics and Political Science professor have observed Singapore's 'vulnerability'. This vulnerability, they argue, is based on its minuscule scale, its predominantly ethnic-Chinese identity in the geo-politics of a Malay archipelago, its violent entanglements with communist insurgency and the constant threat of economic non-viability and political extinction. This vulnerability, they posit, is a condition the island state has to perpetually contend with. Conceptions of vulnerability have been an integral part of Singapore citizen's political education. Singapore citizens, through various state-funded national education programmes and devices, have been more than acutely aware of their nation-state's vulnerability and 'how we nearly did not make it'. Adventure education and training, founded upon these real and perceived vulnerabilities, have a long history in Singapore. Immediately

after independence, the concept of a rugged and flexible workforce that can respond to changes was already a crucial part of Singaporean's education. This led to the early establishment of Outward Bound Schools. While the early precedence of adventure training remains significant, I suggest in this section that the recent discourse and performance of what is increasingly known as the new economy has served to intensify the sense of vulnerability and the need to be adventurous. Recent PAP-state programmes have sought to build on these early 'bases' of 'vulnerability' to describe a new terrain of uncertainty and danger for Singapore citizens - the new economy and the 'globalised economy'. Adventure, I will go on to show, has been promoted as a technology for Singaporeans to become appropriate citizens who can, borrowing Leifer's words, "cope with vulnerability" and to ensure the Lee-configured Singapore to continue "making it".

Specifically, I examine how various PAP-sanctioned projects shape and construct Singaporeans' tourist gaze. The first is the "People's Forum", organised by the South West Community Development Council (SWCDC), which had over 500 citizens participate in focus group discussions on national and community issues. We were divided into four concurrent workshops. The workshops identified four major themes of significance for Singaporeans: the impact of economic restructuring on Singaporeans; the effect of an ageing population on the country and the families; ways to create a better social environment for cohesion and community bonding and balancing family and work life for residents. Workshop chairpersons drawn from the Economic Development Board (EDB) and the Ministry of Community Development

and Sports (MCDS) presented papers on these topics and participants were invited to respond to the ideas presented. In addition, SWCDC Mayor, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon rallied the participants to play their part in effecting economic recovery. To do that, she claimed that we had to be independent and adventurous and we ought to venture out of our collective comfort zone (on our own and not depend on the state for initiatives). While the objective of the forum was to allow for an expression of active citizenry and to “give opportunity for citizens to participate in discussions on issues which affect their lives” (SWCDC, People’s Forum: Be Heard, 2002), the approach remained top-down and became a platform for PAP MPs to ‘sell’ their public policies. That day, the commodity sold was “the adventurous mindset”. This adventurous mindset involved shifting away from the reliance on the state and towards a neo-liberal notion of ‘self-care’. We were told countless ‘success stories’ of citizens taking their initiative to re-train themselves or taking on lower wages, acting upon themselves so as to effect higher labour market value and employability.

The participants of the People’s Forum were not the only ones urged to self-actualise as ‘adventure-citizens’. Students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) too ‘should’ remake themselves adventurously. In a project named the “Make It Real Student Mountaineering Project” (MIR), NUS students were rallied to make an adventure of their lives. The MIR started out as a spin-off of the Singapore Xixabangma Expedition 2002 and aimed to “imbue young Singaporeans with an adventurous spirit and groom budding mountaineers” (exhibition text). A pioneer batch was chosen to train and climb with the experts from Singapore Xixabangma

expedition, reaching the Himalayan peaks of Tharpu Chuli and Chulu West and even the Xixabangma Advanced Base Camp. The exhibition in the NUS Central Library and write-ups of the project in the NUS newsletter and website were meant to collectively promote the project, articulating themes of self-development and self-actualisation. For instance, Ee Khong Lean, a fourth year Arts and Social Science student, commented on her self-development in and through the MIR:

In many ways, mountaineering has similarities with different facets of our lives, at work and in society. It teaches us discipline, sensitivity, and humility – some of the core attributes of leaders across many fields (*Knowledge Enterprise*, 2003).

MIR 2003 patron Dr Vivian Balakrishnan added that “the real lessons in life are more likely to be learnt on the icy slopes of a mountain than the air-conditioned comfort of a lecture theatre”. To this, NUS President and Vice Chancellor Professor Shih Choon Fong added:

More than learning how to organise and execute expeditions, our students had first hand experience working as a team and leveraging on each other’s strength to triumph over adversity. The MIR Programme is a student’s adventure of learning and discovery, testing character, endurance and the spirit of enterprise. (*NUS Press Releases*, “Launch of Make It Real 2003 Student Mountaineering Programme”, 26 Nov 2002).

More recently, the university has admitted a student in the exceptional student category (a category the two main universities in Singapore have difficulties filling from the 'mundane' cohort of applicants) on merits of her mountaineering achievements and the NUS Vice-Provost Lily Kong has commented that NUS needs more of such creative and adventurous students (ST, 21 June 2004).

In another NUS site, the alignment of adventure and work was also promoted. Titled "Navigating global waters: Will You Sink or Swim?" this NUS Lecture was organised by the NUS Students Political Association. The promotional material for this NUS Lecture reads:

Ever wondered what requisite qualities and skills are required for success in today's ever-changing world? Would you really be prepared for the unpredictable conditions with just a Bachelor's degree in the bag? Take a break from your exam revision, and join us as we ponder over the challenges that await a young graduate with our guest panellists.

This NUS Lecture invited a guest panel comprising of three state-recognised role models in the Singapore society. The first panellist is Mr Khoo Swee Chiow, adventurer and recipient of Singapore Youth Award 2002. The second is Miss Indranee Rajah. Miss Rajah is a Senior Counsel and PAP Member of Parliament (Tanjong Pagar GRC). She performed outstandingly in the private sector as Director



of Drew and Napier LLC. The third role model is Mrs Lim Hwee Hua. Mrs Lim is Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Member of Parliament (Marine Parade GRC). She navigated/managed Temasek Holdings Private Limited competently in the 'global waters' as its Managing Director of Corporate Stewardship.

The selection of Khoo, an adventure guru instead of an employment expert, for a talk on employment and job hunting strategies is intriguing. Khoo's adventure fame and his sideline of motivational talks could have resulted in his inclusion alongside two 'mainstream' choices of young PAP MPs. Khoo's presentation transformed the NUS Lecture into a site promoting adventure. He urged NUS students to think 'out of the box' by venturing beyond the state-built boxes or HDB flats we live in and into the sublime and rugged landscapes he made his name in. Khoo alluded to the New Economy as an unpredictable and uncertain terrain much like the Antarctica ice-trails and the Himalayan treks he conquered. He argued that we need to have an adventurous mindset to survive. Back to the urban spaces, he told the NUS undergraduate audience how entrepreneurial and innovative he was in sourcing for adventure sponsorships. Most importantly, he persuaded us to step out of our comfort zones like he once did when he left his 'cushy' job as an IT support staff with Singapore Airlines, the city-state's national carrier - an extremely 'irrational' career move in the eyes of most Singaporeans.

Next, I turn to an adventure fair which promoted adventure to a Housing Development Board estate, the Singapore residential 'heartland' of state funded mass

public housing. With the aim of bringing adventure closer to the adventure lay-person, an adventure fair named “Moving with Rhythm” brought rock climbing walls, kayaks, a sailing boat and other adventure equipment to three HDB neighbourhood sites. These included the ‘open space’ of Yishun and Woodlands MRT station and the atrium of Bukit Panjang Plaza (Plate 4.1).



***Plate 4.1 State-funded adventure fair at Bukit Panjang Plaza***

It was sponsored by the North West CDC, the People’s Association’s (PA) adventure branch and the wider PA Youth Movement. Besides entertaining residents and allowing residents to try out adventure gears, registration booths were also set up for would-be participants of various adventure courses. It was at the Bukit Panjang

adventure fair where I was persuaded to pick up some basic adventure skills. There I picked up my 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training (BOAT) course materials.

In reaching out and in trying to convince the adventure lay-person, the promotional material argued:

You could...

Get mauled by a tiger and die...

Get stung by wild bees and die...

Get gored by a wild boar and die...

Get bitten by a snake and die...

Get trampled by a wild elephant and die...

OR...

You could stay home, watch TV, eat potato chips and die.

Your body was never made for adventures. **YOUR SPIRIT WAS!**

(from The 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training Course 2003 promotion brochure)

The 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training (BOAT) was five-month basic course which sought to equip the adventure lay-person with some essential adventure skills. It was organised by the adventure branch of a community club and was funded by the Peoples' Association. Skills taught in the course included: camp craft, map reading, 'topo', outdoor cooking, First Aid, rock climbing and kayaking. We were instructed

via hands-on sessions and classroom based lectures. Three training camps and expeditions were scheduled to test our adventure competency (Plate 4.2).

PROGRAMME			
DATE		DAY	ACTIVITY
Feb	22-23	Sat-Sun	Orientation Camp
	26	Wed	Rope Work
Mar	2	Sun	Camp Craft
	5	Wed	Map Reading
	9	Sun	Topo Practical
	16	Sun	Outdoor Cooking
	22-23	Sat-Sun	Night Walk (20km)
	29	Sat	First Aid / Camp 1 Briefing
	30	Sun	Abseiling
Apr	5-6	Sat-Sun	Camp I
	13	Sun	Camp 1 Washing/Photo Viewing
	20	Sun	Rock Climbing
	27	Sun	Kayaking
May	2-4	Fri-Sun	Camp II
	11	Sun	Camp II Washing/Photo Viewing
	18	Sun	Day Hike (30km)
June	30-1	Fri-Sun	Overseas Expedition
	14	Sat	Graduation Night

- There are physical training lessons held every Wednesday at 7pm throughout the course to train you up.
- Min. attendance must be 75% for all the theory & practical lessons, excluding the physical training sessions.
- The schedule & the programme are subjected to changes.

**Plate 4.2 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training Course Programme**

In addition, there had been a host of domestic adventure races sparked off and modelled after the popular television program, *The Amazing Race*. While having fun and competing were central themes of such races, I observed while taking part as a race master or ‘guardian’ in The Singapore Amazing Race that such races built upon

the adventure ideals salient in the popular adventure show. The race was meant to test or develop participants' initiative, creativity, ruggedness and teamwork. The race also had real connections to corporeal adventure tours. The Singapore Amazing Race was organised by the Singapore Adventurers' Club, an adventure club which organises many local and overseas tours.

These seemingly disparate sites interconnect in terms of ideals of responding to rapidly changing global terrains and actualising new and appropriate subjects. Such subjects are independent, adaptable, nimble-footed and, at the same time, sociable and cooperative. The examples have shown - in forms of the 'good' South West district resident who adapts and improvises to help contribute to the nation's economic recovery or the champion Singapore Amazing Race team who overcome the odds deploying their teamwork, creativity and enterprise - that an adventurer is the ideal Singaporeans should aspire to be, not just in the adventure landscapes but in their everyday-economic lives. These materials made visible the emergence of a new subject promoted which I specifically term 'adventure-citizen'. This competes with other existing positions in Singapore's labour and workforce governmentality (for example, the cheap and docile 'Asian' worker). This emergence occurs at an uneasy and unsettled time of major economic re-structuring.

This could be seen from the then Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's changing 'ideology'. On top of his legalising of the once banned adventure pursuit of bungee jumping and its supposedly further adrenalin pumping cousin of reverse

bungee jumping in the ‘safety-obsessed’ Singapore (*Straits Times* 5 June 2003), he advocated that Singapore citizens become adventurers in life and that the resource-less Singapore should transform itself into a vibrant adventuring nation:

As a small country with limited natural resources, we have to punch above our weight in many areas in order to survive and succeed. To be a vibrant nation, we need creativity, passion and an adventurous spirit to scale the many mountains facing us. Singaporeans must have the guts and skills to face whatever challenges and to overcome them. (Reutens 2001: Foreword)

Clearly, Goh’s remarks should be seen in the context of a longstanding conception of Singapore as an island-state dependent on its human resources. Singapore’s aspirations and demands for its human resource, however, are changing. A new kind of Singapore subject is desired. In less metaphorical terms, Goh and his party may have meant the constitution of the kind of ‘flexible’ subjects Coe and Kelly (2002:362) described as possessing:

The flexibility to accept lower wages when necessary to assist in employers’ continued profitability...the flexibility to embrace changes in career directions; to acquire new skills and especially computer literacy and technical competencies; to accept retrenchment and eventually re-employment as a fact of life; and finally the flexibility to think creatively and innovatively in order to further add value to a technologically dynamic economy.

