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Becoming Strong Women:

Physicality, Femininity and the Pursuit of Power

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requirements for the degree of

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## Errata Sheet

Page 19, paragraph 2, line 4: Explanatory Note—the reference to gender as a recognizable “*structural force*” is used here to indicate a shift in some feminist views of “socialization” at the time from a psychological process to a socially determined role, such that “sex role socialization” was no longer accepted as solely a psychological construct.

p. 31, para. 2, line 2: “Neilsen et al.,” should be spelled “Nielsen et al.”

p. 31, para. 2, line 6: the verb “construct” should be “constructs”

p. 56, para. 1, line 6: endnote 21 should be numbered 21a (correction also required p. 329)

p. 64, para. 2, line 13: “An unproblematic agency...” should read “An unproblematic notion of agency in humanistic constructions of human nature and its exclusion in structural explanations for social identities is therefore contested in critical socio-cultural analyses.”

p. 65, para. 1, line 3: endnote 21 should be numbered 21b (correction also required p. 329)

p. 74, para. 3, line 3: “material, power effects” should be “material power effects”

p. 82, para. 1, line 10: “Theberge, 1997, p. p. 73” should be “Theberge, 1997, p. 73”

p. 85, para 2, line 5: “sk ill” should be “skill”

p. 85, para 2, line 13: the verb “reify” should be “reifies”

p. 92, para. 2, line 3: “not itself the subject of experience and” should be “not itself the subject of experience, and”

p. 111, para.2, line 1: “she did not know that” should read “she says that at the time she did not know that outdoor activities could have given her an alternative to playing sport”

p. 131, para. 1, line 3: “self-defense” should be spelled “self-defence”

p. 137, para. 2, line 3: the comma after “the private girls’ school” should be deleted and the comma after “which she attended from age 11” should be deleted

p. 141, para. 3, line 12: “self-defense” should be spelled “self-defence”

p. 142, para. 2, line 13: “that women’s physicality” should be “that woman’s physicality”

p. 142, para. 3, line 6: “marital arts training” should be “martial arts training”

p. 147, para.2, line 9: the citation “Henderson, 1996” should precede “Jordan, 1990, 1992”

p. 150, para. 1, lines 4-8: Explanatory Note—The subject of these two sentences is “the persistent emphasis on women’s difference as found in a shared and unquestionable feminine psyche” and thus “it” in the second sentence refers back to this “persistent emphasis.” Instead of “unquestionable feminine psyche,” I could have used the term “psychic structure.” When sexual difference is defined by a pre-determined *psychic* structure, I argue, there is little room for interpreting different women’s *bodily* experiences in new ways.

p. 161, para. 1, line 3: “emphasis added” should be deleted as there was no emphasis added

p. 169, para. 2, line 6: “suggestions not to be “so strong” ” should be “suggestions not to be ‘so strong’ ”

p. 179, para. 3, line 4: “their” refers to “the men’s” in the phrase “their constant performance of physical masculinity”

p. 190, para. 2, line 5: “the American camping movement and the British scouting movement foreshadowed” should read “the American camping movement, along with the British scouting movement, foreshadowed”

p. 192, para. 2, line 2: “is mediated by and *not* resisted in contemporary organized experiential learning contexts” should be “is mediated by, and *not* resisted in, contemporary experiential learning contexts”

p. 201, para. 1, line 3: “yea” should be spelled “yeah”

p. 208, para. 2, line 6: “especially has been a positive one” should read “especially when the day has been a positive one” to be the correct quote given verbatim by the research participant

p. 222, para. 1, line 6: “ (“enduring long physical hauls” (Jo, CC0330U:744-45);” should be “ (“enduring long physical hauls,” Jo, CC0330U:744-45);”

p. 222, para. 2, line 13: “you go sort it out.” should read “you go sort it out.’ ”

p. 235, para. 1, line 4: “These access internal processes” should read “Such policing accesses internal processes” and “because the operate through the physical” should be “because it operates through the physical.”

p. 237, para. 2, line 8: “and , if not contested” should be “and, if not contested”

p. 237, para. 3, line 4: “the project must new modes of physicality” should read “the project must examine new modes of physicality”

p. 239, para. 4, line 4: “orientation..” should be “orientation.”

Please note—page 253 follows page 254.

p.257, para. 1, line 3: “being a woman, “womanly wiles’ or whatever,” should be “being a woman, “womanly wiles” or whatever,”

p. 266, para. 2, line 6: “you know, ‘oh, how do I deal with this?’ (CC0336R:308-16).” should be “you know, ‘oh, how do I deal with this?’ ” (CC0336R:308-16).”

p. 271, para. 2, line 10: “quiet” should be “quite”

p. 290, para. 2, line 22: “had an affect on my performance” should be “had an effect on my performance” and line 23: “had an affect on my confidence” should be “had an effect on my confidence”

p. 310, para. 2, line 11: “do..” should be “do.”

