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## So-- you do this for a living? : a study of women in adventure recreation in Western Australia

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**So ... you do this for a living?**

**A study of women working in  
adventure recreation in Western Australia**

**May Carter, BA (Recreation)**

**This thesis is presented for the degree of  
Master of Social Science (Leisure Sciences)  
Edith Cowan University**

**School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure  
Faculty of Business and Public Management  
Edith Cowan University, Joondalup  
Western Australia  
2000**



## **Abstract**

This study explored the experiences of women working in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. Ten women employed in the local adventure recreation industry were selected as a cross-section sample. Selection criteria for this study included employment in the industry for more than five years, competency in several adventure recreation activities and extensive field experience in “hands-on” instructional roles. The women selected ranged in age from twenty-seven to fifty years of age. Years of employment in the adventure recreation industry ranged from five to thirty years.

The purpose of this study was to describe the realities of working in the adventure recreation industry; explore the shared meanings held by the women about being a woman employed in adventure recreation; and investigate issues relating to women and non-traditional employment, in particular the adventure recreation industry. Research questions addressed access to employment, attraction of the adventure recreation industry, the meanings associated with women working in adventure recreation, and the influence of gender on their working experience.

Interpretive interactionism was chosen as the qualitative research method. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the women. The first interview sought answers to the research questions. The second interview provided an opportunity to clarify emergent themes and ensure the data interpretation was valid. Feminist poststructural theory guided the research process as it focused on power relationships, subjectivity and resistance, and was concerned with disrupting or displacing dominant discourses.

The principal findings of this study related to the difficulties of meeting the physical and emotional demands of working in the adventure recreation industry. Lack of recognition of the responsibilities placed on women working in the adventure recreation industry was a major area of concern. Many of the women in this study felt that the perception that their job was easy and enjoyable did not meet the reality of their working life.

Lack of adequate financial remuneration was also a major concern. It was felt that the remuneration offered by the industry was insufficient to compensate for its demands. Many women worked long hours and spent extended periods of time away from home, often to the detriment of social and family interactions.

Lack of recognition and financial reward was compensated by the diverse range of opportunities offered for personal challenge and flexibility in working arrangements. Many of the women in this study acknowledged a close affinity with the natural environment and expressed their enjoyment of being active outdoors. Sharing their knowledge of technical skills, demonstrating how to appreciate the natural environment and be comfortable outdoors were major factors in career satisfaction.

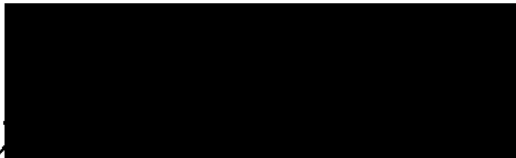
The adventure recreation industry has traditionally adopted male-defined attitudes and practices. Gender-based discrimination was often tolerated and seldom challenged. The predominance of masculine values within the adventure recreation industry has made it difficult for women to attain positions of power and influence.

It was recognised that the position for women within the Western Australian adventure recreation industry was changing. As more women enter the adventure recreation workplace, traditional values are being challenged. The women in this study were moving into managerial and administrative positions and were gaining the power to create new opportunities and workplace environments that met the needs of women.

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.



May Carter

October 2000

## **Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks must go to Dr Sue Colyer and Lekkie Hopkins, my research supervisors.

Dr Sue Colyer undertook the bulk of supervision and deserves congratulations for her patience and gentle persistence. I have appreciated her kindness and understanding, especially during the times when I forgot where I was going. I am extremely grateful that she was there to remind me.

Lekkie Hopkins opened my eyes and mind to feminist thought. Thanks to her, I am now comfortable referring to myself as a feminist.

Associate Professor Francis Lobo also deserves acknowledgment for his unwavering support and his unshakeable belief in my ability.

Most importantly, I express my deepest gratitude to the ten women who consented to be interviewed for this study. They gave generously of their time and I value their friendship and openness. Without their cooperation and enthusiasm, this project would not have begun.

Finally, the support of my partner, Glenn Iles and my friends, especially Sabrina Hahn, must be acknowledged. I have appreciated their faith in me and promise that they will no longer have to endure endless discussions about this thesis. I offer my sincere thanks because I could not have done it without them.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

*Each succeeding generation takes up the work that is laid down by those who pass along, leaving behind them traditions and a standard of achievement that must be lived up to by those who would claim a membership in the brotherhood of the Keepers of the Trail*

Grey Owl, Men of the Last Frontier, 1931  
(Schoel & Stratton, 1990, p. 91)

Historically, the "outdoors" was described as a wild and dangerous place requiring taming by strong, courageous and adventurous men. At the end of the twentieth century, western civilisation has entered into much of the world's wilderness. There is little call for intrepid frontier men to explore new lands, forge new paths and conquer mountains. Entry into most wilderness areas by present day adventurers is often undertaken to experience recreational adventure and personal journeys of discovery, rather than to tame the land.

Advanced technology and safety procedures make participation in wilderness adventures more accessible and adventure recreation pursuits are increasing in popularity (Ewert, 1997). As more people venture outdoors to explore the natural environment, many of the traditionally held beliefs about the outdoors are changing. In particular, the assumption that men, and only men, should lead others in outdoor adventures, is strongly challenged. An increasing number of skilled and experienced women are participating in adventure and gaining employment in the adventure recreation industry.



Women have always been adventurers, albeit in not such great numbers as men, but for a long time their stories remained hidden or unspoken (Warren, 1985). The stories of women's adventures are not well documented and their employment in adventure recreation is less visible than their male counterparts (Bialeschki, 1992). Until recently, women's views were greatly under-represented in the literature but this situation is changing. Where once stories of women adventurers were viewed as marginal, women writing about women outdoors is experiencing "a boom in the literary marketplace" (Fox Rogers, 1997, p. vii).

Academic literature is also increasing. Roberts (1998) lists more than 200 citations of literature and research studies relating to women's experiences of outdoor adventure. [The vast majority of literature on women outdoors focuses on women's experience as participants in adventure recreation programs. Much of the early research in this field focused on gender differences in experiences and expectations of adventure. More recent research attempts to understand the value and meaning of women's outdoor experiences from many perspectives, as participants, leaders and administrators (Henderson & Roberts, 1998).

This study explores the experiences of women who have been employed as instructors, leaders and administrators of adventure recreation programs. It contributes to the understanding of women's experiences as professional outdoor leaders, as it relates the stories of ten women employed in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia in the late 1990s.

## **What is Adventure Recreation?**

Ewert (1987, pp. 58-59) defines adventure recreation as:

recreational endeavour that usually takes place in a natural outdoor setting with activities that are emotionally and physically challenging; these activities utilize apparent or real risk situations in which the outcome, while often uncertain, can be influenced by the actions of the participant and by circumstances.

The term “adventure recreation” is explained here to ensure a common understanding of its use in this study. This term may conjure several different meanings associated with outdoor endeavour, exploration or personal discovery. Activity programs may prefer to be defined more specifically as outdoor recreation, outdoor or adventure education, corporate adventure training and development, or adventure therapy. However, all of these program styles are connected to adventure recreation, as they incorporate adventure recreation activities as the foundation of program structure.

Notwithstanding the purpose of the program, adventure recreation programs might include land-based activities such as bushwalking and camping, mountain biking, orienteering and navigation, mountaineering, rock climbing and abseiling, and cross-country skiing. Water-based adventure activities may include canoeing, kayaking and white water rafting or sailing on lakes, rivers or at sea. Adventure recreation programs are not restricted to these activities and may include a myriad of other related outdoor activities. Program time can extend from several hours to several weeks.

Adventure recreation activities are used across a range of disciplines such as leisure, education, human resource management and development, youth work, and psychology. It is widely accepted that participation in adventure recreation activities can have positive benefits in self-confidence, group cooperation, awareness of natural environments and increased physical ability (Ewert, 1989). Potential outcomes of participation in adventure recreation activities can vary from fun to learning to psychotherapy (Ringer, 1995).

The use of specific terminology that relates to program purpose depends on the perspective of those involved and, consequently, is open to interpretation and discussion. While there is agreement regarding the potential benefits of participation in adventure recreation, there is an ongoing discussion within the adventure industry about how to categorise the variety of adventure experiences and the leadership roles required within each category. In particular, the exploration of the relationship between outdoor/adventure recreation and outdoor/adventure education is recognised as an area that requires future study (Gray, 1998, p. 16).

Figure 1 illustrates a widely accepted model of the levels of adventure experience and associated leadership roles. While this model is presented in a linear format, adventure programs are not static and may combine elements of fun, learning and psychotherapy in varying degrees (Ringer, 1995). The leadership roles, and the competencies required, build upon each other as the levels of program activity and expected outcomes rise. An expanded version of this figure, which includes a brief description of the competencies associated with each level of leadership, is included

as Appendix A. It should be noted that the majority of employment in Western Australia occurs within adventure recreation, education and development programs. Adventure therapy is considered to be a highly specialised discipline and only a limited number of employment opportunities exist within the local industry.

EXPECTED OUTCOME	TYPE OF PROGRAM	LEADERSHIP ROLE
FUN	RECREATION	Skilled outdoor practitioner
		Limit setter/ safety officer
	EDUCATION	Enthusiastic adventurer
LEARNING	ENRICHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	Instructor/coach
		Group facilitator
		Expert communicator
PSYCHO THERAPY	ADJUNCTIVE AND PRIMARY THERAPY	Human behaviour expert
		Clinician

**Figure 1.** Adventure Programs – Outcome, Type and Associated Leadership Role  
(Adapted from Ringer, 1995)

In this study, “adventure recreation” is used as a blanket term to incorporate the recreational, educational, developmental and therapeutic applications of adventure activities. Its use includes related terms such as outdoor recreation, outdoor education, experiential education, adventure education, adventure training and adventure therapy. Use of the term “adventure recreation” is a convenience for this study and is not intended to diminish the debate and discussion of definitional terms and their scope.

## **Women and Adventure Recreation Employment in Western Australia**

Adventure recreation is a relatively new industry in Western Australia. Over the past fifteen years the industry has grown significantly with social groups, schools, corporate training providers and organisations specialising in personal development and counselling programs regularly undertaking organised adventure recreation activities. Women hold a small number of positions within the adventure recreation industry and are underrepresented in many of the organisations that provide adventure recreation experiences. Until recently, adventure recreation instructors were almost exclusively male, even when working with all female organisations such as Guides Western Australia.

Prior to the mid-1980s, adventure recreation opportunities were most often offered through volunteer-based organisations such as the Scouts and Guides, not-for-profit agencies and welfare groups. Opportunities were also available through a limited number of school and tertiary education programs. In Perth in 1989, there were only three companies offering adventure recreation activities on a commercial basis. By the early 1990s, buoyed by a growing interest in school outdoor education programs and corporate adventure training, an increasing number of organisations began to offer adventure experiences for recreation, education and personal or corporate development.

Even with the increase in commercial, educational and not-for-profit organisations offering adventure experiences, the number of women employed in adventure

recreation in Western Australia remains considerably less than men. In March 1999, there were 96 outdoor recreation agencies and organisations listed with the Western Australian Ministry of Sport and Recreation. Of these, less than twenty per cent named a woman as their primary contact.

Similarly, of the 122 graduates of the Graduate Diploma of Science (Outdoor Pursuits) offered by Edith Cowan University since 1987, only twenty per cent of graduates are women. In another example of the under-representation of women in this industry in Western Australia, of more than 450 instructors qualified to lead abseiling activities, less than fifteen per cent are women (David Byers, personal communication, May 8, 1999). To further illustrate this point, an abseiling instructor's forum, held in Perth in March 1999, was attended by more than 100 people. Less than ten women were present. The absence of women, particularly within industry committees or at planning fora such as the abseiling instructor's forum, continues to be the norm.

### **A Feminist Framework**

I have a personal interest in exploring women's employment in adventure recreation. In 1985, in my early twenties, I stood on the bank of a river in south-east Queensland, watching friends make their way through a long rapid. I had just paddled through that rapid and can still remember the exhilaration I felt, the feeling of success when I made it through safely. I had spent lots of time outdoors when I was young, but it was the first time I had experienced anything like that. Standing

there, watching the others make their way through, I decided what I really wanted to do for a living. It did not matter how or where. I was going to leave my secure, boring office job and I was going to work outdoors.

I entered university the following year and spent several years training in technical skills before I gained paid employment. I worked in the field for ten years, with five of those years spent running my own adventure recreation business. Initially, I enjoyed my time working outdoors, but by the end, I was tired, felt dispirited, and lacked confidence. The physical demands of working in the adventure recreation industry were one thing; dealing with the emotional demands was much harder. I felt I had to keep proving my ability and knowledge over and over again. The male dominated culture of the adventure recreation industry often meant that male colleagues ignored my opinions and input. I came to believe that I had nothing to offer and nowhere to go in the adventure recreation industry.

My interest in this study began when I expressed my feelings to close colleagues, especially my female contemporaries. Many of my female colleagues had worked in the industry for a similar length of time. As we talked more, we acknowledged an overarching pattern of disillusion and a desire to move into new areas. Several women expressed their desire to leave the adventure recreation industry but were unsure of where to go. They did not know what opportunities were available to them. Others had already begun to retrain in order to prepare themselves for what they saw as an inevitable departure from active fieldwork. This knowledge caused me great concern. I could not understand what was happening, why the women I had

worked with for so many years seemed to be so disenchanted with the working conditions of an industry they had entered with such expectation and enthusiasm.

This study is as much a journey in personal exploration, discovery and recuperation as it is an academic discussion. By hearing the stories of other women who were also employed in adventure recreation, I began to see the parallels and the differences in our experiences. I began to understand that what was happening was not the result of personal failure, but the result of a complex interaction of social mores, gender expectations and a host of difficulties that women encounter when they enter a traditionally male domain. I also began to see that women working outdoors needed strength of character and a strong sense of self to survive and create their own space within the adventure recreation industry.

Working from a feminist framework gave me the foundation to explore and analyse women's experience from a women-centred perspective. I did not want to compare women's stories to those of men. I wanted to understand how women constructed meanings about their working lives and how they understood their own experiences. I wanted to know what adventure recreation looked like through women's eyes; through other women's eyes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

From an academic perspective, the purpose of this study was to record and analyse the stories of ten women working in the adventure recreation industry in Western



Australia. There is very little written on women's experience of employment in this industry. From a personal perspective, the purpose of this study was to hear the stories of women working in adventure recreation in Western Australia and compare them with my own. I wanted to know if the successes and failures I had experienced within the adventure recreation industry were mine alone, or if similar experiences were shared with other women.

The specific research questions of this investigation fell into four general categories with several sub-questions in each category:

1. How did the women first become employed in the adventure recreation industry?  
*How did they get involved? How did they access training? How did their career paths develop?*
2. What attracted the women to work in adventure recreation?  
*What was it that initially attracted them to the industry? What did they see as the most attractive aspects of their employment? What made their job enjoyable?*
3. What was it like for the women to work in the adventure recreation industry?  
*What difficulties, if any, had they encountered? What was their job really like? Where did they work? How did their employment affect their personal and/or social lives? Did the financial rewards recompense the working conditions? Did they see themselves remaining in the industry long-term, and if not, why not?*
4. How did gender influence the women's experiences of working in adventure recreation?  
*Were there any specific issues or problems that arose from being a woman? Was gender-based discrimination an issue? Was their approach to leadership supported within the industry? Did they see themselves as role models? What did they see as the future position of women in the adventure recreation industry?*

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. to describe the realities of the working experiences of ten selected women employed in the adventure industry in Western Australia;

2. to explore the shared meanings held by this group of women about being a woman employed in the adventure recreation industry; and
3. to investigate issues currently raised within the context of women and non-traditional employment, and in particular, women working in the adventure recreation industry.

It was the purpose of this study to describe the feelings and perceptions that each woman held about her experience of working in the adventure recreation industry. In one to one interviews, each of the women was asked to relate the story of her experience. With the collection of these stories, it was possible to construct meanings that reflected the present situation for women within the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia.

### **Significance of the Study**

Research on the working experiences of people employed within the adventure recreation industry is severely limited. Much of the available research on employment in the adventure recreation industry focuses on effective instruction. It highlights the need for instructor training and qualifications and awareness of risk management issues (e.g. Papworth, 1997; Phipps & Claxton, 1997; Priest, 1987; Priest & Gass, 1998). Discussion of risk management issues focuses on the safety of adventure recreation participants. There is little discussion of the protection of the physical and emotional safety of adventure recreation professionals.

The adventure recreation industry places tremendous physical and emotional demands on its employees (Edwards & Gray, 1998; McNaughton, 1998; Watters, 1990). High rates of attrition and instructor turnover are seen to plague the industry

(Edwards & Gray, 1998) yet little has been done to investigate these issues. Perhaps much of this lack of concern lies in the public perception of working in the adventure recreation industry as fun and easy (Watters, 1990). This perception is grossly inaccurate as there is enormous responsibility placed on program leaders to ensure the safety of individuals in their care. Apart from this issue, there is a requirement to attend to behind-the-scenes tasks such as planning, client consultation, equipment maintenance and on going training that adds to the workload.

Of course, many aspects of working in adventure recreation are not unpleasant, otherwise no rational person would pursue this industry as a career option. Personal satisfaction, flexibility of working conditions, meeting new people and, of course, working outdoors rather than indoors, are often held up as compensation for the recognised difficulties of being employed in the adventure recreation industry.

This study focuses on the experiences of women working full time in adventure recreation. There is a need to examine the perceptions of working in the industry against its realities. Very little has been done to explore the implications of the current imbalance between perceptions of opportunity and excitement, with the reality of providing other people with adventure recreation experiences on a daily basis.

There is an obvious question regarding the need to investigate the working experiences for men as well as women across the industry. However, it was not my intention to enter into a comparative study of men's versus women's experiences of

employment in adventure recreation. Many of the issues raised in this study may well apply to male adventure recreation professionals but the focus of this study is examining the experience of women employed in the adventure recreation industry.

I believe the study's significance lies in the telling of the stories of women involvement in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. Very few real life stories of women working in this industry have been fully explored in the current literature on women and adventure. Only by enabling women to tell the stories of their journey into the adventure arena can we gain new perspectives and knowledge of what life is really like for women who choose to work in adventure recreation.

Presenting the perspectives of women employed in this non-traditional area may encourage (or discourage) women's further employment. The construction of a base of knowledge of women's experiences may benefit others by providing a "reality check" for women considering employment in adventure recreation. Further, this study may act as a vehicle to inform the adventure recreation industry of issues applicable to its employees. In addressing identified issues, it may be possible to work positively with all adventure recreation professionals to enrich the quality of their working lives.

## **Overview of the Thesis**

Two important points regarding the presentation of this study are raised here. Some feminist researchers argue that most researchers work within conventional boundaries of "hygienic research" presentation (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 153-154).

In this context, research findings are presented as “described” and not as they are “experienced”. By conforming to convention, we pretend that the research process is one in which no problems occur and in which no emotions are involved. In reality, the research document is fluid and its content may change many times throughout the research process. The final product is the result of a journey of discovery as original ideas are evaluated and new insights explored.

The involvement of the respondents in this study, the relationships developed and the means by which ideas were explored, are critical to the overall findings of this study. Many of these interactions occurred inside and outside of the conventional research process. It was not my intention to present every problematic or emotional aspect of the research process but, where I felt it was appropriate, the steps taken to gain new insights or overcome difficulties have been described.

Secondly, I feel it is important to acknowledge the gender of authors referenced throughout this study. I have not followed the example of many feminist researchers and included full names in in-text references (see Reinharz, 1992, p.16). However, given names of authors are included in the reference list.

This introduction is followed by a comprehensive review of literature that explores issues relating to women and their participation in physical activity and adventure; women in the workplace; and in particular, their employment in the adventure recreation industry. Literature relating to feminist issues and research on women outdoors is also reviewed.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework of the study. This framework is based on feminist poststructuralist theory and its application in this study is discussed. Chapter Four describes the research design and method chosen and presents the process involved in conducting this study.

Chapters Five and Six present the data collected from interviews conducted with ten women employed in adventure recreation in Western Australia. Specifically, Chapter Five explores general issues of employment in this industry and Chapter Six explores perceptions of employment from a women-centred perspective. Chapter Seven provides a summary of the study findings and discusses relative findings within current literature. In addition, the final chapter makes recommendations for future research.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

*"You can't go hiking in the woods", pronounced my mother ...  
"And you can't go camping" ...  
I was ten years old and I was stunned.  
"Why not?" I wailed  
"Girls don't do that!" was her emphatic reply.*

Anne LaBastille  
(McEwen, 1997, p. 276)

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the stories of ten women working in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. There is very limited literature that directly examines the experiences of women and their employment in adventure recreation. Therefore, in order to place this study within the framework of available literature, this chapter examines a number of issues. These include women's participation in physical activity and adventure, and women's employment in non-traditional workplaces, in particular, the adventure recreation industry. Further, literature relating to feminist issues and approaches to research is explored.

Much of the material published on adventure recreation originates from North America (United States and Canada) and the United Kingdom. Most of the early research presents adventure from a "malestream" perspective and largely ignores the contributions of women and the specific benefits of adventure for women (Little & McIntyre, 1995; Miranda & Yerkes, 1987; Stockham, 1996). In the 1980s, studies of women and adventure recreation attracted a wider audience with a number of

publications from North America (e.g., Miranda & Yerkes, 1986, 1987; Mitten, 1985; Warren, 1985; Yerkes, 1982; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985).

The quantity and quality of literature available on women in the outdoors increased dramatically over the past fifteen years, with again, the vast majority of literature originating from North America. Of the 60 authors cited in Roberts' (1998) bibliography of research on women outdoors, less than ten authors were based outside of North America, with only five based in Australia or New Zealand. This review therefore draws heavily on North American literature, supported by the scarce resources from Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

Further, much of the available literature emphasises specific aspects of women's participation in adventure, particularly constraints to involvement and differences in expectations, approach and attitude to adventure and the outdoors. The most recurrent theme in the literature dealing with women and adventure is the identification of socially and culturally determined constraints to women's participation (e.g. Bell, 1997; Henderson, 1990, 1994, 1996a; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Little & McIntyre, 1995; Morse, 1997).

In order to understand the position of women and their involvement in adventure recreation, the impact of gender on participation in physical activity, in particular adventure activity, is the starting point for this review of literature. It explores the differences in participation due to gender, and attitudes towards women's physicality that have discouraged women's presence in the outdoors, specifically their



participation in adventure. These attitudes and expectations of the perceived physical capabilities of women also extend to influence women's participation in the workforce. When the workplace is an adventure recreation program set in an outdoor environment, the dynamics of constraints to women's participation exert unique pressure on the women who have chosen to enter that arena.

### **The Influence of Gender on Women, Physical Activity and Adventure**

Definitions of male and female are most often determined by physiological characteristics. However, issues surrounding gender are not simply related to physicality but also refer to social constructs and expectations. Gender refers to the "cultural connections associated with one's biological sex" and to how "society determines expectations and behaviour regarding masculinity and femininity" (Henderson et al., 1996, p. 17). It would appear that there is a direct relationship between "appropriate" physical activity and gender role conformity (Kane, 1990, pp. 52-54). In children, it is more likely that gender-appropriate behaviour, such as rough and tumble play for boys, will be praised. Gender-inappropriate behaviour, such as the same play by girls or "sissy" play by boys, can result in social sanctions or labelling (Sharpe, 1994, p. 81).

Age may also impact on conformation to gender roles and conformity is often influenced by parental attitudes and expectations (Paludi, 1998). In a study of adult women soccer players, Scraton (1999) found that as young girls, most of the players were encouraged to play by their fathers or brothers. It was only when the women

reached adolescence that playing soccer was seen as inappropriate and they were expected to adopt accepted models of feminine behaviour and presentation.

There is anecdotal evidence of the social stigma faced by active girls and young women who are labelled “tomboy” (e.g. McEwen, 1997; Yamaguchi & Barber, 1995; Zimmerman & Reavill, 1998). Definitions of tomboy may simply relate to a “girl who prefers boyish activities or dress”, though further research of the term brings up synonyms such as “hoyden”, defined as a “boisterous or ill-mannered girl” (Lowe, 1995, p. 198). As further evidence of the negative connotations associated with female physicality, adult women who participate in traditionally masculine physical activities often have their sexuality questioned through being labelled “weird”, “unfeminine”, “butch” or “lesbian” (Loeffler, 1995, p. 102; McDermott, 1996, pp. 13-15; Scraton, 1999).

Historically, women’s biology was seen as a limitation to physical activity. Women were believed to be physiologically inferior to men and therefore incapable of participating in strenuous physical activity and sport (Lenskyj, 1986). At the turn of the twentieth century, women were believed to be physically and mentally inferior and unable to cope with the “emotional strain of physical recreation” (Bialeschki, 1990, p. 44). Despite the prevailing beliefs of the early 1900s, many women in North America took advantage of the changes in social attitudes brought about by the emergence of the women’s suffrage movement. Great numbers of women scorned prior beliefs and participated in sports and recreation pursuits such as bicycling, gymnastics, ice hockey, swimming, athletics (Lenskyj, 1986). Many North

American women were also actively involved in camping and exploring the outdoors (Bialeschki, 1992; Miranda & Yerkes, 1996).

Unfortunately, most opportunities for participation were limited to women of higher social standing or independent financial means and were not accessible to the average women (Lanskyj, 1986). The British boarding school system, at the turn of this century, is credited with instigating a culture of sport for young women in Britain as it closely imitated the education system devised for public school boys. Hargreaves (1994, p. 66) states that team games were fiercely promoted within the girls' schools and game playing "became a serious business". Within the public girls' school system, middle-class girls were able to participate in activities that, only a few decades before, would have been unimaginable. Hargreaves (1994) acknowledges the position of privilege held by these young women, as physical activity was still inaccessible by most girls in British society.

Lack of access to physical activities, and the lack of consideration and recognition of the desire of women and girls to be involved in physical activity, is typified by the history of the Girl Guide Association in the United Kingdom. Robert Baden-Powell first established the Boy Scout Association in the early 1900s after the success of his book "Scouting for Boys" (Loynes, 1990). Unbeknownst to the Scout Association, large numbers of girls also registered as Boy Scouts, using their initials only to avoid disclosing their gender. In 1909, 6000 girls in the United Kingdom were registered as Boy Scouts. At a public Scout rally held in that year, a group of girls approached Baden-Powell to make their involvement public. This approach resulted in the

establishment of the Girl Guide Association the following year. The girls were called Guides to distinguish their organisation from the boys and dispel parents' concerns that their girls might mix with boys and become tomboys (Evans, Sutton & Moynihan, 1992, p. 11).

In 1910, interest in the Scouting movement grew in the United States. At the time, there were mounting expressions of concern as emancipated women entered into previously exclusively masculine domains of employment and politics. Hantover (1992, p.123) argues that the mounting interest in Scouting provided men with an opportunity to counteract the "perceived feminising forces" in the lives of young boys and to reinforce the "traditional male script" of physical strength and endeavour. Male physicality and power can be symbolised in the strength of the male body and that strength becomes a key indicator of masculinity. As such, physical activities for young men provide the means to develop a sense of masculinity. They learn to use their bodies in "forceful, dominating and aggressive ways"; behaviours that are socially constructed as indicators of male power (McDermott, 1996, p. 13). Demonstration of women's prowess in physical activity could only undermine male power and the established hierarchy.

Following the advent of women's suffrage in North America in the 1920s, the momentum of the women's movement lulled and the belief that physical activity was detrimental to women's health began to gain greater acceptance. Women of this era were condemned for unladylike behaviour and masculine appearance when engaging in physical work or recreational activity (Bialeschki, 1990). In particular, in the

1930s, the opinion that physical stress would interfere with a woman's ability to bear children was given great credence. Women were actively discouraged from participating in physical activity to protect their reproductive ability (Lonskyj, 1986).