Goh's comments originated from a foreword he penned for the Singapore Antarctica expedition team's commemorative publication (which was given to participants of the Singapore Amazing Race in their 'goody' bags). This adventure picture book is instructive. Sponsored by the Northeast Community Development Council, an administrative and town management arm of PAP, it was meant for promoting 'adventure-citizens' to cope with New Economy aspirations. The adventure-citizen and the adventurer are not unpredictable and anti-social/subversive individuals as some would expect a totally "entrepreneurial" and "calculating" self (Rose, 1992: 147) might be. The PAP ideal citizen has to become more than just an entrepreneurial self, as to promote just the attributes of an entrepreneur self undermines the emphasis on community and deference to authority – 'Asian Values' promoted and characteristics of life under PAP's rule. The individualistic and risk-seeking entrepreneurial self also potentially threatens the East Asian and Chinese way of doing business and the concept of *guanxi*. These tensions, however, can be resolved in the kind of 'adventure-citizen' Goh promoted. Discipline and submission to team ideals are key attributes of contemporary adventurers who venture in closely knitted teams. For example, the Antarctica adventurers' incredible feat – which originated as personal pursuits – has been extrapolated as national successes achieved not only through individual brilliance but through exceptional leadership and teamwork as well. The political message is for Singapore citizens to look up to this new breed of 'adventure-citizens' and to employ the kind of "guts and skills" to negotiate the terrains of their new workplace struggles and challenges. The adventure-citizen is one

who is creative, passionate and always ready for and welcoming of uncertainties and difficulties. They must also aspire to become high-performing workers capable of not just “getting the job done” but hyper-productive ones willing to “punch above our weight in many areas in order to survive and succeed” (Goh in Reutens, 2001: Foreword).

Clearly, Goh and his colleagues are well-aware that the single largest and longest-standing ‘adventure programme’ involving the majority of the healthy male Singaporeans has to be the compulsory National Service. Modelled after the Israeli programme, the Singapore Armed Forces employ only a small core of 50, 000 professional soldiers complemented by 250, 000 national servicemen (Leifer, 2000: 16). National service is compulsory for all male citizens certified medically fit and the bulk of the servicemen are enlisted at the age of 18. National service was two and a half years for commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Lower ranking soldiers served a two year national service duration. It was only in early 2004 that a standard two year duration has been effected across all servicemen in all vocations. Military training in the various brigades and their training schools have provided many Singaporean males their first sustained exposure to adventure and the outdoors. Field trainings in the military exclusive but limited training grounds, for instance, in the hilly environments of Pasir Laba and in the nation-state’s second largest island Pulau Tekong have long provided ‘adventure trainings’ for national servicemen. Overseas training sites secured through stable diplomatic ties in People’s Republic of China (Taiwan), Brunei and South Africa provided outdoor experiences outside the nation-



state's limited 'nature'. Thus National Service refracted Singaporean's adventure tourist gaze along gender lines and helped shape male citizen's adventure experience and motivation. The ways in which these military schemes have shaped male citizens' tourist gaze is clearly varied but the general 'effect' military outdoor/field trainings have on these would-be adventure tourists is that adventure is an appropriate technology for potentially actualising not just competent soldiers but also, in general, 'rugged' selves.

The adventure tour is promoted as a technology of the Singaporean self. This technology of the self is environmental and necessitates a geographical imagining of outdoor settings. The outdoor settings and adventure landscapes, to be illustrated in the next section, become 'gymnasiums' in the 'outdoors' - as opposed to the artificial but comfortable air-conditioned ones urban Singaporeans are used to - in the geographical imaginations of my informants as we prepare for and anticipate our adventure tours.

#### **4.3 Adventurism and geographically imagining 'outdoor gymnasiums'**

You want to know why I like to scuba-dive right? Ok, it is because I like the underwater world. It is adventurous and I come out of my comfort zone. It is not like safe package tour. That one is for the old uncles and aunties. We are different. We are the new kind of people for the new world. When we dive, we

don't know what to expect, what we will see. The marine world is fascinating and fast-changing. (Ben Lim)

I like going to the outdoors and to be near nature cos it is like the kampung days when we are more independent. Now Singaporeans are too comfortable. That is why you see we are losing the jobs. The economy doesn't have the kind of inventive people anymore. (Poh Leong Huat)

Package tours, young adventure tourists like Ben reckons, are for the elderly. Poh and other senior adventure tourists, however, see adventure landscapes' often natural settings as a source of creativity and nostalgia for a more inventive past. What is common, though, is the ways in which adventure landscapes constitute a technology for self-reformation. Here I recall Andy's story. His emphasis on being 'gung-ho' and independent as essential attributes he expected of his fellow backpackers points to an internalisation of the kind of discourses I discussed in the previous section. Adventurism, as a form of self-regulation, governs these backpackers from 'within'. Andy expected his fellow travellers to self-regulate the way he was going to. Andy's story also signals a geographical imagining of adventure landscapes as places to 'toughen' oneself. These adventure landscapes were perceived and anticipated as 'outdoor gymnasiums' for Andy and company to work on their 'could-be-tougher' subjectivities. In this way, adventure tours resemble less of an escape and quest for freedom.

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training (BOAT) Orientation Camp held at Loyang Campsite, what was perceived to be a leisurely camp turned out to be a fast-paced and hectic one. We were put through many rounds of team-building games and the rationale, we were told, was that teamwork and group spirit are crucial for adventure. One BOAT instructor said:

In this course, we have to teach all of you how to survive in the outdoors. I know all of us no longer live in *kampungs* (village). We live in nice HDB. In Singapore, everything is easy. You want to go to Yishun, you just need to wave at the taxi uncle, he'll drive you there. In adventure, it's different. There are no taxis or MRTs there. It is not Singapore, you have to realise. Everything is 'bus 11' (means travelling on one's own two legs). Everything we must carry ourselves. We must be strong and independent. No one to rely on during the expeditions. If you cannot move, your trekking mates will have to carry you and your load. You become burden *lah!* (Chun Kiat)

The emphasis was not on making us great athletes but to become self-reliant individuals who would not become liabilities to expedition mates. Expedition mates, however, must be prepared to help out in cases of contingencies. Another instructor reassured:

But if you *suay suay* (unlucky) *kena* (got) accident then of course all of us must help out. Team spirit and friendship is very important. (Cheok Kwong)

Many of us likened such trainings as part of our necessary self-development in the New Economy. Two responses from fellow trainees include:

[I] think this adventure course helps prepare me for working world. Now no longer the same... they want people who are different...you know? I know what I am saying resembles the SMU (Singapore Management University – an institution claiming to be producing different students suitable for the New Economy) advertisement. (Swee Leng)

If you think about it, adventure is more important today. I am not ‘carrying balls’ for the ‘gahmen’ (government) but you keep hearing people say we need to be daring and creative and to venture out lah. Maybe there are some truth to it. We must not see adventure as adventure. Maybe we should see our coming expeditions as training for our character. I think I’ll see it as a test of strength, not physical strength, but mental and perhaps spiritual, you know what I mean. If I can push myself to the limits, get out of my comfort zone, then it gives me confidence I can survive in whatever economy they are talking about. (Han Chin)

These quotes derived from extended conversations with two fellow trainees. Their detail and length may be unusual but their content is typical of BOAT trainees. Since the adventure course is conducted during Singapore’s major economic re-structuring,

we were constantly ‘bombaraded’ in our everyday lives by the international business rhetoric and many of us accept the training rhetoric. We accept them by relating to new economy and workplace discourses.

There was also the anticipation of our then forthcoming expedition destinations and adventure landscapes as ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ as we are expected to work on both our physical fitness and tune our attitudes to better make use of such reconditioning techniques. Yet, the re-conditioning of our ‘souls’ is deemed more vital than the ‘reformation’ of our bodies. The BOAT course consists of many individuals who did not (both before and during the course) exercise regularly. One trainee stated:

Before coming for the course, I rarely exercise. But now I’ll try to come for the physical training sessions regularly so I can enjoy the expeditions. If I wait till the actual trek to exercise, then it will be too late. Preparation now will ensure I get to the top of Mount Ophir. I want to be inspired by the view from the top. You know the Chinese saying that talks about working hard so that one can get to see the splendid view from above? Yeah, that is what I mean. (Cheng Hoon)

We are not young anymore...not so fit...cannot run here and there like before. But now we got experience. But of course we cannot become dictated by what we always do. The good thing about adventure is it forces us to be open and stay adaptable. If the ground change, we change our plans. Plan A don’t work, we come out with Plan B. No problem. (Terence)

Thus, the physical fitness is seen as a pre-requisite and not a goal of the expeditions to come. Becoming an adventure-citizen is different from becoming an athlete. The adventure landscapes are, as fellow trainees perceived, ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ which hold the potential to ‘train’ our subjectivities (rather than our bodies) and to inspire us to become adaptable, flexible and rugged adventure-citizens.

Groups such as the Rovers do not have the luxury of time to meet up and/or train fellow travellers/members prior to the tours. However, we can still see an internalisation of adventurism in the Wanderers’ pre-trip e-mail briefing. The e-mail written and disseminated by the trip leader stated:

Hi there to all the people...As I worked out the itinerary, I can see that it’s super duper pack and we really have to rush. It’s so Amazing Race – running here and running there from after Chiang Mai till Day 1, Pattaya. Things will get really fast pace from Sukothai onwards. A lot of rushing and running here and there. Well, that’s also adventure right?

This connection with the popular TV game show *The Amazing Race* illuminates the kind of adventure-citizen ideal desired in the trip. Instead of being a leisurely pursuit, our backpacking tour is going to be hectic. Rather than envisioning it as a non-work, the tour leader anticipated it to be less of a vacation and more of a work-out for our less-than-rugged Singaporean selves. The Thai backpacker landscape is imagined to

be a dangerous and dishonest landscape which many Singaporeans are not adept at surviving. We were told that we can better survive if we hide our Singaporean identity:

Dress lightly and not so extravagantly, unless you're out going to the pub at night. Otherwise, dress simple and plain. Don't give them the impression that you're Singaporean, then they can cheat you. I became a Pilipino over there, and they know we aren't rich. Mostly I was clad in t-shirt, berms and slippers.

The e-mail alluded to an expectation of self-development. One in which the naïve and gullible Singaporean student transforms into a streetwise and rugged traveller. The Thai backpacker landscape was anticipated as an 'outdoor gymnasium' which potentially re-configures our 'soft' Singaporean subjectivities. This commonly takes a gender dimension and female Singaporean students' subjectivities were seen as doubly 'soft':

This trip is great in that we have equal number of guys and girls. So, we can split 2 guys and 2 girls per team, especially for cabs and walk around. Girls, please do not walk on your own – I am very worried about this. *Seerious!* So, grab a guy along. Daytime is ok, but at night – a bit hmmm...

Like this tour leader, many male Singaporean students perceived their female counterparts to be incapable of fending for themselves in places such as Thailand.

Their ability to realise themselves in dangerous spaces were deemed possible, only if they were escorted by their male counterparts.

As a result of self-government via adventure tourism, ‘outdoor’ settings such as the *sois* or lanes of Bangkok have been geographically imagined as ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ serving as environmental technologies for transforming citizens. The backpacking adventure tour is anticipated at pre-trip by the tour leader to be a technology capable of transforming ‘pampered’ NUS students into rugged ‘adventure-citizens’. The responses to such expectations, however, were not studied for the Rovers group did not meet prior to the trip. This email ‘briefing’ is the only source of pre-trip information. In the next chapter, however, I will elaborate on their adventurism and/in their actual conduct of adventure tours.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have considered the shaping of the adventurism-constructed gaze. I did this via an identification and discussion of the nodes and sites of adventure discourse circulation. From adventure fairs to employment talks, this investigation has foregrounded many everyday spaces not commonly associated with adventure. I connected such articulation and promotion of adventure within the broader context of international business discourses and environment, the PAP rhetoric and the New Economy. I have demonstrated that non-tourism avenues which construct and



reinforce the tourist gaze go beyond the mass media and popular culture and can include the workings of a state-sanctioned self-government I termed ‘adventurism’.

Adventurism motivates the alignment of work with adventure ideals and it brings about my informants’ aspirations to become flexible, adaptable and rugged ‘adventure-citizens’. My observation of a promotion of Singapore-specific ideal of adventure-citizen resonates with geographer Nigel Thrift’s (2000) observations of “fast subjects” in his study of managerial culture and spaces in the New Economy. Beyond Thrift’s managerial spaces of the office and textual spaces of business journals, I have described how these subjects were promoted in spaces such as the People’s Forum, student mountaineering projects and an adventure course.