p. 329: first Note 21 should be Note 21a and second Note 21 should be Note 21b

## Abstract

Women outdoor leaders are often told that they are too aggressive and strident and that they risk being too strong to be role models for their students. They experience competition, hostility, misogynist epithets and sexual advances, as well as coercion to prove themselves from their male students and colleagues. Many of these women report self-doubt and low confidence about their competence and that they do not advance in their careers because they take time to perfect their physical skills. Cultural feminist analyses recommend that activities for women ought not to require intense physical strength and women outdoor leaders should not be so competent that ordinary women cannot aspire to be like them. Prescriptions for all-women groups encourage non-competitive learning experiences which enhance the development of women's inner strengths and protect their psychological safety in the outdoors. Non-separatist remedies agree that women-only courses ensure women are not intimidated by men's physical superiority and argue that they should prepare women to re-enter mixed outdoor programmes with more confidence. These suggestions, however, do not account for the *relations of the physical* through which women and men socially and subjectively embody physicality. This project takes up corporeal feminism in order to examine in a group of women outdoor leaders their lived experiences of physicality and embodied identity and how these effect often contradictory gendered subjectivities. It responds to the literature by arguing that heterogendered norms are sustained when the performance of prowess is rejected as the 'male model.' In contrast, I argue that women in this study who embrace the 'hard, physical' as masculinity are allowing a non-normative bodily strength to reinscribe their feminine subjectivities. Other women who desire an "acceptable" femininity, whether "big and boisterous" or "staunch," are expanding the possibilities for gendered subjectivity. Strong women know what their bodies can do and often enthusiastically want others to experience this. Their physical prowess makes visible the social conditions through which normative femininity is inscribed as limited physical strength. When they reinscribe femininity with a lived power of strength, endurance and bodily control, they become more effective at challenging gender heteronormativity through alternative physicalities.

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## Introduction

The central issue in this research circulates around a number of contradictions. I have always been curious about the highly dedicated, skilled, extremely strong and fit women who emerge as accomplished climbers in high alpine expeditions or as the top competitors in a wilderness adventure pursuit, but say that they were “useless” at sport and physical education in school. It happened again last month in a full-page feature article in our local newspaper on New Zealand mountaineer Lydia Bradey. She was the first woman to summit Mount Everest solo and without oxygen (Bradey, 1989). She now guides expeditions to remote mountainous regions such as Mongolia, professionally, and lives locally in the Southern Alps. The article opens with her statement that she was “utterly useless” at school sport (Thomas, 2002). It is both the significance of this perception to women themselves that interests me, but also the apparent fascination with it for others. With this statement, the author chooses to introduce his subject, who has continued climbing, teaching, guiding and selling outdoor equipment in the fourteen years since her dramatic, and disputed (see Douglas & Beaumont, 1995), Everest climb. His profile starts with her own admission that she was awkward and uncoordinated when she was a girl. The fascination seems to be with the question of how she managed to become one of the leading women climbers in the world.

*My* fascination with this claim is with the way it is treated as confession and as an indication of a rough, more real, embodied raw material underlying the calm, polished exterior that casually holds her ice axe. It projects the expert woman climber as that much more fragile because she was a gawky kid, possibly not ‘popular’ or at least not in the sporting crowd of ‘natural’ athletes. The associations with non-athletic, ill-fitting school children are all drawn into the descriptive frame of reference. And associations of inability with inhibition tell us more about her as a gendered subject than as an active, capable, strong and physical agent. The implication is that she has either overcome a sort of disability in order not “to climb like a girl” or that she still lives a “feminine bodily existence” (Young, 1990c) which she has disguised and augmented with use, training and practice.

This contradiction is underpinned with another in the area of embodiment and identity. Feminist theorizing of cultural sources of identity and the sociology of embodiment imply that there is a correspondence between the ways in which our bodies are lived as our 'selves' and also socialized into collective conformity. The "socialized, lived body" of interest to social theorists is treated as "two sides of the same coin" (Crossley, 1996, p. 99; see Wacquant, 1992); change in one therefore follows or precipitates change in the other. The metaphor appears to impose experience of 'the body' onto a materiality, a physical body comprising twin sides, that is, "lived" inside and "socialized" outside.

The experiences of strong outdoors women tell us that the effects of embodiment are not that straightforward. Although Lydia Bradey was "super-slow" and not very coordinated, she was physically active and took up tramping enthusiastically. She may have felt and even exhibited the markings of a socialized, feminine embodiment, we are not given enough detail in this short interview to know, but she was able to pursue adventure, risk and travel to high places in her teens. Is her self-characterization about her experience of being a girl or about her experience of her body? If it was simply a physical disposition, how could she pursue physically demanding activities in the outdoors? She tells the reporter that "she was 'overjoyed' to discover tramping because all it required was the capacity to get strong" (Thomas, 2002, p. B1).

Was she, then, "socialized" into being a girl, but not quite completely? Was she actually a capable youth who was told in so many social 'messages' that she was awkward and unsure that she became those qualities? If awkward, *was* she unsure as well; do tentativeness and inhibition always emerge from feminized bodies as Young (1990c) suggests? Did she then run around with a group of boys and get strong by being a tomboy? How *do* women "get strong?" The contradictory associations which implicate within them the embodiment of gender, sexuality, physicality and subjectivity lie at the heart of this research study, not least because their conclusions are so deeply insinuated into the thinking about girls and women in the outdoors that as yet they have hardly been noticed as questions.

## Research Context

This research study asks fifteen women who work as outdoor leaders<sup>1</sup> and educators about their experiences growing up as girls and their bodily perceptions and practices as skilled, strong women (see Appendix A). It asks how they became strong, despite, for some, also feeling that they were “useless,” could not run, did not like sport and just did not “fit in.” Nevertheless, they sought work in the outdoors leading groups in what is professionally known as experiential education, immersing students and clients in the activity of self-reliant wilderness travel.