Women persisted in being active, despite the social sanctions. When their physical achievements challenged those of men, these achievements were largely ignored. Ignoring and excluding women was fundamental to the maintenance of male power. In the relatively recent case of the 1978 Acapulco cliff diving championships, a male competitor complained about the inclusion of Barbara Mayer Winters in the final. She was subsequently disqualified for her own protection. The transparency of reasoning behind this decision was epitomised by a male competitor who stated:

This is a death-defying activity - men are taking a great gamble to prove their courage. What would be the point if everyone saw that a woman could do the same? (Bryson, 1990, p. 176).

Bialeschki (1992) suggests that from the earliest beginnings of outdoor recreational activities, women commonly accompanied men, but their accomplishments were obscured in the literature. Women were relegated to the role of helpmate and their achievements were minimised or questioned. Anderson (1970, p. 253) stated that:

For a woman to embark on such adventures is against the main stream of society. A man may contract out of society for a time and be admired for it; manifestation of the same quality in a woman usually provokes social disapproval. Even women who may come to be admired for highly individual achievement tend to be considered successfully eccentric rather than really admirable.

While this statement was made almost thirty years ago, it appears that little has changed in the late 1990s. Negative attitudes to, and perceptions of, women's involvement in strenuous and risky physical activity still persist. They are well

entrenched and socially sanctioned. In a study conducted in North America in 1995, 100 male and female adventure recreation program administrators were surveyed. Fifty per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that "gender role socialisation makes outdoor activities seem inappropriate for women" (Loeffler, 1995, p. 101).

Stockham (1996) and da Silva (1998) relate the collective stories of women mountain climbers. The mountaineering culture was seen to be particularly patriarchal with many mountaineering women finding their skills and strengths dismissed or belittled. Misogyny among male climbers was well established and the mountains were viewed as a world of order and calm where women knew their proper place. One of those places seemed to be as an object of sexual satisfaction, where, as one woman reported she was told, "If you want to climb with the expedition, you ought to be willing to sleep with all the men". Another woman reported being referred to as the "expedition groupie" as the men could not conceive her inclusion in the expedition in any other context (Stockham, 1996, p. 7).

The lack of recognition of women's adventurous achievements is exacerbated by the popular media as it continues to largely represent outdoor adventure as white male "machismo" with little acceptance of the contributions of women (Humberstone, 1996, p. 48). The story of Alison Hargreaves illustrates the attitude of media and the part it plays in influencing how adventurous women are presented to the general public. Alison Hargreaves, an experienced and well known climber, died in 1995 whilst descending K2, the world's second highest peak. Stockham (1996) reported that the media portrayed Hargreaves as obsessed by the desire to reach the summit of

K2, and as an unfit mother who abandoned her children to pursue her own goals. Questions were asked, by the media, about why a woman was there in the first place.

In contrast, Stockham (1996) stated that when two male climbers were killed not long after, in a similar incident on the same peak, the media reported the loss of men of integrity and stature. Nothing was said of the fact that one had children and, unlike the reporting in Hargreave's case, there was no criticism of these men taking part in a high-risk physical activity. It would appear that the media condoned fathers participating in high risk mountaineering, but not mothers. Further, during a discussion of these climbing incidents in a televised interview, the suggestion was made that women should not participate in adventurous, high-risk activities.

Discussion of women's and girls' participation in physical activity in general has increased substantially over the past fifteen years. Research on women's participation in sport has endeavoured to debunk many of the myths associated with women's physical and mental ability and their perceived lack of the physical strength and mental stamina necessary for success in sporting arenas (e.g. Bryson, 1990; Hall, 1996; Lenskyj, 1986; McDermott, 1996; Zimmennan & Reavill, 1998). A body of literature on women and their participation in adventure recreation activities is also growing, albeit more slowly (Henderson & Roberts, 1998) and the mythology associated with women's adventure experiences is being explored (Bialeschki, 1990; Humberstone, 1996; Warren, 1985; Williams, 1993).

The most enduring and prevalent myth is still the perception of an active female as masculine. Labelling of women as unfeminine was particularly prevalent when women ventured outdoors to participate in adventure activities (Henderson, 1992a; Loeffler, 1995). However, women have continued to resist the view that the adventure in the outdoors was a male domain. Alexandra David-Néel explored Tibet early this century; Amelia Earhart flew to many parts of the world and set a world altitude record in 1931; and Dervla Murphy inspired many others with her cycling adventures through India in the 1960s (Galland, 1980; Visontay, 1999). More recently, Arlene Blum led an all-women expedition to the peak of Annapurna in Nepal in 1978, an event that has inspired many women to follow in her footsteps (Blum, 1992). As we reach the end of the 1990s, women have stepped into all avenues of adventure, often forging their own paths and creating opportunities where none existed previously (da Silva, 1998; Fox Rogers, 1997).

### **Women and Adventure Recreation**

Early adventure recreation programs, such as those offered by Outward Bound, were not designed for, nor did they easily accommodate, women (Marsh & Richards, 1989, p. 119). The Outward Bound movement, established by Kurt Hahn in Wales in 1941, recognised the education potential of adventure recreation in training young men (and only young men initially) to acquire life and survival skills through developing competence in land and sea expeditions, mountaineering and cross-country navigation (Miner, 1990). The Outward Bound approach to adventure recreation emphasised “a structured set of vigorously physical outdoor activities”



where development of activity skills acted as a medium to “master the difficult and unfamiliar” (Marsh & Richards, 1989, p. 119). These traditional models of adventure extolled enduring hardship and the conquest of the outdoor environment as the foundation of personal development.

In the 1960s, greater numbers of young women began to participate in mixed gender and all-female courses offered by Outward Bound (Marsh & Richards, 1989). All-female courses were the result of the “astonishing” discovery that girls could “handle – at times even with a superior blitheness – the same courses, of the same degree of difficulty, that had been designed for boys” (Miner, 1990, p. 63). Adult mixed-gender adventure recreation courses soon followed.

Adult women-only courses, first offered by Outward Bound in the United States in 1974 (Galland, 1980, p. 78), were initially seen as controversial because women wished to venture into the wilderness without men - to the “discomfort of whatever remnants there were of a once rather pure macho esprit” (Miner, 1990, p. 63). By 1980, women-only courses were offered by almost all Outward Bound schools across the United States (Galland, 1980, p. 78). As more women became involved in adventure activities, there was an increasing recognition that women came to adventure recreation programs with an “acculturation” different from men (Mitten, 1985, p. 20). Women wanted a different adventure recreation experience from men, and many women preferred that experience to occur with other women (McClintock, 1996; Mitten, 1985).

Much of the discussion around women-only adventure programs relates to the social environment generated within the programs that was seen to be free from “male ego” and the perceived need to fit socially acceptable gender roles (McClintock, 1996, p. 20-22). It was felt that women joining a mixed program might not be able to express their strengths and would prefer to learn new skills in a supportive environment (Mitten, 1985). A further study found that women who participated in all-women adventure experiences (compared to mixed-gender experiences) reported that the social environment was “more relaxed, less competitive, no power differential, [with] more comfort/support” (Hornibrook, et al., 1997, p. 156). This study also identified other outcomes for the women which included personal growth in developing skills and experience without the need to determine a “pecking order”; the establishment of a safer environment as individuals’ contributions were valued; and the lack of perceived pressure to have prior competency in outdoor skills.

The benefit of incorporating feminine perspectives into adventure recreation programming is the subject of much research. For example, some studies have discussed the motivations and benefits of women only programs (e.g., Hornibrook et al., 1997; McClintock, 1996; Mitten, 1985). Other authors discussed the need to change leadership style and program content to accommodate the interests of women and girls to escape the “gender trap” of traditional homogenous (male orientated or masculine styled) adventure recreation programs (e.g., Bell, 1996; Jordan, 1992; Knapp, 1985; Mitten, 1992, Warren & Rheingold, 1993).

## **Women and Adventure Recreation Leadership**

The early adventure programs offered by Outward Bound were based on traditional military models. They were designed to promote self-confidence and self-reliance and exhibited inherently masculine values. Chorn (1995, p. 5) identified masculine values such as competition, independence, toughness and discipline as traditionally dominant in most organisations. This observation is particularly relevant to leadership style in the adventure recreation industry. However, it is the feminine values of collaboration, interdependence, understanding, flexibility and learning identified by Chorn (1995, p. 5) that relate most closely to the attributes of effective adventure recreation leaders identified by Priest (1987, 1989).

Priest (1987, p. 26) identified a range of personal attributes necessary for effective adventure recreation leadership that included motivational philosophy and interest; physical fitness; healthy self-concept and ego; awareness and empathy for others; personable traits and behaviour; and flexible leadership style and judgement based on experience. More recently, Priest and Gass (1998) again emphasised that skills of flexible leadership style and communication were essential for effective adventure recreation leaders. These attributes are somewhat incongruent to traditional stereotypes of masculine leadership, whereas flexibility, communication and empathy are stereotypically associated with women. Consequently, it could be reasonable to assume that women have a natural advantage gaining employment in adventure recreation leadership. However, this does not seem to always be the case. Jordan (1991) found that participants in adventure recreation programs preferred men

as leaders. Their preference was based on the perception that men have greater strength and organisational ability. There appears to be a gap between what research suggests are essential attributes in effective adventure recreation leadership, and reported participant perceptions and expectations of an appropriate adventure recreation leader.

Competency in technical skills is easier to measure and certify than competency in human relations skills. Therefore, technical skill level has traditionally been the primary measure of staff competence. Research findings such as those presented by Priest (1987, 1989) and Priest and Gass (1998) suggest that this may not be entirely appropriate. In addition, twelve components of outdoor leadership were identified by Papworth (1997, p. 213). Only three of these components related to technical, safety and environmental skills. The other nine components included organisational, instructional and communication skills, ethics and flexibility - areas of skill development that related to personal and operational "meta" skills.

With this in mind, it is important to explore the findings of another study of adventure recreation instructor effectiveness (Phipps & Claxton, 1997). Twelve male and five female adventure recreation instructors were assessed through observation and participant feedback across ten sub-sections of perceived effectiveness. These sub-sections included structure, activity practice, communication, perception, motivation, group processing, feedback, leadership, people skills and safety. The findings of the study noted that there was an initial assumption, based on sex-role stereotypes, that men would perform better in

leadership roles than women. However, this assumption was not supported by the study findings. On average, Phipps and Claxton found that women scored significantly higher in all categories except activity practice (the only area where physical strength was a factor). While these findings raised several questions about the perceived effectiveness and participant satisfaction attributed to male or female instructors, the quantitative data collected in this particular study could not provide answers to the question of why this perceived difference existed. One of the most critical points raised by the study was the need to determine what female instructors do differently from their male counterparts to demonstrate greater leader effectiveness and to generate greater participant satisfaction in adventure recreation experiences.

It is acknowledged that feminist learning and leadership styles are different to the traditional masculinist model, and it is no longer appropriate to assume that the traditional model of adventure leadership suits all participants (Bell, 1996; Henderson, 1996b; Warren & Rheingold, 1993). There has been an emergence of women only adventure programs that step away from the masculine model and endeavour to provide supportive and non-competitive learning environments. With this growth, has come recognition of the need for the employment of a diverse range of competent female instructors (Johnston, 1990; Mitten, 1985; Nanschild, 1997; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Warren & Rheingold, 1993). However, gaining employment in the adventure recreation industry has not been easy for women.

Women who seek work in the adventure industry are required to overcome many constraints to entry. Employees in the adventure industry are predominantly male and, as with any majority, they hold the bulk of status and power. There is an identified lack of women in managerial and decision-making roles within the industry (Humberstone, 1994, 1996; Loeffler, 1995, 1996).

Women's visibility in non-traditional areas of employment, in such male dominated industries as adventure recreation, is limited. Employment opportunities for women reflect the similar patterns of constraint that exist in other sectors of the workforce. Domestic responsibility, the perpetuation of job market segmentation on gender lines and a lack of recognition of feminist management methods all contribute to the continued lower status of women in the workplace (Wearing, 1996).

Domestic responsibility plays a large role in women's decisions to pursue long-term careers in adventure recreation. It takes time to develop adventure recreation leadership skills. This skill development or the choice to raise a family competes for women's allocation of time. Research by the National Outdoor Leadership School in the US reported that the average age of an Instructors Course graduate was 26, with the average age of a Course Leader being 30 – an age when many women make the decision to have or not have children (Coombs, 1992).

## **Making a Place for Women – Women and Non-traditional Employment**

Prior to the 1960s, it was the norm for married women to remain at home. Women were invisible from early career studies as it was assumed that women would be centred at home and women who did work were simply trying to place themselves in the company of “marriageable men” (Frisby, 1992, p. 158). While this misconception may have changed, there are still a great number of constraints to women entering male dominated areas of employment.

A “glass ceiling” of subtle attitudes and prejudices does exist and it blocks many women from reaching their full potential in various careers. Women are under represented in management and, in general, are often denied promotion due to the perception of lack of qualifications or experience. Many of these perceptions are based purely on socialised roles and on the homosociality of organisations where masculine models of management and behaviour are the norm (Still, 1992, 1993).

Socialised expectations of women’s behaviour and accepted divisions of labour have, in the past, enabled some jobs to be traditionally defined as female or male, restricting the access of many women into non-traditional fields of employment (Hannam, 1993). Women who chose to enter these fields learnt male models of behaviour in order to survive, thereby enabling the traditional masculine culture of organisations to continue unchanged (Still, 1993).

Despite the traditions and recognised dominance of male management and instructional staff in the adventure recreation industry, little by little the workplace is changing. The North American National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) has set itself the goal of having 40 per cent of its staff positions filled by women, to match the percentage of female students (Koesler, 1993). In 1992, although there was a 41 per cent increase in female instructors over the previous four years, its overall percentage of female staff was still only 31 per cent (Coombs, 1992; Koesler, 1993). By 1998/99, female staff figures had increased marginally to 33 per cent, despite many initiatives designed to attract female instructors (John Gookin, personal communication, 6 July, 1999).

Almost reverse gender ratios are being recorded in the Australian Outward Bound School. In a recruitment drive in 1996, the School received 170 applications for trainee positions (54% male, 46% female). Of these applicants, five women and four men were selected to train as instructors (Neill, 1997). Sam (Sandra) Robinson, the Operations Manager for Outward Bound Australia, stated that in 1998, women made up sixty per cent of Outward Bound Australia instructors. She acknowledged that over the past three years, recruitment criteria had changed with greater emphasis on recruiting trainees with higher levels of interpersonal skills (personal communication, 14 January, 1999).

The reason why differences exist between the North American and the Australian examples remains unanswered and has not been explored in this study. Cultural differences in attitudes to women's employment in North America and Australia, or



differences in working conditions or recruitment criteria may provide some clues, but as yet there is no evidence to suggest why this difference in staff gender ratio exists between the North American and Australian examples cited.

### **Research on Women's Experiences Working in Adventure Recreation**

There is an expanding base of literature that explores women's adventure experiences, yet little appears to have been published that directly relates the stories of women employed in adventure recreation. Only four examples of published research could be found that directly related to women's experiences of employment in adventure recreation. Each of these studies was based in a different country: Miranda & Yerkes (1986, 1987) in the United States of America; Green (1994) in Victoria, Australia; Loeffler (1996) in Canada and the United States of America; and the fourth study (Allin, 1998) in the United Kingdom. Each of these four studies took a different focus towards women's involvement in the adventure recreation industry.

The first study, completed in the mid-1980s by Miranda and Yerkes (1986, 1987) was the most comprehensive in terms of investigating working conditions for women within the adventure recreation industry. Miranda and Yerkes surveyed 130 North American female outdoor leaders and examined four major areas: income, motivation for seeking employment, perception of women leaders, and the influence of gender on their career development. This study found that the average age of women employed in the outdoor industry, at that time, was twenty-eight with 74 per

cent of women surveyed earning less than US\$10,000 per year from adventure recreation employment.

Most women had trained “on-the-job” with few women holding formal qualifications in adventure pursuits. Their primary motivators for entering the industry were life sharing and teaching skills; the enjoyment of being in the outdoors; and wanting to teach values that cherish nature. Miranda and Yerkes (1986, 1987) found that women who worked outdoors were active in developing awareness of women’s needs and issues in the outdoors. The women believed that their gender encouraged other women to participate but acknowledged that it took longer to be accepted by male participants. In addition, only 24 per cent of women interviewed believed they had more employment opportunities than their male counterparts, with these women primarily employed in industry sectors, such as education, where equitable employment practices had been introduced. At the conclusion of Miranda and Yerke’s study, they predicted a significant increase in demand for female instructors and encouraged further research on gender related issues in outdoor leadership. Despite their encouragement, it appears little further research was conducted until the mid-1990s.

An Australian study undertaken by Green (1994) involved four female students in their final year of an undergraduate outdoor education course in Victoria. The four women were questioned about their experience and the study findings reinforced stereotypical attitudes and behaviour of male students towards female students. Physical strength was considered (by male students) to be one of the best indicators

of competence in the outdoors. The women, however, felt that skill, technique and good judgement were just as important as physical strength. In addition, interference in their performance by male students was a source of annoyance to the women. Male students tended to step in to protect the women when they (the male students) assumed their help was needed. The women felt that they were not taken seriously and resented the lack of opportunities to fully share their expertise and knowledge.

Loeffler (1995) surveyed 100 outdoor education program administrators to identify factors that influenced women's career development in outdoor leadership. It was found that gender role socialisation and lack of perceived experience played a large part in constraining women's career advancement. The majority of women surveyed felt the existence of a well-established male network, that discriminated against women in hiring and training, was a constraint to their employment. This constraint was ranked fourth by males surveyed. First ranked responses from males surveyed were women's perception of themselves as less competent, women's lack of exposure to outdoor skills and gender role socialisation. Loeffler's study concluded by suggesting strategies that may assist in establishing support networks for women and facilitate their entry into the adventure recreation industry.

Allin (1998) is currently completing a study of women working in outdoor education in the United Kingdom. Preliminary findings of her study focus on issues of physicality and the identification of strategies for successful negotiation of male-gendered space.

Other published material has used anecdotes and personal experience to explore issues of discrimination, socialised gender roles and stereotypical attitudes to women's training, leadership roles and employment in the outdoors (Humberstone, 1994; Johnson, 1990; Levi, 1991; Warren, 1985). Levi (1991) described her experience of employment at a Local Education Authority in the United Kingdom as an assistant outdoor leader. She stated that she received constant verbal abuse from her male supervisor and was rarely given the opportunity to take on leadership roles, despite her skill level and experience.

It would appear that traditional attitudes to women outdoors remain prevalent, despite several attempts to recognise constraints and suggest strategies aimed at breaking down the barriers to women's employment in adventure recreation. Identifying constraints and strategies is useful in assisting women to negotiate their way in employment. However, this study endeavours to explore the reality and the perceptions women hold about their working lives in the adventure recreation industry. Its purpose is to fill, in part, the gap of knowledge that exists between the expectations of women's employment in the adventure recreation field, and the reality of their working lives.

### **The Future for Women and Adventure Recreation**

Historically, women, people of colour and people with a disability have been excluded from outdoor adventure programs (Humberstone, 1994, 1996; Pottinger, 1994; Roberts & Drogin, 1996). These groups are often under-served as participants

in adventure programming and under-represented in adventure recreation organisations. Realisation of the potential of “gender and diversity consciousness” has resulted in increased demand for adventure programs that cater for diverse populations (Henderson, 1997, p. 89).

A recent literature review of research on women and the outdoors inferred that, through current research findings, adventure recreation providers were being encouraged to adopt a more feminist philosophy that “seeks to empower and enhance integrity for all participants” (Henderson & Roberts, 1998, pp. 5-6). This approach to adventure recreation leadership was more people and outcome centred. It moved away from traditional adventure programs that primarily focused on the development of technical skills and relied on hierarchical leadership models.

As discussed, women’s access to employment and training in adventure recreation has been traditionally dominated by male stereotypes of adventure leadership. A study by Jordan (1991) found there was a pre-course preference for male leadership in Outward Bound programs but this preference was not as evident at the end of the program. Differences in participant’s post-course evaluation of male and female instructors were small. If anything, there was a tendency towards higher post-course ratings for female leaders in areas of instructor and participant rapport. Even so, the results of the study suggested that women would find it difficult to receive recognition for physical or technical skills.

Knapp (1985) proposed that women's involvement in adventure programming was a major factor in changing traditional attitudes to sex-role stereotypes. Exposure to female outdoor instructors, who demonstrated androgynous behaviours in performing physically demanding activities, challenged the acceptance of sex-role stereotypes. More recent research supported this position as it was found that women taking on leadership roles caused reassessment of pre-defined ideas of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour and leadership style (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Pate, 1997). To further support the argument for competent female instructors as role models, a study reported by Coombs (1992) found that in outdoor courses run without women leaders, there was a consistent lack of leadership demonstrated by female participants. Without exposure to women in leadership roles, female participants were reluctant to adopt behaviours they felt might be interpreted as inappropriate for their gender.

Similarly in the workplace, women have been reticent in taking up employment where there are few female employees to act as role models. A study on young women's career choices sought to determine the impact of role models on career aspirations (Johnston, 1994). Without first-hand experience, young women found it difficult to realise their potential for employment outside of traditional careers for women. Sharpe (1994) also found that work experience or exposure to friends or relatives in non-traditional areas benefited girls in making choices about career directions. Therefore, it is expected that as more young women are exposed to positive adventure experiences with appropriate female role models as adventure recreation leaders, the number of young women seeking employment in the field will

increase. Warren (1997) proposed that the women currently employed in the adventure recreation industry have an important role to play in mentoring younger women and encouraging them to remain in the field.

There is an important link between feminist literature and the experiences of young women that is yet to be explored. We have little understanding of the role adventurous women play as role models for younger women and their decisions to enter into non-traditional areas of employment such as adventure recreation. This is an area for further study across a range of employment options that will become increasingly rich for inquiry as the nature of work changes.

### **Feminist Issues and Adventure Recreation**

For many women, leisure activities were not considered an important aspect of their lives and until recently, sport and leisure issues were not high on the feminist agenda (Deem, 1996). Much leisure research was based on men's experience (Wearing, 1998) with little appreciation and understanding of women's leisure preferences (Lee, 1996). There was a tendency by feminist researchers to treat discrimination in leisure as less important than discrimination in other areas, such as the home and workplace. As a result, feminist researchers have failed to effectively deal with issues of women and limited access to meaningful leisure experiences (Shaw, 1996).

The past decade has seen an emerging interest in the examination of women's issues regarding participation in adventure recreation. In particular, feminist writers now

argue that leisure and sport provide women with the opportunity to resist male dominated discourse and become agents for change in “trying out and changing rigid definitions of male and female bodies” (Wearing, 1998, p. 181). In this decade, research on women and adventure recreation has incorporated feminist perspectives and discussed issues directly relevant to women’s experience. These issues include the recognition of women’s achievements and past involvement in adventure recreation (Bialeschki, 1992; Henderson, 1992a; Miranda & Yerkes, 1996; Williams, 1992). Several studies have evaluated the importance of providing women only programs or incorporating feminine or feminist perspectives into adventure recreation programming if women are to receive full enjoyment and benefit from the experience (Johnson, 1990; McClintock, 1996; Mitten, 1992; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Warren, 1990).

Often, research has focused on the uniqueness of women’s experiences in the outdoors. Several discussions relate to the inter-relationships of women and nature, and the emerging field of ecofeminism (Fox, 1997; Russell & Bell, 1996; Warren, 1997). Changes in attitudes to women’s participation in adventure activities and the practice of women’s leadership in outdoor settings (Bell, 1996, Henderson, 1996a) have led to greater awareness of the potential for spiritual awareness and empowerment (Fox, 1998; Henderson, 1996a). The therapeutic value of outdoor experiences for women, especially survivors of sexual or physical abuse, has also been investigated (Asher, Huffaker & McNally, 1994; Mitten & Dutton, 1996; Stopha, 1994). Further, Kiewa (1995, 1996) found that women who challenge socialised imposed limits by engaging in adventure activities, report feelings of



competence and empowerment. These studies have led to new approaches in adventure leadership that extort the value of outdoor experiences for women in enhancing feelings of healing and personal control.

Feminist poststructural theory has been used as a tool for analysis to explore and deconstruct the discourse that surrounds the outdoors and the adventure recreation industry. This theoretical framework examines the relationships between language, subjectivity, social organisation and power (Weedon, 1997). Henderson and Bialeschki (1991) explored women and recreation leadership and concluded that new models of leadership were likely to emerge if organisations were willing to critique and transform traditionally masculine concepts and practices of leadership. Davidson (1994) took a feminist poststructural approach to analyse the meanings of the outdoors and the predominant discourses that were promoted and exhibited through the practices of the Outward Bound School. Further, she explored the theoretical base of adventure-based counselling and concluded that adventure education had a powerful and well entrenched philosophy that was often insensitive to the needs of people who existed outside of white middle class culture.

Feminist approaches to research on adventure recreation have led to a greater depth of understanding, not only of women's experience but also the hegemonic culture, predominant meanings and values of the adventure recreation industry. This study uses a feminist poststructural approach to analyse the experience of women working in adventure recreation and their interpretation of the meaning of their working lives.

Feminist approaches to research, poststructural theory and its application to this study are examined in the following chapter.

## Chapter Three

### A Feminist Framework

*It is a wonderful and joyous thing to be a woman, and we must embrace those things that make us different to men. But we should not dwell on those differences until they become impediments to our growth and adventurous spirits.*

Brooke Zancett  
(Hall, 1998, p. 27)

### Seeing a Feminist Perspective

When I first began to develop the parameters of this study, I did not initially consider the inclusion of feminist theory. In fact, I fought against it. In my mind, feminism was associated with radical women whose separatist ideals sought to reverse the gender order and dominate men.

With hindsight, I have to acknowledge that I had been working in male dominated environments for a long time. It had been my experience that when I was outspoken, or raised gender issues in discussions within the adventure recreation industry, I was labeled a “radical feminist” and treated with disdain by some of my male colleagues. I believed that if I wanted to remain employable, it was best that I did not upset the status quo of the established gender order.

Until recently, I had no understanding of the diversity of feminist theory or its application. Clarity only came when I removed myself from full time employment and I began this academic adventure. Exploring feminist theory and beginning to understand its complexity gave me new insights to my working experience and the

ability to articulate the meanings of that experience in a new language. In addition, putting myself at the centre of my own working experience and recognising the influence of gender issues on women's working experience, allowed new perspectives to emerge.

### **Analysing Women's Experience from a Feminist Theoretical Framework**

Analysing the themes that emerged from the women's accounts of their experience of employment in adventure recreation was the primary concern of this study. At first, I found it difficult to select a feminist theoretical framework that would enable me to do this. The major difficulty I faced was selecting a particular feminist theory or theories that supported my vision of this study.

The multitude of approaches to feminism and feminist theory all have relevance in particular circumstances and attempts to generate one definitive feminist theory have resulted in great debate (Tong, 1998). Liberal feminist theory tends to accentuate the desirability of masculine traits and supports frameworks that enable women to develop such skills in order to succeed. Radical or cultural feminists depict male culture as aggressive and advocate for separatism (Kiewa, 1995). While aspects of these theories hold true in the context of the present study, I was concerned that structuralist feminist theories such as these, present women as "universally oppressed" (Wearing, 1996, p. 34). I did not feel comfortable with promoting that position within this study.

Women entering traditionally male dominated work environments often encounter many difficulties such as discrimination, lack of recognition of their skills or lack of opportunities for advancement (Bradley, 1989). While the women I planned to interview might well prove this observation true, I believed that positive changes were occurring for women within the adventure recreation industry. Therefore I felt that it was not appropriate to assume an expectation of oppression as I examined the experiences of women employed in the industry.

Feminist poststructuralist theory gave me the theoretical framework I was seeking. Many feminists have observed that perceptions of reality in Western society tend to be male constructions that support male power interests. The strength of poststructural theory is that it “rejects the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity” (Gavey, 1989, p. 46). It does not support the notion of only one true philosophy or one best method of approach. Poststructural theorists argue that many philosophies exist and an individual’s acceptance or rejection of any philosophical viewpoint will depend on the historical and social contexts of their individual experience. Plurality of meaning is welcomed with differing approaches seen as no more or less valid than any other.

Feminist poststructuralism focuses on power relationships, the use of language, subjectivity and resistance, and is concerned with disrupting or displacing dominant discourses (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1997). I viewed this theoretical framework as a more appropriate model from which to analyse the experiences of the women I intended to interview.