I have demonstrated that the adventure tour is promoted as a technology for transforming citizens into adventure-citizens. This technology of the adventure tourist self is environmental and necessitates a geographical imagining of outdoor settings as what I term ‘outdoor gymnasiums’. The outdoor settings and adventure landscapes, this chapter has illustrated, become ‘outdoor gymnasiums’ in the geographical imaginations of my informants as they prepare for and anticipate their adventure tours. In the next chapter, I consider the other ‘effects’ of adventurism during the actual conduct of adventure tours – the proliferation of specific environmental practices and the role of the visual.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Gaze on an Adventure Tour**

## 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the shaping of the adventure tourist gaze by new economy discourses. I will now proceed to discuss the workings of the adventure tourist gaze within the specific context of adventure landscapes. This inquiry is divided into two sections. The first investigates the use of adventure tours as an environmental “technology of the self” (see Foucault, 1988). I will demonstrate that my informants’ adventure tours are programmes and devices that also permit them to effect, by their own choice and means or guided by ‘expert’ others, conditionings on their bodies and selves. To do this, I will show that my informants’ experiences and performances of adventure tours can be likened to ‘scheduled workouts’ in ‘outdoor gymnasiums’. These outdoor gymnasiums were constructed - via the adventurers’ own ways of seeing - as devices to (re)condition their characters and mindsets. Instead of merely constituting avenues to achieve freedom and escape, I argue that adventure tours are also technologies and schemes co-opted to for their self-government.

The second section examines the visual in adventure tourism. I will describe the various ways of collecting visual signs during adventure tours, the types of signs collected and the roles this ‘shopping’ for visual signs play in the constitution of these adventure tours. I draw upon the works of MacCannell and Urry on the nature of visual consumption and tourist subjectification to study my informants’ tourist gaze. I conclude with a consideration of the adventure tours as environmental technologies of

selves organised by adventurism, and a discussion of the ways the workings of the visual in these tours may further contribute to the understanding of the tourist gaze.

## **5.2 Environmental technologies of the self: Scheduled workouts in ‘outdoor gymnasiums’**

To senior adventure tourists, the rural landscapes of Peninsula Malaysia reminded them of the old *kampung* (or village) lifestyle they used to lead in Singapore prior to the nation’s massive urban development project of the 1960s (Plate 5.1). However, this reminder is not merely a nostalgic one:

This thing about enterprise and creativity is not new. My generation of Singaporeans, we grow up in *kampungs* (villages), we play by the river and we play home-made toys. That is how we became innovative! (Richmond)

[Growing up in kampungs,] that’s how we made Singapore successful. But your generation? You all grow up in HDB, everything is structured, everything is prepared for you, everything is concrete and high-rise. (Yee Teck)

To these senior adventure tourists, the adventure landscapes of Peninsula Malaysia, particularly Pulau Perhentian, thus became an environmental technique and scheme that helps to realize appropriately creative and rugged Singaporeans, one, as Mei Hwa reckoned, that is more effective than the education system in Singapore:

I think to make new generation of Singaporeans creative, all you need to do is forget about school reforms and curriculum revisions, and just get those young punks to do adventure. (Mei Hwa)



*Plate 5.1 Richmond and the SAC adventurers at Pulau Perhentian, Malaysia*

The notion of rural environments as a technology that is capable of releasing rugged selves was also shared by many of the younger informants, many of whom had expressed their longing for an environment that preceded urban development. For example, they wanted, among other things, to experience living in zinc-roofed wooden

houses. More significantly, many of them thought that surviving in a more rural and less convenient environment, without modern luxuries, would help to make them more creative, innovative and flexible. As Hwee Mei, a young SAC member, commented, “people who had gone through hardship in the *kampungs* will make better and tougher individuals.”

The comments made during this rather leisurely trip should be seen in the wider context of my informants’ participation in other SAC activities. These activities are graded in terms of difficulty. Although originally meant to serve as a guideline for prospective participants to gauge the suitability of the adventure tours, I argue that, in my informants’ worlds, the various gradings - “rest and relax, easy, intermediate, difficult and expert” (SAC email briefings) - were also benchmarks that they could use to measure their own adventure competency. Adventure competency, in turn, is tied to notions of flexibility, ruggedness and innovation. Like levels of difficulty/competency in gymnasium workouts, they strive to work from one level to the next.

Below, I present an extract from my research diary to illustrate how a border-crossing episode in a backpacking tour can simultaneously be seen as a means of acquiring and shaping adventure-citizen selves:

*The sun was setting. We were sitting on the beach 5 minutes walk from our resort accommodation on Pulau Redang. We had done the*

Pulau Redang part of the trip as what Ah Keng called "just another tour". The real adventure, he reckoned, should come after we leave the main group on the Malaysian island. Leaving the main group, we would travel up North to Southern Thailand. We had yet to sort out the route, particularly the custom crossing at Sungei Gulok. "Yeah bro, that's where the adventure lies!" Ah Keng said. "That was what we came for" Tien Ming agreed. We were determined to make it a good backpacking adventure. We spent the rest of the night strolling on the beach and drinking beer.

The next morning, we left the main group at Pulau Redang and set off to find ourselves a bus that would take us up North. We had little trouble doing this in the sleepy town as Ah Keng speaks good Bahasa. We spent the waiting time roaming the streets before boarding our bus for Sungei Gulok. We reached Sungei Gulok in the evening and were making our border crossing on foot. June was surprised none of us leading the group had any experience making this border crossing on foot. She started to make a fuss and complained we were irresponsible and did not do enough "research

and planning". "But this is the adventure!" Ah Keng, Tien Ming and I explained. Joshua and Janice agreed that this seemed fun and adventurous and tried to calm June down.

After settling the custom procedures, we went in search for our transport to the Thai province, Krabi. We were told by one of the guards at the Thai custom office that the last cheap public bus will be setting off in about ten minute's time. Hearing that, we started to run in the direction he pointed to, hoping to catch that last budget mode of transport. The girls commented that this was "so Amazing Race" and started to imagine doing this backpacking tour as contestants of the popular American travel game-show. After the initial excitement, reality crept in and we realised we were never going to make that last public bus to Krabi.

It was getting dark and we were beginning to panic. We realised that as foreigners and tourists, we were extremely visible in this little border town. None of us wanted to be stranded in this 'sleazy' town for the night. After some frantic searching, we found a mini



van which would take us to our destination for a very high fee we would be embarrassed to disclose. On the van, we began to laugh at our own misadventure but felt that this was the only way we were going to learn - by hitting the road less travelled on our own.

The streetscape of the border town was our 'outdoor gymnasium' and we were, because of our misadventure, progressing from being pampered package tourists to becoming streetwise travellers. The intended contingency - by deliberately not planning - was essential in re-conditioning us as adventure-citizens. The transit route from Pulau Redang to Sungei Gulok to Krabi Town was deployed as an outdoor gymnasium for our self-actualisations. However, it can only become an effective outdoor gymnasium and environmental technology when certain nodes and crossings in the route were left uncharted, which was why Tien Ming, Ah Keng and I deliberately left that part of the trip unplanned. As a result, on this particular backpacking trip, the contingency brought out the flexibility, innovation and ruggedness in us, characteristics of a seasoned streetwise traveller (Plate 5.2). Still, this was not appreciated by all in the group and June was upset that we did not do enough travel itinerary planning and research for the Sungei Gulok crossing.



***Plate 5.2 Realising oneself adventurously via backpacking***

Notions of risk-taking and contingency were key ideals in the course of my fieldwork on adventure training. During the 11<sup>th</sup> Basic Outdoor Adventure Training Course (BOAT), for instance, most of the trainees felt guilty of the sedentary and safe lifestyles that they have been leading, and thus aspired to acquire adventure skills so that they could go on expeditions in rugged and sublime places in foreign and ‘exotic’ lands. Towards that end, trainees left the ‘comfort’ zones of their offices and apartments and signed up for the course that would equip them with essential outdoor skills. Expeditions were also lined up for them to test these newly-acquired capabilities.

Many of the adventure ideals and ethics promoted and ‘taught’ in the course were actually extrapolations from workplace environments, notably ideas with regards to coping with the new economy and economic re-structuring. Teamwork, perseverance and the ability to deal with contingencies were among the recurring themes in the course. We were governed by ideals of team-building and self-improvement/competency to ‘realise ourselves’ according to course objectives, requirements and deliverables. In choosing to realise ourselves in this way, we were therefore governed through our freedom (Rose, 1999). There was also an emphasis on our ability to handle “accidents”, “crisis” and other things that we could not “pre-plan” during our expeditions. This resonated with the tensions between the PAP top-down policy planning and the party’s promotion of autonomy and contingency in the adventurer-citizen. The fast changing adventure terrains, like the new capitalist workplace in the new ‘globalised’ economy, were places where rugged and enterprising adventurer-citizens were desired. Landscapes of adventures are outdoor gymnasiums for adventure trainees, one which required not just a bodily and ‘touristic’ engagement with the landscapes of adventure, but also called for an alignment of work and adventure, something that is in line with what PM Goh, the PAP and the ERC desired.

For backpacking adventure tourists from Rovers Adventure Club, progressing from pampered Singapore subjects into streetwise cosmopolitan travellers involved not just getting from place to place efficiently and safely or negotiating natural barriers

adventurously. For them, it also necessitated the acquisition of social skills to survive (travelling) group dynamics, in a way that is no different from outwitting or outlasting rival contestants in another popular American game show *Survivor*. Below is a research diary extract illustrating this self-produced 'Survivor' episode:

It was nine in the morning and we were all gathered at Suk-11's dining area for our breakfast. All was peaceful till the Thai police arrived. Apparently, our group leader Iskander had made a police report. The Rover's fund for this trip was stolen last night. He suspected that it was an inside job and we were ushered to an unused wooden house in Suk-11. I was later told by an informant that I had been the prime suspect for they found my reason for joining the trip strange. After they had gone through everyone's backpacks and had everyone searched, we left Suk-11 and went about our backpacking tour. However, the issue of the theft and the allegations of "an inside job" lingered. One by one, we took turns being the key suspect and various conspiracy theories were formulated by the tour leader's in-group. We had our bags secretly searched by the Rovers main committee members.

After five days of realising ourselves adventurously doing hill tribe treks, bamboo rafting and elephant riding, we returned to Suk-11. There, the main committee had arrived at the conclusion/assumption that the most suspicious person is Cheng Peng and were determined to 'convict' him. After some interrogation, he was evicted from the group the next morning. As we continued to backpack without Cheng Peng, the sois and lanes and the peoples of the backpacking landscape were viewed with a certain degree of suspicion. Yet, some of us appreciated the dangers and risks involved in such a mode of travel. "We had to be independent and less trusting" some of my informants would say during the course of our adventure. "We cannot even trust our own travelling mates", one of them elaborated.

Theft and other petty crimes were common in backpacker places in Southeast Asia. These were amongst the many 'challenges' a backpacker 'ought' to tackle. Thus, risk-taking and contingencies are not only located in "natural settings" or "the great outdoors" which many adventure tourism researches focus on. Managing group dynamics, as shown in this example, was also paramount. The social settings created in the backpacker hostels and other gathering places, while clearly not belonging to

the 'outdoors', can therefore also be considered as 'gymnasiums' for the same purpose of realising streetwise travellers and 'adventure-citizens'.

Not all attempts at realising adventure citizens involved the ousting of adventure mates. In scuba diving, adventure tourists realised themselves through ventures and sightings in 'sublime' underwater reefscales. I recalled with amusement my group of leisure divers' search for their elusive manta ray. Having devoured spicy stingrays as a delicacy, the ultimate goal of these Singaporean divers was to see a real giant manta ray, a sighting that is highly regarded in the local dive community. The manta ray is also a recurrent motif in the archive of dive imagery. One proof of its significance can be found in its use as a logo for the Asia Dive Expo. Here is a research diary account of our manta-hunt at Turtle House:

Having skipped a previous dive that morning due to blocked air channels in my sinuses, I rejoined this group of hyper-macho leisure divers who were platoon mates during their compulsory military service in the commando brigade in the late morning for another boat trip to Turtle House from Happy Water's resort. I am amused that after much bragging on how good they are at 'manta-hunting', they had not seen that elusive manta ray they wanted to see so badly and I am amazed at the impact this had on their morale. Just

when our dive boat was about to reach our dive site, Turtle House, one of them said something really interesting:

"Actually hor, I saw a real manta before...that time when I go to the underwater world at Sentosa..."

I am sure Heng meant to cheer his brigade buddies up but his words were met with much disgust and his standing in their pecking order of masculinity/adventure dropped drastically. Among the retorts were:

"Wah lau (exclamation, of disgust), you gu niang (young lady) ah? Sentosa one also count?"

With that, Heng's inauthentic and 'out-of-place' sighting of manta rays at the giant aquarium of Singapore's tourist island, Sentosa, relegated him to the ranks of the feminine or effeminate. Ignoring his pleas for a reassessment of his potentially adventurous/macho self, we put on our dive gears and submerged ourselves for yet

another search for the authentic/in-situ/real sighting of manta rays in Turtle House.

In-situ and real sightings of marine creatures such as manta rays and sharks are prized trophies which confer adventure authority on scuba divers. The underwater environments are deemed dangerous spaces – as opposed to the safety of marine theme parks and aquariums - by the scuba diving community I encountered during fieldwork. Divers acknowledge the risk and danger involved in their underwater adventures but believe that with adequate training, one will acquire the competency to explore the underwater landscape safely and ‘hunt’ for their favoured marine creatures. These trainings are provided by cultural/adventure authorities such as the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) and National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI). Besides training scuba divers, these authorities also certify scuba dive tour operations based on the operators competency in managing the scuba diving risk. And because of this real and perceived danger, the underwater world becomes an ideal outdoor gymnasium to realise adventure-citizens.