Experiential education as a philosophy has traditionally taken as its subject matter the betterment of moral persons in a liberal egalitarian society. Predominantly influenced by Judeo-Christian understandings of the self as the source of moral values and behaviours, educators Kurt Hahn, in Germany and Britain, and John Dewey, in the United States, responded to the impoverishment of human moral courage which they witnessed in years of world war and socio-economic depression. On both sides of the Atlantic, each saw the education of the moral self toward responsible citizenship and selfless contribution to the collective good of democratic society as their purpose (Kraft, 1985). Over the course of a century, the western society and social life they envisioned have changed significantly. Social theorists in the late modern era argue that we now live in “a somatic society” (Turner, 1992). The rational moral actor is newly conceptualized as an embodied social actor. The project of the moral self is now a project of the democratic body, itself just as much a social project as historical genealogies of social institutions are beginning to show. The visibility of social bodies as thresholds across which gender, sexuality, class, race and nationality interchange with disciplines of power allows new recognition of the pluralities which effect the lived subjectivity of any individual, embodied self.

For outdoor applications of experiential education, such an as yet emergent shift in social theory means that the pedagogical and theoretical disavowal of the body may be, and must be, revisited. It has been treated as a practical fact that students have organic bodies with which to accomplish physical tasks which forge challenging experience and those bodies were once given double metaphors of meaning

(instrumental vehicles for action and symbolic expressions of self) while being attributed a universality. There is now space for the social investigation of such treatment. If such bodies are socially produced, as I argue here, we must consider the centrality of their corporeal effects in constituting better persons.

Historically, the practice of outdoor experiential education<sup>2</sup> has always been dependent upon the active capabilities of embodied subjects and has always worked through the embodiment of knowing subjects. Outdoor experiential education as a field has invested the body with the purpose of transforming the self and of underwriting the project of self-discovery with its “absent presence” (Shilling, 1993). Moreover, it has privileged consciousness as the source of self-knowledge in order to deny the body its constitutive role in knowledge/power relations. This very move, however, attests to the importance of body knowledge, body practice and the embodiment of culture in the construction of social life.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to elaborate on the exercise of “somatic” relations as a site of identity, difference and power. I argue that somatic relations are recognizable to embodied actors in the constitution of *the physical*: physical being, physical activity, difference in physical capacity and physical power, which I call physical difference; the social construction of each of these constituents of the physical is organized in consensual relations. As a result, I refer in this project to *relations of the physical* and focus in particular on physical difference. Physical difference is both a cultural construct and a social practice, both structure and practice of social relations. Body culture theorists, including Bryan Turner, Mike Featherstone and Arthur Frank, have been attempting to juxtapose these dual forces in their taxonomies of the social production of bodies. My interest is in how they might be lived by embodied social actors. Physical difference, physical perception and physical action are at once socially and subjectively embodied as structure and practice; lived, socialized embodiment, however, is not a universal experience. My specific focus is in how various women negotiate their embodiment when working in the field of experiential education

outdoors which both denies the constitutive power of their bodies in their competence as educators and situates their social identity as sexual difference, itself dependent upon the very bodies which are dismissed.

The social production of bodies is made material in the constitution of the physical; thus are gendered bodies produced *in a physical relation* to each other. It seems entirely self-evident to start from the position that femininities and masculinities have always been made in the physical. The very continuum of gendered forms of identity is culturally condensed into two exclusive and oppositional categories in order to protect and privilege physical difference. Gender identity is differentiated, from essence to action, on the basis of a sexualized, physical complementarity.

Yet, in discourses of education and in the Anglo-American synthesis of outdoor experiential education, the physical has been neatly subsumed into the 'base' of the self-actualization 'pyramid.' Maslow's (1970) "hierarchy of needs" forms the bedrock of outdoor leadership psychology and every outdoor leader's introduction to group facilitation: look after the body's basic physical and safety needs and the student will be free to discover his or her own true potential. Students are satisfying their uniquely human, 'higher needs' by seeking "to be that self which one truly is," in Rogers' (1961) words. Social identity, in gender, race, class or sexual orientation, does not enter nature, much less effect the self or contribute to change and 'personal growth.' The beauty of working in the outdoors is that it is not culture. The convergence of liberal ideals of rational autonomy and humanistic psychology emphasizing individual uniqueness leaves a fertile legacy in which the wilderness journey has become the archetypal metaphor for the forging of the rugged individual who finds himself or herself at once a whole and self-knowing being and a member of the universal human family, with newfound compassion and respect for the depth of the human spirit.

It is a legacy still found in the outdoor leadership and 'women in the outdoors'<sup>3</sup> literatures, as I argue in Chapter 1. Part of its power is that after an extended wilderness expedition or outdoor challenge course, students do feel that they have become new and different persons. It is not my intent to deny that they feel this experience. My argument is that they have, indeed, become different as embodied persons for they have *become* different bodies. Their physical experience has changed the very physical

contours and tissues of their own body as much as the constitution of their bodily power and self-efficacy. Relations of the physical are at the heart of the social meanings of embodied change in the wilderness traveller. What is mistakenly attributed to psychological growth rests on more than a new awareness of personal abilities and previously undiscovered attributes. New consciousness of self and thus personal “empowerment” are dependent upon or rather, I would argue, *constituted in* what the body can do.