From my own experience, I knew that in areas where women's involvement in adventure recreation was becoming more visible and accepted, their position within the industry was strengthening. In addition, their influence was changing the power dynamics of the industry. In particular, traditional models of adventure recreation leadership that supported a philosophy of conquest and survival in the outdoors, were being challenged. Feminine values of cooperation and concern for others and the environment were being acclaimed as more appropriate models of leadership.

As the industry expanded, not only through the involvement of more women, but as more people in general became involved, new needs were identified. Market demand for a greater diversity of adventure recreation programs to meet those needs was growing. Adventure recreation programs were changing to meet the needs of older people, young children, people with disabilities, youth at risk, psychiatric patients, and survivors of drug abuse or violence. These market sectors are very different from the traditional adventure recreation market of young fit males.

Much of the change I perceived to be occurring centred on breaking down the traditional structure of adventure recreation experiences. With market expansion, the diversity of meanings attached to adventure recreation experiences was also expanding. In addition, new terminology and language was being adopted into common usage within the industry to describe contemporary adventure recreation experiences and structures. Terms such as "frontloading" supported an expectation that participants would be given adequate training and knowledge prior to the

adventure experience in order to attain a higher level of appreciation. "Debriefing the experience" required that participants reflected on program events and gained an awareness of the many physical and emotional facets of their experience and that of others. Practices such as these were virtually absent from traditional adventure recreation programs.

Feminist poststructuralism is particularly interested in the connections between meaning and power with an implicit understanding that meaning, power and identity are always in flux (Kenway & Willis, 1997). By collecting stories of the women employed in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia, I believed I would be able to determine what dominant discourses were evident within the industry. Through the process of analysis, it would then be possible to identify the ways in which women negotiated and established their own ways of working. Deciding how to best record the different cultural and social factors of the adventure recreation industry, as experienced by the women I planned to interview, was my next challenge.

### **Feminist Research in Perspective**

Incorporating a feminist theoretical framework was an important factor of this study. As discussed, I initially found it was difficult to decide which theoretical framework best suited this study. I faced a similar dilemma when it came to selecting a suitable research method. Just as there is no one definitive feminist theory, there is no one definitive feminist research method.

An exhaustive study of the use of feminist methods in social research identified ten themes of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992, p. 240). These themes included issues of theoretical perspective, multiplicity of method, social change, diversity, and the interactive relationships that may develop between the researcher, research subjects and the reader. For me, the most important of Reinharz's statements was that while feminism could provide a perspective to drive the research, it did not provide a method in itself. There have been attempts to determine the boundaries of feminist research methods, but most often feminist researchers have chosen to employ a feminist perspective within previously defined research methods (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992).

I felt this was a major obstacle in developing the study and realised there was not going to be an easy solution. I could not pick up a textbook and follow the steps through in order to construct a credible feminist research method. I needed to understand how feminist theory could influence what I wanted to achieve and then select a research method that would best achieve that goal.

The understanding that women's lives are significant and that women are important as individuals and as a social category was implicit in the study I wanted to undertake. I was interested in developing an understanding of the diversity of women's working experience and how, or if, women were working to create social change. Further, I wanted to interpret the meanings generated by the women's experiences, not just record and measure their experiences. This meant I needed to



use a research method that supported interpretive, inductive, naturalistic or qualitative approaches as opposed to positivist or quantitative approaches (Stanley & Wise, 1983).

Interpretive research explores the “nature of lived experience and social order” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 262). This method of qualitative research, also referred to as naturalistic or phenomenological, assumes that multiple realities exist and that they are divergent and inter-related. Individual perceptions of experience form the basis of qualitative research and can incorporate individual beliefs, feelings, judgements and evaluations based on an individual’s physical involvement (Hammond, Howarth & Keat, 1991). Understanding of social phenomena in this context is based on the research subject’s own perspective of how they define their world. It is the researcher’s role to discover and explain these realities (Henderson, 1991).

Reinharz (1992, p. 18) states that the use of interviewing is identified as one of the principal means used by feminists who seek to achieve “active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives”. However, there is concern raised by some feminist scholars that the interviewer/interviewee relationship can be exploitative; that a “proper” interview may be laden with masculine values such as “objectivity, detachment and hierarchy and ‘science’ ... which takes priority over people’s more individualised concerns” (Oakley, 1988, p. 38). Oakley further contends that greater depth of quality information can be obtained if a non-hierarchical, interactive relationship is allowed to develop. This interactive approach

of involvement between interviewer and interviewee in the research process is well regarded by feminist researchers (Reinharz, 1992).

It was impossible for me to contemplate the establishment of a hierarchical or "proper" interview framework from which to conduct the planned interviews. I had been involved in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry for more than ten years. I knew all of the women I planned to interview; some on a purely professional basis, but most on a professional and social basis. I was very conscious of how the interview process might influence the level of rapport I currently held with each of the women. I wanted the interviews to be a positive experience; an exchange, not simply an extraction of information. This study presented an opportunity to develop new relationships and build on previously established friendships.

The fact that I knew so much about the industry was another important factor in adopting a feminist approach to this study. Feminist research frequently recognises personal experience as a valuable asset. This is not the case in mainstream research where personal experience is typically regarded as irrelevant or "thought to contaminate a project's objectivity" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 258). My involvement in the adventure recreation industry gave me particular insights and the ability to communicate in the language of the women being interviewed. In addition, feminist research is often presented in the researcher's own voice (Reinharz, 1992, p. 258). Presenting my perspectives of this study in the first person singular voice recognised my personal involvement, not only as the researcher, but also as an insider with experience at many levels of the adventure recreation industry.

To conclude, use of qualitative methods was deemed as essential since the primary purpose of the study was to understand women's experience, not to measure it (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18). Also, in order to apply poststructuralist theory effectively in the analysis process, I needed to gain an understanding of the historical and social constructs that may have influenced women's perception of their experience. Given these parameters, I was still faced with the challenge of how to select the most appropriate research method in order to give the study the credibility it deserved. The discussion of the specific research method I eventually chose to use in this study is presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Method of Investigation**

*Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.*

Matthew 7:7

### **Introduction**

This study explored the stories of ten women employed in adventure recreation in Western Australia. This chapter presents the process involved in conducting this study. The research design and research method chosen is discussed. Steps taken in selection of the study population, data collection and analysis are also discussed. Finally, the study limitations and ethical issues of the study are considered.

### **Research Design**

As I entered this study, I knew I wanted to explore how each of the women first became involved in the adventure recreation industry, and what motivated them to stay in the industry. Most importantly, I wanted each woman to express her thoughts about women's contributions to the adventure recreation industry and the influence gender had on the quality of her working life.

In order to capture the essence and gain an understanding of the women's stories, a qualitative approach to the study was favoured. Qualitative research methods

contain the characteristics of interpretation, communication and reflection (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 50-51).

### **The Question of Method**

Making the decision to choose a qualitative method was only the first step. While I understood much of the philosophy behind qualitative research, I sought an accessible, yet rigorous, research method that would enable me to conduct this study on my terms. Any one of several qualitative methods, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, biography or ethnography, could have been adopted for this study. All these qualitative methods incorporate the following elements - elements that I believed were essential to the successful completion of this study:

- Assumes that the social world is a human creation with interpretive science capturing reality as it is seen and experienced by the respondents;
- Approaches reality without preconceived ideas;
- Perceives the researcher and the researched as two equally important elements and recognises the subjective nature of human behaviour;
- Attempts to present information gathered verbally in a detailed and complete form not in numbers or variables;
- Aims to understand people not to measure them; and
- Employs research procedures that produce descriptive data, presenting the respondents' views and experiences in their own words (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 45).

I began the journey of method selection from an essentially phenomenological perspective, in that it was a study of "the structure and essence of experience" for a particular group of people (Patton, 1990, p. 69). However, I encountered several

problems in attempting to understand phenomenology and how to use it as the research method in this study. My concerns were exacerbated in that the use of the term, phenomenology, appears to have become confused (Patton, 1990, p. 68). The “founder” of the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl, first presented phenomenology as a form of transcendental philosophy. This approach was rejected by existential phenomenologists such as Satre and Merleau-Ponty who, respectively, refuted Husserl’s concept of transcendental ego and regarded Husserl’s theories as a form of “intellectualism” (Hammond, Howarth & Keat, 1991, pp. 4-5). Patton (1990) observed that, over time, phenomenology has been given various meanings: a paradigm, a philosophy, a perspective, or as simply synonymous with qualitative method. To further add to my concerns, Mitchell (1990, p. 274) stated that one must practice phenomenology in order to understand it.

There is a great deal written about what phenomenology represents as a research philosophy (Hammond, et al., 1991), but little written about how to actually undertake a phenomenological study. The six steps of phenomenological research developed by Colaizzi (see Beck, 1992) provide a simple process through which the researcher extracts statements and phrases from interview transcripts. Meanings are formulated and organised into clusters of themes. Finally, an exhaustive description of the phenomena is produced and reviewed by members of the study population.

Colaizzi’s steps did not go far enough for me. I wanted to be able to recognise my own experience in the study. Also, the process of “bracketing” associated with most phenomenological inquiry was a concern. “Bracketing” requires the researcher to be

objective, to put aside any preconceptions or prior knowledge so as not to bias the study with predetermined hypothesis or personal experience (Beck, 1992, p. 167; Creswell, 1998, p. 33). Considering the extent of my experience in the adventure recreation industry, and the personal relationship I had with several of the women, I did not feel it was realistic to ignore my own experience. Also, phenomenology tends to focus on one single phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, p. 32) and I wanted this study to paint a broader picture by being able to place the stories of the women's experience within a social and historical context. These limitations prompted me to continue searching for another naturalistic method that would enable me to do that.

Creswell (1998) discussed five traditions of qualitative inquiry – biography, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study. I became interested in his discussion of biographical methods. Even though biography tends to focus on a single individual, it was essentially the collection of life stories and oral history (Creswell, 1998, p. 49). I became particularly interested in the idea of interpretive biography as it focused on not only collecting life stories, but interpreting their meanings and placing them within an historical context (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). Creswell's discussion led me to further explore the work of Denzin (1989) and the methodological approach of "interpretive interactionism".

I construed interpretive interactionism as a mix of biography and phenomenology as it sought, not only to construct the life story of the research subject/s, but also to understand the meanings and events behind those stories and experiences (Creswell,

1998, p. 85). Most importantly, interpretive interactionism recognised the involvement of the researcher as an integral component in the research process.

Denzin (1994, p. 510) described interpretive interactionism as beginning and ending with the researcher, in that “the events and troubles that are written about are ones that the writer has already experienced and witnessed first-hand”. As stated, I found it difficult to accept the concept of “bracketing” as described in phenomenological methods because the researcher’s personal experience is excluded. However, awareness of personal subjectivity was introduced quite differently and accepted within Denzin’s interpretive method as “deconstruction”. The researcher was encouraged to explore preconceptions and previous definitions and examine how they influenced existing understanding (Denzin, 1989, p. 50). Denzin’s method uses the term “bracketing” but within a different context.

The structured process of interpretive interactionism was a major factor in my choice of this research method. The research process of interpretive interactionism consists of six identifiable stages with several steps:

- Framing the research question:  
*Locate the problematic biographical experience to be studied; discover why this problem is a public issue; find people with similar experiences; and begin to ask how these experiences occur.*
- Deconstruction and critical analysis of prior conceptions of the phenomenon:  
*Examine prior conceptions of the phenomenon including how it has been defined and analysed; critically interpret previous definitions; and present the preconceptions and biases that support existing understanding.*
- Capturing the phenomenon, including locating and situating it in the natural world and obtaining multiple instances of it:  
*Collect multiple personal histories and locate significant life experiences that relate to the phenomenon in question.*



- Bracketing the phenomenon, reducing it to its essential elements and cutting it loose from the natural world so that its essential structures and features may be uncovered:  
*Identify the essential elements of each life experience; interpret the meanings of key phrases, statements and events; obtain "feedback" from the research subjects regarding the interpretation, if possible; and begin to reveal the essence of the phenomenon.*
- Construction, or putting the phenomenon back together in terms of its essential parts, pieces, and structures:  
*List the bracketed elements and indicate how these elements relate and affect other elements in the study; state how these elements form a coherent total.*
- Contextualisation, or relocating the phenomenon back in the natural social world.  
*Present rich stories that embody the themes or explore different experiences; indicate how these lived experiences alter and shape the phenomenon being studied; and document the contemporary context that surrounds the experience and makes it whole (Denzin, 1989, p. 48-62).*

Choosing to use interpretive interactionism was not a perfect solution to my search for the most appropriate research method. While the methodological strategies outlined by Denzin suited this study well, some aspects of its suggested application did not. Denzin (1989, p. 10) stated that the use of interpretive interactionism was appropriate:

when the researcher wants to examine the relationship between personal troubles, for example wife-beating or alcoholism, and the public policies and public institutions that have been created to address those personal troubles. Interpretive interactionism speaks to this interrelationship between private lives and public responses to personal troubles.

I chose to reinterpret Denzin's application of interpretive interactionism within the context of the adventure recreation industry. While many of the issues raised by the women in the telling of their life stories were problematic, many others related to personal achievements and strengths. Also, there was no one public institution or policy that could address the issues raised. Instead, there was an unregulated

industry with a set of fluctuating values and practices. However, I believed it was possible to use Denzin's interpretive framework to analyse the private and public responses to the personal situations experienced by the women and how this related to the quality of their working lives.

By introducing the concepts of feminist poststructural analysis (as previously discussed in Chapter Three), I reinterpreted Denzin's steps of construction and contextualisation into a framework that enabled me to explore the strengths and achievements, as well as the problems, identified by the women interviewed. Poststructuralism deals with the interrelationship of power, meaning and identity, recognising that these elements change as social and cultural discourse change. I wanted this study to have the means to explore many interrelated issues, not just focus on one single element or record a chronological history.

I believed that the Western Australian adventure recreation industry appeared to be in a state of flux, with significant changes occurring in both philosophy and practice. Rather than focusing on only the problematic or negative aspects of their experience, I wanted to examine the overall experience of the women interviewed. Next I wanted to be able to interpret their experience within both an historical and a contemporary context through the exploration of issues relating to power, meaning and identity. By adjusting the application of interpretive interaction to suit my purposes, Denzin's research strategies gave me the steps to follow to reach a position where I felt comfortable presenting, analysing and interpreting the data.

## **The Study Population**

In this study, ten women were selected as a cross-section sample of women employed across several sectors of the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. This constructed sample was purposive in that it relied on identifying a target group who met criteria as set by the researcher (Sekaran, 1992, p. 235). I wanted to interview women who had shared similar working experiences to mine.

The selection criteria for this study were for women who:

- were or had been employed in the adventure recreation industry or actively involved in leading adventure recreation programs for five (5) or more years;
- were competent in more than one activity discipline (i.e. roping activities, paddling, bushwalking, camping) and had spent the majority of their working lives “hands on” in the field;
- provided a cross-section of the local industry including women of varied age who worked as freelance instructors, were self-employed or employed in commercial enterprises and not-for-profit organisations or worked as outdoor educators in schools;
- resided in the south west corner of Western Australia and were readily available for face-to-face interviews; and
- were articulate and willing to discuss their experience working in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia.

I began to construct the sample by speaking with women I knew who met the criteria, to determine if they would be willing to participate. From each of these women, I requested information about other women whom they believed would also meet the selection criteria. Using this method of “snowball sampling” (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 139), I was able to access the contact details of the ten women included in the study.

I knew all of the women interviewed, some better than others. I had worked with several of the women and three women had been employed by me as instructors. Others I had met briefly through adventure recreation industry events or out in the field. One major problem I encountered was tracking each of the women down, contacting them and keeping in touch with them over the eighteen-month period it took to conduct the interviews.

Five other women were initially considered as suitable for the study, but time constraints and finding a convenient meeting place excluded them from this study. One woman was very interested in the study but was resistant to the idea of being interviewed. We were good friends and she felt, as I knew her story already, that there was no point in her retelling it – particularly to a tape recorder. Several other women volunteered themselves (or were volunteered by others) but none met all of the selection criteria.

### **Data Collection**

An in-depth interview was chosen as the most appropriate research tool and it is typically used in phenomenological studies (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Interviews provide rich data and enable a greater understanding of individual realities from a number of perspectives (Henderson, 1991, p. 72). Two individual interviews were to be conducted with each of the women. It was planned that interviews would last approximately one hour. Each interview would be tape recorded and transcribed.

All of the women would be sent a copy of their first interview transcript for review. The initial interview would be followed by a second interview where points of view could be clarified, and issues arising from early interviews, or discussed in current literature, could be explored. The two rounds of interviews would be conducted in early 1998 and 1999.

The first interviews were an opportunity to invite women to tell their stories and to relate which issues were important to them, rather than formulating what I believed to be the important questions based on my own experience. The initial interviews were designed to be exploratory with issues discussed as they were raised.

The initial round of interviews took place in the first six months of 1998 with one exception. Availability and scheduling difficulties meant one woman was not initially interviewed until early 1999. By this time, the early stages of data analysis had begun and a pattern of initial questioning had emerged. Each initial interview began by asking the women to describe their current employment. Once that was established, they were then asked how they first became involved in the adventure recreation industry. From that point, each interview was allowed to run its course. All of the first interviews were between sixty and ninety minutes in length.

The second interviews were more focused on specific issues and designed to follow-up on themes and meanings identified from the preliminary data analysis. These interviews enabled each of the women to validate initial interpretation and expand on particular issues. By the time I began the second round of interviews, I knew how

much time was involved in transcribing each interview. Second interviews were limited to sixty minutes, the duration of one recording tape.

The interviews took the form of a conversation or a discussion rather than a formally structured interview, and in several cases, my input was minimal. It seemed initial questions opened the “floodgate”, so to speak. There was no stopping several of the women from telling the stories of their experiences and expressing their pleasure and pain. Perhaps having an empathetic ear, to whom the women did not have to explain the vagaries and the specific language of the adventure recreation industry, enriched the data collected.

The interviews took place in a variety of venues, selected as the most convenient to each of the women. These venues included my home, their homes and workplaces. At one interviewee’s request, her interview took place in a café overlooking the beach. Recording in a public place is not recommended as the background noise made transcription more difficult. In addition, there were several interruptions by café staff and the lack of privacy may well have influenced the openness of the interviewee’s responses.

### **Data Analysis**

Establishing credibility in qualitative work is challenging, as data analysis cannot parallel the scientific validity of quantitative work (Olesen, 1994, p. 165). Therefore,

the reliability and validity of data collection and analysis are important issues in qualitative research.

This study followed Henderson's (1991, p. 137) suggestions that for a study to be reliable it needed a flexible plan with changes documented; used a second opinion for interpretation in data analysis; and established an audit trail. In order to gain a second opinion, a close colleague, with experience of the adventure recreation industry, was asked to examine several transcripts coded with emergent themes (pseudonyms were used to protect each interviewee's identity) to ensure that my interpretation of significant statements accurately reflected the women's experiences. Also, as part of the second interview process, each woman interviewed was asked to review the interpretation of meanings formulated from previous interviews and to clarify identified themes. These second interviews further ensured that themes generated from the first interviews reflected the women's perspective and experience, and not mine.

A documented audit trail, showing links between the coding of raw data and the development of cluster themes was established through the use of the computer software package QSR NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory building). In addition, an electronic journal was kept as the data analysis process began, though entries were not regular. This journal recorded issues as they were identified, as well as shifts in ideas and conclusions. A number of the margin notes made during the coding process were also transferred to this journal.

## **Limitations**

Due to financial and time constraints the sample for this study was limited to ten (10) women who worked in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. The local adventure industry is characterised by its relatively small size and the unique natural and built environments in which it operates. It cannot be assumed that all of the findings of this study could be generalised across the wider adventure recreation industry.

This study used a qualitative method and another research design may have produced different findings. In addition, the use of qualitative method raises the issue of objectivity versus subjectivity. It is also assumed that because of my personal relationships with several of the women interviewed, and my close involvement in the Western Australian adventure recreation, that, despite my best efforts, some elements of personal bias will have influenced the interpretations and meanings presented in the study. In order to ensure the findings represented the views of the women, interview content was analysed to identify emergent themes. The themes identified within each woman's interviews were compared to previous analysis to establish a system of constant comparison (Henderson, 1991). In addition, numerous discussions were held with the women involved in the study and with close colleagues within the adventure recreation industry, to ensure the conclusions reached reflected the views of the women and were not mine alone.



## **Ethical Considerations**

For a research project to attain validity, participants must enter with informed consent. They need to be aware of the purpose of the research and their rights as respondents. They need to have an assurance of voluntary participation, safety and confidentiality. In order to meet these requirements, several steps were taken to ensure each woman felt confident that her involvement in the study would be managed ethically.

The first step was to acknowledge my personal involvement and experience in the adventure recreation industry. Ethical considerations existed in that several women involved in the local adventure industry have worked with or were employed by me at some time. It would be naive to assume that personal relationships or the prospect of future employment did not have any influence on their choice to participate in the proposed study. It would also be foolhardy to expect that I would have no ongoing association with the women involved or be asked about the study's progress or findings. This issue was discussed honestly and openly in regard to possible breaches of confidentiality.

This aspect of confidentiality was a problem. It was, at times, tempting to correct comments or assumptions made about the women by other people in the adventure recreation industry because of the information I had gathered during the interview process. I learnt much about discretion.

It was important that I remained as neutral as possible about the women's involvement in the study and their right to self-determination and choice. Each of the women was aware of her right to leave the project at any time without fear of reprisal or any breach of confidentiality on my part. It was explained to each of the women, that if they chose to leave the study at any time, their contribution would be discarded.

Prior to the first interview, each of the women signed a Letter of Consent (Appendix B), recording informed consent. All were given adequate written and oral information prior to the study to enable them to make an informed choice regarding their participation.

Also, in order to protect anonymity, each woman was asked to choose a pseudonym. All tapes, transcripts and electronic files were identified only by this pseudonym. My research supervisors and colleagues read transcripts labelled only with the women's pseudonyms. The secretarial service employed to assist with transcription was also supplied with tapes labelled with each woman's pseudonym.

Possible harm to women through publication of their story was taken into account. The small number of women working in the local industry, and the well-established network that operates within it, made an assurance of absolute anonymity for any individual virtually impossible. It transpired that three women became aware of each other's involvement in the study as they had discussed the study among themselves. This was not something I had expected or had taken steps to counteract; though

perhaps it was foreseeable in light of the small size of the Western Australian industry.

All participants were asked to consider the professional implications of divulging personal information that might enable their identification. The inclusion of any personal information that might facilitate identification was discussed with each individual at the time of interview. The names of adventure recreation organisations, people associated with the industry or specific locations were not included in the findings.

There was one other ethical issue addressed by this study. It has been a traditional practice that research materials, including tapes and interview transcripts, be retained for a period of five years and then destroyed. One of my research supervisors held the opinion that this practice squandered oral historical data that could well be used by future researchers. Therefore, the women were also asked if, following completion of the study, they were willing for the tapes and transcripts of their interviews to be forwarded to the Western Australian State Library, and in particular, the Battye Library Oral History collection. If they were willing, they were asked to sign a second release form (Appendix C). All, bar one, of the women agreed to her interviews being donated to the Battye Library and incorporated into its local history collection. Research materials not donated will be held in safe storage, for a period of not less than five years, after which time they will be destroyed.

## Overview

Once I had reached a decision regarding the most appropriate research method, collecting and analysing the data fell easier into place. Using Denzin's model of interpretive interactionism gave me the framework to build the study. I was able to approach the data collection from both a biographical and phenomenological perspective. As such, I was able to collect data that not only enabled me to build a description of how and why women were involved in the adventure recreation industry, but also enabled me to interpret and construct meanings from their experiences.

The fact that I conducted two interviews with each of the ten women worked well within Denzin's framework. The first interview enabled the collection of biographical data – how and why they became (and remained) involved and what they did for a living. Issues raised within the first interviews could be explored from a more philosophical, or phenomenological, perspective in the second interview.

The following chapters reflect this framework. The next two chapters follow Denzin's stages of *capture* and *bracketing*. Chapter Five presents much of the biographical data collected and explores issues that relate to becoming involved in adventure recreation and the realities of employment within the industry. Chapter Six examines employment in the adventure recreation industry from a woman-centred perspective. Chapter Seven follows Denzin's stages of *construction* and *contextualisation* as it examines all of this data within historical and contemporary

contexts. In addition, my interpretation of the women's experiences of employment in the adventure recreation industry is presented, with particular reference to the influence of power, meaning and identity.

## Chapter Five

### Experiencing Adventure

*[I] never ever thought that I'd be able to be an adventure person because I always thought that adventure people were really cool and much more skilled and heaps more heroic than I ever was. So it was kind of a pipe dream back in those days ... but [I] always thought, "Wouldn't it be cool to be able to do that".*

Duckie, age 27  
First interview, 30 January 1998

### Introduction

This chapter explores the women's exposure to adventure recreation and their introduction to employment in the field. It discusses the many attractions of employment in the adventure recreation industry. In addition, the personal and professional realities of working in the adventure recreation industry are examined.

A profile of the ten women interviewed is attached as Appendix D. Pseudonyms, chosen by the women, are used throughout the following chapters to protect their identity. All ages are given as at the time of the second interview. The names of individuals and organisations involved in adventure recreation are shown as NN. Specific locations are shown as XX.

### Getting Started

Common threads run through all the women's stories though each story has its own characteristics. The women came from many different backgrounds and different

countries (Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom), but they all found enjoyment in being physically active outdoors. In almost all cases, this enjoyment began early in their lives. The common thread of learning to enjoy adventurous activities was greatly influenced by where and how the women grew up. In addition, family and friends played an important role in introducing the women to the joys of exploring and playing in the outdoors.

Most of the women grew up in areas with easy access to unique outdoor environments such as mountains, bushland, creeks or rivers and they spent their childhood exploring the outdoors. Phantom, Heidi and Jane recalled that their parents introduced them to adventure, either by taking them along on family adventures or ensuring they were given the opportunity to experience the outdoors through their schooling or in organised groups.

*I grew up in the country and ... when I was four I'd get up and go fishing and my Mum would be looking for me. Like where's Kosci, she's not in her bed and you know I'd get up at five or six in the morning and go fishing ... and I was very young ... being outside so I think it's always been sort of part of me in some ways. I guess I just loved it. (Kosci, age 27).*

*I suppose it was very much the lifestyle I had as a child ... I grew up on a farm in XX, a fruit farm. My parents had done a lot of camping when they were younger and my dad was an army person and he had an old army tent and he used to pitch it in the field and we used to sleep in it at night, all through the summer. We slept outside a lot in the summer, we sort of lived outside, our whole childhood it seems. I mean it can't have been because it gets quite cold in XX (laughs) but my whole childhood seems to be based outside. It was a very very outdoorsy sort of life and I guess ... that's probably how it all started. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I always have been with my family as well because we lived in XX, a really outdoor city. We did a lot of skiing ... every winter holidays and most second weekends, so I did a lot of that and a lot of other things, not a lot of water sports, mostly like bushwalking, camping ... I went to a really good school ... renowned for its outdoor [education] program. (Phantom, age 31).*

*When I was about thirteen, fourteen ...I'd done a lot with my parents and I'd been an Adventure Scout and a Girl Guide. (Heidi, age 29).*

*My parents had, before that, taken me down to XX [adventure tourism centre] when it had just opened and I had been abseiling and climbing and things with NN [the owner]. He was a bit of an inspiration as well ... (Jane, age 30).*

As a teenager, Duckie was sent on a sail training ship voyage by her parents. She spent ten days at sea with other young people learning to sail a square-rig vessel. Duckie regularly returned to the ship as volunteer crew and maintained the friendships developed through her experience. The social opportunities offered through involvement in adventure activity clubs were important to several of the women. Participating in outdoor activities presented them with an opportunity to spend more time with friends or partners and it enabled them to increase their skill level and range of experience.