Scuba diving is not inherently dangerous. Neither are scuba-dives necessarily adrenaline-pumping activities. However, to scuba dive, many informants often allude to the need for an entrepreneurial mindset - one that is open to contingencies in a fast changing landscape (of changing visibility, lost guides and encounters with dangerous marine forms) - and the ability to adapt to a new environment. Humans are not configured to survive underwater. It is therefore not uncommon for scuba divers,



particularly beginner divers and trainees, to quit as a result of problems, psychological and/or bodily, adapting to the underwater environment. By venturing into a landscape we are not bodily-designed for and for some, not psychologically prepared for, regardless of how safely and easily we do it, it is still a means of getting out of our 'comfort zones'. However, in many cases, we do not venture only for the sake of freedom and escape; our motivations and tourist gazes are also bound up with ideas of the New Economy.

Divers, like workers in a workplace shaped by adventurism and the new economy, need to "upgrade" their skills constantly and are encouraged to go for a myriad of scuba courses to better their underwater proficiency. The underwater world is a fast changing and unpredictable terrain, much like the workplace in the new economy. Having discussed the aspect of self-realizations in my informants' practice of adventure tourism, I proceed now to investigate the role and workings of the visual in their performance of adventure tourism.

### **5.3 The visual in adventure tours**

In this section, I consider the visual nature of my informants' adventure tours in three ways. First, I will show how the collection of visual signs supports and complements their scheduled workouts in outdoor gymnasiums. This will be followed by an examination of how this visual consumption is maintained and sustained by other discourses as described by Urry in *The Tourist Gaze*. Subsequently, I will

demonstrate the ways in which the 'shopping' for visual signs, especially via tourist photography, can be an end in itself. As these three practices co-exist, it is therefore not useful to separate them empirically. What I will do instead, is focus on the process of visual sign collection, the types of signs collected and their roles in adventure tours by presenting stories and dialogues which illustrate them. In a research diary account which follows, I describe how seeing adventure sites both complements the 'workouts' in 'outdoor gymnasiums' and motivates the underwater tour itself.

The dive site we 'travelled' in the afternoon is a small 'atoll' of coral resembling a small underwater house. The people at the dive shop named it 'turtle house'. We find it a great name. The guys loved it for it signals the possibility of spotting and riding turtles. Other less adventurous ones - including myself - liked it for it hints at the possibility of a less demanding dive. It certainly sounds more sedentary and 'relac' (Malay-Singaporean slang for relaxing) than say, "Shark's Den"! After fifteen minutes of sightseeing and photo-taking on the dive boat, we were told to start our dive. Lazily, we chased away our post-lunch blues and put on our heavy dive gears. Steven commented that it seems to get heavier and heavier each time we get out here. It is worth noting that this un-macho

comment comes only after the ladies took their 'back-rolls', plunged into the waters and vacated the dive boat. I smiled in agreement. Being the one with the tiniest physique and lousiest fitness, I could not agree more. I was the last to enter the water this time. By the time I got my head beneath the water mark, most of the dive group had already descended and were hovering above the sea bed. They looked impatient. As I descended after my quick safety check - happy to have made a competent descent as they watched - I realised something is not so right. My otherwise trusty face mask is fogging up and 'turtle house' is starting to look real misty. I know my dive is ruined. Through the mist and fog, I saw Kay Soon and Shin Har swim towards me. They saw my fogging mask and were 'finning' over to help guide me. I was about to feel really fortunate to have a dive master and a fellow diver tow me along until they started mocking me. Their message is clear: why dive when you cannot see? Visiting a dive site without sight - they seemed to be handsigning (the main form of scuba communication underwater) - is a waste of money and effort.

A tourism experience employs a variety of senses – taste, smell, touch and hearing - but it is only within a visually stunning geography, setting and scenery, so suggests Urry, that it becomes a meaningful one for the tourist. For my scuba diving informants, it is the sight of the thriving coral habitat or that of an eerie ship-wreck that drew them into the depths of the oceans. Similarly, it was the inspirational view from the snow-capped mountains that motivated the mountain trail trekkers, and for the jungle trekkers, it was the sightings of primitive flora and fauna.

Visual consumption is not a simple and straight forward process (Urry, 1990). Tourism and viewing involve the collections of signs. Signs which are collected by adventure tourists have to be visually extraordinary. The adventure tourist who is a regular office worker would desire to see something that is very different from that of their more familiar photocopying machines, workstations and corporate gatherings. Certainly, it has to be something that sets them apart from their normal everyday lives, or even other tourism experiences:

I am stuck in the office for close to seven days a week. I constantly feel the urge to get out. I long to see the night sky, the birds, the trees, the rivers...anything but the photocopier or the computer. I can't do this with most beach resorts or package tours. They will bring me to five star hotels with all the internet connections and office facilities and I will see the same things again... I love to explore nature's gift... you are a geography student, you should understand what I am saying. (Siew Choo)

Thus, office workers would want to see sceneries of jungle trails, mountain ranges and thriving coral reef-scapes. And while photocopiers, facsimile machines and personal computers remind them of sophisticated office technologies, the coral reef-scape conjures images of the wonders of nature:

When I get to see all the Nemos (clown fishes), soft corals and other fascinating creatures of the ocean, I am reminded of the magic and wonders of Mother Nature. These make scuba diving very enriching and meaningful. (Lin Wee)

The sights/sites one gets on a mountain range is awe-inspiring because it signifies the conquest of treacherous mountain terrains:

I know this sounds funny but this view we get here (on top of Mount Ophir) is rewarding and beautiful because we put in so much effort in getting here. The trails and treks are not easy and many of us are not seasoned trekkers. But the idea that we urban people can come and, through teamwork and perseverance, conquer a difficult Malaysian peak is commendable. We may not be the first to get here and this is not as treacherous a mountain as the Himalayas but for us, amateur adventurers with busy day jobs, this is as much of an achievement as

the professionals when they put their stupid flag on some funny mountain after they spent lots of money on cutting edge technology and equipment. (Ian Lim)

When my informants see a narrow jungle trail, what is sometimes captured is a sight of the ‘virgin/primitive’ jungle and, depending on the richness of their imaginations, ‘possibly’ populated by “savages lost in time”:

Are there cannibals in this forest? [Laughs] I know there probably isn’t any but we can imagine right? Anyway this jungle looks so *ulu* (Malay slang for desolate) and primitive...maybe there are some undiscovered peoples? Like people lost in time? Know this sounds crazy but we have to be imaginative so the trek will be fun, don’t you agree? (Diana)

There are two kinds of signs a tourist can collect (Urry, 1990). First, the seeing of a completely unique object, such as the scenic view of the Silk Road, the spectacular rapids of New Zealand and the top-of-the-world view from the peak of Everest on an adventure tour. There are of course unique signs adventure tourists could collect without extensive training or a professional’s budget and funding:

I have a couple of favourites. There is the view from Mount Kinabalu...the rooftop of Southeast Asia...there you can see spectacular granite structures exposed and uneroded...the sharp edges attenuated by the rising sun is a picture most people want to take when they get on the top. (John Lu)

I remember seeing this idyllic village in Vietnam. The road is long and winding and the countryside looks so scenic. There are no industry, no cars and no morning rush for work. Everything looks so peaceful. It is the most authentic Southeast Asian place I've seen. (Winnie Ng)

The waterfalls of Stong! Cheap and good. Best value for money scenery...but do watch out for the leeches in the water! (Tan Chin Leong)

For many Singaporean adventure tourists, the view from Mount Kinabalu of 'Borneo', the winding roads of countryside Vietnam and the streams and waterfalls of Peninsula Malaysia are accessible but still unique signs suitable for their tourist gaze.

The second type of signs a tourist can collect are of the more mundane variety such as plaques, street signage and other markers for famous mountains, lanes and other adventure places. These objects with no outstanding qualities are collected as they help to articulate the uniqueness and worthiness of another object. During fieldwork, plaques, signage and markers which describe the height, location or other attributes of adventure difficulty were amongst the most popular sites/sights for our tourist gaze and photographic frames. These included the height marker on top of Mount Ophir (Plate. 5.3; Plate 5.4 and Plate 5.5), the street signage at Sungei Gulok border town and gigantic maps placed at dive shops depicting dive locations. For the adventurers, these markers would then serve as documented evidences of their "having

being there and done that” and were extremely useful in their subsequent adventure narrations.



*Plate 5.3 Adventure tourists turned adventure photographers*



*Plate 5.4 BOAT trainees posing for the camera*





*Plate 5.5 Taking group photographs at the spot height marker at the peak of Mount Ophir*

Tourist technologies are also specially (re)configured for the systematic collection of these adventure signs. Tourist maps and guides detail the route and location of spectacular sites/sights hence essentially making them visual technologies. The adventure tourist is perhaps the most adept geographer in the spectrum of tourists. Map-reading and topography are essential lectures in basic adventure courses, and underwater navigation is a skill taught in advance scuba diving. Maps and guides are ‘scientific’ visual recordings documented by expert travellers, cartographers and modern-day ‘explorers’. Popular and personal technologies for recording the visual are

available too. The rise in adventure tourists from Singapore also coincides with the proliferation of affordable, user-friendly and maintenance free ‘adventure photography’ gears. Underwater casings for digital items, once a specialized equipment used only for professional underwater photography, are now becoming popular with novice scuba divers as well, particularly with the recent introduction of cheap and easy-to-use models. ‘Shatterproof’ and rugged photographic gears have also entered the market. These are evidences of industry recognition of the visual nature of adventure tourism consumption.

Yet, is adventure tourism not a different kind of tourism emphasising the bodily engagement with nature as so many would argue? The role and relevance of the visual consumption in adventure tourism cannot be disputed. Adventure tours are physically demanding activities but very often, fitness is a prerequisite and not an objective. What is worked upon is the self/subject (or ‘character’) and less so of the body. The same bodily exercises could be practised using resistant machines and treadmills in air-conditioned gymnasiums, on jogging tracks and doing competitive sports. For many adventure tourists, however, the adventure tours promise more than just fitness and health:

I did not do adventure for just physical fitness. I don’t think I’ve become fitter by doing the treks and camps. Daily jogs and other exercise regimes sound more useful if fitness improvement is what I’m seeking. (Daryl Lee, 31)

Although some adventure tourists view bruises and insect bites, or well-toned physiques, as trophies acquired from adventures, these ‘achievements’ would appear meaningless (and even silly) if they were not derived from travelling in visually inspiring or treacherous geographies:

Getting bitten by a jellyfish here (at a beautiful dive site off Trengganu) is worth it *lah*. Different story if you ask me this happened at our Pulau Hantu (island in Singapore with low visibility and less thriving coral growth). (Teck Hwa, 32 Engineer and scuba diving tourist with Bluewave Adventure Tours).

In line with Urry’s argument of the tourist in *The Tourist Gaze*, adventure tours have to take place at sites which are visually stunning and distinct from the perceived safety and mundane-ness of everyday life. Like other forms of tours, there is active visual consumption in adventure tours. Photography, videography and journal sketches are fundamental components of trekking, backpacking, abseiling, mountaineering, biking, sky diving, base-jumping and scuba diving. These collection of signs helps to re-configure adventure places as ‘outdoor gymnasiums’, and for the adventure tourists, aids in their realisation of adventurous selves in and through these tours. The active search for the most sublime images in adventure places re-affirms the inspirational nature or the character development component of their tours. It helps focus the adventure tourist’s desire to seek out adventure during the tour. Having “seen it at the top” or “seen it there” (Plate 5.4) and backing this claim with photographic or even

videographic evidence were also crucial in my informants' reflection and narration of their adventures.



***Plate 5.6 Seeing Nemo 'there': 'sight-seeing' in underwater environments***

The conventional notion that adventure tourism is a form of tourism motivated by a bodily engagement with the 'outdoors' or 'nature' may stem from the extensive training some have to undergo before they can access certain adventure tours. The various trainings for adventure tourism impart adventure skills which obviously require a corporeal and bodily engagement with adventure landscapes for there is the need to train adventure tourists to bodily cope with the adventure environments. However, trainings do more than just that.

More often than not, trainings include environmental conservation ideas and ethics about overcoming crisis and the ability to act on the contingent. These are based

on a visual appreciation/consumption of these ‘uncertain’ and ‘treacherous’ environments. However, with the exception of the niche group of expert adventurers, adventure tourists usually merely ‘see’ the treacherous environments. Scuba divers, for instance, only get to see a World War Two battleship, but they would never know what participating in the war or experiencing its many atrocities and dangers would have been like.