Such an argument seems another somewhat commonsensical claim, but it is worth exploring for the purposes of bringing new insight to the social processes which organize physical experiences in the outdoors. A turn to corporeality could prompt a revision of the theoretical canon in the outdoor experiential education literature. It is not that a focus on the disembodied subject as the source of self-knowledge through experience is misdirected, but that broader conceptualizations of the social constitution of subjectivity, knowledge and experience across the “lived, socialized bodies” of social theory will give much wider scope for understanding experiences in the outdoors.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is therefore structured to facilitate an exploration of these issues through the reported experiences of women who work professionally in the outdoors. A review of literature on ‘women in the outdoors’ in Chapter 1 elicits two major preoccupations which undermine that body of writing in its project of exploring the dilemmas of negotiating gendered experience. The literature pivots on, first, a fear of the performance of physical prowess, which it assesses as a male obsession involving practices of competition and coercion to compel a demonstration of the willingness to take bodily risks. It then shifts to, second, the promotion of psychological safety for participants in physical activity as both the solution to the first problem and the unique need, ultimately, of women in the outdoors. The first preoccupation emerges as a generalized rejection of the “male model” and the second as a natural affirmation of “feminine culture.” I propose that these are limited and inadequate responses to the

conditions of both professional and critical feminist practice for women outdoor leaders.

In Chapter 2, I contend that social theory of the body and embodiment offers a more productive means of assessing these two modes of differentiation which at present ensure that a gendered physicality is preserved in outdoor adventure programming. In particular, if new theorizing on body culture and the social relations of physical activity is incorporated then it offers a comprehensive means for redressing the absent presence of the body and what bodies 'can do' in theorizing about outdoor experience. Body culture and physical relations are taken up through the personal and practical responses of physicality; in this way bodies produce physical identities which are lived and felt as aspects of selves. For the context of 'women's experience' outdoors, an analytical framework is needed for investigating the way in which physicality effects new consciousness, interpreted as the self, in order to prevent 'the body' being added to existing explanatory frameworks. For such an approach would reproduce the gendering practices of the 'mind/body split' of much current metatheory. The chapter ends by introducing corporeal feminism as the most useful intervention with which to shift the outmoded cultural feminism of the 'women in the outdoors' arguments.

Chapter 3 then explores the value of a corporeal feminist analysis of women's experiences of their bodies and their engagement in relations of the physical by illustrating its concepts in the context of lived realities. Life history narratives and memory writing form the empirical basis to this chapter. It is sometimes only in considering the complexities of lived, socialized realities for very different women whose life experiences produce them as subjects differently that it is possible to contest dominant theoretical prescription. This chapter is a response to taken-for-granted claims that women are intimidated by the outdoors because they lack physical experiences of skill development and training. It argues that key physical 'moments' may be found in women's biographies of embodiment in which women become either suddenly or gradually aware of what their bodies 'can do.' If women come to the outdoors without consciousness of these prior experiences—even, for example, a change in physique—it would seem a primary purpose of outdoor programmes to bring

them to consciousness or, if necessary, to *provide* what are evidently life-changing moments.

In Chapter 4, the discussion moves to the outdoor leadership careers and later experiences these women have as strong and capable women. At some point in their lives they have become conscious that they have the ability, as much as the desire, to lead expeditions and teach skills to others. The outdoor leadership literature, including numerous quantitative studies of the 1980s constructing the ideal traits, skills and competencies of good outdoor leaders, gives no explicit attention to the role of gender relations, indeed, to social relations at all in constituting physical skills and ability. And yet, women's narratives and observations show gendering practices at work. Many involve what I would call physical interactions between men colleagues and men students and the women; they can be traced to assumptions about proper embodiment and physical differences. The threat strong women pose to active men outdoors is that they are "too strong" to be in the outdoors. However, there is a striking critique of women in outdoor leadership within the 'women in the outdoors' literature itself. The criticism of strong women that they have become "superwomen" is examined in its lived realities in this chapter. The chapter sets up the central themes for the next two chapters by arguing that fear of the superwoman figure is based in part on the fear that she represents a desire in women to become like men. It is also based in part on such a rigid view of gender identity that it cannot accept differentiation within women as a determinant group. In particular it cannot account for the effects of lesbian practices and the heteronormativity of femininity as it operates in the outdoors.

Chapter 5 explores fear of female masculinity in this context. It takes up the depiction of the real outdoors man as the "hard, physical" trapper,<sup>4</sup> mountaineer or "guru" instructor and asks how women who have appropriated 'the hard' make sense of it for themselves. It argues that psychoanalytical explanations for gendered identity have made 'the hard' a masculine practice by linking it to 'the physical,' where it embeds and conceals a socially constructed heterosexual normativity. Instead, 'the hard' is the stance of a willingness to risk one's body, a psychological trait which ensures distance from embodiment. If becoming 'hard' is how physicality can be distanced from emotional connection and desire, it is conjectured, then the heterosexual

feminine is indeed compromised when women become ‘hard’ climbers, trampers or expedition leaders. What is at stake when women “step into the woods,” then, is precisely the physicality of dependence constructed in heterogendered social relations which prohibits emotional toughness and physical confidence.