*I guess when I was fifteen, I joined the canoe club, which would have been the start of my getting into the outdoor pursuits area. (Purple, age 32).*

*Rockclimbing ... that became part of my life for two years ... long weekends we would all go off on longer trips and it was huge and that was my main interest in those days ... It was social as well, I had a boyfriend who was doing the same thing, was in the same club so off we all went together. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I had done a lot of canoeing, a lot of bushwalking, white water, you know ... I had lived around different places in XX and the man that I was living with was really into white water rafting and outdoor stuff so we used to do a lot of weekend trips. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

Not everybody became involved in adventure recreation pursuits at a young age. Kosci, who as a child, would escape from her bed to go fishing, had to be pushed into trying adventure recreation activities. She was a national competition level triathlete when, at nineteen, she sustained an injury and was forced to retire from



competition and training. One of her college teachers encouraged her to try something new to fill the void caused by ceasing her rigorous training schedule.

*At college, we had a course called the 18 day, which was 18 days from hikes to hike to canoeing to voyager canoes, the big canoes, plus solo camping ... plus climbing, sailing and scuba diving so everything for the 18 days ... it was a great course and one of my teachers forced me to do it. He said, "Kosci, if you don't do it, I'll pay for you to do it" and he gave me all the gear so I had my pack and my Petzl lamp, I had everything, my knife, and he said "Now, you've got no excuse not to do it". (Kosci, age 27).*

Like Kosci, other women were physically active but were not introduced to adventure activities until they were older. Addie was twenty-eight years old and working as a physical education teacher when she first became involved in adventure activities through the education system. She explained her introduction to adventure recreation activities in the following way.

*Around 1978/79 I worked in ... [physical education] advisory. Working in that place was just so stimulating and I met ... NN [male] and NN [female] ... and both of them introduced me and inspired me to get involved in outdoor education ... There was a lot of money being put into educating teachers into gaining greater backgrounds and skills in teaching outdoor [education]. So NN and NN organised wonderful courses for us to go on. (Addie, age 46).*

Norma was the latest starter. She had a long involvement in sport, especially long-distance running. Friends introduced her to adventure recreation through a university extension program in the early 1990s.

*I'd been very much an outdoors person, as in sport ... what you would call traditional type sport for as long as I could remember ... I guess from there I just branched out to looking for something that was perhaps something out of the normal team sports or long distance running or the things that I was doing, but I didn't really know what I was looking for ... I just happened to go on a weekend with a couple of my girlfriends [to go] abseiling. I have to say that at the time, I didn't even know the word abseiling, I thought it was atsailing, so I had to be corrected on that! (Norma, age 49).*

Getting involved in adventure recreation was only the first step towards pursuing a career in the industry. The realisation that adventure recreation was a potential career option occurred under many different circumstances. For some of the women, working in adventure recreation is the only career they have known. From the age when they were making their first career decisions, they held a strong belief that working outdoors was what they wanted to do for a living. Jane, Purple and Pluto completed physical education degrees at university in order to pursue an outdoor career path.

*When I was 18 I'd just left school, I came down to work with NN at XX [adventure tourism centre] when they started as a resort. All I wanted to do, I thought, I had a hunch that this was what I wanted to get into. I did everything. I cooked, I cleaned, I just did whatever I could, and I snuck out on instructing days and from there ... I went to [university] and I did a [physical education] degree ... (Jane, age 30).*

*I always thought when I was at school that what would decide where you [would be employed was] indoors or outdoors, paper or people and I decided people and outdoors. I started doing forestry ... [but] I ended up enrolling [in physical education] and did my three years there with a fourth year [Diploma of Education]. (Purple, age 32).*

*When I was at college, every school that I went on teaching practice ... if there was an outdoorsy type activity happening, I'd jump in on it and I'd do [it]. I did quite a few trips with schools during my teaching practice. (Pluto, age 50).*

Duckie's previous experience as volunteer on sail training ships first initiated the idea that she might be able to pursue a career in that area. While in her late teens, she spent a year overseas and gained her first experience of paid employment in the outdoors.

*I got a job as a deckhand in XX ... and then we actually crossed the Atlantic on that boat ... So, that was sort of paid work being in a semi-recreational outdoor sort of role. [I] really really enjoyed it and I thought, I wonder if I can do that back in Perth. (Duckie, age 27).*

When Duckie returned to university in Perth, she changed her area of study from politics and history to human movement and psychology studies, with the view to pursuing a career in the adventure recreation industry. Completion of qualifications in physical education, education, human movement and sports science was a common starting point for women gaining employment in the industry.

Four of the women had well-established career paths before they chose to change career direction or make significant changes in their lives. Phantom chose to add to her archaeology qualifications by completing postgraduate degrees in education and outdoor pursuits in order to secure work in the adventure recreation industry.

*I finished teaching full-time and I got my first opportunity to work in the outdoors through NN [adventure recreation company] and that was a trip to XX [north-west Western Australia]. I went up there ... with my archaeology background because I ... knew the area and was really being an archaeology consultant on that trip ... It was an excellent trip ...and from that more stuff came up with them, quite a lot of stuff came up with them actually and I sort of moved into doing more school programs. (Phantom, age 31).*

Heidi was studying business; Elizabeth was involved in social work; and Nomia worked as a private secretary before pursuing careers in adventure. Each stated that their involvement came about through luck or simply being in the right place at the right time.

*I was doing a business degree and I went to an alternative careers fair. I found NN [outdoor education organisation] and decided that maybe they'd employ me so I applied. (Heidi, age 29).*

*I worked running a centre in XX for women who had been incarcerated ... and a flyer arrived in the mail from NN [outdoor education organisation] saying ... please come to a free three day try and see what you think of [adventure] as a training tool. And I packed my bags and went, real quick ... and got offered a job ... Had never climbed before but I had the background of ... skills in working with people ... I stayed for eighteen months and then I set up my own business. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*Coming back from Nepal ... I came back reassessing my life, wanting to make changes, not sure of the changes that I wanted to make, but realising that there was more to life than what I had been doing for many years and it was a classic case ... of right time, right place. I met this particular person, he was ... a silent partner in an adventure company and he said, "I would like you to meet my partners". (Norma, age 49).*

Friends and family connections were very important in enabling women to establish a career in adventure recreation. Kosci received assistance, from the same college teacher who had encouraged her to undertake her first adventure experience, to secure a job in the outdoor equipment store. This position gave her the opportunity to increase her experience and skill level. Purple had friends already working in the industry in Western Australia and, one friend in particular, made a direct approach to his employer on her behalf.

*I got contacts to work, from the teacher that got me into [my first trip]. He said "Kosci, would you like to work in the outdoor camping shop?" ... and then I was able to buy gear ... and I got lots of gear and from there I was doing quite a bit of outdoor stuff and I thought I wanted to study doing that as well. (Kosci, age 27).*

*NN who was ... minding my house when I was gone [overseas doing an adventure training course], kept saying there's heaps of work in this company that I'm working for. I've been telling them all about your course and your experiences and they want to meet you and they want to give you some work. (Purple, age 32).*

*I knew NN [adventure camp manager] from when I was about five or six years old, family connections and so on ... Perth is a very small town. ... I went on [a camp] and I saw NN ... and I hadn't been back in Perth for very long and ... he introduced me to NN [adventure recreation instructor] and I helped out on the abseiling and thought "Yeah I can do this". NN [adventure recreation instructor] he told me about the abseiling instructor's course so I did some training with him to get some more hours up and then I did the course. (Duckie, age 27)*

The decision to work outdoors was only the first step in the journey. Several of the women began their involvement in the industry as volunteers, "apprentices" or

unpaid trainees. Heidi did not immediately get paid work through the first organisation she applied to but was able to secure employment after several months of volunteer work. Elizabeth was asked to complete a voluntary training course with the same organisation before being offered employment. Norma, who had very little adventure recreation experience, completed six months of on-the-job training before she took on instructional roles.

*They didn't give me a job, but I volunteered for two months and then I volunteered for another month and then I decided I could do it just as well as anyone else so [in 1993] I started working for NN [our for education organisation] in the XX as an instructor. (Heidi, age 29).*

*So they offered me a position which was come and go through a training program for 30 days and at the end of 36 days we'll make a decision about your ability and whether you want to be involved and so I went ... It was a 21 day induction camp and I took holidays from [my job] and did 21 days' training and at the end of it we agreed that I'd work there. It was great. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*I did probably a six-month apprenticeship with one of their senior roping instructors where I used to go along to every abseiling program which was either every week or every fortnight and I did my apprenticeship by just observing and then doing voluntary work on those programs. (Norma, age 49).*

None of the women were concerned that, in the beginning stages of their career, they were asked to work as a volunteer. Most saw volunteering as on-the-job training and an expected part of being new to the industry. In addition, all enjoyed the process of becoming involved and developing new skills.

Another avenue of employment opportunity was participating in training courses. Duckie and Purple travelled overseas and paid their own way to attend an intensive training course conducted by a large North American organisation. On completion of this course, both women were offered the possibility of future employment, but

only if they continued to train as unpaid trainees with that organisation. Completing training courses was essentially a selection process whereby, if they were successful, they might then be offered paid employment.

Another of the larger international organisations had a different selection process for its Australian staff. When Heidi first came to Australia, she was expected to pass a test of her ability in order to work here, despite having worked for the same organisation in the United Kingdom and the United States.

*You had to go around and do all these things like initiative tasks and fitness tests and getting up at five o'clock in the morning and going running ... For two days you just did all this and then you had to pack to go on an expedition. We weren't told where we were going or what we'd need. We went out on this two day expedition. [They] got us up early in the morning and took half our food away because they said "Oh sometimes you might be in a situation where you don't need all ... you know you don't make it to your food drop and you need to sort your food". We walked 'til two o'clock in the morning that morning, got up at five and walked to our destination, went climbing for the day and had to set up a flying fox as well and still be cheerful. (laughter) And at the end of it all they made us walk to this grid reference ... where they told us the assessment was over. I don't think it was and we had a fire and we had chicken [at the campsite] and we all got to ask questions ... The next day they decided ... who'd got a permanent job, who'd got relief jobs and who hadn't made it. (Heidi, age 29).*

This particular selection process is no longer practiced. However, the use of such a process raises the question of why anybody would be willing to subject themselves to extremes of physical and emotional stress in order to get a job. It is possible to understand why Heidi did not care what selection process she was asked to complete if it is understood that her only goal, at that time, was to gain employment with that organisation in Australia. She was willing to undergo anything to reach that goal. Many other women were willing to undertake any number of volunteer positions or commit to organisations as unpaid trainees.

It appears that working in adventure recreation has particular, if not peculiar, attractions. Even though all of the women entered the industry under different circumstances, the attraction of the industry was so powerful that all were willing to undergo some level of physical, financial and emotional hardship in order to achieve employment. The next section explores the many facets of attraction to employment in the adventure recreation industry.

### **The Attraction of Adventure**

The women expressed their attraction to the adventure recreation industry in different ways. However, their reasons for seeking employment in the industry can be grouped into four major themes:

- personal fulfillment and the opportunity to face challenging situations, both personally and professionally;
- the opportunity to work in different outdoor environments, particularly wilderness areas, and being able to share those environments with other people;
- the working environment of the industry itself, in that it was seen to be very social, flexible and diverse; and
- a strong belief in the value of adventure recreation in engendering personal and social development.

These four themes interlink in many ways, but each deserves exploration in its own right.

All of the women stated that they were personally challenged and fulfilled by employment in the outdoors. They were motivated to achieve and were given opportunities to extend themselves both personally and professionally. Some of the

women felt privileged to be able to take up the opportunities that outdoor employment offered. The spiritual and emotional fulfillment that came from being outdoors was also important to several of the women.

*The most important things for me being in the industry is it is fulfilling, it's a job that's fulfilling for me, it keeps me motivated, every single day, every single week, there's something new, some new challenge that I have to meet, it stretches me phenomenally. (Duckie, age 27).*

*I like to have the space to be able to try new things within the parameters that we have at NN ... [In addition] I think learning to manage my own time and being in charge ... I would have left a long time ago if there hadn't been being in charge ... because I run my own show and I do what I like and I just feel like I'm moving forward somewhere. (Heidi, age 29).*

*If you can do your work and you love your work, and you feel great value and worth from doing it, that's an absolute gift in its own right ... I feel very privileged to be able to do what I do and everyone I talk to goes "Wow, that's so exciting" and I mean it is, and sure there are drawbacks that go with it, but basically I think ... the good stuff far outweighs the not so good. I fully intend to be doing this sort of crazy bits and pieces, [when] opportunities arise you can jump for them, for a long time to come. (Purple, age 30).*

*I still love [my job] for the most part, it's a wonderful job for females ... I think we're extremely lucky. (Addie, age 46).*

An important aspect of attraction to the adventure recreation industry for some of the women was entering a field that was male dominated and enabled women to move away from socialised roles and stereotypes. This was an initial aspect of attraction to the industry for Jane. Norma saw the industry as a means of changing her life.

*I think one of the challenging things early on was the fact that it was a very male dominated field I must admit that was one thing that led me there ... I've always liked a challenge like that ... It's a different field to the traditional female occupations because it encompasses a huge amount. It's not your run of the mill job, you have got to be able to do everything. And you find yourself in some pretty full-on situations sometimes, thinking on your feet, and I think most people see it as a real challenge. (Jane, age 30).*

*The biggest plus was ... I think for many years I had been this free spirit that sort of wanted to do something out of my little box that I was in and this was a great opportunity to branch out and do something different and do*



*something in the outdoors which I had always enjoyed and do something that wasn't the norm because my life up until then, for a variety of reasons, had been quite conservative and stereotyped.* (Norma, age 49).

On yet another level, working outdoors fulfilled spiritual and emotional needs in feeling a connection with the outdoors or using time in the outdoors as a means of spiritual rejuvenation. This aspect seemed more important to the older women interviewed for this study. Perhaps it is part of the process of maturation and becoming more reflective on what life has to offer and developing an appreciation of the path that life has taken.

*I feel a real connectiveness out in the wild which is why I do what I do ...* (Purple, age 32).

*I think for me the outdoors provides a real solace and it's ... where I'm most at peace ... it's the place that I go to regenerate and spend time for me.* (Elizabeth, age 44).

*I guess just the outdoors, just the freedom ... I'm talking about the spiritual freedom, I think that was enormous for me.* (Norma, age 49).

*I suppose to me it's my soul food, if you like. I know I stay balanced as long as I have time in the outdoors. I think the outdoors balances the spiritual and emotional side of you with the practical and everything else. I get chewed up if I don't spend time away. It's peaceful, it's calm, it's basic. I get enormous pleasure when I'm lying in my hutchie [tent] and I'm looking at the stars and I think, God, I don't want to be anywhere else. I feel sorry for people who don't do it. The pleasure [from] just that absolute simplicity of living is a very calming, focusing sort of thing so I suppose that's really what it does for me.* (Pluto, age 50).

Pluto also noted the impact that working in the outdoors over many years had on her self-confidence and self-esteem. She strongly believed that her involvement in the outdoors had developed a strong sense of personal ability and competence.

*The value of what I have done, or what I did as a youngster is still coming out. I'm still feeling it, I'm still getting surprises and I think that the older I get I'm still surprised when I meet, especially other women of my age, who are so scared of so many aspects of life that I'm thinking crikey I can't*

*believe that they won't do this and they won't do that and they're scared to do this and they're scared to do that and I realise when I look back, that it is very largely the outdoor educational experience that I had, that has given me this confidence to do things in life. (Pluto, age 50).*

Apart from the personal and spiritual fulfillment working outdoors can bring, there is simple pleasure gained from working in outdoor environments, and in sharing those environments with other people. On one level, there is a personal enjoyment and appreciation of the opportunities that adventure recreation offers. On another level, sharing enjoyable experiences with other people, especially people new to the outdoors, gave the women a feeling of satisfaction and personal reward.

*I love ... being still in the outdoors. (Addie, age 46).*

*You get such a buzz from when you go and get to do different things in the outdoors. (Duckie, age 27).*

*[It is] my love of the outdoors ... it's the whole environment ... It is the adventure activities ... but enjoyment came from actually taking other people out into something that I enjoy so much and it was seeing their enjoyment too and giving them the chance to experience it the way I had. ... Sometimes you will climb with a group and it is much more time-consuming and the responsibility is on you to get everyone up there but it is worth it if you can get to a beautiful ledge and you are there and looking around and know that they have never seen anything like it before and that is really rewarding. (Phantom, age 31).*

*I was really happy there in the mountains, just getting up and you're all surrounded and ... I was happy to take people in places where they've never seen and it was for them the best ... and I had really good feedback. (Kosei, age 27).*

The social aspects of the industry also brought rewards. Contact with different people in diverse environments is important in considering the attraction of the adventure recreation industry. It is regarded as a very social industry where strong personal relationships can develop. The intensity of experience means that friendships between adventure recreation employees often last over many years, even

though face to face contact may be seldom. In addition, the involvement between staff and participants may also create a lasting bond. Apart from the social aspects, there is a high degree of diversity in the working environment itself with the quality of experience often determined by the relationships that develop during an adventure recreation program.

*To be outside, that's number one and usually, it's not a structured thing, that's like from nine 'til five so it's a bit flexible and you do different things, you're never doing the same things, so you know, it's never the same, so you never know what to expect and that's probably the best out of it because it's always different ... You always meet different people and usually you come home and you feel like those people enjoyed it and it was good to be with them and you do get attached to people as well and when you spend a week with them or even a day, some people, you still remember after years. They stay with you because they were great and it's good to have them along so, I guess that's probably the best out of it. (Kosci, age 27).*

*I love the people who come on courses and also the people you work with. There is no other job to me where I would get the same satisfaction and total commitment that you get with the people that you work with. I mean ... relationships that you develop with people in the outdoors through the sort of experiences you have, not all the time just work-related ones, but these are the people that you are going to go off and do a trip with in your own time and I still keep in touch with all my XX friends because we just had something that is still there and to me that is really important. (Jane, age 30).*

*The people that I work with are wonderful ... which means that my social life's taken care of. (Duckie, age 27).*

*I envisage that I'll be able to work with my friends ... and that's a really good thing about this industry that you make really good close friends and they are usually people that have got similar ethics and ... similar causes to what they're on about, what they think the environment is about, what the outdoors is about. (Phantom, age 31).*

Being able to use the development of personal relationships as a learning tool was also a significant factor in the attraction of employment in the adventure recreation industry. The women held a very strong belief that the outdoors provided an effective and enjoyable tool for learning, on a personal and social level. In addition,

adventure recreation experiences provided opportunities to increase environmental awareness and appreciation.

*I want them to feel comfortable and have an appreciation I think. We've got a huge country, more full of nature than anything else and I just think we should learn to enjoy it. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I really see outdoor [education] as being valuable because it allows people to learn about themselves, to learn new skills, to be in the outdoors, learn about the environment, how to take care of the earth, things like that. (Duckie, age 27).*

*So I had people who had never seen snow and never done [skiing] and it was like the basics so it was good fun. It was good giving experience to people and making sure they're enjoying it. That was the biggest phase was to make sure they wanted to do this again and show them how things work and things like that. (Kosci, age 27).*

Once a level of appreciation and understanding of the outdoor environment is reached, adventure recreation experiences can assist people to learn about themselves and others. This was also an important factor in attracting these women to the industry. Being in an outdoor environment offered a great number of unique personal challenges. It offered both physical and emotional challenges that could engender feelings of self-confidence, empathy for others and develop personal and social skills that were transferable to everyday life. Working within organisations that recognised the value of adventure recreation as a learning tool was also important to the women.

*If you set an environment up that's safe for people and that they enjoy and isn't uncomfortable then it is a really good learning tool ... People remember things that evoke a strong emotional response whether it is positive or negative and if you set up an outdoor environment that is intimate and positive, people will walk away and they will always remember that and if you can provide a dynamic and safe program, there is no other place, people will forget a conference centre, but they won't forget a fantastic unique environment that they felt really good in. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*Outdoor education, to me, is one of the better ways of teaching life skills and if we can help students develop those skills and cope in this world ... then I think we're giving them a pretty rare gift. And that's it in a nutshell. (Addie, age 46).*

*You were mostly giving skills and over time, we were actually given questions and things that we could ask people at given times throughout the voyage to facilitate how they were going as a group, as a team and as individuals. I got right into that, loved it, thought it was really great so that sort of made me think I might like to do that for a living. (Duckie, age 27).*

*That's really satisfying to see people be able to say things ... to others or say things about themselves in the group that they can share, even sometimes it's hard to do it and they do it anyway and that's really good to see, it's very satisfying. You feel like you helped ... you feel like you were part of that to make them open up. And I guess that's probably the best for me in the job. (Kosci, age 27).*

*I wanted to work for someone who wasn't just in the outdoors, they weren't just doing the outdoor adventure, they were doing personal development, because that, as an instructor, I find that more gratifying than just taking someone orienteering for the day or climbing for the day or that sort of thing. (Heidi, age 29).*

When the personal and professional benefits of working in the adventure recreation industry are comprehensively presented, it is hard to imagine why the industry has such a problem with the high levels of staff turnover and retention noted by Edwards and Gray (1998). Workers in other industries may yearn for similar personal and professional challenges, interpersonal contact and a sense of purpose in their working lives that is inherent in the adventure recreation industry. However, when looking at this industry from a pragmatic perspective, a more realistic point of view emerges. The reality of working in the adventure recreation industry is far from romantic. It is hard work.

*Some people I do think like the romantic notion that it is just sitting on mountain tops and looking around or it's kind of glorified on the whole ... you know ... swaggering with your harness on and you know, looking like you know what you are doing. But the hard cold reality is long hours and everything and I think a lot of people don't expect that and I think that weeds*

*a lot of people out and always will because it's part and parcel of it. (Jane, age 30).*

There is a great number of challenging aspects associated with working in the adventure recreation industry. Not least of these is the lack of general understanding of the day to day realities of working in the industry and the level of commitment required. The expectation that employees will work long hours and be prepared to spend extended periods of time away from home is included in this commitment. These aspects of employment within the adventure recreation industry are examined in the following section.

### **The Reality of Working in Adventure**

When the women began to discuss the realities of working in adventure recreation, a number of issues emerged. It was obvious that several of the women were very concerned about the demands of working in the adventure recreation industry and the impact their work had on their personal lives. These concerns are grouped into several of themes:

- lack of recognition of the value of their work;
- lack of understanding of the demanding nature of their job;
- lack of appreciation and acknowledgement of skill and experience;
- lack of adequate financial remuneration; and
- the impact of extended periods of time spent away from home on their social and personal lives.

The first concern often raised by the women when talking about their working lives was the lack of recognition of what was involved. Some of the women felt that most people outside the adventure recreation industry had very limited knowledge or

understanding of what their job actually involved or what they did day to day. In particular, the aspects of working in adventure recreation that related to educative processes or developing personal and social skills were often misunderstood or undervalued.

*People ... think outdoor recreation is the hard [activity] skills, that's what they identify it with and that's logical too. You naturally think that you know, doing outdoor stuff is canoeing down rapids or kayaking or rock climbing or abseiling ... people immediately think of that, that's the first thing. The soft [human relations] skills are not in the initial idea. (Phantom, age 31).*

*I tell them I work in outdoor education and mostly people say, "What's that?" or "Is that like [physical education]?". And you go oooh, cringe, it's nothing like [physical education], it's the opposite side of the picture. It's about life skills, it's about learning to get on with people and ... we do it using the medium of these skills which might be abseiling, canoeing, caving whatever ... So it's trying to get across to them that it's more than just purely skills that are taking people out [into the outdoors] and you are putting them in a situation that takes them outside their comfort zones and they're having to deal with simply living with each other [which] could be the biggest challenge. It's not necessarily ... leaping tall cliffs ... It's more just getting on and getting back to the basics of dealing with people, with problems, with living, eating, breathing, drinking and toileting, rubbishing, the works ... It's getting back to the bare basics and really seeing what a person is, peeling back the layers on a person and showing real people what they are. (Purple, age 32).*

Several of the women also held very strong points of view that the work they did for a living was misunderstood. There was a general perception that their job was great fun and simply involved recreating outdoors. This perception did not match the reality of working long hours in often extremely physically challenging environments. In particular, there was little understanding or appreciation of the demands of maintaining responsibility for others and ensuring the physical and emotional safety of the diverse range of participants in every adventure recreation program.

*People have a perception of the industry that you're just out there playing silly-buggers and swinging around on ropes and having fun and I think people often don't understand the duty of care, responsibility or the stress around safety. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*Their first reaction is like "Oh what a wonderful job" and that really irritates me ... because they seem to think it's this real ... you know like you have this real fantasy life and it's not, it's not reality at all. I think it's quite hard work and it is, I think you know we have a really wonderful job in some respects, but in other respects we give up a lot. (Heidi, age 29).*

*As much as everybody thinks it's the best job to have (laughs) because they don't really know what it is, what it involves. It's very hard, you know. (Kosci, age 27).*

*There have been many times on a cliff face with the participants where they say "I'd love to have your job. Have you got any vacancies in your company" and you treat it with the respect that you need to treat that question, but you have a silent little snigger as if to say, well, they don't know that I was up to 11 o'clock counting out the helmets and making sure the harnesses were right and they see you at the cliff-face having what they see as the good fun. (Norma, age 49).*

Pluto spoke about how she came to the personal realisation that the adventure recreation industry was not always going to be about having fun. Taking on leadership roles and assuming responsibility for other people's safety meant being serious about what she was doing.

*I think that was when I first realised that being the back-up person when you can be jolly and happy and keep everybody going is quite different from being the lead person and worrying about all the decision-making. That was my big leap into leadership at first, it was quite different and it was a difficult trip because we were very very short of water and you had some really critical decisions to make that was all up to me and I thought, it took a lot of the jolliness out of it for me and I became a serious leader after that. (Pluto, age 50.)*

In addition to taking leadership seriously, the difficulties of adventure recreation leadership are often taken for granted. Working in extreme wilderness environments can take its toll of physical and emotional health. Being constantly on duty with



little time off, or being responsible for large numbers of (often inexperienced) participants in the field can be extremely demanding. To make matters worse, often there was little relief available or minimal support on hand.

*It was hard. And in the winter when it's 40 below and you're out on a 10-day ski trip and you're ice climbing and skiing and you've got kids getting frostbite and kids not wanting to be there and it's physically hard on yourself and you've got the responsibility of the kids, it's a hard job and two [leaders] left in the winter which was the hardest program. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*I was duty coordinator which means you're on duty for seven days a week, twenty four hours a day, always in contact and you get four days off a month and I realised that that wasn't what I wanted to do. And that was part of my job and that was a big factor in thinking I don't need to live like this any more. It's lost its appeal somehow. (Heidi, age 29).*

*I had ninety-five kids out in the field and I had twelve instructors out and the rest ... and NN [partner] wasn't here and normally he's on the river or he's somewhere around and I always feel that's OK because that's my backup ... but anyway, I went out and I was really really nervous because I thought this has got to work. (Jane, age 30).*

In order to support the demands of the job, many of the women had undertaken high levels of training and were very skilled in many outdoor pursuits. Heidi, Purple, Elizabeth and Kosci had a great number of accredited qualifications between them. Many of the others had also undertaken a variety of training courses in skill development, group management and rescue techniques.

*[I have qualifications as] a Yacht Master ... Mountain Leadership Assessment ... Wilderness First Aid ... Single Pitch [roping] Training. (Heidi, age 29)*

*I did the ice climbing, ice and crevasse rescue ... swift water rescue stuff ... I've done rope rescue techniques ... rock climbing ... my abseiling instructor's [certificate] ... In the sailing and water based area, I've got my sailing instructor's in dinghies ... wind-surfing instructor ... Yacht Master ... coxswain's ticket ... all the associated first aid [and] Wilderness First Aid. (Purple, age 32)*

*I've got a white water ticket ... I've got a cliff rescue certificate ... I've done two rescue courses in Australia ... and Wilderness First Aid. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*That was three months [intensive training in] ice climbing, glacier mountaineering and all the rescue stuff through that as well ... ski mountaineering ... we had wilderness first aid through that ... we had white water canoeing ... rockclimbing. (Kosci, age 27).*

While the level of accredited training achieved by these women is commendable, much of their training was conducted for personal interest and is unrelated to their employability in Australia. There is very little demand for ice climbing or glacier mountaineering in the Australian outdoor environment. However, several of the women had either begun their careers in other countries with alpine environments or, as in Purple's case, had pursued these areas of training as a means of accessing their own adventure recreation experiences.