Most adventure tourists are ‘soft’ or amateur adventurers who gaze upon treacherous terrains from a distance and seldom subject themselves to real danger. Even when they do enter these life-threatening environments, they are often trained and certified by expert trainers and equipped with technologies which guarantee high levels of safety. Hence, their consumption of the adventure tourism experience is largely visual (Plate 5.5). They get to see and perhaps even imagine the danger and crisis that may fall upon them, but rarely would they be remotely subjected to them. Hence, visual consumption of adventure sites is the key motivation and dominant activity in adventure tourism, merely the bodily engagement with ‘nature’ and ‘outdoors’.



***Plate 5.7 Snorkelling in the visually captivating waters of Pulau Redang, Malaysia***

Before entering the field, I have speculated the possibility of my informants critically examining their role and act of viewing. Drawing from MacCannell, I have postulated that my informants should be able to see the power relations embedded in their tourist gaze and their subjectification in tourism. As suggested by MacCannell, a second gaze can occur as a function of Urry's tourist gaze. This second gaze, which has in view the Foucauldian subject or Urry's tourists, is always aware that "something is being concealed from it" and that "there is something missing from every picture, from every look or glance." As such, according to MacCannell's gaze, seeing is not always believing. This view is indeed apparent in the responses of a few of my informants:

I know that some of these backpacking places are as contrived as the Disneylands. But I am still interested to come and see how exactly they are

staged and organised. How the show is performed by tourism workers and fellow backpackers. But of course, I don't tell everyone this for it will spoil the mood. Everyone loves to think that they are having the real thing and when you travel with someone who claims he is critical and says everything is inauthentic and contrived for tourism, it can be quite a spoil sport. But now that you asked and since you are doing research on this, I think you will not mind my 'theory'! (Ah Keng, 25)

Sometimes when I dive, I think about human impacts on the dive sites. You know there is a huge industry, this whole scuba diving thing. Maybe you should do a research on this. We (scuba diving tourists) are made to think we are consuming these places in an environmentally-friendly way and you have these endless beach clean-ups and reef conservation projects organised by dive operators but we know the whole thing is just a circus act. How many times have we seen divers stepping on corals or banging their air tanks into the reefs? When we dive, our impacts and the state of coral health are always hidden from us. These are things we are not supposed to see! (Pei Lin, 27)

Behaving like 'ethnographers' on these tours, these informants show that they are intelligent subjects who think and consume tourism site/sights critically. While critical tourists received little or no training in the social sciences, and are not tasked with writing duties, Galani-Moutafi's (2000) claim that tourists and travellers are necessarily less critical and less reflexive than self-proclaimed ethnographers is unfair.

Informants such as Ah Keng and Pei Lin are competent geographers and ethnographers. While consuming tourism places and landscapes, they are engaged in their everyday theorisations. They possessed not just the ‘touristy’ gaze of Urry but also the critical second gaze MacCannell suggested. On their adventure tours, they were able to ‘step out’ from their subject positions to gaze upon their own touristy act of gazing upon adventure landscapes and therefore, at the same time, critically examine them/themselves. However, as suggested by Ah Keng, these second gaze often goes unmentioned for they hold the potential to ruin the travelling mood of co-travellers. Other than extended conversations with Ah Keng and Pei Lin which yielded the two quotes, I have difficulty identifying this second gaze from many of my other informants. I have at times doubted my own ethnographic practice but it might well be that these second gaze is hidden and rarely spoken about because informants want to stay sociable and to ensure that the tour remains fun.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

I have sought to understand the tourist gaze of Singapore adventure tourists by considering adventure tours as environmental “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988) organised by adventurism and the workings of the visual in these tours. Towards this end, I have subjected myself to the same environmental technologies and “geographical practices of self” (Matless, 1994) as my informants by actively participating in their adventures. Like Cohen, I do not believe that the tourism experience can be illustrated and explained using “an endless number of surveys on



tourist ‘motivation’” (1979: 23). Instead, I relied on ethnographic accounts as well as extended and candid dialogues with informants from 5 adventure groups during the conduct of their adventure tours. I have investigated Singapore adventure tourists’ “geographical practices of self” and their use of adventure tours as an environmental technology of the self. Adventure tours are observed to be environmental devices that permit them to effect, on their own or with the guidance of professionals, reconditioning operations on their bodies and selves. To do this, my informants’ experiences and performances of adventure tours have been likened to ‘scheduled workouts’ in ‘outdoor gymnasiums’. Instead of being avenues to achieve freedom and escape, as suggested by the adventure tourism industry and some preceding research, I have demonstrated that adventure tours are also technologies and schemes co-opted to for their own self-government.

The various ways of collecting visual signs during adventure tours, the types of signs collected and the roles this ‘shopping’ for visual signs played in the constitution of these adventure tours have also been described. While the main focus of this chapter has been on explicating the specific role of adventurism, I have also demonstrated how the visual worthiness of these ‘distinctive’ landscapes too was sometimes sufficient to motivate some of my informants performance of adventure travels. The adventure tourist gaze, this chapter has argued, is embodied, environmental and governmental. However, in arguing for the work of government in adventure tours is not to suggest that self-government is situated and confined in the sites, spaces and environments of adventure recreation, pursuits and travels. In the

next chapter, I proceed to investigate the effects of self-government and adventurism upon my informants' homecoming, paying attention to their post-trip adventure narrations.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Adventure Narration in Everyday Life**

## 6.1 Introduction

I thought I'll have to do some of these adventures before I am old...that is if I want to become the sort of person I always wanted to be. (John Tan)

It never fails to awe me each time I traversed such terrains. Mother Nature certainly has her ways that even in the harshest of conditions, life exists. And by subjecting yourself to it, you will realise how puny we really are. (Josephine Poh, in her travelogue *Diary of a Young Adventurer: Abseiling Adventure 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003 to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2003*).

This chapter addresses the content and performance of my informants' personal adventure tour stories or what I call post-trip adventure narration. Drawing upon my ethnographic material from post-trip photograph exchange sessions, barbeque outings and other social gatherings, I investigate their adventure tales and relate these specific and personal stories within broader societal concerns of the 'new economy' in their everyday lives. John and Josephine's quotes are examples of these. Like risk narratives and other forms of travel biography, adventure narration or the telling of adventure (tour) stories are significant for academic inquiry into the phenomenon of adventure tourism for as Elsrud (2001:613) observes, they "continue to work after homecoming" and are efforts at narrating identity. They are also rich empirical materials to investigate concepts of 'personhood' – identity, subjectivity and the self - in tourism studies (Desforges, 2000). While seeking to build upon these

previous efforts, my approach differs in - and I believe draws its strength from these differences from - the following ways. Instead of using single-site in-depth interviews conducted when tourists and travellers return or secondary sources of travellers, this chapter draws upon ethnography of the same travelling groups I had followed on the adventure tours. Hence, I argue that my approach as an insider and fellow tourist not only allows me greater access into a range of adventure narrations than would be available through in-depth interviews, I also have the benefit of observing and/while participating in these performances of adventure story telling.

I have segmented the readers' journey in this chapter into three parts. In the first section following this introduction, I look at performance of gender in adventure narration and how gender refracts their adventure story telling. These adventure tales are avenues in which tourism researchers can see the gender dimensions of travel. Elsrud observes via backpacker adventure narration that "adventurous women may be caught in an intersection of two logical systems: the reflexive project of 'late modernity' open to both genders and the adventure as a historically founded masculine practice" (Elsrud, 2001: 597). In addition, this section will illustrate how male informants negotiate the traditional conception of adventure as a masculine practice. In the second section, I proceed to investigate the emphasis and implications of the visual in these narratives. Many studies have examined the content of travel photography but I seek to extend beyond content analysis by illustrating adventure tourists' in-situ responses and their reflections on adventure and the role these images play in their constitution of adventure narration. In the third section, I investigate the

telling of adventure tales in the workplace and their connections with adventurism. While influential tourism anthropologist Bruner (1995) suggests in his fieldwork of American tourists that tourists do not have an audience for their tour-related stories and sights, I will show in this section that Singapore adventure tourists' adventure tales find their ways into the workplace as the workplace culture becomes increasingly 'adventurous'. A consideration of how these adventure narratives constitute the tourist subject in everyday life in 'new economy' concludes the chapter.

## **6.2 Post-trip adventure narration as gendered performances**

Many facets of identities were performed in these tales of adventures. However, gender performances were particularly prominent in the field and so deserve some extended discussions here. As Elsrud (2001) has pointed out, women travellers and adventurers appeared trapped in a dilemma between the logics of what Giddens terms as the "reflexive life project of late modernity" and the widespread conception of adventure and travel as traditionally masculine practice. Women informants aspire to realise various adventure ideals but they are forced to constantly negotiate adventure tourism's masculinism.

Adventurers have conventionally been depicted as men who 'penetrated' 'virgin' lands and risked their lives in the process (Beezer, 1993; Connell, 1995; Pratt, 1992). This is not surprising considering the deeply rooted stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is traditionally equated with aggressiveness,

mobility, activity and change while femininity is ascribed notions of nurturing, immobility and passivity.

Stereotypical representations of gender and adventure exist in the academic domain too. During my research presentations, some found it hard to believe that there were just as many female adventure tourists in the groups and tours I studied. Before I clarified that many Singapore adventure groups are not male-majority, some even claimed that I was ‘wrong’ in selecting and working on a ‘gender biased’ profile. One of the most frequently asked questions at the end of my research presentations at conferences and seminars concerns the numerical representation of female adventurers – questions of “just how many of these are girls?” or accusations of “aren’t you already working on a very male-biased sample?” My answer was simple: there were just as many female adventurers as they are males. It is a sad irony that some ‘enlightened’ academics (not just the lay-people) were still caught in the stereotypical images of the male adventurer or adventure and travel as a traditionally or even essentially masculine practice!

Having suggested that there are equal numbers of female adventure tourists in my study and in the Singapore adventure community does not mean that their ventures necessarily mean the same to them and their audience. Female informants seemed to have it ‘tougher’ not in the adventure tour but rather in the narration of their adventurous tales or ‘coming out’ with their ‘adventure-citizen’ identities. They appeared caught in a dilemma between, amongst other motivations and contradictions,

what seemed to be ‘new economy’ aspirations of ‘adventure-citizen’ and the prevailing conception of adventure as a traditionally masculine practice. Take for instance, Josephine’s entry in her travelogue displayed on the adventure club notice-board:

Our 17 kg backpacks took some getting used to as we were all not in our fittest condition. The effect of gradient, coupled with the warm and humid weather, we were tired out pretty soon. Nonetheless, the team spirit was high and we persevered and reached the summit of Panti. Cramps and fatigue were just lingering silently around, waiting for an opportunity to strike. The guys had their fair chance to display their chivalry as they helped the gals with their backpacks over tricky obstacles. (Josephine Poh, in her travelogue *Diary of a Young Adventurer: Abseiling Adventure 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003 to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2003*).

Or during a post-trip debrief session conducted on the tour bus where adventure tourists reflect upon or take stock of their adventure travel experience:

I like the part of crossing the big river walking on this narrow log...and with all the weight on my back, it was really scary. I had to walk really really slowly...luckily the guys who stayed behind were very gentlemanly and helpful. Chin Keong especially...he helped me with my backpack and also made me a walking stick on our way down. (Emmeline).



While clearly seeking to become ‘adventure-citizens’ by subjecting themselves to the same rigours of adventure and travel, female adventurers appeared concerned about their new-found ‘independence’ in a still patriarchal society and would rather attribute their adventure success as results of good team spirit and the ‘chivalry of the guys’.

From Josephine and Emmeline’s quotations, it is clear that there was an explicit attempt at reaffirming the male-centred perspectives of adventure. These were some efforts to reassure male adventurers’ that without their ‘chivalry’ and ‘gentlemanliness’, the ‘demure’ and ‘less-rugged’ female adventurers would not be able to realise their adventure potentials. Female adventure tourists would also attribute their adventure successes to ‘teamwork’ and ‘luck’ more than their male counterparts. They liked to appear less accomplished than their male co-adventurers. However, many female adventure tourists were actually equally if not more competent than male adventurers in my fieldwork and they were armed with recognised adventure credentials. The writer of that notice-board travelogue, Josephine, is a certified “Rescue Diver” capable of executing search and rescue operations for scuba divers in distress and had similar credentials in other adventures such as kayaking and rock climbing. When I asked one of the female trainees of BOAT why she took so long to ‘reveal’ her adventure credentials and abilities, she explained:

Sometimes when I tell people these things, they get funny ideas. What do I mean? You see, the girls will think I am a big tom-boy or worse still a ‘butch’

and they may think I am a difficult person to relate to. It is true I don't like to do girly things but that doesn't make me less feminine. If I tell the guys I've trekked to the base camp of Everest and am planning to go higher next year or that I had done a solo backpacking trip in East Europe for a year two years ago, then it will probably scare the shit out of some of them. They will feel intimidated. Guys want control and domination! They like soft gentle 'kawaii' (cute) girls who do knitting in the living room [laugh]. I'm exaggerating a bit here, but sometimes, people, guys or girls will not like to see this adventure side of me, somehow they think it is wrong. (Hwee Ching)

There is a geographical specificity to the kinds of feminine attributes, roles and appeals described here. What is considered feminine and attractive is constituted in an array of transnational cultural connections. The idea of 'kawaii' is constructed in relation to the Japanese notion of 'cute' which has been shaping Singaporeans' 'taste' of feminine appeal (see McVeigh, 2000 for a good discussion on Japanese commodification of female identities including 'cuteness'). This shaping of Singaporeans' 'taste' of feminine appeal occurs through the consumption of Japanese popular culture. While not exacting a demand on 'flawless' beauty, the 'kawaii' notion of female attractiveness necessitates 'Asian' females to appear 'petite', 'demure' and 'not too intelligent', thereby reaffirming Japanese or 'Asian' male dominance in society.