Chapter 6, therefore, explores the limitations of a narrowly conceptualized, inner feminine nature by examining the messages of a practically constituted, bodily comportment with its own physical sensibility. Although many women desire the sensual experiences of the elements outdoors, they do not feel that their physicality is any more feminine. Some women engage in certain practices to retain the feel and fabric of femininity, which is presumed heterosexual and must certainly be acknowledged as sexual. I argue here that strength and physicality thus reinscribe femininities in various practical, perceptible, corporeal ways which are worth exploring. Becoming a strong woman may forge a ‘physical femininity,’ if not a masculinity. It offers alternatives across a heterogendered continuum, which I depict in generalized clusters from femme to “staunch,” which are lived as ‘real’ as much as taken up as strategies by different women. I give some examples of strategic uses of feminine bodies, from acquiring muscles to discarding menstruation, from women in this study. This chapter moves toward a dissociation of heterosexualization from particular modes of physicalities. It points to the need for greater consideration of the role of physicality and relations of the physical in shaping a heteronormative femininity in gendered interactions outdoors.

Chapter 7 then turns to the implications of corporeality for women. If women’s life experiences produce certain opportunities to view their own acquisition of physical skills and power differently as much as to view their sensually invested habits of gender differently, how do women outdoor leaders use this alternative mode of bodily action in their work? How do they work with girls and women in the outdoors? A critical feminist analysis of the dilemmas of negotiating gendered experience can only be helpful if we move beyond the plea to provide better role models and to assist women to develop pride in their female bodies. The women in this study say that knowing what their bodies can do reshapes and expands their very relationship to their investments in femininities. The processes of *corporeal* reinscription are only

accessible for women who become strong enough to recognize that bodily strength is acquired socially and tough enough to push themselves to acquire the psychological skills through which strength is practised. In corporeality, 'personal growth' is accessible only through physical activity, strength and power.

Finally, the dissertation concludes by situating themes which emerged in the lived experiences of the New Zealand outdoor leaders within the context of the major preoccupations of the 'women in the outdoors' literature. It strongly recommends that we relocate women's bodies at the centre of their experiences of physical potential and power by teaching them what they can skilfully do. They will reinvest the political project of experiential education with the very bodies which are the disavowed subjects of empowerment. In the process, strong women harness a physical pleasure previously available only to 'hard, physical' men and experience new bodily ways in which to know themselves as masculine, feminine, both or some mode of physicality in between.

## Chapter 1 Empowering Women Outdoors: Feminine ‘Strengths’ or Physical Strength?

At an annual experiential education conference, an American outdoor leader tells the Women’s Professional Group meeting about an extraordinary young woman student enrolled on an adventure-based learning ropes course. The young woman had grown very long fingernails. When she came to the rope ladder leading to a high ropes element, the “Burma Bridge,” she decided that she could not grip it properly and would not climb it. Choices such as this were honoured and there was no pressure on her to continue. The young woman, however, saw that other group members were finding it exciting. She decided that she wanted to climb the ladder and complete the challenge with her group. And so she bit her fingernails off, one by one.

### Femininity At Stake

It is a popular belief in discussions of ‘women in the outdoors’ that when women participate in wilderness activities they are in danger of losing their femininity. The implication is that in such a harsh and masculine domain, women compromise something in themselves. It is not clear from the literature whether the loss is of an inner self or of a social appearance. The question seems to be whether they can really *be* feminine when participating in such masculine activities. Humanistic advocates answer yes and argue that women must bring their innate feminine traits to outdoor learning activities with men, because masculine approaches to the pursuits are then balanced. By the same argument, women must participate in mixed-sex outdoor programmes for their presence changes the otherwise stereotypical behaviours and sexist beliefs within groups as well. The limitations of biological sex roles are “escaped” when men and women share tasks, appreciate each other’s complementarity and together feel “more complete” in life outdoors (e.g., Graham, 1997; Knapp, 1985). Femininity balances masculinity.

Feminist advocates for 'women in the outdoors' answer yes, but argue instead that the activities themselves be altered. Women's unique needs make them a "special population" which must be offered different outdoor programmes to the standard courses developed by and for men. They insist that women want "gender-free" experiences and would create "a new heroic for adventure programming" (e.g., Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Mitten, 1985; Warren, 1985). These arguments take up femininity and masculinity in terms of "acculturated" roles and then focus on the role-behaviour freedom of women-only courses, that is, freedom from male cultural domination. Gender differences themselves are seen as inherent and autonomous, and not necessarily viewed as relational or complementary. Women's groups offer safety from imposed cultural patterns and, concomitantly, from the presence of men.

The feminist approaches encompass both liberal and cultural feminisms; they are humanistic in their hope for universal, coherent and self-affirming experiences. In the literature they are largely prescriptive, their arguments and hypotheses made with quite generalized claims about women, femaleness and femininity. They attribute an authenticity to experience, not unexpected in experience-based education, but give little attention to contradictory details of lived, everyday meanings for different women which could reveal how direct experience is consensually and socially organized. Indeed, in 1982, two of the first researchers offer their "hunches" about what women need in the outdoors and then encourage research on women's outdoor experiences to test their impressions. Not surprisingly, research has continued to pursue their questions as if, as Davidson (1994, p. 12) observes, their significance is "transparent."<sup>5</sup> If a cue is taken from the young woman in the vignette above, perhaps the unanswered question is whether there is a fear among women of losing femininity. Clearly, there is potential for a new way to understand the practical investments of femininity and, indeed, the practices of *femininities* which reveal the pluralities constituting an apparently coherent and unmediated identity, as well as the modes through which these are acquired and divested, perhaps even as easily as chewing off one's fingernails.