*I did the ice climbing, ice and crevasse rescue and all that sort of component which I guess is highly irrelevant for the whole of Australia because we don't really have it, but it was something different and I wanted to try something completely different. (Purple, age 32).*

The extent of the women's training needs to be put into perspective. Not all employment takes place in wilderness environments or involves highly demanding levels of group management. In fact, most adventure recreation programs are presented at basic skill levels so that they are manageable and accessible to the general population. It was not always necessary for instructors to be highly technically skilled in adventure activity areas and it was possible to operate effectively, in some circumstances, with limited training. At times, instructors were required to have only basic knowledge and competency in several activity skills.

*I'd done the training on the spot to be instructor and I was not the best skier. Like I'd skied but not ... I learnt it to have the job basically and then, after*

*that, it was just basic stuff and it was more for people to enjoy it. (Kosci, age 27).*

*Most of it was, I guess, soft adventure recreational ... experience stuff ... where you would take kids away for four days, five days but they tended to be dormitory-based, or base-camp-based where you would then take them out for an overnight walk or navigation or abseiling or whatever the experience was. (Purple, age 32).*

However, because so many adventure experiences are designed to be accessible, this can lead to another problem: the perception that anyone can do the job, and associated industry complacency regarding instructor qualifications. This problem was discussed by several of the women.

There was a great deal of tension between the perception that "anyone can do the job" and the high expectations of instructor competency. The primary cause of this tension is lack of understanding of the different levels of risk associated with different adventure recreation programs. The women believed there was a need to recognise appropriate levels of instructor competency to ensure the safety of all people participating in adventure recreation programs. Understanding the level of risk involved and being competent in the skills presented is essential, as appropriate risk management was a key element in a program's success.

*[The company I work for presents] twenty two and twenty six [wilderness] courses and on that people are paying two thousand dollars which is good for what they're getting, but they ... expect a very competent instructor and that's what they get. (Heidi, age 29).*

*You know you don't take clients into an environment that ... you know is beyond a certain level of risk ... So you're not doing anything within the adventure scene that is beyond an extreme comfort level for you and if you are you should be ... someone should grab you and give you a shake. You should not be in a position where you are not extremely competent and comfortable. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*Because I've seen so many times, people sent into the woods with no qualifications, no experience and thinking, "Oooohhhh, this is not right". If you don't have any people to work, you don't run the show. You know, you can't just take anybody in the street to do it, you know, that's wrong. (Kosci, age 27).*

Taking people "off the street" to work on adventure recreation programs is not as unusual as it sounds. Most of the women in this study began their work experience in the adventure recreation industry as volunteers. This aspect of the management of the industry initiated the expression of strong opinions regarding the value of their level of training, competency and experience, and how that was translated into payment or compensation for work done. There was a general feeling that the adventure recreation industry pays very poorly and that the acquisition of skill and experience is not adequately recognised nor financially compensated.

*It's not well-paid because well-paid would be something like a tradesman who gets twenty or twenty-five dollars an hour and it's nowhere near that – eight, nine or ten dollars an hour which is less than a shop assistant would get and you're responsible for people's lives. (Duckie, age 27).*

*They expect their staff to be well-trained and experienced, but they don't want to pay for it and one of my arguments with getting all these qualifications in place [is that] we're going to price people out of the market. Instructors, we're going to have no instructors because they can't afford it, on the wage an instructor gets to get all those qualifications to the level they're at ... we'll never, ever get that money back, ever. (Heidi, age 29).*

*If you're a freelance instructor, you can spend up to 200 days just to ... scratch a living, not just make a living, to scratch a living. I mean it's an horrendous existence ... I try and pay ... as much as I can ... The majority of my budget goes on that because I just think they do a fantastic job and the pay is pitiful, absolutely pitiful. (Pluto, age 50).*

*Some companies you work, 12, 13 hours, 14 hours with them and they'll pay you \$120 a day or \$125 a day and it just doesn't make sense. You're burnt out, you go home, you're burnt out. ... It's just not right and then there's other companies like half a day is eight hours so that's \$60 ... And basically what they say to you, is well, if you don't want to do it, somebody else will do it. (Kosci, age 27).*

The statement that "if you don't do it, someone else will" is often used against adventure recreation employees when they raise the issue of inadequate financial compensation. This is just one of a number of reasons used to justify low pay scales. The most common reasons given are that adventure recreation instructors "do it for love" or that "it's a lifestyle choice" and therefore not a serious occupation. Several of the women felt that the adventure recreation industry exploited its employees.

*By saying that people who work in this industry do it basically for the love of it because, hey don't we all just love ... [and] everyone does love what they're doing but there comes a point as well where you've got to start [realising] ... okay well I'm not eighteen any more ... (Jane, age 30).*

*I mean people bandy that about ... "but it's a lifestyle". I mean it's a lifestyle one side of it, it's a great lifestyle but the other side of it is it's a god-awful lifestyle because it cuts you out of so many things. It's very hard. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I think the industry can be very hard on people, very damaging on people. It can bring them out and exploit the skills that they have, doesn't value them often ... it's not a very nurturing industry ... people tend to get chewed up and spat out a bit or they tend to get bounced around a bit and I'd rather not work like that. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

Duckie gave a most unusual justification for why adventure instructors were paid very low wages by the company where she worked. This explanation supported the perception that adventure recreation staff did the job for love and, therefore, did not need or expect to be adequately compensated financially.

*I've done a bit of reading about what is work and why we get paid and I reckon that people believe they get paid for the amount of pain they get put through and the amount of crap they have to put up with. So a doctor has to put up with sick people all day so therefore they get paid a lot of money ... a lawyer has to put up with cut-throat sharks and has to manipulate and do all those things, therefore they get paid a lot. An adventure instructor is really... would probably do it anyway so you may as well give them lunch money because really, they'd probably be doing it for themselves if you weren't there with them so I guess that's part of it, the amount of fun they're having. (Duckie, age 27).*

Duckie continued to justify her employer's attitude to keeping pay scales low with a reassurance that the company compensated staff members in other ways, such as putting on social events and providing on-the-job training. Even so, she recognised that employees were not well paid.

*I think people are happy with the pay rate they get as long as they are not getting used up and as long as they get value other than the money they're getting paid from their employers. So that's what I try and do at NN [adventure training company] is give people value. So we do lots of social events. We try and give them training so they are getting value ... We do all sorts of training with them so that people feel they are getting value for ... their money, you know, they don't get that much money really. (Duckie, age 27).*

It was interesting to hear this story from the other side. Phantom worked for this particular company for several years and was now not so willing to do so. She worked for two years before she received a promotion from basic pay levels even though she held a number of recognised qualifications and had a great deal of experience in the field. In addition, she viewed the expectation that she would attend social functions as a burden and an unnecessary demand on her personal time.

*Initially when I worked for NN [adventure training company] I was new to ropes courses and it was starting to annoy me after a year or two, I was starting to get fairly grieyed ... I had to press to get my pay to go up ... the hours drove me mad and the expectations afterwards too, you know when you're told that you have to go to a BBQ afterwards when you know, it's your own free time ... NN put on a lot of activities ... for staff and it's to try to sort of say thank you, but it doesn't work ... People would prefer, to be paid to be rewarded with pay rather than rewarded with extra activities which are usually straight after the day and you're just exhausted and want to go home. (Phantom, age 31).*

One further reason for the low levels of pay is that prices within the industry were market driven. The industry is viewed as financially unstable due to the large number of operators who entered the market place, often to survive for only short

periods of time. There was a common feeling that if the industry could reach a level of stability and there was market place recognition of the value of quality adventure recreation programs, then the financial situation might improve.

*I think it's hard for all people in this industry whether they're employees or employers and I suppose I've been at both sides and I suppose being on the employer side I've seen how difficult the industry is for employees and prospective employees. On the whole there's not enough work out there to really support the number of employees and instructors. (Norma, age 49).*

*If we could get schools to pay more, it would go straight to our staff ... [It's] getting better because we're starting to say we will not do [the job] for less than this to ensure that A. staff get paid properly and B. that we keep our heads above water. I mean ... why should outdoor [education] prices still stay at the same [level as ten years ago] ... It's just crap. (Jane, age 30).*

It was generally agreed that it was difficult to maintain a regular income, as the industry was highly seasonal and seen as insecure and unstable. To counter-balance irregular work and low pay levels, several of the women, especially those in freelance positions, supplemented their income by working in outdoor equipment stores or by relief teaching.

*That's why I guess I'm working at NN these days, at the shop ... it helps to balance out the holes, just to have a bit of money coming in. (Kosei, age 27).*

*I think most people will say to you too that they supplement, if they've got a teaching degree then they supplement their outdoor work with relief teaching. (Phantom, age 31).*

Only four of the ten women interviewed were paid a full-time salary. The remaining six women worked as freelance instructors or were self-employed. The level of full-time salaries received ranged from \$19,000 to more than \$40,000. The two highest paid women (who both received more than \$40,000 per annum) were employed as teachers in secondary schools. The middle range salary was approximately \$30,000 per annum and for this, the woman involved worked a sixty-hour week on average,

with work often occurring on weekends. The recipient of the lowest full-time salary was provided with a small one bedroom unit in the city that was used when she was not in the field at most a supplement of \$5,000 per year. The organisation she worked for argued that it operated as a charity and compensated her by providing her with accommodation, food and transport for the six to nine months of the year she spent in the field. Pluto expressed her concern at the lack of equity in salary levels when compared to other industries with similar expectations of long hours and extended periods of time spent away from home.

*Because of the time spent away and it is unrealistic and it's not fair. In fact you know there are a lot of other jobs that do the same thing but ... the difference with this one is that it's not well-paid enough. I know a lot of people whose husbands are away for large chunks of time but it's the only way they can get a decent income, but this one you're away for large chunks of time and you don't even have a decent income. (Pluto, age 50).*

The issue of how much time was spent away from home earning an income was also discussed by all of the women. Pluto mentioned that many freelance instructors spent more than two hundred (200) days in the field to earn a meagre living. With an average pay rate of \$150 per day (often less), very few freelance instructors had the potential to earn over \$30,000 per annum. From their earnings, they were expected to pay to attend training courses to maintain currency in their qualifications; purchase their own equipment; and provide their own transport to and from adventure recreation programs. Purple observed that in order for her to make a reasonable living as a freelance instructor, she spent approximately two hundred and seventy (270) days in the field each year, and had done so for several years.



Time spent away from home was not only a financial issue. Spending extended periods of time away from home placed enormous strain on social, personal and family relationships. Most of the women felt that the industry demanded a huge commitment, often to the detriment of their social lives. They lost contact with friends or relied on the few friends who understood that the demands of their job meant that social contact would be sporadic and they would not see them on a regular basis. Elizabeth had worked in the industry for many years and now made a conscious effort to ensure she maintained a life outside of work.

*It's not the sort of job where you can have a real lifestyle that most people would want, male or female. So if you are keen on going to the movies every Tuesday night with your girlfriends or boyfriend or you want to have dinner parties every weekend ... It's very hard to do that with this sort of job because you're away all the time and it's not the work physically, it's the emotional drain and the lack of having good close-knit friendships and things like that. (Duckie, age 27).*

*I'm tired of not having a social life. And that's really getting to me, just not being in one place. Like I live in WA but I'm never in one place more than a few weeks at a time. (Heidi, age 29).*

*When I worked for NN [outdoor education organisation] ... it was a hundred per cent of your life ... When I worked for another commercial operator I would work courses back to back, time and time again and if you're not doing that you're writing proposals or you're doing something else. I have done it in my own company and I choose not to now ... Work gets in the way of my social life, of me being able to play in my garden, or to go and paddle or to do the things that I like to do for myself and I really want a balance in my life of things that I do. I'm not prepared to work seven days a week... I've been there, I've done it. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

In several cases, the women's place of employment and the people they met through work, became their social life. One attraction of the industry is that it is regarded as being very social and could provide the opportunity to meet people with similar attitudes and needs. This had benefits as the women did not have to explain what

they did for a living and friends within the adventure recreation industry understood the demands of their lifestyle.

*I think you have to understand that this company was my life, I really didn't have a very huge social life outside of that company ... At this stage, my relationship was in that company ... time did not allow me really to have much of a social life outside of it and I quite enjoyed what was happening, the life that it provided me. (Norma, age 49).*

*A lot of the friends that I have are in this same industry because you don't have to be on display as some sort of "Wow that's so different" ... so it's kind of like it's normal in your own circle of outdoor friends ... And also you're kind of wanting to catch up with them because of their adventures and yours and so on and it's like that networking thing for, for skills, for experience, for work as well as the friendship thing ... And you speak the same language ... [it] takes quite a lot of energy when there's new people involved and you have to explain this weird thing that you do. (Purple, age 32).*

The concern that emerges from this situation is that several women believe this can be damaging, as organisations or individuals can become quite insular. People can become so obsessed with their working life that they lack contact and interaction with people outside the industry except as participants on adventure recreation programs. It is possible to lose perspective and value little else than the immediate environment of the adventure recreation industry. Jane and Heidi were conscious of this phenomenon and made sure they maintained interests outside of the industry.

*It's totally conversation that other people can't come in on and I find that really hard ... Like NN [outdoor educator/academic], I really like NN [but] I find him so difficult to talk to in social situations because he can't chill out ... He's got to talk shop ... There is a world out there you know, beyond this. Hello ... shall we go and visit that one day ... that'd be nice. (Jane, age 30).*

*NN [outdoor education organisation] is like I said, very insular. I mean it's like you're living on a little island sometimes. I'm at the stage where I want to have friends outside NN and I don't always want to talk NN and live NN and breathe it, so it's an interesting transition. (Heidi, age 29).*

This insularity and lack of understanding of what employment in adventure recreation involves and the commitment required can also take its toll on personal relationships. Working long hours or extended periods of time away from home can mean a great deal of time is spent apart. Many of the women found continuing a personal relationship in those circumstances very difficult, especially if one partner is unable or not prepared to compromise their situation in order to maintain the relationship.

*Work is on weekends, it's long hours. My job at least 50 or 60 hours a week, it's never less ... Trying to maintain a full-time relationship in those situations with somebody who is used to much less working hours [is difficult] ... So my previous full-time relationship has been that he can't understand it, he doesn't have an understanding of the industry so that hugely took a bit of a toll, I think, on our relationship because I am dedicated to work, I love it. (Duckie, age 27).*

*It would be really interesting to look at [statistics] that said, say over the last ten years ... how many relationships were broken up as a result or a key factor being working in the outdoors and being away or whatever. (Norma, age 49).*

*It has broken up a lot of relationships in the sense that people get tired of you not being around in the end. It takes a very understanding person who can cope with the amount of time that I am away. (Pluto, age 50).*

*There's a heap of give and take with that particular one and I think, yeah, it's typically not a good area ... for relationships. You see them falling apart all over the place. (Purple, age 32).*

Of the ten women interviewed, five were single and there is an argument that it is easier to survive in the adventure recreation industry as a single person. Of the remaining five women, four were married and one was in a long-term relationship. Of the four married women, three were married to men who also worked in the adventure recreation industry. There were several conflicting opinions as to whether having a personal relationship with someone else in the industry was a good

arrangement or one to be avoided. Duckie saw involvement with someone in the adventure recreation industry as the most likely option for her to fulfill her goal to have a family life with children.

*With all of that, kids fit in, I don't know how, but they do, they fit in. Because whether I'm running my own company or I've got a husband who's in the industry as well and we take turns or ... unless it's with someone whose extremely understanding ... I can't see it working the other way. (Duckie, age 27).*

Several other women were not so sure that having a relationship with someone in the same industry was such a good idea.

*When I once had a relationship with somebody in the industry, that was hopeless because we were both away at different times and you know "When can we next get together" and sometimes it was two or three months hence ... So I'd come home and he was going away and vice versa so sometimes being in the same industry is not the best thing at all. It gives you an understanding of it but it makes the time apart even greater. (Pluto, age 50).*

*Relationships are certainly an issue because there's no way I can have one when ... I'm never in one place for long enough to see someone. And I don't want to see someone at work, that's certainly an issue for me. (Heidi, age 29).*

*I think it is a workable thing [relationships]. I mean if you can find someone that's either completely disassociated from outdoor education and is willing to support you in doing whatever, then that'd be fairly amazing ... I mean, I've seen a few really successful relationships like that and I think that maybe that's the answer, to have someone who's not really into it at all. (Purple, age 32).*

Kosci's husband did not work in the adventure recreation industry and, as a couple, they found adjusting to the time spent apart very difficult. In particular, Kosci found reconciling her home life with the time in the field confusing. She would lose track of events at home and, at worst, not even recognise her husband when she came home.

*It was not that hard when I was away because there's a lot of stuff going on but when you come back here, all confused and you're trying to adapt to*

*what's going on now and you've lost track of everything and it's good in some ways and bad in others. And for NN [husband] it was really hard because for him, it was the same environment and empty and for me, it was a different environment. So when I was away, it was alright but when I'd come back, he was very confused ... It's like you don't realise that you're away cause you're busy, you're doing tons of things ... When you come back, I'd find, I'd see NN and I wouldn't recognise him. I'd see him and think, you've changed. And that was not very good. For him, I was the same, but for me, he was different and we didn't like that. (Kosci, age 27).*

Elizabeth also expressed the difficulty of maintaining a relationship with a partner not involved in the adventure recreation industry, particularly when there were children involved. Leaving home to work also meant leaving behind all the responsibility for care of the children and the household. As well, she ran her business from home and that meant her partner was left with the extra responsibility of maintaining her business while she was away. Wanting time on her own to relax when she arrived home from a program also caused problems.

*When you walk out the door, you walk away and you leave all the responsibility, you don't do anything with the kids, you don't do any of the taking to school, picking up, you don't do any cooking, cleaning, washing ... you walk out and leave your dog, you walk out and leave everything and the other person has to pick it all up and it's a big ask. And when you come home if you've been responsible for a group, I always want a bit of personal space. And the other person wants to download all ... the things that have happened and in a business that runs from home, your partner picks up all the phone calls, records all the messages, has the inconvenience of the fax, the phone ... all of that stuff so it is a big ask. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

Purple recognised that needing time out to unwind after a program was important. As a single woman it was easier for her to withdraw, relax and refocus. She found that at times she would not instigate social contact until she had settled back into her home life and had readjusted to being in the city. This opportunity was not afforded to any of the women who were in long-term relationships.

*[It's] interesting to think how you regain your energy and I know, after I've been out there [on a program], it's almost like you're switching on and you're having to be focused and responsible and really tuned in to your group. Then when you do come home and you've been physically on to it and really mentally on to it for such a long time ... I find I've just got to go "Mmmm, I'm home, but I'm not going to tell any one for at least a day or two" ... And then come back in and you can just come back in at a normal level. (Purple, age 32).*

With all of the strain of juggling the demands of their work life and maintaining social and family contact, there is a great concern that many of the women no longer have time to enjoy being in the outdoors. In effect, they had lost the ability or motivation to recreate outdoors and spent non-working time indoors recuperating. Some have realised the importance of finding the space to spend their own time in the outdoors and made a conscious effort to find time to pursue their own adventures or with friends and partners.

*My dream is being in the outdoors now with friends I guess ... banning kids [students]. (Addie, age 46).*

*I had a trek to Nepal, many, many years ago now but it was huge, that was a personal thing and I do need to do things like that for myself because that is still where I get the biggest buzz out of life as it were, that's why I went into it ... I don't get enough time but I do try to ... I'm trying to set myself a goal of at least one trip per year. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I think it's more important for me at the moment to feel it on a personal level so ... [We're] starting to get more into the outdoors ourselves as our own activity again and there was a long time when neither NN [husband] or I did anything. (Phantom, age 31).*

Remembering why they entered the industry in the first place and reinforcing the many attractions of the adventure recreation industry was important to all of the women. It kept them focused and made it easier to deal with the day to day difficulties.

All of the women recognised the problems associated with the high turnover rate of staff. It seemed to be accepted that many people will enter the industry and only stay for a short period of time, especially those instructors who become involved in school-based programs where programs are often run with large numbers of school students. Addie reached the point where she needed “time out” after five years of running school-based outdoor education programs.

*Instructing on school camps and things like that you, I think ... people only seem to do that for a few years because of the high burn-out factor. (Phantom, age 31).*

*If they become heavily involved in it, they tend to burn out because, speaking from experience, that's what happened to me at NN [school] and it was basically five years of camps to the point where I didn't want to know about it for a couple of years and actually did something else for a while. (Addie, age 46).*

The problem of continually losing qualified and experienced people from the industry due to the difficulties of dealing with the demanding lifestyle was recognised, yet there was little that could, or was being done to address this loss of resources from the industry. All of the women in this study had been involved in the adventure recreation industry for a minimum of five years, a significantly longer time frame than the average of two to three years spent by many instructors in the field. Some of the women were content to remain employed in the adventure working industry; others had reduced their involvement to part-time employment or were seeking alternate careers.

In order to remain employed for so long in a high-stress industry, the women had developed several mechanisms to cope with their working lives. It was apparent that some of the women were more satisfied with their position within the adventure

recreation than others. Those who were most satisfied were the women who had established an element of control and were able to balance their professional and personal lives. This observation applied mainly to the older women. The three women who had been in the industry longest, Elizabeth, Pluto and Addie, accepted the realities of the industry and each had found ways to ensure they maintained regular contact with friends and family and took time out for themselves. Elizabeth had established her own business, was financially secure and had no problem turning down work that did not suit her lifestyle. Pluto and Addie were employed full-time by schools and had worked hard over many years to establish their positions and develop a degree of autonomy. Over the last few years, Addie was spending less time in the field and was currently involved in writing a textbook for use by outdoor education teachers. Norma no longer worked full-time in the industry but maintained contact with many of her colleagues and continued to work as an instructor on adventure recreation programs when it suited her.

Duckie and Purple were younger, single and prepared to commit to the adventure recreation lifestyle. They recognised that improving their professional status within the adventure recreation industry meant further training and travel. They saw very little room for advancement within the Western Australian industry. They believed the local industry was too small and the full-time job opportunities were too rare. Duckie accepted a position with a North American organisation shortly after the second interview for this study took place. Purple also expected to leave Western Australia in the months following her second interview to take up a position as a trainee with an international organisation.



Of the other younger women, Jane, Phantom, Heidi and Kosci were concerned with the difficulty of juggling friends and family and were struggling to accept the lack of stability and financial remuneration offered by the adventure recreation industry. Jane and Phantom were involved in their own businesses and were moving towards establishing a professional lifestyle that suited their needs. Heidi and Kosci were seeking retraining and expected to find employment outside of the industry within the next year. Both of these women continued to recognise the value of adventure recreation and expected they would be able to incorporate aspects of the outdoor experience in their new careers.

## **Overview**

This chapter has reported on how the women became involved in adventure recreation, the attraction of the adventure recreation industry, and the realities of working within it. Much of what has been discussed is not just the story of women. It is possible that many of the stories told would have been similar if told from a masculine perspective. It is likely that many of the means of exposure to adventure recreation, the attractions and the realities of the industry, would be the same for men as for women.

However, this study is an exploration of employment in the adventure recreation industry as it relates to women in particular. It identifies and examines the issues of being a woman working in a non-traditional, male dominated environment. Most

importantly, it explores how, or if, women are able to adapt and change the adventure recreation industry to meet their needs.

The following chapter reviews the women's perceptions of their acceptance into the adventure recreation industry. In addition, it examines the impact of the increasing number of women seeking employment in the industry on philosophy and approach to adventure recreation program planning and leadership. The position that women hold as role models and the future of women in the adventure recreation industry is also explored.

## Chapter Six

### Women and the Adventure Experience

*A love of the outdoors, although dormant, lies within most women. That it is so infrequently exhibited is due, to a large extent, to the means that are taken to awaken its spirit. No woman of any force will enjoy the role of passive observer for any length of time.*

Katherine Gidney Pinkerton, 1916  
(da Silva, 1998, p. 72)

#### Introduction

This chapter explores how the women interviewed in this study experienced their employment in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. It reveals how they felt about their experiences and the techniques they developed, not only to survive, but also to prosper, in a male dominated environment. While many of the issues discussed in the previous chapter may be generally applicable to workers across the adventure recreation industry, the issues discussed in this chapter are specific to women's experience.

In the early stages of the interviews, the women talked easily about the physical difficulties of working long hours and spending long periods of time away from home. It appeared less easy for some of them to discuss how they coped with the emotional difficulties of employment in the adventure recreation industry. While some of the women were very open about all aspects of their working lives, others deferred discussing how they felt about themselves and the path their career had taken until well into the interview process.

Their reticence was more than an unwillingness to discuss their experiences and share their stories. The interviews provided the first opportunity many of the women had to discuss the perceptions they had developed and the feelings and meanings they attached to their working experience. Several of the women commented that it was only when the opportunity to be involved in this study was presented that they started to think about what working in adventure recreation really meant to them.

The primary issues they identified included their minority status within the adventure recreation industry and associated discrimination coupled with a lack of recognition of their physical ability, competency in technical skills, and their experience. This chapter explores the major themes that emerged from the interviews with the women.

- Dealing with discrimination based on gender stereotypes and assumptions about their physicality and femininity;
- Recognising the number of women employed and their lack of representation in some areas of the industry;
- Developing new, and more comfortable, approaches to adventure recreation leadership;
- Acting as role models and recreating images of women outdoors.

### **Dealing with Discrimination**

Traditionally, the Western Australian adventure recreation industry has been male dominated. It has not been easy for women to access employment and gain acceptance within the local industry. One of the primary problems for women seeking employment in adventure recreation was overcoming assumptions that women are less physically able and less technically skilled than men, and therefore less suited to employment outdoors. Some of women in this study reported that they

were described as "tough" or perceived to be "unfeminine", further perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Duckie felt that the perception of women's physical strength was a major factor in influencing the lack of acceptance of women into the adventure recreation workplace. She felt that while physical strength was important, physical fitness and competency played a much greater role in determining an instructor's suitability for their position. She acknowledged that while women needed to be physically fit to be proficient, their level of strength did not need to emulate or equal men's strength.

*I don't think it's something that people would say, "How strong are you? Can you go and lift that weight there?" ... but I reckon there's a sort of subliminal ... "Are you as strong as the blokes?" kind of thing ... I think it's because if you're going to be leading groups in programs you need to be able to physically complete the activity and you need to be able to do it without puffing and without it actually being a strain upon you. Now to do that in programs that are quite physical you need to be really, really fit, you need to be really strong. And it's not about being as strong as the blokes, but it is about being stronger than your average bear so you've got to be physically stronger than most [other women]. (Duckie, age 27).*

Elizabeth and Duckie, both tall women, felt their height gave them a more imposing physical presence than the average women. They found that they were rarely challenged or confronted about any assumed lack of physical ability. Elizabeth was very happy for others to carry heavy items as it meant she was more comfortable and didn't have to work as hard. However, Duckie recognised that assumptions about lack of physical strength could be a problem for smaller women.

*Maybe because I'm over six foot tall I've never had to say or prove my position or physical stature ... and I am always the first person to let the blokes carry all the heavy things to the site and back. It has never worried me. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*I know that it's been a real issue for some of [the other women] because they're generally smaller in stature ... For me I think that my physical presence has meant that not many blokes really give a shit about it, about being stronger or not stronger ... I mean NN [female instructor] gets so much stick about her being small ... and she used to get a lot more so she's got a real attitude about it now and I think there are other people who are the same so physicality would definitely be an issue for them. It hasn't been so much [of an issue] for me, I've just become more aware of it. (Duckie, age 27).*

Several of the women were quite small in stature. Kosci spoke of the irritation she felt when she was singled out and had attention drawn to her assumed lack of strength. On a skill-training course where she was the only female present, she was consistently offered lighter loads and suggestions were made that she would need extra assistance because she was a woman. When Norma was confronted about her perceived lack of physical strength and suitability for her position as a trek leader, she chose to carry on regardless and managed to change the mind of the individual who had initially challenged her.