Adventure group members and adventure tourists often help one another and because of the outdoor nature of most of these activities, injuries and fatigue are common. Female informants were not the only ones who got fatigued and were injured. The male ones did too. Although these male adventure tourists would seldom seek female assistance, they did get some help from their female co-travellers. It is true that acts of male chivalry exist. However, as demonstrated by the preceding quotations, the interesting point is that female adventurers often over-report these assistances and male adventure tourists often under-report the help that they get - whether such assistance come from their male or female counterparts.

Male adventurer tourists were more forthright and even boastful in their adventure narration, especially when it comes to how they 'ride to the rescue of some damsels in distress':

Scuba diving is not difficult. So long you know how to stay calm in the water, it is okie. I remember during my own open water course, my buddy injured her ankle. It was a sprain I think. So throughout the course, she couldn't walk properly, let alone 'fin' in the water. As a result, I need to carry all the things for her on land, and I also had to tow her on the water surface and underwater when we dive. But she was a very calm person, had very good water confidence and executed the scuba dive drills very well, and we passed the course together. You see, you dun even need kick in the water, also can pass the course! Swimming not that important! (Chin Ee)

This time, the self-proclaimed ‘knight in shining armour’ is me. Here, I attempt a ‘self-critical’ reflection of my own boastful adventure narration. This quote is reproduced from my ‘advice’ given via ICQ communication to a female friend who wanted to take up scuba diving. Then she was enquiring about whether a good mastery of swimming is crucial for scuba diving and I used the opportunity to elaborate on my ‘chivalrous’ act during my Open Water Divers Course.

Of course, male adventure tourists’ adventure narration need not always take the form of ‘chivalrous knights’. And here I recall our ‘heroes’ from the Bluewave Scuba diving tour. This time, they were not on some Manta Ray hunt but rather, involved in a hunt for another kind of ‘ray’ at a reunion Barbeque for the scuba divers. Below, I present a research diary account of a conversation that took place at a post-trip barbeque reunion among three male informants:

*“Wah lau, where's the bloody stingray?” Khoon Nee barked.*

*“How I know?” Heng replied reluctantly.*

*“In your underwater world again ah?” Khoon Nee mocked [referring to Heng’s inauthentic sighting of manta rays in aquariums rather than in the natural environments of the open sea].*

"Hey what's wrong with going to underwater world to see Manta Ray?"

Anyway, I was the one who found that big giant turtle during that dive at Turtle House." Heng defended.

"And I found that big sleepy white shark on the sea bed. Think it's a hammerhead!" Boon Siong added.

"Okay okay. I know all of you *damn power* (Singapore army slang for describing great competency). But I still need that stingray. Can one of you go find it?" Khoon Nee ordered.

"Remember that time Heng's air leaked? Wah, it was bubbling like nobody's business. Luckily I saw it man. If not our Heng dunno go where *liao*."

"Think Khoon Nee most *power* (Singapore army slang for describing heroic attributes). He *go* and chase that big shark into the cave."

Conversations that night among this group of friends who knew each other since their military days surround that of marine life sightings and other 'adventurous' performances which ascribed masculine attributes to the narrators of the tales. Notions of bravery and risking one's lives are crucial in male informants' adventure narration. Similarly, mis-adventures and embarrassing moments are self-censored in female presence. For example, our inability to find Manta Rays or the remark that "the tanks

kept getting heavier and heavier” were removed from our conversations when female scuba divers were around during the dive tour and the barbeque reunion. In the next section, I examine the emphasis and implications of the visual in my informants’ adventure story telling.

### **6.3 The emphasis and implications of the visual in adventure narration**

The Sullivans told us to bring our slides and the morning was spent viewing each other’s photographs. If anyone had a particularly striking photo, others would ask for a copy, but in fact there was considerable similarity in the images, possibly because on tour everyone usually took photographs at the same time, when the bus stopped...There were many romantic images of buffalo in the rice fields, of saffron-robed monks, of smiling Third World children and of Buddhist temples. Another reason for the similarity was the influence of *National geographic* magazine. While on tour, copies of *National Geographic* coverage of the country would circulate among tourists... (Bruner, 1995:228)

Like in Bruner’s observations at the Sullivan’s tourist reunion, an important source of adventure narration is the photograph exchange or viewing sessions which often follow tours. Drawing upon materials from photograph exchange sessions which are the most popular form of post-trip reunions/gatherings, I investigate the emphasis on the visual in their narration. This is not to say that adventure narration which took

place at other venues or for other purposes did not exhibit this visual culture. Like the actual conduct of the tour, adventure narration places a great deal of emphasis on the visual. This can be seen from the various visual technologies deployed to record the ‘adventure’ - still and motion photography, postcards and even journal writings and sketches (Plate 6.1).



***Plate 6.1 Recording adventure visually: Underwater group photograph***

Here, I explore this visual culture paying attention to Urry’s (1990) “tourist gaze” and MacCannell’s (2001) “second gaze” and will proceed to discuss the implications of these for Singapore adventure tourist subjectification and agency. There are two ways in which my informants demonstrate what MacCannell calls the Urry gaze or the “first gaze”. Firstly photographs which aimed at remembering ‘pure’ spectacular landscapes were taken. The second type of photographs are the ones taken

to mark and put to permanence – at least on photographic paper or pixels - one's adventure travel 'achievements'.

During the Rovers' photo exchange session, we had many photographs resembling those of Bruner's tourists. It seemed like we were subjected to the same kind of tourism discourses as the American tourists and produced "romantic images of buffalo in the rice fields, of saffron-robed monks, of smiling Third World children and of Buddhist temples" of Thailand. These romantic/spectacular pictures often generated discussions of how 'authentic' and 'oriental' or 'Thai' these places were. Many informants used these images to highlight the authentic quality of the tours and how we managed to get closer to the 'real', 'mysterious' and 'dangerous' Thailand. Many also alluded to the 'risk taking' and adventure involved. In the BOAT adventure course, photographs of spectacular sites were used not only for adventure tourists' personal remembrance but also used to help promote the club's activities. These photographs are displayed on notice boards and in newsletters and circulated not just well in the member community but also to further would-be adventurers.

For the scuba diving tourists of Bluewave, photography and the visual culture is paramount in their adventure narration. Scuba diving tourists often talked about the fascinating marine life they sighted and took photographs of their dives. Underwater photography was a crucial activity for some of them and 'reviews' and 'public viewings' of their pictures and slides assumed an importance equal to if not more than the actual dive tour. The images provided not merely a source of tour remembrance



but also an avenue of discussion on dive and photography techniques. They were also important ‘trophies’ for scuba diving tourists to show to their friends and other ‘significant others’.

As Urry (1992) suggested, mundane objects were significant site/sight markers in tourist photography. Various signboards and geographical markers including spot height stones on mountain tops, location signage and maps of trekking trails are common in my informants’ photographs. As Urry posits, these otherwise mundane objects gave credit to the adventurers’ trekking, diving or backpacking efforts by ‘proving’ that my informants were ‘really there’ and had ‘really done it’ For example, Plate 1.1 and Plate 5.3, which were taken at Gunung Ledang signage indicating the start of the trail and at Gunung Ledang’s peak spot-height marker respectively, were the most popular and most reproduced photographs. Hence, the common composition consists of adventure tourists standing next to these objects thereby proving they really were ‘in-situ’.

However, the tourists’ viewfinders were not always keen on framing the tourist subject (Urry, 1992: 180). There were times when adventure tourists see certain sites or even people captured on film as ‘polluting’. Sometimes, this includes fellow tourists. One fellow tourist made this remark when viewing one of my photographs:

This would be a really cool shot...if only you weren’t inside! I mean, not that I hate you or the way you look but see, it would make a real *National*

*Geographic* pic. With you inside, it just looks like yet another tourist picture (Junxiang).

It could also be that certain peoples or objects deemed out-of-place were captured by the adventure-tourist-photographer:

I should have shifted a bit more to the right. You see, the rubbish here... This tyre shouldn't be here lah. Spoiled my 'Nemo' shot (Diana)

Sounds racist but I think this would be better without the Malay boys playing in the background (Andy)

There were also those who felt that visual technologies were limiting and expressions of disappointments during photo-exchange sessions at the inability of photographic records to 'capture' what a place 'really' was like were common:

I've always wanted the perfect shot. Not one that looks nice but one that captures the 'feel' or the essence of the place. Thinking that a single shot may not be able to capture the breathtaking landscape, I've resorted to taking multiple shots from the peak...to create that all-round effect...that really wide view...as if we were standing in the picture...but I just couldn't get that feeling. It looks nice, it is a good picture, but somehow nothing beats being there and experiencing it at the top (Kay Meng)

Kay Meng expressed the desire for ‘real’ presence in his photography. However, this awareness of the limitations of the visual happened, I observed, at home rather than on location even when digital photography offers possibilities of instant reviewing of pictures taken there and then probably because tourists reflect more ‘critically’ when they are away from destination and were back home. On the tours, informants were more pre-occupied with taking the sights/sites in, consuming them, rather than reflecting on them.

Some expressed ways of ‘visual resource management’ for future trips to capture pure views:

We should refrain from taking those ‘touristy’ shots. We are adventurers not tourists! (Wen Jing)

I think I will pay more attention to the ‘artistic’ side of my composition...like making sure there are no ‘unwanted’ objects inside my shot (Mabel)

However, as I hear from my informants after they return from some of the subsequent adventure tours I did not have the chance to follow; these ‘visual resource management’ techniques and procedures were rarely ‘enforced’. This is probably the result of courtesy and common sense at work during their tours.

These pictures illustrate our subjectification to tourism discourses and to the tourism and media industries. It also shows our subjectification to adventurism and our desire to become or in the case of these adventure photographs and their narrations in particular, of proving that we were adventure-citizens. However, my informants were not trapped in the ‘structures’ of the tourism discourses/industries and adventurism. We see this from their possession of the “second gaze”. While the second gaze was less obvious during the tours, a point I made in Chapter 5, they were more prevalent during post-tour adventure narration.

My informants’ second gaze and their agency were demonstrated by the ‘playful’ photographs some of them took. These ‘playful’ acts include taking pictures of tourists doing tourist things such as taking pictures of fellow tourist taking pictures of yourself/others. In these, my informants displayed their critical ethnographic leanings:

Pictures like this are fun because you capture people doing touristy things. A lot of people think when we go on travel we become very noble people who get to see real authentic things. Or that we are some Indiana Jones who risked our lives for some global adventure... But we are not. We are just some bored Singapore executives out on a tour. Not exactly a package tour like the Chinese or Japanese tourists we see at Singapore Zoo but you see, we do touristy things too! (Andrew Shen, pointing to a picture of BOAT trainees posing on Mount Ophir)

I want to remember the way the expedition was... (Mervin, pointing to an identical shot)

Or of adventure tourists intentionally taking shots they know would look ‘ugly’ and ‘uninspiring’:

This is a horrible shot if you submit this picture for some ‘nature’ or wildlife photography competition. You see, there are more people than nature, but I wanted it this way, cause this is the way our trek had been. A whole big group of us... (Susan)

I wanted to have a picture that destroys the media image of Thailand. A very ‘anti-authentic’ picture. What is authentic today? We see MacDonalds and Coke everywhere! (Meiling)

It appeared that my informants were more willing to reveal their critical ‘anthropological’ tendencies during these post-trip gatherings. It seemed to be less of a ‘spoil-sport’ to render visible this second gaze they possess than that during the tours. Having said that, is that all we can make of adventure narration? Do they merely circulate within their own adventure/travel communities as suggested in Bruner’s study?

## 6.4 Workplace and adventurous tales

I gained some insight into this culture when one day at lunch I asked, who did they show their photographs to when they returned home? The question elicited some uneasiness and a few quiet smiles. What I learned was that they showed their slides to their children, possibly to a close friend or relative, but that in general not many people wanted to see their slides or even hear about the trip, at least not in any detail. (Bruner, 1995:228).