In the field of outdoor experiential education the earliest writings on gendered perspectives of education in the outdoors are credited with making popular the now commonsense claim. When a woman pursues outdoor adventure, "the moment she

steps into the woods, her femininity is in question,” contends Warren (1985, p. 11). The argument comes in one of four influential essays (see Knapp, 1985; Miranda, 1985; Mitten, 1985; Warren, 1985), based loosely on sex role theory and socialization theory. They are aimed at the leaders involved in facilitating experiences for the men and, increasingly by that time in the United States, women in their outdoor groups. They seek to explain women’s different experience of the outdoors as a learning environment and of the inherent bonds of gender. They examine camping and expedition programmes for girls and women instrumental in celebrating a separate moral space. The authors urge that women’s otherwise unrecognized moral needs be met as a way to acknowledge that there are indeed “gender issues” in the institutional context of outdoor experiential education. The essays have become the flagship for feminist outdoor programming recommendations with a focus on women’s gendered experience.

Over a decade later, statements from the authoritative 1985 essays are still cited as the premises for professional interventions, changes to programming objectives, new staff training agendas and research (e.g., Kiewa, 1994, 1995; Loeffler, 1995a, 1995b; Morse, 1997). Two of the essays are still reprinted, unaltered, in textbooks (see Mitten, 1985, 1996a; Warren, 1985, 1990, 1996b). The claims about women’s social risks and needs for separate courses in the outdoors are often repeated without question (e.g., Asher, Huffaker & McNally, 1994; Hornibrook et al., 1997; Kiewa, 1994; Loeffler, 1997; Mack, 1996; Morch, 1997; Morse, 1997; Roberts & Drogin, 1993). Feminist arguments taking a liberal humanistic approach, in which men and women would not be separated and their differences seen as complementary (e.g., Gerstein, 1987; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987b; Joyce, 1988), are also repeated unproblematized (e.g., Nolan & Priest, 1993). As I have argued, it appears that the professional dialogue on gender issues has hardly been extended in fifteen years (Bell, 1997).

This project takes a closer look at theorizing gendered social relations and experience in the outdoors. It reassesses early analyses and survey research which address women’s experience in the context of outdoor experiential education as a professional field. It challenges the somewhat static state of gender theorizing in the literature since. Most importantly, it looks closely at *how* the popular belief that “a woman faces substantial societal risks in pursuing adventure experiences” (Warren,

1985, p. 11) might be experienced, if at all, in the everyday lives of a group of contemporary New Zealand women.

A primary aim of the questions explored here, therefore, is to find out empirically what happens to different women when they “step into the woods.” How, for example, are women who work in the outdoors challenged on the very grounds of their gender identity? The work I am undertaking does not prove that finding her gender “is in question” occurs for every woman who ventures into the outdoors or lives in the wilderness. Nor does it deny that commonsense beliefs have discursive power. It does examine in contextual detail, for those women who *do* experience being discredited on the basis of gender deviance, more precisely what is questioned and how. The arguments presented here gather together experiences of individual professional outdoor leaders in order to access the particular contexts and ambiguities of their everyday experiences of gendered relations in the outdoors. I interpret selected narratives within a matrix of the relations of gender, sexuality and body culture which contribute to the production of the particular circumstances available to each woman. The outcome is that the daily tensions, negotiations and compromises lived by specific women give more depth to a larger social analysis of different women’s experiences of becoming gendered social subjects.

Empirical evidence suggests that gender, sexuality and the embodiment of subjectivity are often and perhaps always lived in dissonant and contradictory ways for the strong outdoors women who participate in the research study which I report here (see Appendix A). When men, and other women, question their gendered investments, it is on the basis of their willing use of physical strength and bodily actions more socially defined as masculine and not so much on the basis of an emphasized femininity or their loss of it. In fact, some women admit that they present ‘acceptable’ femininity in body shape, hair, dress and jewellery, such that they are targeted for heterosexual sexual approaches and harassment during their work. Many are mothers, one is a grandmother and one is pregnant at the time of the research and they discuss how these identities impact their work as well. In turn, some of the women reveal that they struggle themselves with expectations of femininity. Instead of “nice arms and ankles,” they have big feet and weak ankles that are unattractive in high heels. Whether they

struggle or not with feminine appearance, they do not struggle with their own desire for physical “freedom and control,” the cultural practices of masculinity, or to “be like a bloke.” One woman clearly sees her physical strength as not feminine, but as not necessarily masculine. She wishes that a strong woman would be heterosexually attractive to men, perhaps because in her own experience her strength and capability were appealing to her partner when they met. She says,

I would rather men admired me for my physical self, the fact that I'm strong and I was reasonably- you know, I wasn't obese or anything like that. Had a- had a sense of physical competence. That, um, I had a little bit of personality when I was away on trips. I would rather people are attracted to me for those things rather than the fact that I dress nicely or I appear feminine. (Siobhan, CC0327J:279-86)<sup>6</sup>

In other cases, women achieve a corporeal identity which adopts gendered norms of both femininity and masculinity. Each of the research participants explains in her own narrative how her particular corporeal identity, contradictory as it may appear, is meaningful to her lived reality. It is here that an investigation of gender identity and physicality must begin. I detail these narratives of corporeality<sup>7</sup> in Chapter 3.