*[They presume] they're strong and women are weak ... When I did my abseiling course the guy, the instructor was saying - they were all guys taking the course and then there is me, the little one - and then they'd say all right "Oh so we'll give you a little rope to carry" you know things like that. I mean they were just teasing but it's not necessary you know ... and they will say "so for the not so strong one" and looking at me and then say "you can put an extra knot in your pulley system" ... I mean it was good to get me aware of those things, but there's no reason why I should be the example that I'm the one that's not strong. (Kosci, age 27).*

*I remember meeting part of my group in Kathmandu and ... I met them and I did all the obvious leadership things and this particular guy said "Whose the leader?" and I said "Well I am" and he turned and said "But you're a woman" and I got over the shock and I said "Yes, but I'm it, do you have a problem with that?" ... He said to me later "But you looked so little and frail and so slight and had no idea that you could lead a group of people to a 6400m trekking peak in Nepal" and that was his perception but that was not what he expected of the person who would lead that trek. (Norma, age 49).*

Norma stated that being challenged about her ability was disappointing. She was saddened that people saw adventure as a “male macho thing”. Like Norma, other women reported instances of their position being questioned or their presence seen as curious. Purple found that when she worked with private boys’ schools, the initial assumption was often made that she was there to cook.

*I was slightly saddened at the whole issue of how we are perceived face up and how people have an expectation that something like this is going to be a male macho thing. (Norma, age 49).*

*Working with private boys’ schools, they kind of say things like “So you’re the cook?” or something like that which is kind of interesting, a little annoying as well, but kind of fun when you can turn around and say “Actually, no, I’m your senior instructor!” (Purple, age 32).*

Kosci worked for a new organisation established in a coastal town in northern Western Australia, a remote region with a predominantly male population. She found that, while her employer was supportive, she was viewed as a novelty within the local community. In addition, Kosci stated that her employers accepted a young local woman who worked with her as suiting her role as assistant instructor because she was “masculine”. They perceived that feminine girls did not do that sort of work.

*I was very well-received there and it was like “This is an abseiling instructor” like “Everybody look, we’ve got a girl” (laughter) ... so it was “Oh, there’s a woman here, she’s an abseiling instructor”. They said “Well, she’s a masculine girl” and I said “What do you mean by masculine? Am I a masculine girl?” [They replied] “Oh, for sure you are”. I said “So what is a feminine girl?” [They replied] “Well feminine girls don’t do that sort of thing you know.” (Kosci, age 27).*

The notion that “feminine girls don’t do that sort of thing” was vigorously refuted by all of the women. Several women challenged stereotypical definitions of femininity. They did not see themselves as unfeminine simply because they chose to work in a

physically challenging environment. In addition, the women did not see that being feminine meant that they needed to dress up, wear make-up or appear “sexy”.

Phantom enjoyed dressing up, but not in the outdoor workplace.

*I constantly seem to be up against the, you know, well you know you're not very feminine and it's like well I don't believe that but ... Because I think you're doing the job that is seen to be typically male because it's outdoors and it's quite physical by nature ... they kind of almost box you as being this tough person ... I don't like to think of myself as being tough, more so just being competent and being confident enough to do that sort of stuff which doesn't necessarily mean that you lose your feminine side ... I know I tend to get boxed quite a lot in that category of not being connected to the female side. (Purple, age 32).*

*I heard from ... maybe a couple of people, that women [in this industry] are perceived as being really butch and masculine and hairy armpits and all that sort of stuff, but my own perceptions are just so not that. Every woman that I've ever looked at [in this industry] who I think is amazing, is just as feminine [as any other]. (Duckie, age 27).*

*I don't see myself as very masculine but I guess I don't wear really high heels and make-up and that sort of thing. I'm very natural looking but maybe they see a feminine girl you know, really sexy and ... I really don't care about the way I look too much ... I wouldn't want to see myself in a sexy little suit with a lot of make-up though (laughter). (Kosci, age 27).*

*I was really the tomboy anyway at school but ... every now and then ... I like to dress up and wear nice clothes and things ... I like to do it and I don't feel embarrassed to do it and I don't feel like it's incongruous necessarily with my character. (Phantom, age 31).*

It was predominantly the youngest women who initially reported their displeasure when faced with incidences of openly sexist discrimination. It took some discussion for some of the other women to admit they had experienced incidences of sexism. All of the women stated that they often chose to ignore or found ways to disregard incidences of sexual discrimination. Some accepted or disregarded the situation and others viewed it as a joke. It was almost as if dealing with gender stereotypes was so ingrained in all of the women's working experience that it was not an issue that



deserved discussion. Addie admitted that she had learnt when to stay quiet and spoke out only when necessary.

*I was egged on badly in my first year by one of the guys I worked with who really had a problem with women ... he really gave me a hard time, he just wouldn't ... He would almost totally ignore me sometimes and ... I just sort of went "bugger him".*

*I have had some very sexist comments from guys ... in particular, one teacher from an all-boys school here ... On a canoe trip, during the whole program he'd been really sleazy and coming on to me, I [gave] him absolutely no time at all. (Jane, age 30).*

*It was an interesting program because it was with a group of ... the most macho males ... and it was a tough program, they had no respect for females ... It was perceived that it was quite difficult for me, I didn't find it that difficult, I just accepted that this is the way that some people are. (Norma, age 44).*

*I mean there's some attitudes out there which ... you've got to look at them as fun, otherwise you'd just pull your hair out in frustration. (Purple, age 32).*

*Unfortunately I work with two males who are ... extremely ... egotistical and power with one of them in particular ... is an issue and ... he'll only let me influence him so far and then he has to ... take over and have the power ... [It] doesn't mean anything ... What he says goes and I guess for my own survival I've learnt to keep quiet but I'll say what I have to when I need to so that I can [survive]. (Addie, age 49).*

Pluto stated that she had always believed in her own value and it was quite a shock to her when she was faced with blatant discrimination based on her gender. Pluto and Heidi chose to disregard any displays of discrimination by disowning the problem. They both saw the display of another person's intolerance and lack of understanding as that person's problem, not theirs.

*I'm not a good person to ask [about discrimination] because ... I'm of the assumption that my voice is equally as valuable as anybody else and if it's ever put in front of me that it isn't and I do meet it, I get the shock of my life I have to tell you. It really takes me back and ... it upsets me initially I think ... and then I get really angry and then I get dismissive I think ... But when it does [happen] ... I get this big shock and then I think "Oh their problem, not mine, they're the losers". (Pluto, age 50).*

*[If people say] "Oh you're just a female what would you know" ... I'd just smile at them and ... just brush it off, [it] wouldn't particularly bother me ... I don't find that a problem, it's just ... it's [their] problem not mine. (Heidi, age 29).*

Several of the women, like Jane, took strength by remembering their abilities and reinforcing their feelings of personal competence. It was important to Jane that she did not adopt a submissive female role.

*I had to learn a lot in my first year ... Mainly about not biting all the time ... They just tease all the time and make jokes about size or strength or anything like that. And I just learnt to think, well I know that I can do this, I know that I am employed because of what I can do and I might not lift as much as they can but I have got other things that they can't do so ... that in itself was a big step because it is very easy to just fall into that [submissive] role. (Jane, age 30).*

Taking this step was not always easy. For Phantom, being accepted as a competent instructor proved to be an extremely frustrating and demoralising experience. Addie stated that she knew of a young woman who left the industry because she could no longer deal with the difficulty of being in a male dominated environment.

*It was definitely hard to get into climbing as a female as I didn't find a lot of people wanted to climb with me, I had to prove myself first ... [And] in terms of working in the outdoors, I often found that ... you had to prove yourself first quite a lot before you would be accepted as any good and people were very reluctant to tell you that you were any good at things. They were much more prone to tell you where your weaknesses lie which would rip you ... your self-confidence gets a battering and mine definitely did. (Phantom, age 31).*

*One of the girls who was teaching with me last year finally left after four years. Couldn't stand it any more ... she's now teaching an all female [physical education] department and has never been happier. (Addie, age 46).*

On a more positive note, all of the women interviewed took personal satisfaction from being able to demonstrate to participants, particularly male participants that

they were capable. Several women regarded those situations when they faced discrimination as an opportunity for people to learn that many of their assumptions about women's abilities were based on gender stereotypes and were not a reflection of the reality of these women's level of skill or competence.

*I've had a guy once dead set that I couldn't tie a knot and he just took the ropes ... He wasted half an hour frigging around and finally one of the guys said "I've had enough, you know, why not let her do it obviously she knows what she's doing" [and he replied] "Oh bloody woman tie a knot" and ... half an hour went by and he still hadn't had a rope tied and the person I was with, I just had to get them to close their mouth and sit and wait it out because every opportunity is a learning opportunity. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*Some of these guys used to say to me "You're holding my rope?" ... and I'd be like, "You know the system is really good and I'm not as weak as I look". And after a while I didn't have to justify anything any more, I just thought ... I can't be bothered talking, so if they are actually going to question that, if I can't do what I'm out here to do well, I shouldn't be here. I wouldn't be here. (Jane, age 30).*

*In a lot of cases they had this perception that you had to be big and strong to haul these ropes around and tie them and do things that we tend to do so they saw this very petite person and thought "Well, what's she doing here?" ... I think a lot of people take you on face value ... I think I made sure that I didn't slot into that role of I need to prove myself. I really just slotted into the role where I've got a job to do, I'll do it and ... their perception changed and ... invariably people would come up and they would say things like "Gee when I first saw you, I thought what's she doing here?" or "What's she going to add to this?" and they were always very surprised and often quite perhaps humbled or apologetic at their own thoughts. (Norma, age 49).*

While gendered stereotypes of women working outdoors continue to exist, the number of women employed in the adventure recreation industry will remain a minority. While it is accepted that the number of women working in the adventure recreation industry is increasing, women who seek employment in this industry must overcome many hurdles. The next section of this chapter explores women's presence in the adventure recreation industry, paying particular attention to those sections of

the industry where women are gaining acceptance and those areas from which they continue to be excluded.

### **Where are the Women?**

The women interviewed in this study agreed that, historically, women made up less than ten per cent of adventure recreation employees across the Western Australian industry. It was felt that while this per centage had increased over the past ten years, women remained a minority in most areas of the adventure recreation industry.

Elizabeth and Pluto have fifty years of experience in the adventure recreation industry between them. When they became involved twenty or more years ago, it was not unusual for them to be the only women present on adventure recreation programs. They accepted this situation and persevered regardless, as their personal goals were simply to pursue and enjoy their own adventurous activities. Jane began her involvement in the industry just over ten years ago and, like many of the others, her early work experiences were with all male instructors. She recalled the joy she felt when she found herself working with other women instructors for the first time.

*When I was here in the seventies, I didn't meet any other women climbing or walking. There were women bush walkers up north but [in south west WA] at the climb sites, I didn't meet another woman. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*When I first started, there were very few women in the industry ... That's changing a little bit now. Certainly there are more females available when you want to employ people, but I can remember being, over and over again, being the only female in all sorts of circumstances. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I made a bit of a quantum leap going to XX [outdoor education centre on the east coast of Australia] and suddenly realised there were a lot of women*

*working outdoors. It's not always going to be just me and the boys and that was really fantastic, that was just a great experience. (Jane, age 30).*

Despite the recognised existence of discrimination against women in the adventure recreation industry, there was a perception that opportunities for women were increasing. Adventure recreation organisations were seen to be becoming more receptive to women's employment.

*I think there are a lot more women coming into it ... That has been the predominant change and I can also see that companies are starting to realise they have to have a female contingent. (Phantom, age 31).*

This being the case, many of the women regarded their gender as an advantage when seeking employment. With only a limited number of qualified women available for employment, many of the women expressed the feeling that they gained employment due to luck and were simply in the right place at the right time.

*There is without a doubt a shortage of women in the industry. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I do think that women [have] an advantage at the moment ... I think it's been the case for the last probably five years, and I think that's one of the reasons I've been able to get into the industry with the skill level I have, because I'm a girl, because there are not many girls. (Duckie, age 27).*

*[My employment] had a lot to do with the fact that I was female and it was going to be value added for that employer to have a female on the program so certainly then ... I was very fortunate. I don't think I would have the opportunity now that I had nine years ago so I feel that I'm really fortunate for that ... I think life's all about right time, right place and I just happened to be there. (Nonna, age 49).*

*I think being female has helped a lot because there was quite a glut of male instructors but very few female instructors ... it seemed to be quite easy to walk in and take it from there. (Purple, age 32).*

It was felt that with the number of women in the industry increasing, those women who were employed were being given more opportunities to take on key

management roles. This situation was resulting in increased employment opportunities for women and it was no longer as difficult for women to enter the industry as it once had been. Norma knew of two instances where women had established their own businesses and created opportunities for employment for other women.

*NN [adventure training company] is run by a woman with an enormous amount of experience, who for a time there, and I don't know whether it was deliberate or just the way it panned out, only seemed to employ women.*

*NN [wilderness first aid training organisation] was originally established by a NN [woman] who came out of the outdoor industry and employed quite a few female first aid instructors. (Norma, age 49).*

Organisational culture played an important part in determining the sectors of the industry where women were most accepted. The women felt schools were more supportive of women in physical education roles with secondary schools providing the majority of employment opportunities for the women interviewed in this study. There was a strong link identified between physical education and outdoor education programs within many Western Australian schools. In addition, Education Department guidelines required that both male and female staff accompanied students on co-educational adventure programs. Seven of the ten women interviewed held tertiary qualifications in education, physical education and similar disciplines.

Private girls' schools were seen as most encouraging of women's involvement in adventure recreation and actively sought suitably qualified women to fill instructional roles. Five of the women interviewed had attended private girls' schools. Pluto worked in private girls' schools for the majority of her career. She

felt women were always well represented within the private girls' school system and there was little acknowledgment of any gender bias.

*Having been in teaching all my life, where the gender bias has never [been an issue] ... [It was] probably with one of the first areas where male and female equality was there ... Since I've been teaching, [I've been in] a lot of situations where you'll have a female head of department and males working under her. The males come in as youngsters and they have to work under women who are higher up and that sort of thing and it's never been a problem. (Pluto, age 50).*

Phantom also recognised that the number of women was greater in the education section of the industry, though fewer women held management positions within the state school system. Addie worked within the state school system and reported that, even though she had significantly more experience than the current head of her physical education department, she doubted she would ever be promoted as male teachers traditionally held that position.

*There are more women [working] in the state schools. You have to be more outdoor [education teachers], but when you look at how many are heads of department I don't think you'll find too many of us. (Phantom, age 31).*

Women were also gaining ground within the private adventure training and education sector. Duckie stated that when she took on a management role within a local private adventure training organisation, she made a conscious effort to attract and employ more women. Further, a number of people commented to Duckie that they expected the culture of that particular organisation to change with women taking up management positions. The most obvious change that occurred was that women employees were no longer a minority in this particular organisation.

*NN [adventure training company] has been mostly male dominated up until NN [woman] started to take a leadership role within [the company] ... Until NN [woman] started to own part of the company, it's been males and ... always had a real male thing ... and I had so many people say to me "Wow*

*there's a women working for [the company] now, that's interesting. Gee, that's going to change things" and stuff like that.*

*There are probably more women working at NN [adventure training company] now than any other organisation and I think a lot of that is because of the skills we require, being more group management skills ... but a lot of it's just because I've been magnetising girls to work for us. I've been actually physically thinking to myself, yep, we should have more women working here because they are bloody good at it and they work bloody hard. (Duckie, age 27).*

This change was also occurring at a national level. Heidi reported that, in the national outdoor education organisation where she was employed, women instructors were in the majority and women held the majority of management positions. When she began working with this organisation three years ago, most management positions were held by men and sixty per cent of instructors were male: a situation that has now completely reversed. She stated that a major factor in precipitating this change in management composition was the resignation of the previous Executive Director. Jane supported Heidi's view that, until recently, this particular organisation had not been supportive of women in management.

*[When I first began working there] I'd say probably sixty, forty - sixty [per cent] males and forty [per cent] females [were employed as instructors] ... It's changed and now we've got a lot more women in higher management ... Our Operations Director is female and she probably runs the show day to day ... I'd say nearly all our Area Coordinators are female at the moment, which are you know, the highest level of coordinator out in the field. (Heidi, age 29).*

*He [previous Executive Director] was the head of NN [outdoor education organisation] for years ... [It was] like an old battle ship that place ... no women could crack that hierarchy. (Jane, age 30).*

Despite women's advancements in selected sectors of the industry, the women reported that they experienced limited acceptance on industry committees and



industry representative groups. Very few women in Western Australia held positions at this level.

*How many women are there on committees? I don't think there are that many to be honest ... I don't actually know a lot of people who [are] on groups or who [are] in sort of committees and things but I generally get the picture that there's less or few women, mostly men. (Phantom, age 31).*

The culture of these committees was a major factor in women's hesitancy to become involved. Several of the women spoke of their experiences at this level of the industry and their reluctance to initiate or continue to be involved in groups that disregarded the needs of women. Industry associations and peak bodies were seen as male dominated and highly political. Addie, in particular, spoke of her experience on an industry training committee.

*We know that we're not being listened to ... and that was the big [issue] ... no one took any notice of what we said ... And we knew that what they were saying was more who could out-do the other rather than who could produce a result that was going to meet the needs of the group. (Addie, age 46).*

Other women stated their reluctance to become involved. They were not prepared to put themselves in situations where they felt their opinions were discredited. The women saw little personal value in playing the political game within the industry.

*I don't suffer fools lightly in terms of people in the industry and I know how to sort out the shit from the clay ... I genuinely love what we do ... and if you want to look it as a hierarchy ... I don't get into the political side of it. I don't want to because to me that takes the fun out of it for me. Sure you know, to have your name spattered all over what have you been on this board and that board, that committee, this committee ... not interested and never been interested. (Jane, age 30).*

*I refuse ... I don't feel like I have anything to contribute to them [committees] ... I work and I like my personal space. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

Purple explained her reasons for lack of involvement in the political process of the industry. She believed it was better for women to remain outside of that aspect of the industry. In addition, she believed it was possible for women to gain more respect by staying away from “the man’s world thing” of committees and industry associations.

*Those people in the so-called powerplay positions ... are thankful for the fact that women have decided not to jump in and rock the boat and play as well ... because it's just not worth the angst to do it I don't think. I think most women have seen it or have experimented in it and walked away from it ... And I really think that if those guys actually see that happening, then it perhaps supports them ... they can go ahead and do it without having women in the picture ... or maybe they actually do recognise it for what it is and there's a certain respect for the women who just quietly get on and do the job ... and I think there's kind of that wise woman sort of feel about it. ... If you can just hold your own and be true to who you are without getting involved in all that bullshit, then I think the guys, maybe subconsciously ... actually hold that in high regard rather than you jumping in and doing the man's world thing which quite often is ... debates and bullshit. (Purple, age 32).*

Only two of the women interviewed for this study were involved in industry associations or committees. It was interesting that one of these women was perceived as exhibiting very masculine behaviours by two of the other women interviewed. One woman commented that these behaviours might not be a personal trait but simply that woman’s way of dealing with male dominated environments.

*She's also a very male like character ... that might sound negative, but she's strong in a male way. I perceive her as ... not a very female person in the way she talks or ... she doesn't show a lot of emotion and the way she deals with things and maybe that is because she's in such a male orientated situation, I don't know. (Name omitted)*

The woman who was involved with industry committees and organisations recognised that these groups were very male dominated but, in her opinion, that situation was changing. She had observed that many of the older industry representatives, with very traditional approaches to adventure recreation, were

resigning. As a result, attitudes were changing, as younger people with new perspectives became involved.

*There's probably a few of the diehards but I think they are becoming less and less ... I mean they're not being taken as seriously now, they're easily sort of like pooh-poohed as it were so I don't think there's an enormous strength anywhere of those kind of people, I really don't. (Name omitted).*

Many of the women interviewed believed that attitudes within the adventure recreation industry were changing. This was not only due to women's increased involvement in most sectors of the industry, but an industry-wide move away from traditional models of adventure recreation programming. New perspectives of appropriate models of adventure recreation leadership were being introduced and women were readily adopting new approaches. Even so, many of the women interviewed in this study discussed the struggle to have new approaches recognised and appreciated within what was still a predominantly masculine, albeit changing, culture in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia.

### **Developing New Ways to Lead**

One of the most fervent areas of discussion recorded in this study, was the question of perceived differences between the leadership styles of men and women in the outdoors. There were many strong opinions expressed about the way in which women were challenging traditional approaches to adventure recreation leadership. The most common theme emerging from the interviews was the people-centred leadership style of women. Women were reported to better understand the needs of clients and staff.

*I think women do have a better understanding of people in general. (Heidi, age 29).*

*I think that I really listen to what a lot of people have got to say. I think that's the major difference, not so dogmatic in approach and I'm talking about men in general ... every male I've ever worked with ... who's been running programs takes a similar approach. They're fairly dogmatic, they like things done their way and they're not really too open to what other people have to input. (Jane, age 30).*

*I mean I think that you can be gender specific and say that on the whole and, this comes out in comments to me frequently, that women ... are far more empathetic to each other, they look after each other. (Pluto, age 50).*

Taking a more people-centred approach had positive repercussions in the work place.

Both Duckie and Jane reported that, as they took on more responsibility for staff management, staff appeared to be happier and were working more constructively.

*NN [adventure training company] always had a real male thing ... and I had so many people say to me "Wow there's a woman working for NN now, that's interesting gee, that's going to change things" ... I think it's changed things because I know the staff are a lot happier ... I think we are more approachable since I've been in charge of staff. I spend a lot of time, coaching, cajoling, talking, making sure staff are happy, determining what staff training needs are, that's a particular area of mine. I enjoy that and I want that to happen and I really want to support people in a career path in the industry. (Duckie, age 27).*

*I had staff feedback at the end and it was just like sort of "you know it was good, I knew you were out there and it was just a different style to NN [male manager] and we liked that" ... He can be a little bit [dictatorial and his] way is the right way whereas I'm just very open to other people, their level of experience. (Jane, age 30).*

Several of the women interviewed were concerned that their comments about leadership styles should not be interpreted as statements that women's styles were better than those displayed by men, nor that people-centred leadership was the sole domain of women. They saw the introduction of their preferred leadership styles as an alternative to traditional masculinist models of leadership. Addie discussed the

benefits of shared leadership on several occasions. She felt it was very important that men and women were given the opportunity to work together as adventure recreation instructors. She believed that men and women had much to learn from each other and through working together, achieved an effective balance of leadership styles.

*I think instructors that are really good ... don't have such a tough approach and they're a bit softer and actually got two feet on the ground and ... I guess in the stereotype it would be feminine but I don't want to say that because, you know it's not a feminine approach to be nice and actually have feelings and be able to feel for other people ... Everybody should be able to do that. (Kosci, age 27).*

*There's no doubt that ... women have a softer touch. That's been proven. Our communication skills are better, our listening skills are better, blokes spatial skills are better etc etc and research has all proven that ... And we were meant to work together, we were meant to complement each other ... I know, a lot of my best work has been with another male [instructor] where, as a team, we've learnt to work together and I would bring the soft [human relations] skills and teach him and through many long discussions and arguments we would grow from each other and he might teach me a few more hard [technical] skills or give me the benefit of his experience in some other way. (Addie, age 46).*

Duckie also expressed the opinion that while she recognised that men and women often lead differently, it was important not to generalise and perpetuate the myths of gender stereotyping. Duckie had observed that there was a different attitude or feeling in the workplace when any one gender was in the majority.

*I'm not sure that women necessarily have any skills any more than guys because I've met guys [who] have got the skills that women are supposed to have and I've met girls who just don't have those things, who are not empathetic, who are self-centred, are not good at relating to people. I've seen girls be typical male roles and males be typical girl roles so I'm not sure that there is actually anything different related to gender. But I do find that it's a nice, happy, fun, less competitive environment when there's lots of girls around but it's quite an empowering environment when the guys are around because they are always off doing something different whereas the girls just want to sit and chat (laughs) which is great but both of them are quite different environments. There's definitely a different vibe when there is all*

guys working on a program and all girls working on a program. (Duckie, age 27).

The greatest perceived difference between men's and women's leadership styles was seen in attitudes towards fun. Several of the women felt that many men in the industry took themselves and what they did for a living far too seriously. It was perceived that some male instructors were so involved in presenting and developing strong technical skills in adventure recreation programs, that they were in danger of forgetting that adventure recreation was also about having fun. The women felt that adventure recreation programs did not necessarily have to focus on high-risk activities or on producing the best paddlers or highest climbers. Nor did they need to promote an attitude that outdoor experiences were only about hard expeditions, being tough and conquering the outdoors.

*I think a little bit of the fun aspect and the just being out there and appreciating you are in that environment is being lost ... Let's get out there and see the fun aspect of it and let's go back to the basics and have a bit of fun and start at the lower levels and then we can go up to greater levels of risk. (Addie, age 46).*

*It's a big company ... they're professional and they take themselves extremely seriously ... they don't know how to have fun, they've lost the fun out of their programs. (Jane, age 30).*

On another level, educating people about how to be comfortable outdoors and appreciate the environment was important to the women. Elizabeth and Pluto saw their approach as different to their male counterparts as they wanted to be comfortable in the outdoors and did not see the benefit of "doing it hard".

*I think the industry's changed ... and how it's different is that we actually sleep and eat every day ... People are encouraged to learn how to care for themselves and be comfortable and care for the environment and the equipment. (Elizabeth, age 44).*

*When you go on these programs you're moving out of your normal comfort zone, you have to recreate your comfort zone. You can be comfortable and the whole idea is to be comfortable, not to be uncomfortable. Any fool can be uncomfortable, but we're trying to teach you to be comfortable in a changed environment and I think that is very important. (Pluto, age 50).*

Pluto expanded on this theme by stating that the traditional approach of pushing people beyond comfortable limits often discouraged them from returning to the outdoors, as they did not enjoy the experience.

*If I don't get enough students coming back I've got to ask myself why. I can't do things with them that are going to turn them off because they won't come ... I think that that's where a lot of schools make the mistake ... they run all these programs that push [their students] harder and harder and they don't have a choice ... and a lot of students will say "Phew God, thank goodness I got through that, I'm never, ever going to go near the bush again as long as I live". (Pluto, age 50).*

It was noted by many of the women that there was increasing recognition of the benefits of positive outdoor experiences that incorporated elements of personal development and environmental awareness.

*I think it's a whole shift in the purpose of the programs and knowledge. People are much more aware and more and more and more people are getting out into the outdoors. I mean I'm having enormous shifts in my thinking of what we should be doing with kids and where we should be taking them. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I think the general industry is changing towards recognition of ... outdoor education purely as a medium for change and growth and it's not the activity, it's what you do with the activity ... Some of the schools who started off with a very strong testosterone level, and again, because they're private schools with probably very strong traditions, have even started to flip side to the other side. (Purple, age 32).*

It is debatable whether the changes in attitude and approach noted was due to women's influence or simply a global shift in awareness of people-centred approaches to adventure recreation. However, many of the women believed that

their involvement in the industry can play an important role in encouraging more women to participate in, and develop new approaches to, adventure recreation activities. In addition, demonstration of their competency at leadership level has impact in breaking down gender stereotypes and assumptions about women's ability.

### **Being a Role Model**

Apart from challenging traditional approaches to adventure recreation leadership, the women interviewed in this study felt their increasing presence in the adventure recreation industry challenged conventional stereotypes of gendered behaviour. Many of the women felt they played an important role in paving the way and encouraging other women to experience adventure.

Jane felt that women of her generation had broken through many barriers and it was important that women continued to be seen as physically active and competent. Duckie stated that she enjoyed being an "adventurous" woman, though she acknowledged that it was not always an easy path because her behaviour was seen to be outside accepted gender stereotypes.