Unlike the tourists in Brunner's study, my informants' tour narrations go beyond their fellow adventure tourist community. One key area in which they deploy their adventure narration is at the workplace. Here I explore their adventure narration in three areas: the job interview, the lunch time banter and the holiday leave application.

As discussed in Chapter 4, a discourse I observe as 'adventurism' has brought about the alignment of work and adventure and within a contextual framework of a Singapore society undergoing major economic restructuring, it is not surprising that many of my informants are proud of their adventure tourism and identify themselves as what I call 'adventure-citizens' in the workplace:

I am happy to tell my colleagues about my adventure tours. Sometimes, it makes us stand out. Sometimes nobody cares really. But when they do, they

often attribute some very positive traits...rightly or wrongly so... for example, they will think that we are more independent... more of a problem solver...even creative...they always assume you are or that you want to think out of the box. So while I really do think I benefited from my adventures ...sometimes in ways they mentioned... I do not expect people to agree with me or to think that I've necessarily become more rugged so to speak. But it seems now that everyone is talking about globalised economy, the idea of being an adventurous person, becomes readily accepted. We (adventurers) have progressed from people on the sides, people left out, to become part of the propaganda. (Lim Yeow Hock)

Yeow Hock's experience of adventure narration in the workplace is intriguing. For one, he did not try too hard at selling his adventures but was very clear about the kind of advantages the adventurous tales potentially render him. He knew how to make use of the notions of independence, problem-solving and creativity that would be ascribed when he narrates his adventures. He was also conscious about the economic climate which gave adventures and 'adventure-citizen' more weight and recognition. He knew that being an adventurous person or an 'adventure-citizen' is no longer something on the 'fringe' and that adventure-citizens are now 'part of the propaganda'. However, given Singapore society's patriarchal nature, the female informants had an unequal playing field and some even deployed adventure narration as a tool to 'level' it:

Sometimes I make it a point to sell this side of myself... to let people (in the office) know I do adventure. Although we are supposed to be in a 'new economy', some things are still very old and rotten. We are still in a very, very male-dominated society... I want people to know that we girls can be as 'outdoor' as the guys can be. I think sometimes my male colleagues are intimidated by my adventures. Some give me the impression that they think I am someone who's always trying to prove a point. Well, I do have a point to prove, and that is I am as tough as I want to be and we girls should not be disadvantaged in the workplace. We are not passive. We are not slow to change. And we don't get tied down. There are of course many people who are very supportive of my travels and adventures and they believe it makes me who I am. It kind of 'value-adds' me (Lim Hwee Chee)

Hwee Chee's situation is caught between aspirations of an adventure-citizen and that of adventure tourism as a traditionally masculine practice. It did not help that the patriarchal Singapore society seemed to exert undue pressures on her and her female colleagues. 'New economy' or not, the male domination in some Singapore workplace stayed unchanged.

Besides adventurism and ideas of 'new economy', some informants use adventure-narration in the workplace to showcase positive attributes:



Adventure tours have this extremely wholesome appeal to it...though some adventures are dangerous and some of us don't shower for days and were smelly on our treks and camps, people still think adventure is something super-nice. We are just a bunch of smelly people who don't have a proper place to hang out in. But seriously, we do have some really nice experiences in adventure and when we tell people our stories about how we overcome our own limitations and conquered Nature and minus the bit about not showering, they become very impressed. Some colleagues even asked me to bring them along. But it is difficult to all go together. Someone has to stay behind to do the office work *lah*. (Joe Ng)

On top of making myself fit and slim, I think it makes it easier for guys to find something to talk to me about. Like I am not just a girl who shop and shop but am someone who can be a buddy on a dive or camp. Think that makes me more sociable or makes them think I am more okie to be with. (Cheryl Wee)

Thus, the 'rewards' of doing adventures did not stop upon homecoming. Back in Singapore and particularly in the workplace, many informants continue to reap the 'positives' of adventure tourism in forms of socially pleasing self-images. This kind of society-'endorsed' self-images goes beyond "fit and slim" bodies. They signal to colleagues someone who is able to persevere ("overcome our own limitations and conquer Nature") and who is a 'wholesome' friend ("someone who can be a buddy on

a dive or camp” and unlike most ‘shop-aholic’ Singapore females who were addicted to what has been marketed as ‘retail therapy’).

Finally, in addition to being useful in everyday workplace interactions, one informant claimed adventure narration is also extremely useful in the job interviews. This, however, is a double-edged sword. Specifically, John cautioned:

I like to mention my backpacking experiences during job interviews. It will help me stand out as an adventurous person. Many times, I can see they were impressed. However, I know I must be careful about this also for it may also signal that I am someone who likes to go on long vacations. So we have to be careful about talking about adventure travels to job interviewers. (John)

John’s dilemma is shared by many of his fellow travellers who are careful about how much ‘adventure’ they want to reveal to their employers. While adventure adds credit to one’s ‘social capital’ to use Bourdieu’s term, it may also conjure images of an uncommitted worker whose self-definition and self-realisation derive from leisure and travel rather than work and home.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have extended my inquiry into adventurism by drawing upon my ethnography of post-trip gatherings to illustrate and examine post-tour adventure

narration. These have been important for they continue to perform the tours – the identity work and the emphasis on the visual upon homecoming. I have investigated the gender dimension of these narratives and demonstrated how gender had refracted the practice of narrating adventures. Specifically, I illustrated my female informants' dilemma of being caught between aspiring to become adventure-citizens and staying within 'appropriate' or society-endorsed gender boundaries. Female informants had expressed their concerns of adventure being traditionally a male pursuit and were found to be careful and reserved in narrating their adventure, particularly their adventure achievements. Where possible, these achievements were framed within the context of teamwork or gentlemanly assistance from their male co-adventurers. Male adventurers, on the other hand, were found to have deployed adventure tourism as an avenue to add masculine credentials and to appear more 'manly'.

The emphasis on and implications of the visual have also been explored. To do this, I examined photograph exchange sessions. There, I observed and engaged with their visual culture. This included their constitution of the tourist gaze by observing what they think about the views they had shot. These gatherings have also been found to be rich sites to 'mine' MacCannell's "second gaze". While demonstrations of their second gaze potentially disrupt adventure tourism consumption while on the tours, being critical of tourist subjectification and the often unequal power relations in the tourist worlds were found to have been more socially accepted at post-trip gatherings. In these post-trip spaces, they have demonstrated their ethnographic abilities and critical reflections and have shown that tourists are capable of critical observations in

the field, thereby blurring the researcher-researched boundary and debunking the ‘high and mighty’ academic authority of ethnographers.

In the last section of the chapter, I have shown that adventure narration has significance outside the adventure tour groups and has, on many occasions, travelled into the workplace. My informants have attributed this to the workings of adventurism and the general ‘feel-good’ and alleged wholesome appeal of adventure tourism. The personal and possibly banal stories that my informants tell are not only significant tales of their travels but also important performances in their everyday lives in ‘new economy’. In ethnographing Singapore adventure tourists, it is heartening to find that while possessing tourist gaze and while their adventure tourism motivations have been shaped by various tourism, popular culture and state discourse, my informants have had - to a certain extent - autonomy and agency in forms of critical and reflexive second gazes. These are demonstrated upon homecoming. They have shown that they are aware of their subjectivities and are able to reflect critically about these and have strategically deployed them in the workplace which is a space that privileges adventure and the adventure-citizen.

## **Chapter 7**

## **Conclusion**

## **7.1 A tourism geography of Singapore adventure tourist**

Throughout this work I have discussed specific dimensions and details of Singaporeans' adventure tourism. From photograph exchange to tour reunions, I have studied Singapore adventure tourists by participating in their adventure tours and other 'non-tourism' activities. I have also, through content analysis of various materials and observations at various seminars and fairs, considered the political and economic context of my informants' lives, travels and adventures.

My approach to the study of adventure tourism has differed from studies that focus on adventure pursuits and adventure recreation and research efforts that seek to build psychological models for adventure tourism motivations. Rather, I have drawn from and built upon transdisciplinary insights and theories to investigate the relation between adventure tourism, the economy and society and to contribute to the study of Singapore adventure tourists' travels.

This chapter aims to draw together conclusions about themes and issues which have been presented in various parts of this thesis, thereby unifying the preceding chapters into an integrated picture of Singapore adventure tourists and their lives and travel geographies. I begin by drawing together ideas in this thesis which respond to broader themes and concepts in tourism studies and geography. I conclude by discussing the significance of this research for an understanding of capitalism, freedom and the Singapore society.

## **7.2 Contributions to tourism studies and geography**

There are various ways in which this thesis project responds to critical issues in the study of tourism and geography. In this section, I look at the contributions to understanding the tourist subject and the visual in adventure tourism and the ways in which these concepts further understandings in geography and tourism studies.

In order to understand the workings of power and organisation in tourism, many research projects have marginalised the tourist subject. Rather than adopt a theoretical framework that privileges power and domination at the expense of the tourist subject, I have investigated adventure tourism from the perspective of governmentality. I have paid particular attention to the ways in which my informants' choose to realise themselves in and through adventure tourism.

Adventure tourism has been conceptualised as an avenue for self-government. Singapore adventure tourists often see adventure tours as means of self-development and self-actualisation. In this study, I have found that adventure tourism motivates attempts to realise idealised subjects I term 'adventure-citizens'. Adventure-citizens are subjects capable of negotiating and surviving what appears to be a fast-changing and treacherous new economy. I have examined my informants' subjectification by describing 'adventurism' - the coming together of new economy work aspirations and adventure practices. Adventurism is both an array of discourses and a set of practices

that privilege adventure, risk-taking and flexibility in society. I have argued that adventurism motivates adventure tourism and shapes my informants' tourism experiences.

While the role of geography in adventure tourism is clear, few tourism research projects have described the ways in which tourist subjectification occurs in and through what Matless (1994) calls 'geographical practices of self'. As I have demonstrated, my informants' trekking, scuba-diving and backpacking were inherently very geographical *practices*. These geographical practices were capable of transforming the adventure tourist self. Thus, adventurism illuminates the role of geography in tourist subjectification. Specifically, I have studied the ways in which my informants geographically imagined adventure landscapes 'outdoor gymnasiums' during pre-trip and how their embodied practices in these spaces during the actual conduct of adventure tours were attempts at realising appropriate 'adventure-citizens'. This, of course, is not an attempt to revert to a form of environmental determinism. Rather, I have conceptualised the adventure tours in these 'outdoor gymnasiums' as 'environmental technologies of self'. This research has described the ways and means in which Singapore adventure tourists realise themselves in and through their adventure environments. In doing so, I have extended adventure tourism research beyond considerations of tourist destinations as 'impact areas' or as monolithic spaces receiving adventure tourist flows and connected adventure tourism research with emerging research concerns on tourist place and performance.



I have also sought to highlight the geography of adventure tourism by examining the ways in which the phenomenon of adventure tourism is constituted in and connected across various spaces which appear distinct and disparate. First, I have shown how ideals desired in urban spaces have motivated travel and practices in non-urban spaces. The new economy discourse and the PAP-state's desire for effective and productive Singapore citizens appear to be specifically urban concerns but they have, as demonstrated in this thesis, encouraged the practice of adventure tours outside the urban spaces of the city-state. Idealised travel and practice in adventure spaces were formed in relation to aspirations in the workplace and the urban life in new economy.

Second, I have considered the ways in which adventure identities acquired in 'rugged' landscapes were mobilized in everyday spaces upon homecoming. The deployment of these adventure identities, as shown in this thesis, was refracted along the lines of gender. The workplace is a key site for narrating adventure and deploying adventure identities. Adventure identities were, however, narrated in the workplace with degrees of caution. Depending on the specific context, being an avid adventurer can help present a positive self-image but may also portray the converse.

In this thesis, I have sought to address the visual debate and concern in tourism studies. I built upon Urry's concept of the tourist gaze to show that seeing/photographing and the visual is not a straightforward and simple process in adventure tourism. As suggested by Urry, tourists collect two kinds of signs. The first are signs which are spectacular and distinct on their own. The second are signs which

are mundane but are still important for they help articulate the uniqueness or 'authenticity' of other visually worthy objects. In my ethnography, I observed the ways in which my informants went about collecting these two kinds of signs. Their visual consumption and their 'shopping' for these two kinds of signs have highlighted themes in cultural geography. For instance, signs and objects that were considered in-place and out-of-place suggest specific forms of moral geographies associated with adventure landscapes.