In the opening vignette, fingernails, visible markers of heteronormative femininity, are reminders of the ‘gender trouble’ of being vigorously active in the outdoors. The young woman is impelled to pursue her activity regardless of any compromise in femininity or the loss of her emphasis on femininity. She desires the bodily experience of active achievement concurrently with the corporeal project of accomplishing a feminine appearance, despite potential dissonance between these modes of embodiment. In this single gesture she engages with what I take up in the dissertation as *physical relations*, a social force constituting physical experience, bodily practice and compulsory heterosexual normativity (MacKinnon, 1987). Its constituents, themselves subsumed within gender relations, serve as a discourse reinscribing gender relations in ways that complicate and expand consensually constructed norms of gender.

What do these and other examples from lived experience mean for the fear that a woman's femininity is at stake when she goes into the outdoors? If outdoors women are “disruptive women,” who specifically violate “unquestioned heteronormative

expectations” (Nielsen et al., 2000) through taking up relations of the physical, then their very existence undermines the now inadequate construction of the special needs of ‘women in the outdoors’ which reproduces “a woman’s femininity.”

Since the ‘femininity is at stake’ claims, feminist theories of difference encompassing sex, gender, sexuality and the body have vastly extended the perspectives within which social analyses of outdoor experiential education may be conducted (Bell, 1993c, 1997). Femininity, for example, must be treated as more than “a woman’s” innate nature and more than distinct characteristics which are not found in men, but as a range of cultural representations used to regulate gender normativity in women *and men* and thus “create the conditions for the presence of normative sexuality” (Schutte, 1997, p. 44). If gender regulation is at stake in the pursuit of physical experiences outdoors, so too, necessarily, is compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980).

To explore, then, how femininities are regulated in and through physical relations this study employs a critical feminist social analysis of relations of power. Fundamental to the critical feminist approach to gendered experience I develop here is the connection between femininities, masculinities and heteronormativity, as social relations, and the physical accomplishment of gendered and sexual identities, as subjective practices. I argue that social theory in the outdoors literature must account for body culture and relations of the physical if it intends to open up more productive means of exploring social experience.

Accordingly, this chapter starts with problematic theoretical assumptions about gender, experience and identity in the feminist literature on women’s participation in outdoor programmes. The review of literature draws upon observations made by women about gender practices in the outdoors in the ‘male model.’ It proceeds to identify two major preoccupations which undermine the feminist project of negotiating gender in the ‘male model’ of outdoor experience. These preoccupations point to particular relations of the body, that is, performing proof of prowess and ensuring psychological safety, which differentiate physical experience and, I argue, discipline such gendered differentiation as embodiment.

The chapter, as a result, argues against the prevalent sexual difference perspective informing gender analyses. It leads into arguments in Chapter 2 for a

theory of corporeal difference. It concludes that investigations into gendered experience must revolve more around issues of embodied physicality than the psychological 'strengths' of femininity.

### **'Women in the Outdoors:' Femininity as Inner Strength**

It is not surprising that ways in which gender constructs identity are not central to discussions of women's experiences outdoors, which instead emphasize the universality of 'a woman's' femininity, positioning all women as members of a singular and oppositional group to men. This approach has precluded any acknowledgement of active women's divergent experiences, which might produce a subjectivity in competent outdoors women which differs from less physically skilled women, for example. It has endorsed a shared embodiment, rather than acknowledging a possibility of different physical experiences of embodiment among women. More importantly, it has prevented discussion of this shared embodiment by universalizing 'a woman's' experience as "feminine reality" (Mitten, 1985, p. 20) in efforts to avoid defining women by cultural constructions of bodily difference altogether. Instead, women's "strengths"<sup>8</sup> are typically dissociated from bodily ability and associated with attitudes and values found in women's shared femininity (e.g., Angell, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a, 1987b; Knapp, 1985; Mitten, 1985, 1992a; Warren, 1985). With little acknowledgement of constitutive difference among women, then, participants in adventure, education or therapy outdoors are perceived as the same as trained women who are professional and voluntary outdoor leaders.

Representation of these two groups, participants and leaders, allows for the possibility that gender may be lived differently through physical capability, even while women's female bodies are considered to fix them biologically and ontologically in the same gender category. The ways in which these two groups of active, capable women embody gender differently and the tensions in their disparate representation are explored throughout this investigation, but highlighted specifically in Chapter 4 which focuses on experiences of and prescriptions for women as outdoor leaders. Here I begin by exploring how the dominant cultural feminist attributions of gender operate to

construct and maintain two exclusive gender groups in the literature on “ordinary women’s” outdoor adventures.<sup>9</sup>

One of the problems for any social critique of the field, as I have argued elsewhere, is that the concept of gender is under theorized in writing in outdoor experiential education. It is assumed as a universal attribute experienced as a personal trait or a group characteristic; both individual and collective attributes are seen as fixed and homogeneous in nature (Bell, 1993a, 1997). Much of the definitive research in outdoor experiential education, such as that on outdoor leadership competencies, is conducted from within behavioural psychology and social psychology, in a positivist paradigm with the aim of generalizing the quantitative findings across populations (Ewert, 1987; Humberstone, 1996; see also Bell, 1993a on outdoor leadership research; see also Davidson, 1994 on adventure-based counselling). Gender is treated as one among many, equally valid, descriptive variables, the influence of which on research outcomes and new knowledge is to be reduced or explained through further research (e.g., Phipps & Claxton, 1997; Priest, 1987). Gender is perhaps most commonly used as a bipolar dimension of personality in studies of self-concept change through outdoor adventure courses (e.g., Marsh & Richards, 1989; Mitchell & Mitchell, 1989). Yet, gender is deemed non-existent in texts on practice with their predominant emphasis on the universal humanistic individual as leader or student (e.g., Cockrell, 1991; Langmuir, 1984; Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Schoel et al., 1988). Nor, until recently, has it been considered an important consideration in wilderness therapy practices (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994b).