*I think there are a lot of women in the generation before me ... were stifled by what they could and couldn't do ... culturally ... I think we have really broken through that and I think that it is important for women to keep seeing that and have it reinforced ... I think it is really powerful. (Jane, age 30).*

*It's quite a nice feeling knowing that you're a rare breed of woman, it's quite nice. Because you know that, I mean jeez you know, it's like you think right, I'm not run of the mill. This is good I am happy to be a different kind of person to the [women] that you see on TV ... So I don't think it's such a bad thing though it just makes it a bit harder. (Duckie, age 27).*



Many of the women felt it was important to demonstrate that the physical demands of adventure recreation were within the reach of women. Kosci acknowledged that many of the activities presented in adventure recreation programs were delivered at very basic skill levels and therefore accessible to most physically able people. Purple also believed that most people were capable of doing what she did, it was just that she chose to do it.

*I just do some things. Like anyone can do any of these things, I don't do any of this stuff to any great elite level, like it's no big deal really it's just what I do. (Purple, age 32).*

The women felt that demonstrating their comfort with the outdoors and their competence in outdoor skills went a long way in encouraging other women to be more adventurous. Many of the women felt that their presence on adventure recreation programs was a major factor in increasing women's involvement.

*She just said if I hadn't done the demonstration on the ropes course, if one of the guys had gone up, she said "I wouldn't have done it" but you know, that was very powerful for her though with a lot of other people it doesn't matter whether it is one of the guys or girls ... but some people are quite affected by it. (Jane, age 30).*

*We often saw that when females turned up and often they would be quite apprehensive that they would be very pleased that there was a female, and of course I wasn't the only female instructor as time went on in that organisation. (Norma, age 49).*

*There's not a program that you go on that you don't think who would be the best person to do this activity as a demonstration ... and often times ... you'll get a female to do the demonstrations because it's good for the women in the group to go "Well she can do it that's pretty cool". (Purple, age 32).*

*A lot of women don't think they can do a lot of things that are out there and it is much more important for me to see that they believe that they can do it and that they can see other women doing it. (Phantom, age 31).*

Perhaps because of the women's acceptance of their physicality, none of the women interviewed in this study saw age as a barrier to enjoying adventure recreation activities. This issue was very important to the older women interviewed and they saw themselves as playing an important role in inspiring others to participate, no matter what their age. Although Addie was aged in her mid-forties, she continued to work on outdoor education programs and regularly led expeditions. She found that her ability was often compared to her younger students. Norma had never considered her age as a deterrent to her participation in adventure recreation, even though she was in her early forties when she first became involved in the industry.

*Quite often the kids say "How old are you, Miss?" and ... I've found him [male co-worker] comparing me to the students, especially the female students, because I guess I outwalked them and outpaddled them and he found that quite amazing. (Addie, age 44).*

*I don't think age was a real problem at all or had any real bearing ... Maybe it would have been had I not been as fit or as energetic or as enthusiastic, but because I had all those characteristics I think my age became irrelevant. (Norma, age 49).*

In addition, Purple believed women demonstrating adventure skills removed the "bravado" element from the activity and reinforced the image of adventure recreation being accessible to most people. This was seen to be especially important in male dominated groups where women's ability was often negated.

*It's really good for them to see a woman doing stuff so that it takes away this bullshit bravado stuff that quite often goes along with single sex male groups as well so that they go... they don't go Oh a girl can do it therefore I can do it and sometimes we do, but there's more of the well you know it's just people doing people things, instead of male female... doing male roles, female roles. So I think it's equally important in both sexes. (Purple, age 32).*

*The deputy principal said that it would be really good if I did some climbing because the boys would be amazed to see a female climbing. It would be really good for them to see that image ... it can break the stereotype if they see more women ... doing something that might have been more male*

*dominated or even in their minds a male dominated activity. It is good for them to see women doing it because then it breaks their stereotyping and makes them more open-minded and maybe less paternalistic. (Phantom, age 31).*

*I think [adventure recreation] is one of the most powerful situations for people to experience themselves and to totally trust it to you to make it a safe experience for them. I think it's huge. I've seen a lot of men who would be quite sexist in lots of respects really show some respect [for women instructors] and ... not only do we women need that but they as men need that incredibly and I think it would be an incredible shame if women got put off being in this field. (Janc, age 30.)*

Women's participation in adventure recreation can be very powerful in breaking down gender stereotypes. Demonstrating that women are physically capable plays an important role in creating new images of women's ability. It was the impact this had on young women that was most important to several of the women interviewed.

*I see myself as a role model for girls in particular, and well, if she can do it, so can we. (Addie, age 46).*

In particular, the women recognised that their involvement in adventure recreation could provide the impetus for young women to pursue adventure recreation as a viable career option. The women in this study saw their position as role models for young women as vital to the continuation of women's involvement in the industry. Many of the women felt it was crucial that young women were encouraged to become involved and take their place as the next generation of women working outdoors.

*[For young] women it's always sort of something they don't consider necessarily [as a career option] unless they come from the country or have been exposed to it from a young age. (Kosci, age 27).*

*I have a lot of ex-students coming back, working on my programs with me and getting jobs in the industry. So therefore, because it started happening as a school-based program, those people who did it in school are starting to go into the outdoors and wanting to follow it as a career. (Pluto, age 50).*

*I'm finding more and more that some of the kids who were in your own groups ... when I first started are now coming back into outdoor education and recognising it for it's worth and going through and training and studying and getting into it. (Purple, age 30).*

*It's nice to demonstrate to those young teenage girls that this is an area of employment, or another aspect is this can demonstrate to you by role models that men and women can work in an industry and be equal and equally respected by their co-workers.*

*There are a lot of girls out there who wouldn't in the past have been exposed to this industry, wouldn't even know it existed ... [and] ... they're now exposed to something they think "Oh yeah I'd like to do that rather than maybe become a secretary" which is the stereotype when I left school. (Norma, age 49).*

Many of the women believed that, despite the gains that women had made within the adventure industry, there was still a long way to go. Addie stated that she was discussing issues of discrimination and differences in preferred leadership style twenty years ago. Others felt these issues would remain subject to ongoing debate, as it would be a very slow process to change the ingrained masculine values of the industry.

*It hasn't changed in the last twenty years that I know about, that's for sure. I can remember some of my female role models, they used to talk about those issues then and I'm still talking about them now. (Addie, age 46).*

*I think these issues will still be being raised ... but I mean I can always really keep encouraging more women ... I think it's something gradual you know, I don't think there'll ever be half and half. (Kosci, age 27).*

While recognising the difficulties of working within the adventure recreation industry, there were many feelings of optimism expressed regarding women's futures. The women interviewed in this study were struggling to have their voice heard and none could see an easy solution to what they acknowledged was a long-term problem. As stated by Addie, women had been trying for twenty years to give

voice to issues relating to their experience of employment in the adventure recreation industry. However, the women refused to accept the position that the culture of the industry would always remain hegemonically masculine. They perceived that, over the last decade, a great number of changes had occurred. An increasing number of women were entering the field and important changes were occurring in approach to programming and leadership style. In some sections of the industry, women were now gaining power through organisational management and self-employment, a position that previously had eluded them.

## **Overview**

This chapter explored how the women interviewed felt about their experience of working in the adventure recreation industry. Issues relating to discrimination, particularly discrimination based on assumptions made about women's physicality and ability, were examined. In addition, issues relating to the number of women employed within particular segments of the industry, and the lack of women's representation in industry associations was explored. Most importantly, the influence of women's presence on leadership models and their position as role models for others within the adventure recreation industry was discussed.

The final chapter of this study reflects on the issues raised by the women and explores developments and change within the adventure recreation industry. In particular, it explores the way in which attitudes and approaches to adventure recreation have influenced women's position within the industry.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **So ... you do this for a living? So what?**

*Your silence will not protect you.*

Audre Lorde, 1934-1992  
US feminist activist

#### **Introduction**

This final chapter reflects on the research questions and the many issues raised by the ten women in the course of their interviews. It restates the purpose of the study and summarises the approach taken to collect and analyse the data. The research objectives are reviewed and examined against relevant literature. Conclusions drawn from the study are discussed and several directions for future research are proposed. To conclude this study, a personal perspective on the research findings is presented.

The literature review identified several themes that were relevant to women working in adventure recreation. These themes included issues relating to gender and physicality, women and participation in physical activity, women and adventure recreation leadership and women and non-traditional employment. Feminist issues such as resistance and agency for women in adventure recreation were also discussed. This chapter compares the findings of this study with relevant literature and explores factors that have influenced the employment of women in adventure recreation.

## **Summary of Approach**

In order to capture the essence and gain an understanding of the women's stories, a qualitative approach to the study was chosen as the most appropriate research method. This study was approached from a phenomenological perspective, in that it was a study of "the structure and essence of experience" for a particular group of people (Patton, 1990, p. 69). In this study, the interpretive biographical method of "interpretive interactionism" (Denzin, 1989) was used as it focused on collecting life stories, and interpreting their meanings and placing them within a socio-cultural context (Creswell, 1998, p. 51).

Denzin's (1989) method of interpretive interactionism consists of six steps of framing, deconstruction, capture, bracketing, construction and contextualisation. In this study, the research questions were framed and, through a review of relevant literature, prior conceptions were critically analysed and deconstructed. The phenomena in question, the experiences of women working in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia, were captured through interview. In Chapters Five and Six of this study, these experiences were bracketed and their essential elements identified. This chapter constructs the interrelationship of the study findings and places them within socio-cultural contexts identified in the current literature. A story of women working outdoors fulfills Denzin's final stage of contextualisation.

## **Summary of Results**

This section represents the purpose of the study and revisits the study objectives and research questions. The findings of the study are examined against the research objectives. The emergent themes from the data are discussed in context with the relevant literature.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this study was to record and analyse the stories of ten women working in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia. There is very little written on women's experience of employment in the adventure recreation industry. Personal satisfaction, flexibility of working conditions, meeting new people and, of course, working outdoors rather than indoors, are often held up as compensation for the conditions of employment in the adventure recreation industry. These conditions include long hours, minimal financial reward and extended periods of time spent away from home. This study sought to examine the perceptions of working in the industry against its realities. Very little research has been done that considers the implications of the imbalance between perceptions of opportunity and excitement, with the reality of providing other people with adventure recreation experiences on a daily basis. In addition, this study explored what it meant to be a woman working in adventure recreation.



## ***Objectives of the Study***

Three research objectives were developed to achieve the purpose of the study. The research objectives and specific research questions are revisited to begin the process of construction (Denzin, 1989). The specific objectives of this study were:

1. to describe the realities of the working experiences of ten selected women employed in the adventure industry in Western Australia;
2. to explore the shared meanings held by this group of women about being a woman employed in the adventure recreation industry; and
3. to investigate issues currently raised within the context of women and non-traditional employment, and in particular, women working in the adventure recreation industry.

The specific research questions of the study were designed to meet the objectives of the study and fell into four general categories with several sub-questions in each category:

1. How did the women first become employed in the adventure recreation industry?  
*How did they get involved? How did they access training? How did their career paths develop?*
2. What attracted the women to work in adventure recreation?  
*What was it that initially attracted them to the industry? What did they see as the most attractive aspects of their employment? What made their job enjoyable?*
3. What was it like for the women to work in the adventure recreation industry?  
*What difficulties, if any, had they encountered? What was their job really like? Where did they work? How did their employment affect their personal and/or social lives? Did the financial rewards recompense the working conditions? Did they see themselves remaining in the industry long-term, and if not, why not?*
4. How did gender influence the women's experiences of working in adventure recreation?  
*Were there any specific issues or problems that arose from being a woman? Was gender-based discrimination an issue? Was their approach to*

*leadership supported within the industry? Did they see themselves as role models? What did they see as the future position of women in the adventure recreation industry?*

In the previous chapters, the specific findings relating to each of the sub-questions were addressed. In this section, each of the three research objectives is explored interdependently. Several of the issues raised within each of the objectives interrelate, especially those issues relating to perceptions of women's physicality and discriminatory practices.

***Objective One – To describe the realities of the working experiences of ten selected women employed in the adventure industry in Western Australia***

The women in this study told many stories of their working experiences in the adventure recreation industry. They spoke about how they became involved, what roles they took within the industry and most importantly, described their working conditions. There were similarities in the way women accessed employment and many of the stories they told of their working conditions shared common elements. The common features of the women's stories are further described and compared with the relevant literature.

All of the women in this study had an active childhood and participated in adventure recreation activities prior to seeking employment in the industry. Family and friends played an important role in introducing them to adventure recreation activities and encouraging them to continue. Opportunity and encouragement were identified in the literature as important factors that enabled women to become involved in physical activity.

Seraton (1999) found that many women soccer players had played soccer with boys in their childhood. They were actively encouraged by their fathers, brothers or friends to continue playing, even when these women reached adolescence and were under increasing pressure to conform to gender stereotypes. Similarly, in a study of women working in outdoor education in the United Kingdom, Allin (1998) found that all of the women were involved in sport or informal outdoor experiences at an early age. Many of these women reported that they had been encouraged to participate in physical activity by fathers, brothers or male playmates. In addition, Williams (1992) also reported that the ten women in her study of women's participation in outdoor adventure had an active childhood. The women in Williams' study stated that their outdoor experiences were important to them and believed their early experiences had resulted in them being more confident and self-assured as adults.

All of the women in the present study initially became involved in the industry as volunteers or trainee staff on minimal wages. The women accepted that working as a volunteer was part of the process of gaining employment. There seemed to be an expectation that individuals, particularly women, needed to establish their credibility as a competent instructor before they would be offered employment. This process of becoming competent took time and the women spent several years working as volunteers, completing training courses or gaining academic credentials before they were offered paid work in the adventure recreation industry.

Miranda and Yerkes (1987, p. 17) reported similar findings to the present study in relation to “professional preparation”. They reported that women spent much time gaining certified qualifications, voluntary leadership experience or on-the-job training. Almost two-thirds of the women in Miranda and Yerkes’ study had completed accredited outdoor leadership courses, with 45 per cent of the study sample having completed bachelors’ degrees in outdoor education or recreation. However, most felt that it was their volunteer work and on-the-job training that defined them as “professional” outdoor leaders.

When the women in this study did gain employment, they began to comprehend the realities of the adventure recreation industry and the demanding nature of the work. The women felt that many people outside of the industry held romantic notions regarding the perceived fun and excitement of working outdoors. In addition, the women felt this often devalued their career choice and were disappointed when people considered that they did not have a “serious” job. The women held a strong belief that it was only possible to understand the nature of employment in the adventure recreation industry by being involved in it.

The women recognised that many programs offered within the adventure recreation industry operated at basic levels, yet there were inherent risks involved in any physically active program, particularly programs conducted in natural environments. In outdoor settings, a high level of responsibility was placed on the women, as program instructors or facilitators, to safeguard participants’ safety. The women were expected to hold current qualifications and to continue to upgrade skills and

training. Gaining qualifications and undertaking training was often self-funded or was conducted “on-the-job”. The expectation of employment agencies that the women would continue to train and gain accredited qualifications meant that many were often over-qualified for the positions available.

The women in this study reported that most positions within the industry required them to act in very basic instructional roles. The women did not always enjoy those positions, as the personal challenge they sought in their working life was not always present in lower level roles. In other situations, such as leading expeditions in wilderness environments, the responsibilities for other people’s safety placed on instructors, and the expectation that they would be able to manage any situation that occurred, meant that levels of personal challenge were extremely high. Leading expedition programs was physically and emotionally draining. All of the women sought to find, within their working lives, a balance of professional comfort and personal challenge.

The physical and emotional demands of the industry were well recognised. The high rate of staff turnover within the industry was acknowledged. This situation was exacerbated by a lack of adequate financial reward (Edwards & Gray, 1998). All of the women had experienced situations within the industry where they worked long hours and were poorly paid for the time worked. In addition, as much of the work was seasonal, it was difficult to secure regular employment. As a result, many of the women found they worked almost non-stop during the busy season, only taking time out, away from the field, during the quieter months of the year. Those women

employed within the school system and those women who ran their own businesses, reported higher levels of financial reward and security.

In a study of 130 North American women outdoor leaders, the low pay levels in the industry shocked Miranda and Yerkes (1986). They found it was only women who were employed within universities or in management positions in large school districts who were paid a commensurate salary. Very few women in their study received payment that reflected the level of responsibility, long hours and time spent away from home inherent in adventure recreation employment.

Employment in the adventure recreation industry required the women to spend long periods of time away from home. This had a negative impact on many of the women's personal and social lives. The women had difficulty maintaining intimate relationships and friendships with people outside of the adventure recreation industry. As a result, many of the women sought social interaction within the industry, forming strong friendships and personal relationships with co-workers or colleagues. While they appreciated the friendships they developed, some of the women described the industry as "insular". They raised concerns that some adventure recreation instructors developed a very narrow view of the world. The women felt it was important for all adventure recreation instructors and program facilitators to maintain regular contact with people outside of their working environment in order to maintain a healthy life perspective.

In the long term, the women did not view hands-on instruction in the field as a viable career option. Short-term employment as an adventure recreation instructor was seen as a rewarding career choice for women, but over time, the physical and emotional demands of the industry took their toll. Unless the women were able to move into management, administrative or training roles, they had little choice but to leave the industry. Most of the women in this study had successfully negotiated positions in management and training and were spending less time, hands-on, in the field.

There is very little in the literature to support the realities of working in adventure recreation as reported by the women in this study. Studies have been conducted on shiftworkers in other industries (Rowland, 1982; Hannaford, 1982). These studies on shiftwork reported similar issues to this study: social dislocation; difficult conditions of service; and the problems that arose in personal relationships due to time spent apart.

The primary difference in the findings of these studies was the financial reward gained from working shifts. Shiftworkers reported that the extra income earned compensated for the difficult working conditions and the strain placed on family and social relationships (Hannaford, 1982). This was not the case in the adventure recreation industry. The women in this study cited lack of financial security as one of the primary reasons people left the adventure recreation industry.

Edwards and Gray (1998) investigated the reasons for high levels of “burnout” in the Australian outdoor education profession. They suggested there were several

measures that could be implemented by employers to counteract it. These measures included giving employees a sense of security and success, financial reward, and balance between time working and time off. They also recognised the importance of personal, social, family and professional areas within employees' personal lives influenced the quality of their working life (Edwards & Gray, 1998, pp. 43-44). An understanding of the importance of these measures for long-term employee health is not currently accepted within the local adventure recreation industry. The Australian industry continues to be predominantly staffed by "young single people who are underpaid and overworked" (Edwards & Gray, 1998, p. 37).

One of the most important findings by Miranda and Yerkes (1986, 1987) was that there was no established forum for women in which they could raise issues about employment conditions. This situation is the same for women in Western Australia in the 1990s. Women have very few opportunities to discuss employment or other concerns regarding the Western Australia adventure recreation industry. In addition, it appears there was a general reluctance by the women interviewed, and by others within the adventure recreation industry, to discuss how the issues, such as long hours and low pay, might be overcome. As a result, these employment conditions are accepted without challenge.

Some aspects of employment, such as seasonal employment, are very difficult to change. However, it is only through the recent publication of selected articles and conference presentations that discuss the problems of balancing an outdoor career and a home life, that employment conditions within the industry are beginning to be



openly discussed (Carter, 1999; Edwards & Gray, 1998; McNaughton, 1998). The problem of "burnout" within the adventure recreation industry, caused in part by less than equitable employment conditions and minimal financial reward for time spent on the job, is beginning to receive public attention. It is only by acknowledging that the working conditions within the industry are less than optimal, and discussing the problems identified, that strategies can be introduced to change the current reality of working in adventure recreation.

The positive realities of employment in adventure recreation include working outdoors in diverse environments with high levels of social contact and personal challenge. Employment in this industry enabled the women to continue to enjoy being physical and maintaining involvement in outdoor activities that many of the women began at a young age. However, few people outside of the adventure recreation industry saw beyond the positive aspects of working outdoors and, therefore did not understand the harsh realities of employment in adventure recreation.

All of the women in this study had, at some time, worked long hours, spent time away from home and foregone regular social and family life in order to stay employed within the adventure recreation industry. They accepted the demands and responsibilities placed upon them for ensuring other people's safety, and they did so for very little financial reward. The women reported that money was not the most important aspect of their employment. They believed there were many more

important areas of job satisfaction and reward they could gain from employment in adventure recreation.

***Objective Two – To explore the shared meanings held by this group of women about being a woman employed in the adventure recreation industry.***

The purpose of this objective was to identify what the women felt was important to them, and discover the meanings that the women held about their employment in adventure recreation. I then sought to explore how these meanings influenced the women's employment, particularly how the shared meanings influenced the way in which they worked within the adventure recreation industry.

Three dominant themes emerged from the interviews. The first two related to the natural environment and were interrelated. There was a strong ethic of environmental awareness and many women expressed their feeling of connection to the natural environment. Secondly, all of the women saw the potential of the outdoor environment to be a learning place, with adventure recreation activities being the tools that enabled learning to take place.

The third theme was much more personal. It related to how they, as women, were perceived when they entered the male dominated environment of the outdoors. Of greater importance than this, were the meanings the women attached to their experience in the outdoors and how they perceived themselves. Traditional meanings cast the outdoors as a place for brave men whose purpose was to tame the environment and develop strength through overcoming hardship (Marsh & Richards,

1989; Messner, 1992). As a consequence, many of the women spoke of the discrimination they faced when they entered this traditionally male domain.

Much discrimination within the adventure recreation industry was not overt, but influenced by traditional stereotypes and attitudes imbedded in the image of adventure recreation. Marsh and Richards (1989, p. 120) stated that in traditional programs such as Outward Bound, there was an historical emphasis on developing masculine characteristics in order to make "men out of boys". Due to increasing participation by women and a change in emphasis to psychological rather than physiological development, there was an increasing recognition of the inappropriateness of the "macho" imagery attached to adventure recreation. Bell (1997, p. 147) stated that accounts of the first women to participate in Outward Bound courses credit women with "defusing dominant masculine behaviours and attitudes". However, Marsh and Richards (1989) found that participation in an Outward Bound program was more likely to enhance the masculine characteristics of initiative, risk taking and determination rather than developing feminine characteristics of cooperation, communication and consideration for others in both male and female participants.

Several of the women in this study discussed the problems of negotiating stereotypes of gendered behaviour. In particular, they discussed the perception that because they chose to work in the outdoors, they were more masculine than feminine in character. The women in this study spoke of resisting and rejecting traditional notions that successful participation in adventure recreation activities were necessarily imbedded

with masculine characteristics and behaviours. The women were not prepared to accept that characteristics such as confidence, initiative and risk taking were naturally masculine traits, any more than communication and cooperation were the natural domain of women.

From another perspective, the most obvious area of gender-based discrimination for the women in this study was found in perceptions held of women's physicality. The women stated that they were perceived to be less physically strong, less capable and less skilled than their male counterparts. This perception was based on historically accepted socio-cultural stereotypes; it was not based on the physical evidence of women's ability. Equally, several women stated that women who were skilled in adventure recreation activities were labeled as "tough" or "butch".

This finding was supported by a study that investigated the existence of stereotypes, prejudices and barriers for women physical educators (Harris & Griffin, 1997). Women physical educators were perceived to be more masculine and aggressive than other women and were often labeled as lesbian. Wearing (1998, p. 181) confirmed that male dominated discourse has defined the female body as passive and inferior. However, Bryson (1994, p. 48) stated that many women felt a desire to reclaim physical activity for women so that "enjoyment, sense of achievement and physical benefits can be maintained in a manner that does not contribute to the oppression of any non-dominant group".

Several of the women in this study felt very strongly about their position as agents in changing traditional views of women's physicality. They expressed their belief in their ability. They rejected the stereotypical assumption of the male adventurer as naturally superior. In a study of women working in outdoor education in the United Kingdom, Allin (1998) found that these women were developing new relationships with their bodies and body image. These women were redefining physicality in their terms, with a greater emphasis on ability and achievement than on strength and power. Similarly, Kiewa (1997) had found that women reported a higher level of acceptance of their body image and physicality when they considered factors such as competence and ability. The women in this study enjoyed the challenge and the physicality of adventure recreation and were eager to establish a place as capable women in the outdoors.

Traditional literature on adventure recreation suggests that the primary motivator for seeking adventure was risk taking, with climbers seeking "the opportunity to express control over their lives and the immediate situation" (Ewert, 1989, p. 3). Others claim that adventure "speaks of beginning, boldness and power" (Quinn, 1990, p. 145). These observations perpetuate the myths of masculine power and may be true in the traditional sense of adventure and conquest. Women do undertake admirable feats requiring strength and courage. Often their motivation for embarking on adventure has little to do with boldness and power. Pam Oliver, in a team of twenty women, successfully trekked to the North Pole in 1997. When asked why she would undertake such an adventure, Oliver replied, "I liked the idea of the team. Step by step it was a challenge" (Hackforth-Jones, 1999, p. 36).

The women in this study reported that the attraction of the adventure recreation industry was having the opportunity to face challenges. The challenges they sought were personal and professional, rather than the traditional adventure challenge of conquering the environment. One of the important aspects of the attraction was being in the outdoors, of gaining spiritual and emotional fulfillment from interactions with nature. Many of the women reported that they found being outdoors was a spiritual experience. They found solace and felt most at peace in the outdoors. This finding is reflective of a study of six women who participated in a five-day wilderness experience (Fox, 1998). Feelings of inner peace, elation, calm and connectedness to the environment were reported by all of the women in Fox's study.

The respect for nature and a wareness of environmental ethics held by the women in this study influenced the way they interacted with the natural environment. The women viewed the natural environment as a place to be nurtured, which in turn would nurture them. This study did not set out to compare men's and women's experiences, but there was strong feeling expressed by the women that they viewed their interactions with nature differently from their male counterparts.

The emerging field of ecofeminism makes much of connections between women and nature. However, like feminist theory in general, ecofeminist theory is still being debated (e.g. Fox, 1997; Russell & Bell, 1996; Tong, 1998). I have a personal concern that some ecofeminist theories place too much emphasis on the link between all forms of human oppression and oppression of nature and the assumed spiritual

connection between women and the natural environment (see Tong, 1998). However, ecofeminist theory supports the belief expressed by the women in this study that women tend to interact with nature through an ethic of care rather than domination.

On a global level, there is a call for a change in traditional approaches to environmental issues within the adventure recreation industry. This call asks that we work as “Humans with Nature”, to “co-exist in harmony, where neither suffers at the expense of the other” (Priest & Gass, 1997, p. 2). The outdoors does not have to be a competitive arena nor an environment to be conquered with military precision. Increasing numbers of people are venturing into the outdoors and the impact of an antagonistic approach to the natural environment has become evident (Priest & Gass, 1997). The women in this study regarded environmental destruction and the possibility of physical and emotional injury to adventure recreation participants as inappropriate and unnecessary.

An important aspect of employment for many of the women was the opportunity to establish careful interactions with nature. In addition, employment in adventure recreation created opportunities for the women to impart knowledge in minimal impact techniques, and enable participants in adventure recreation programs to develop an appreciation of the natural environment. Many of the women in this study rejected traditional notions that personal development occurred when adventure recreation participants endured hardship and difficult environments

(Marsh & Richards, 1989). They believed it was more important for participants to learn how to be comfortable outdoors.

The findings of the present study are consistent with findings of the study conducted by Miranda and Yerkes (1986). Those women employed as outdoor leaders ranked the importance of ten different motivators for seeking employment in adventure recreation. The three highest ranking motivators selected by these women were sharing and teaching skills; enjoying being outdoors; and wanting to teach values that cherish nature (Miranda & Yerkes, 1986, p. 15).

Many of the women in this present study expressed the opinion that changing attitudes towards women's physicality, and enabling people to gain an appreciation of the natural environment, were imperative. The women saw the outdoors as a place for fun and enjoyment. They believed that they had an important role to play in imparting knowledge and developing skills so that people would feel comfortable in the outdoors. Further, the women believed that establishing comfort outdoors was a critical factor, as only when people were comfortable in the outdoors were they receptive to learning. The women believed that participation in adventure recreation offered individuals opportunities to learn new skills and to learn about themselves.

***Objective Three – To investigate issues currently raised within the context of women and non-traditional employment, and in particular, women working in the adventure recreation industry.***

This objective sought to investigate women's position within non-traditional employment, in particular, in adventure recreation. Over the past thirty years,



feminist literature has comprehensively explored work and workplace issues for women (e.g. Bradley, 1989; Tong, 1998). With the advent of equal opportunity legislation, it would be pleasing to believe that gender-based discrimination no longer exists in the workplace. However, this is not the case (Still, 1997). Gender-based discrimination continues to be an issue for women in the workplace, particularly in male dominated areas such as sport and science (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Wertheim, 1995).