I have also attempted a 'reworking' of Urry's tourist gaze using Foucault's later concept of governmentality. By describing and analysing my informants' practice of adventure tourism, I have shown how various discourses identified by Urry such as health and education have helped organise my informants' tourist gaze. In addition to these, my identification of adventurism helped illuminate a set of discourses and a range of practices that align adventure and work in the new economy. I see adventurism in the ways in which my informants relate visually sublime or treacherous landscapes with challenges in working life and the ways in which they sought to capture these inspirational images permanently - in forms of photographic film and digital bytes. As mentioned, I have also focused on the ways in which my informants realise themselves in relation to the ideals these images articulate. Adventurism-shaped visual practices were found in my fieldwork to have been promoted not just by the popular culture, mass media and tourism industry as identified by Urry but also by the PAP-state. This promotion of the adventurism-

shaped tourist gaze is intertwined with the PAP-state's interests in developing effective and productive workers and citizens.

The thesis has also 'revisited' MacCannell's critique of Urry's tourist gaze. MacCannell has suggested a "second gaze" to complement what he thinks is a less critical "Urry gaze". Urry has responded to his critics mainly by pointing to the multiplicity of his tourist gaze, including an anthropological gaze shaped and informed by insights from social science. What my thesis has achieved is clearly not a final reconciliation of the Urry-MacCannell debate. Rather, I provided empirical observations of these different gazes as my informants travelled from adventure places to everyday spaces - a geographical aspect which has largely been neglected by tourism research. The second gaze or anthropological gaze was not obvious in the actual conduct of the tours. However, I observed that informants were more willing to discuss their critical gazes and perspectives on tourism practices during the post-trip gatherings. My informants avoided appearing too critical or cynical of tourism practices and institutions for they were afraid that would make them unpopular and anti-social during what was supposed to be 'fun-filled and effortless' vacations and holidays. Seeing the tour sights/sites using their second or anthropological gaze may transform the adventure tours into what they fear would turn out to be 'boring academic fieldtrips'. Their more critical gazes, however, appeared during the post-trip gatherings such as photograph exchange and trip reunions. In these everyday spaces, their critical views were more socially accepted.

This thesis, finally, has been a response to Britton's (1991) call for a more critical tourism geography. While I have not adopted Britton's political economy framework for tourism, I have attended to critical concerns of the economy and governmentality in tourism practices and experiences. This piece of work should be seen in the context of a 'second critical wave' in tourism geography, one that is shaped and motivated by the broader 'cultural' turn in the social science. An emerging 'cultural' turn in tourism geography focuses on the plurality and fluidity of tourist performances and tourism practices. This 'cultural' turn attends to the cultural shapings and political conditionings of tourist practices by various tourism and non-tourism authorities and institutions rather than spatial distribution and tourists 'flows'/'impacts'. Having discussed the relevance of this work to geography and tourism studies, I proceed to consider the broader consequences of adventurism for freedom, capitalism and Singapore society.

### **7.3 Significance for capitalism, freedom and Singapore society**

Within my argument of adventurism exists two caveats. First, I have not intended adventurism to stand for merely a form of PAP 'propaganda' or 'brainwashing'. While its most unrelenting promoter remains the ruling PAP, Singapore-specific new economy aspirations in adventurism have been organised by international business, particularly the notions of 'knowledge-based' economy and the formation of what Nigel Thrift (1998) observes as 'soft or knowledgeable capitalism'. Adventurism also builds upon a longstanding paranoia over geo-political vulnerability

and economic non-viability of a city-state disproportionately reliant on ‘human resources’. Furthermore, while adventurism resembles a discourse perpetuated by the business and political elite, its promotion and circulation have broader implications. Second, my proposition that adventurism is composed of three ‘mechanisms’ is not a claim that all three components are always perfectly aligned. The tourist gaze, the discourses and the embodied practices of adventure tourism, while closely entwined, may work less closely in specific cases. For instance, Cohen’s (1973) concepts of nomads and ‘drifters’ are still relevant and not all adventure tourists seek to realise themselves as ‘adventure-citizens’.

Following recent governmentality studies (for example, Rose, 1999), I investigated an expanded notion of freedom (as compared to, say, Foucault’s earlier works) and have argued that Singaporean adventure tourists’ freedom is shaped by adventurism. As such, they were not totally free from Singapore and their workplace ethics when they (ad)venture. They were governed through a constrained freedom and never achieving a freedom that is unrelated to the necessities of contemporary ‘soft’ capitalism. I have highlighted that a paradox exists in that whereas adventure tourism has often been seen as escape from work, in practice it better shapes the ‘escapee’ for the demands of the contemporary workplace. The actualization of adventurer-citizen selves in the geography of outdoor gymnasiums positions adventure tourism as a crucial part of a new phase of capitalism, or perhaps of the anticipation of such a new avatar of capitalist developments.

Regarding the rise of 'soft' capitalism, Thrift (1998) points out that 'dancing' and 'surfing' best describe the nature of capitalism in this new phase, as they suggest "weightlessness, lightness and facility of movement". Singapore's adventure tourists have a role to play in our understandings of 'soft' capitalism for if metaphors for life in such a capitalist phase or an anticipation of it are needed, we need not look to Thrift's 'dancers' and 'surfers', as equally good metaphors can be found in the Singaporean adventure tourists studied. The trekker, diver and other adventure tourists need to be rugged, enterprising and flexible since the environments they realise themselves in are potentially as fast-changing and treacherous as the managerial spaces Thrift describes in his seminal essays.

Lastly, and returning to the discourse of adventurism, for all the "supposedly empowering rhetoric of self-actualisation", as Thrift (1998) observes of 'soft' capitalism, adventurism must also be considered as a means for the Singapore and global elite to "potentially maintain and legitimise their privileged position". The unemployed, retrenched and other segments marginalised in 'soft' capitalism have been problematised as 'dependent', 'soft' and 'unimaginative' and their situations deemed results of their inability or unwillingness to realise themselves appropriately in 'soft' capitalism. Finally, it may additionally be argued that just, as in the past, mass tourism represented an extension of Fordist society, so the new performances of tourism discussed in this thesis are also not divorced from, or challenging of the workings of economy, but are indeed conditioned by and shaped to operate in the service of those increasingly fluid terrains.

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## **Appendix**

### Appendix 1: Profile of Adventure Tourists in Study

S/No	Group	Name	Age	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity
1	BOAT	Chun Kiat	28	Insurance agent	Male	Chinese
2	BOAT	Cheok Kwong	25	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
3	BOAT	Swee Leng	29	Project Manager	Female	Chinese
4	BOAT	Han Chin	33	Self-employed	Male	Chinese
5	BOAT	Cheng Hoon	30	Accountant	Female	Chinese
6	BOAT	Terence	26	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
7	BOAT	Ian Lim	29	Accountant	Male	Chinese
8	BOAT	Andrew Shen	32	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
9	BOAT	Mervin	22	Student	Male	Chinese
10	BOAT	Susan	18	Student	Female	Chinese
11	BOAT	Josephine Poh	26	IT consultant	Female	Chinese
12	BOAT	Emmeline	20	Student	Female	Chinese
13	BOAT	Hwee Cheng	30	Sales Representative	Female	Chinese
14	BOAT	Lim Yeow Hock	34	Trader	Male	Chinese
15	BOAT	Cheryl Wee	33	Executive	Female	Chinese
16	BOAT	John	35	Manager	Male	Chinese
17	BOAT	Junxiang	29	Research Analyst	Male	Chinese
18	BOAT	Kay Meng	27	Engineer	Male	Chinese
19	BOAT	Michael	34	Engineering parts dealer	Male	Chinese
20	BOAT	Wai Hung	26	Engineer	Male	Chinese
21	BOAT	Leslie	30	Financial Planner	Male	Chinese
22	BOAT	Annie	44	Insurance agent	Female	Chinese
23	BOAT	Pui Leng	28	Accountant	Female	Chinese
24	BOAT	Sandy	23	Finance officer	Female	Chinese
25	BOAT	Xinrong	22	Student	Female	Chinese
26	BOAT	Tek Yong	26	Engineer	Male	Chinese
27	BOAT	Wang Hao	27	Chemist	Male	Chinese
28	BOAT	Karen	27	Events coordinator	Female	Chinese
29	BOAT	Yihui	27	Graphic artist	Female	Chinese



S/No	Group	Name	Age	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity
30	BOAT	See Soon	31	Aviation specialist	Male	Chinese
31	BOAT	Minghui	26	Librarian	Female	Chinese
32	BOAT	Ridzwan	19	Student	Male	Malay
33	BOAT	Johnny	32	Sale person	Male	Chinese
34	BOAT	Fariz	29	Technician	Male	Malay
35	BOAT	Limin	22	Sales person	Female	Chinese
36	BOAT	Cindy	25	Unemployed	Female	Chinese
37	BOAT	Lionel	26	Engineer	Male	Chinese
38	BOAT	Ronald	27	Car Dealer	Male	Chinese
39	BOAT	Sam	30	Artistic Director	Male	Chinese
40	BOAT	Shujun	28	Accounts officer	Female	Chinese
41	BOAT	Amy	36	Clerical officer	Female	Chinese
42	BOAT	Albert	35	Technician	Male	Chinese
43	BOAT	Hoe Teck	34	Teacher	Male	Chinese
44	BOAT	Lawrence	26	Research analyst	Male	Chinese
45	BOAT	Sue	25	Engineer	Female	Chinese
46	BOAT	Jenny	24	Finance Manager	Female	Chinese
47	BOAT	Peiqing	26	Sales person	Female	Chinese
48	BOAT	Wendy	27	Assistant Manager	Female	Chinese
49	BOAT	Wenli	23	Events planner	Female	Chinese
50	BOAT	Lydia	26	Accountant	Female	Malay
51	BOAT	Rachel	25	Graphic artist	Female	Chinese
52	BOAT	Grace	24	Finance officer	Female	Chinese
53	BOAT	Vivian	26	Teacher	Female	Chinese
54	BOAT	Lilian	27	IT executive	Female	Chinese
55	BOAT	Hsin Hui	24	Media executive	Female	Chinese
56	BOAT	Wilson	28	Producer	Male	Chinese
57	BOAT	Mike	29	Events Manager	Male	Chinese
58	BOAT	Justin	26	Executive	Male	Chinese
59	BOAT	Laurelle	19	Student	Female	Chinese
60	Rovers	Iskandar	23	Student	Male	Chinese
61	Rovers	Cheng Peng	26	Student	Male	Chinese
62	Rovers	John Tan	23	Student	Male	Chinese
63	Rovers	Meiling	21	Student	Female	Chinese
64	Rovers	Tan Chin Leong	23	Student	Male	Chinese
65	Rovers	Pauline	22	Student	Female	Chinese
66	Rovers	Huiling	21	Student	Female	Chinese
67	Rovers	Mingli	20	Student	Female	Chinese
68	Rovers	Jane	21	Student	Female	Chinese

S/No	Group	Name	Age	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity
69	Rovers	Boon Long	22	Student	Male	Chinese
70	Rovers	Liwen	21	Student	Female	Chinese
71	Rovers	Xiaojuan	21	Student	Female	Chinese
72	Rovers	Weili	21	Student	Female	Chinese
73	Bluewave	Heng	27	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
74	Bluewave	Steven	24	Accountant	Male	Chinese
75	Bluewave	Kay Soon	26	Trader	Male	Chinese
76	Bluewave	Shin Har	28	Dive Master	Male	Chinese
77	Bluewave	Khoon Nee	27	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
78	Bluewave	Boon Siong	27	Engineer	Male	Chinese
79	Bluewave	Ben Lim	30	Business Executive	Male	Chinese
80	Bluewave	Winnie Ng	24	Dive Master	Female	Chinese
81	Bluewave	Teck Hwa	32	Engineer	Male	Chinese
82	Bluewave	Pei Lin	27	Accountant	Female	Chinese
83	Bluewave	Wen Jing	25	Engineer	Female	Chinese
84	Bluewave	Mabel	24	Business Executive	Female	Chinese
85	Bluewave	Annabel	23	Estate Manager	Female	Chinese
86	Independent backpackers	Andy	26	Graduating tertiary student	Male	Chinese
87	Independent backpackers	Ah Keng	25	Graduating tertiary student	Male	Chinese
88	Independent backpackers	Tien Ming	25	Graduating tertiary student	Male	Chinese
89	Independent backpackers	June	24	Graduating tertiary student	Female	Chinese
90	Independent backpackers	Joshua	26	Graduating tertiary student	Male	Chinese
91	Independent backpackers	Janice	24	Graduating tertiary student	Female	Chinese
92	SAC	Richmond	52	Retiree	Male	Chinese
93	SAC	Yee Teck	45	Trader	Male	Chinese
94	SAC	Mei Hwa	40	Home tutor	Female	Chinese
95	SAC	Hwee Mei	17	Student	Female	Chinese
96	SAC	Diana	20	Student	Female	Chinese
97	SAC	Joe Ng	30	Business Executive	Male	Chinese

S/No	Group	Name	Age	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity
98	SAC	Poh Leong Huat	43	Teacher	Male	Chinese
99	SAC	John Lu	34	Driver	Male	Chinese
100	SAC	Daryl Lee	31	Army regular	Male	Chinese