Women's visibility in non-traditional areas of employment is limited, particularly in such male dominated industries as adventure recreation. Employment opportunities for women in adventure recreation reflect the similar patterns of constraint that exist in other sectors of the workforce. Domestic responsibility, the perpetuation of job market segmentation on gender lines, and a lack of recognition of feminist management methods all contribute to the continued lower status of women in the workplace (Wearing, 1996).

Domestic responsibility was an issue for all of the women in this study, but of much greater importance for some women than others. Five of the women in this study were single and none of these women had children. The literature on women in the outdoors shows a pattern of participation in adventure recreation activities by predominantly single women (Kiewa, McIntyre & Little, 1995; Miranda & Yerkes, 1986; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985). However, two of the women in this study were married with young children. Several of the other women in this study did not

believe it would be possible for them to combine motherhood and a hands-on role within the adventure recreation industry.

The two women with young children spoke at length of the difficulty of combining their career aspirations with motherhood. The ideological view of motherhood demands that a “good” mother is unselfish, available to her child/ren at all times and puts her child/ren’s needs before her own (Wearing, 1996, p. 118). This caused a dilemma for both of these women. They recognised their own internal struggle to deal with societal expectations of motherhood and their personal expectations of themselves and their career. McKenna (1997) proposed that this situation was not unusual. Many women were facing similar dilemmas as they struggled with the question of how to combine motherhood and domestic responsibility with their career aspirations.

Sharpe (1994) discussed the continuing problem of combining motherhood and work. She argued that this dilemma was rooted in the gendered division of labour and the assumption that it was the women’s role to sacrifice their career to assume primary responsibility for the family. This argument was based on the assumption that because women bore children, they were best suited to raise them. It would appear that issues of women’s physicality and biology underpin many of the assumptions made about women in the workplace.

The women in this study reported that instances of discrimination against women employed in the adventure recreation industry were most often related to issues of

physicality. They were viewed as less proficient in technical skills and lacking in physical strength. Sharpe (1994) stated that the argument that women are less technically adept or able to cope with “heavy” work was used to perpetuate the gendered division of labour. Young women were often steered toward employment in the service industries and dissuaded from entering careers that involved physical exertion or required technical skill.

Studies by Loeffler (1995) and Morse (1997) suggested that opportunities for women’s employment in adventure recreation were severely hampered by limited exposure to the technical skills required. The perception that women lacked experience in skills such as rope handling or boating, and had little understanding of mechanics, was perceived as a serious constraint to women’s employability. In addition, expectations of high levels of technical competency were male-driven, so that when women were measured against these standards, they often failed to meet male-defined criteria (Loeffler, 1995; Green, 1994).

The women in this study spoke of the difficulty they had experienced in establishing their credibility as competent adventure recreation instructors. The failure to meet male-defined standards initially eroded the confidence of some of the women. They became hesitant to accept responsibility beyond their self-perceived levels of competency. These women compensated for their lack of self-confidence by undertaking extensive accredited training and acquiring external qualifications that proved their ability. Loeffler (1996) found that the perceptions held by women of being less competent and thus, less able to handle the physical demands of the job,

were serious constraints to women's career development within the adventure recreation industry.

The women interviewed in this study believed that they had the skill competency and physical ability required for employment in adventure recreation. Several women stated that the technical skills required for employment were often basic and they believed that they were more than capable of meeting the physical demands of the industry. Brookes (1997, p. 43) found that much of the imagery attached to adventure recreation employment is fiction and based on "romanticism, domination of nature, or the myth of the bushman". As such, many of the meanings attached to the adventure recreation industry, particularly those that conjure images of strength, bravery and danger in the wilderness, are steeped in mythology and not based in reality.

The women in the present study reported that there was a continuing perception that women who did succeed within the adventure recreation industry were "masculine". A study of women park rangers in Australia supported the notion that in order to succeed in the outdoors, women must adopt masculine behaviours (Black & Davidson, 1998). They found that women who gained employment in "male identified positions" adopted the "male normative role" in order to survive (Black & Davidson, 1998, p. 15). The male culture of park rangers refused to acknowledge women's contribution unless they contributed in male-defined ways. Women in non-traditional employment are reported to face typecasting, discrimination, lack of female support and sexual harassment.

Loeffler (1996) found that the primary constraints identified by women, in her study of adventure education professionals in North America, was the “old boys network” and the difficulties women encountered in trying to break into the industry. Women felt that there was discrimination in hiring and training as they were excluded from informal male networks. To add a further degree of difficulty, very few women were able to “get in on the ground floor” of organisations instituted in the 1970s and 1980s (Loeffler, 1996; Miranda & Yerkes, 1987). Consequently, few women held key positions in established adventure recreation organisations from which they could influence policy and decision-making that takes into account women’s needs in the outdoors.

These findings were not as apparent in this study and perhaps the small size of the local industry has influenced women’s position and status. The women interviewed in this study were, in many ways, an unusual group. They had managed to survive in a working environment that is frequently described as masculine and male dominated (Allin, 1998; Henderson, 1992b; Humberstone, 1994, 1996; Koesler, 1993; Loeffler, 1995, 1996). Despite women being a minority within the industry, they have managed to overcome displays of discrimination and discriminatory practices. Most of the women in this study were involved at a management or supervisory level in the organisations where they worked. They held positions of relative power within their employment sphere and were able to influence organisational decision-making.

The women in this study believed that the adventure recreation workplace was changing. In particular, they felt that the increasing number of women entering the adventure recreation industry challenged traditional masculine practices and attitudes. They suggested that this was evident in the adoption of new leadership styles. Adventure recreation programming was changing focus, moving away from an emphasis on the development of technical skills. The emphasis was more on adventure recreation as a learning tool for personal and social development and environmental awareness. This move away from traditional masculinist practices in adventure recreation programming was, in turn, changing the way in which the industry was being managed.

As women moved into management positions or set up their own businesses, they were able to influence organisational culture in these agencies. This has played a major role in creating a climate of acceptance for women's employment. Six of the women in this study held management positions with a degree of control over who they employed. These women reported that they consciously employed as many other women as possible. In essence, the women in this study were creating a new culture in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry that recognised feminist management styles, as they were no longer bound by traditional beliefs and practices. The feminist management values of collaboration and alliances identified by Chorn (1995) were becoming accepted within the Western Australian adventure recreation industry.

It was noted, by the women in this study, that much of this change was occurring within the education sector of the industry, an area that many of the women felt was more supportive of women taking leadership roles. This view appears to contradict Kenway and Willis (1997), who argued that masculinist cultures remain well entrenched within the Australian school system. However, many of the women in the present study worked within the private girls' schools system. They perceived that the culture of girls' schools was more accepting of their presence and management style.

Although there has been some change, women remained a notable minority within industry representative groups in Western Australia. Many of the women in this study were reluctant to become involved in industry politics. They perceived industry committees to be more focused on power and politics than achieving results. Henderson and Bialeschki (1991, pp. 284-285) suggested that the lack of women's presence within general leisure industry administration could be the result of an established mindset which suggests that appropriate female behaviour "does not result in assuming traditional roles of asserting authority and power".

The women in this study spoke of their experiences within industry representative groups and their reluctance to remain involved. When the women were involved, they often found themselves as the sole women present and struggled to be heard. One woman reported that she had found her involvement with a particular industry association to be a demoralising experience, as her input was often ignored or trivialised. The lack of female support within industry associations made it very

difficult for women to establish a sense of personal power or feel valued within that environment. Humberstone (1996, p. 47) argued that the under representation of women at higher levels of the adventure recreation industry continued because "many women have experienced oppression rather than empowerment in situations where men have predominated". The Western Australian industry appears to support this argument. Several of the women in this study reported that they chose to protect themselves from possible disempowerment by remaining outside of industry associations.

One of the primary reasons expressed by the women in this study for lack of involvement in this level of the industry was lack of access to role models and mentors. Similarly, in the traditionally masculine science professions, Wertheim (1995) stated lack of access to a mentor could seriously restrict a young scientist's career. Gaining access to a mentor was a critical issue for women in career advancement.

Many of the women in this study found themselves taking on active roles as mentors. They believed that their presence and support might assist young women to negotiate the identified barriers to women's involvement in the adventure recreation industry. All of the women recognised that the difficulties associated with employment in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry were not new. They suggested no easy solutions to the problems identified for women in non-traditional employment such as the adventure recreation industry. They hoped that with continuing change within the industry, and increased recognition and support for women, more young



women will be able to transcend many of the identified constraints to employment and find their way within the adventure recreation industry.

### **Research Conclusions and Implications**

This study reported on women's experiences of working in adventure recreation. Many of the findings of this study were not new. Many similar findings were reported in studies of women in sport and women working in other non-traditional areas of employment. However, placing these findings within the context of the adventure recreation industry, gives a new perspective to the experience of women's employment in a physically challenging, non-traditional industry.

The objectives of this study identified three major areas of inquiry: the realities of working in adventure recreation; the meanings given to their experience by women working in adventure recreation; and the issues relating to women working in non-traditional areas, in particular, adventure recreation. The principal findings of this study relate to difficulties in meeting the physical and emotional demands of working in adventure recreation. Lack of recognition of the demands placed on adventure recreation employees was a major area of concern. Many of the women in this study felt that the perception that their job was easy and enjoyable did not meet the reality of their working life. Many of the women endeavoured to juggle the demands of their professional and personal lives, often to the detriment of social and family interactions.

Money, or the lack of adequate financial remuneration, was raised as an issue. The women felt that the remuneration offered by the industry was not sufficient to compensate for the long hours, the level of responsibility demanded and the level of training required to attain management or administrative positions within the industry. However, the positive aspects of working in the industry, such as being in the outdoors, the diverse range of opportunities offered for personal challenge and flexibility in working arrangements more than compensated for lack of financial reward.

Many of the women in this study acknowledged a close affinity with the natural environment and expressed their enjoyment of being active outdoors. They upheld the belief that participation in adventure recreation activities provided many opportunities for learning. Sharing their knowledge of technical skills and demonstrating to other people how to appreciate the natural environment and be comfortable outdoors, were major factors in career satisfaction. Creating safe and comfortable environments where people were willing and able to learn was a professional challenge that was enjoyed by all of the women in this study.

All the women in this study began their involvement in physical activity at a young age. All were encouraged by family or friends to continue their involvement into their adult lives. Despite this encouragement, all of the women experienced some form of gender-based discrimination during their adventure recreation career. Most discrimination was based on assumptions relating to their physicality, in particular, an assumed lack of physical strength or technical ability.

The adventure recreation industry has traditionally adopted male-defined attitudes and practices. As a result, women strove to gain recognition and acceptance within the adventure recreation industry as women. Within the adventure recreation workplace, gender-based discrimination was often tolerated and seldom challenged by the women in this study. It was perceived by many of the women that they had no alternative but to accept the situation and do the best they could to demonstrate their ability and establish credibility as competent adventure recreation instructors. Many of the women were highly qualified in technical skills and had gained academic credentials in physical education and/or outdoor pursuits.

Many of the women in this study challenged traditional models of hierarchical adventure recreation leadership. They were keen to implement new models of leadership based on feminine values of cooperation and communication. The women saw their approach as people-centred and focused on enjoying the outdoor environment rather than attempting to conquer it by proving their courage and skill.

The level of gender-based discrimination experienced by the women was often relative to the level of support they received from co-workers, especially male co-workers. It would appear from the findings of this study that, despite women's ability, the predominance of masculine values within the adventure recreation industry has made it difficult for women to attain positions of power and influence.

It is recognised that the position for women within the adventure recreation industry is changing. As more women enter the adventure recreation workplace, traditional values are being challenged. The women in this study were moving into managerial and administrative positions and were gaining the power to create new opportunities and workplace environments that meet the needs of women.

### **Future Research Directions**

This is the first study to explore working conditions for women in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry. The findings of this study suggest several avenues for further research. These avenues fall into two major categories:

- Working conditions in the adventure recreation industry; and
- Gender and its influence on involvement in the adventure recreation industry.

The working conditions of the adventure recreation industry demand immediate attention. The reality of working in adventure recreation, and the difficulties that result from a demanding workload and lack of recognition of the level of responsibility required, are well documented in this study. Occupational safety and health legislation is well entrenched for employees in many industries but, as yet, the adventure recreation industry has not chosen to pursue this issue or adopt standard occupational safety and health practices to protect employees. It is reasonable to assume that long hours and excessive workloads will have a negative impact on participant and employee safety, yet this issue has received scant attention from the adventure recreation industry.

From another perspective, research into employee remuneration and benefits is long overdue. Several of the women in this study expressed concern that, apart from issues relating to minimum legal pay scales, essential benefits such as workers' compensation and superannuation were not always included in their employment agreements. It may be that there is limited understanding of employer responsibilities with respect to industrial relations issues. The legal (and moral) implications of this situation need to be addressed.

Apart from safety and financial issues, several gender issues within the adventure recreation industry deserve attention. There is limited recognition of women's contribution to the adventure recreation industry and limited knowledge of their position within the industry. This study reported that the education and training sectors of the adventure recreation industry appeared to be more supportive of women's involvement. It could be useful to investigate gender ratios at different levels of responsibility and across different sectors of the industry to establish a pattern of women's employment.

In addition, there is an important link between feminist literature and the experiences of young women, that is yet to be explored. There is little understanding of the role adventurous women play as role models for younger women and their decisions to enter into non-traditional areas of employment such as adventure recreation. It could also be constructive to further explore the encouragement that women received from family and friends, particularly male family and friends, to pursue adventurous

activities. This may become an area for further study as more young women enter the adventure recreation industry.

In addition, it may be useful to explore the attitudes and approach to adventure recreation programming in place across the industry. Findings of such a study may correlate to gender ratios in particular sectors of the industry. It could be interesting to explore whether traditional attitudes and approaches are entrenched in certain sectors of the adventure recreation industry or if change in approach is occurring across the industry as a whole.

There is one further issue that deserves attention. Early reports of women's involvement in physical activity credited the private girls' school system with introducing many young women to sport and other physically active pursuits. Five of the ten women in this study attended private girls' schools. In addition, almost all of the women in this study worked with private girls' schools at some time. It is proposed that women's involvement in adventure recreation deserves investigation as not only a gender issue, but also a matter of class and exposure to opportunity.

This last issue raises several further questions. All of the women in this study were of white European backgrounds. Several authors have discussed the problems faced by women of colour and lower socio-economic status in accessing adventure recreation opportunities (e.g. Humberstone, 1994; Pottinger, 1994; Roberts & Drogin, 1996). It would appear that access to adventure recreation is often limited to members of the white middle-class. The previous authors have begun to explore

issues of access to adventure recreation and their relationship to ethnicity and class in the United Kingdom and North America. Perhaps it is time that we began to do the same in Australia.

This study reported on a great number of perceived changes that were currently occurring for women within the adventure recreation industry. Many of these changes were initiated during the past decade. It is suggested that this study be replicated in five years time to evaluate the process of change and reassess the position of women in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry.

It was also noted that many of the issues raised in the study related to general working conditions within the adventure recreation industry. This study focused on the Western Australian adventure recreation industry and it is not known whether these findings reflect the employment conditions in other Australian states. In addition, it is possible that many of the findings of this study would influence men's employment. It would be useful to investigate masculine perspectives of employment to establish men's position within the adventure recreation industry.

### **A Personal Perspective on the Research Findings**

From a personal perspective, I empathise with the position of the women interviewed in this study. I understand the problems associated with spending long periods of time away from home, especially the difficulty in maintaining a relationship with a partner who is not involved in the industry. In my situation, I was lucky. My partner

had worked as an outdoor instructor and camp-leader during his university years. He had also worked with me for two years when we first set up our adventure recreation business and, therefore, he had an appreciation of the demands of my chosen career. However, when he changed career path and entered into full-time employment with a training company, the strain of maintaining a relationship with an often absent partner began to show.

In addition, the business I operated relied heavily on seasonal work contracts as a primary source of income. Maintaining a regular income during the quieter months was often difficult. My decision to close down the business was precipitated by financial concerns and deterioration in my physical ability. I had become ill and, even though I recuperated physically, I could not cope any longer with the demands of regularly working outdoors. In addition, I was tired of constantly travelling. I wanted to spend time at home and pursue other interests.

Now that I have distanced myself from that experience, I realise that I was severely “burnt out” and was not coping well with the emotional demands of the industry. What I can also see, with the gift of hindsight, is that I had little support from the industry itself. There was no public acknowledgement of the difficulties encountered by adventure recreation employees and no forum for discussion of those issues.

One of the most surprising personal findings of this study was that I was not alone. I was not the only woman frustrated with the realisation that even if I did speak about my concerns, no-one wanted to hear. Very few of the women involved in this study



had examined the reality of their employment conditions, except on a very superficial level. The women were very aware of the difficulties they encountered but few believed they had the power to change their working conditions. They had resigned themselves to the status quo.

Despite this resignation, there was optimism. Positive shifts in women's acceptance in the Western Australian adventure recreation industry have occurred. In the first series of interviews conducted in early 1998, several women expressed concern that the number of young women entering the industry had declined. They were concerned that when they left active fieldwork, the pool of employable women instructors would be very small. When the second series of interviews was conducted in early 1999, that situation had changed dramatically. Several women stated that the "flood" of young women seeking employment in the field had allayed their concerns. There was optimism that the number of employable women was increasing and that a "second generation" of Western Australian women would move into their positions.

During the year between the first and second series of interviews, a number of significant events had occurred. Several of the women interviewed were promoted into managerial or administrative positions within their organisations, and for the first time in their adventure recreation careers, were able to influence decision-making. These women were making a conscious effort to employ more women and encourage younger women to seek training and employment in the industry.

In addition, an international adventure therapy conference was held in Perth in mid-1998 and a national outdoor education conference in early 1999. These conferences made new information available, encouraging debate on accepted practices and attitudes. More importantly, the attendance by adventure recreation professionals from around the world opened the Western Australian adventure recreation industry to scrutiny.

Many questions were raised about how the adventure recreation industry operated and the direction in which it was heading. To add to the debate on industry practice, there is a national movement being facilitated through the Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia to introduce nationally recognised accredited training. This move is forcing the local industry to examine its operations and prepare itself for the eventual introduction of accredited instructor qualifications and the adoption of formalised operating practices.

Women's position within the Western Australian adventure recreation industry has reached a critical point. This study found that few women were active and vocal members of industry associations. Many women reported that they were reluctant to involve themselves in the industry at that level. I understand their position because I am familiar with almost all of the current industry associations and experienced the frustration and disappointment expressed by the women in this study.

Recently, I was asked to join the committee of a new state peak body that is forming through the merger of several smaller organisations. My first reaction was to refuse.

My refusal was a reaction to past experience and I was seeking to protect myself from any further disappointment and frustration. This may be a safe position but it was not a progressive one. Only by women having the courage to face their concerns and be counted amongst industry leaders will we make our presence known.

It is time to raise the issues of employment conditions and discrimination in the adventure recreation workplace. Women in the adventure recreation industry in Western Australia need to find their voice. We will only do that through initiating networks and forums that support women and enable open discussion to occur.

Women cannot continue to stay on the fringes of the adventure recreation industry. There is too much change occurring within industry structure and without women's input, our voice will not be heard. Western Australian women must assume responsibility and make a contribution to industry associations. We must become visibly proactive if we want to initiate change.

## A Story

It was a long walk to the top of the cliff but it was worth the effort. Being here means that I have an unobstructed view to the coast. I know that some people would think it crazy for a woman to walk up here on her own but the view is beautiful and I need some time on my own. Here seems the perfect place. There is something special about being on my own in a wild place, watching the birds soar and looking down on the land below.

It was a hard week. There were too many students, with too little assistance from the school staff who came along. Why do people think I have an easy job? It only looks easy to them because I know what I'm doing. I think most people forget how much preparation goes into organising a week away on a school camp. In the last few weeks, I had so many meetings with school staff, trying to get them organised. It might have been okay if I hadn't had to run four other programs in the last month. Trying to return calls on the mobile phone while you are out bush is just too hard.

I wish the students had been more organised. I tried to arrange to come into the school and do some basic training before the students came away – even just in how to put up a tent. I was told that they couldn't afford it, it wasn't necessary and everything would be organised. Setting up camp could have been a nightmare because none of the students knew what to do and the school's staff wasn't much better. At least the two freelance adventure staff I brought down with me were used to the situation and knew how to handle it. They were a great help. I don't know

how I would have made it through the week without them. Making sure everybody's comfortable and keeping everybody safe during a myriad of activities takes a lot of energy. The school's staff was complaining they were tired by the middle of the week. We didn't have time to be tired. It wasn't the school staff who organised getting the canoes off the river or carried all the gear to set up the climbing site. It certainly wasn't they who went looking for the three kids who got lost because they had an argument over which way was North. At least the students were appreciative when I found them and brought them back to camp in time for dinner.

It's such a beautiful view from here. I wish I had time just to sit with the students and let them experience this. Instead, the school principal wanted to make sure everybody was always occupied, so this week was jam-packed with bushwalking, abseiling, climbing, caving and canoeing. Learning how to cook on a fuel stove and survive without a television was a big enough challenge for most of the students. I hope they got something out of it because I'm exhausted. They were laughing and joking about their week in the bush as they got on the bus to go home so I suppose that makes it all worthwhile.

It is a good experience for the students, or at least, I try to make sure that it is. I really want them to enjoy it because it might encourage them to want to keep going outdoors as they get older. More importantly, I hope they learn to appreciate how beautiful the natural environment is and want to protect it. I know the trips I took with my family when I was young played a huge part in getting me interested in working outdoors. We did really good stuff like go skiing in winter. As I got older,

going surfing or camping was a great excuse to hang out with your friends. We had lots of fun. It's a shame it's not quite the same for me now that I do it for a living.

I don't know how women with a family do this for a living and stay sane. I don't have to report to anyone when I get home. I can just take a long bath and not talk to anyone else until I have to, though I know there will be phone calls to return and it's only two days before I start the next five-day program. The next one is a corporate group - all senior managers and all men. I will have to prepare myself for the "What's a woman doing here" jokes even though I should be used to them by now. At least I'll be working with Tony. He's a good operator and won't let those kind of jokes go on for too long. I try and laugh it off but that just seems to encourage some of them. I know I can do everything I need to so the boys just have to get used to being led by a woman.

I can always look forward to the following program. The next one is a social group canoeing on the river for a weekend and there will be more women participants. I'll be working with Jill and it'll be good to catch up. Hopefully having more women along will mean a change in pace and we can have some fun with them. My biggest hope is that I won't have to spend the weekend proving to some man that I do know what I'm doing and that just because he's a bloke it doesn't mean he has to be better at this outdoor stuff than I am.

The sun is setting and I need to get back to the car. It's packed with all the gear and there is still the job of sorting it all out when I get home. That job can wait until

tomorrow. I've borrowed so much gear from other people and I wish I didn't have to return all of it. My personal gear needs updating and that's proving expensive. The finances are all right now although the pay for this job was not spectacular. The big problem is that it's not long until the summer season finishes and I'm not so sure that I'll get much work during winter. Maybe it's time to call in all those favours I'm owed. I did enough work as a volunteer in the early days so maybe someone will need another qualified instructor along on a program if I can't organise some work on my own.

It's time. The sun is really low now and it will be dark soon. It's still a two-hour drive home. I should visit my family on the way back because I haven't had time to see them for about three weeks. If I'm lucky, they'll feed me. Dad gets really worried that I'll never settle down. He calls me a tomboy and he's never been able to understand that I like working outdoors. It seems strange that he feels that way because he introduced me to the outdoors when I was young. Sometimes I think he's hoping I'll just grow out of it. He doesn't seem to realise that I'm happy as I am.

I have to remember to call Andrew in the morning. He wants me to come to a party tomorrow night. I hope I can find the energy to dress up and pretend I have a social life. Sometimes I do wonder if I would be better off in a sensible job with regular hours but I just can't imagine doing anything else for a living. Even though it is hard work sometimes, I do enjoy my job. How many other people can finish their working day as they watch the sun go down on the ocean?

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EXPECTED OUTCOME	TYPE OF PROGRAM	LEADERSHIP ROLE	LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES
FUN	RECREATION	Skilled outdoor practitioner	Competence in technical skills and confidence in own ability
		Limit setter/ safety officer	Understanding and application of physical and emotional safety parameters
	EDUCATION	Enthusiastic adventurer	Understanding and appreciation of the value of adventure experiences; able to inspire others to achieve
		Instructor/coach	Advanced level of technical skill; able to conduct training in technical skills
LEARNING	ENRICHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	Group facilitator	Understanding of, and ability to manage, group process; ability to effect transference of learning
		Expert communicator	Advanced understanding of group process and management skills; well developed interpersonal and counselling skills
PSYCHO THERAPY	ADJUNCTIVE AND PRIMARY THERAPY	Human behaviour expert	Understanding of application of psychological and psychotherapeutic practices
		Clinician	Ability to effectively implement psychological and psychotherapeutic practices

**Figure 1.** Adventure Programs – Outcome, Type and Associated Leadership Role  
(Adapted from Ringer, 1994, 1995)

**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES**

**“SO ... YOU DO THIS FOR A LIVING?”  
A STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF  
WOMEN WORKING IN ADVENTURE**

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**Letter of Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in the above study which explores the experiences of women working in the adventure recreation and education industry in Western Australia. Your story and the stories of similar women will form the basis of a Masters thesis for the School of Leisure Science at Edith Cowan University.

My name is May Carter and I have been involved in the adventure education and recreation industry for over ten years. I am very interested to hear and explore the stories of other women who work in adventure. It is envisaged that the stories told will be of interest to many others currently working in the industry and may serve as a “reality check” for women who will enter in the future.

Should you volunteer to participate, you will be asked about your experiences working in the adventure education and recreation industry. You will be asked to be available for two interviews, at a time and place of your choice in Perth or within comfortable travelling distance (up to four hours drive). Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour and with your permission, all interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. If at any time you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and any information you have provided will not be used in the study.

We will discuss issues of confidentiality and protection of your identity prior to any interviews taking place. All tape recordings and transcripts will be coded and securely held. You will be welcome to access them on request.

Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on (08) 9371 0661.

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If you are willing to participate in the study described above, please sign below.

**Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

RELEASE FORM

I, .....  
(interviewee's name)

of .....

.....Post code.....  
(address)

give permission to.....  
(name of interviewer and/or project)

to use the interview, or part of the interview, conducted with me on  
.....  
(date/s of interview)

for research, publication, and/or broadcasting (*delete those not required*) and for  
copies to be lodged in the Battye Library for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed.....  
(Interviewee)

Date.....

Interviewer's signature

.....

### Profile of the ten women interviewed

PSEUDONYM	AGE RANGE	TIME IN INDUSTRY	AGE STARTED WORKING IN INDUSTRY	MARITAL STATUS	CHILDREN (3 women only)	POSITIONS HELD BY THE WOMEN	TERTIARY QUALIFICATIONS (8 women only)
Duckie Heidi Jane Kosci Phantom Purple	27-32	5-10 years	20-25	3 Married 3 Single	1 x 4 year old plus 1 x 4 months old  1 x 15 months old	Adventure Program Manager Company Director Company Director Freelance Instructor Freelance Instructor  Freelance Instructor plus Partner in new small business Marketing and Operations Manager Outdoor Education Coordinator Outdoor Education Teacher State Coordinator	Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Human Movement Bachelor of Human Movement, Diploma of Education Bachelor of Human Movement, Diploma of Education Bachelor of Science (Archaeology), Diploma of Education, Graduate Diploma in Outdoor Pursuits Diploma of Social Science (Sports science) Diploma of Teaching (Physical Education), Master of Education Diploma of Teaching (Primary), Graduate Diploma in Outdoor Pursuits
Addie Elizabeth Norma Pluto	44 - 50	5 - 30 years	20-41	1 Married 1 Defacto 2 Single	2 adult children		