Empirical research about women’s experiences tends to use a naturalistic paradigm. In contrast to the outdoor leadership research which omits any reference to cultural difference, this research presumes difference and would therefore be intended to offer “thick description” of how ‘women in the outdoors’ are ontologically different to men (e.g. Hardin, 1979; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Nanschild, 1997).<sup>10</sup> Along with the two North American quantitative surveys of women’s motivations for choosing all-women programmes (e.g., Hornibrook et al., 1997; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985), the qualitative studies are clearly meant to respond to Miranda and Yerkes’ (1982) aim to establish that a “special population” of women wanting their own outdoor

experiences does exist.<sup>11</sup> But this literature rarely defines or clarifies its representation of gender. Given its theoretical reliance on gender as essential and embodied difference, the equivalence of the terms women and female is presumed; these identities are constructed interchangeably for the field and its profession through the feminist 'discovery,' or rather construction, of gendered perspectives (e.g., Beale, 1988; Bialeschki, 1992; Henderson, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a, 1987b; Jordan, 1992; Joyce, 1988; Knapp, 1985; Miranda, 1985; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Mitten, 1985, 1992a; Warren, 1985; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985). Notions of gendered identity are somewhat vaguely tied to women's "unique perspective." In taking women as the subject of study, feminists seek to establish that the subject of experiential education philosophies is men. Women represent difference. "By labelling myths that impede our realization of gender differences, we take the first step in insuring that outdoor adventure will be a positive, holistic experience for women," writes Warren (1985, p. 14). Critique of outdoor leadership research and theory attempts to examine ways in which gender is erased through the universal humanistic subject as rational, capable and transcendent authority (Bell, 1993a, 1993c, 1996b; Henderson, 1996). However, in 'gendering the subject,' feminists turn for an indisputable basis of gender to a universalized feminine psyche.

Feminist psychologists, sociologists and philosophers outside outdoor experiential education concentrated in the 1980s on demonstrating that gender operates broadly as a structural force in the lives of women (Eisenstein, 1984; Foster, 1999; Grosz, 1988). It is more than an innate trait or personality structure, but rather a predetermined role constraining opportunities for autonomous action. Sex-role socialization, that is, the development of psychological conformity to biologically-generated behaviours, is an active and restrictive social force. The sex versus gender debates then separated role conformity from biology and shifted the terms of what could be questioned. Feminist theorizing, very generally, moved to separate the notion of "ascribed" roles based on biology from that of "achieved" identities based on social processes (Foster, 1999). Biological determinism and its medium, sex roles, were then challenged by social constructionists.

The few American feminist perspectives in the outdoors emerged in the early 1980s and reflect the historical moment of their origins through their criticism of traditional domains and sex-based traits, roles and stereotypes. Those few which have taken up the shift away from role theory have emphasized choices made by a more coherent, unified female self as opposed to following the turn to a more socially constructed subjectivity. Some, though not all, of the feminist perspectives are deliberately women-centred, that is, they posit an exclusive identity for women, and draw on work by feminists who identify an internal female psychic structure in which such a coherence of self might develop (e.g. Chodorow, 1978; Schaef, 1981; Gilligan, 1982). This feminist work offers a structural explanation for an aspect of all women which could not be changed, instead of an explanation which blamed women for feeling limited by their own consensual participation in reproductive roles. Somewhat paradoxically, a generally held feminist critique of the outdoor field uses this explanation to celebrate the authenticity of women's feminine psyche *and* the spirit of those women who break free from role constraints—even when the feminist sources they use argue that women's roles, in the family, for example, are reproduced through the feminine psyche itself.

For example, in arguing that women come to outdoor courses with different acculturation than men, Mitten (1985) cites the work of Chodorow (1978). Chodorow locates the root of women's oppression in the social organization of mothering within the family. She theorizes that women take on the psychic imprint of the mothering role in their personalities after being mothered, rather than imitating their mothers or learning the role, such that it becomes personally and socially synonymous with the feminine identity through the psyche. One might think that advocates of outdoor experiences for women would aim to undo such imprinting and disengage women from any social prescription toward mothering or traditional family arrangements. Instead they *emphasize* the very psyche in which feminine "strengths" are said to be embedded. Indeed, an argument for mothering as a set of social ideas to oppose aggression is made to adventure and experiential educators for professional consideration (see Miranda, 1989). And Mitten (1992a, p. 58-59), herself, argues that a good leader for all-women's trips is really just "a good hostess" who "circulates freely among guests and is

accessible to all...can facilitate introductions...and help people meet other people” and generally meet their personal needs. It appears she has not made a close reading of Chodorow’s *critique* of the family’s heterosexual psychic structures. Davidson (1994) takes up this gap in critical theorizing with her scrutiny of a practical adventure-based counselling text (see Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe, 1988) which urges co-leaders to adopt traditional, heterosexual parent roles with their outdoor groups. With no substantive discussion of feminist theorizing of the 1970s or 1980s it is difficult to know why ‘feminist’ analyses in the outdoors literature adopt one or the other perspective. The few feminist calls for outdoor programming change, coming out of the United States and relying on second wave American feminism, appear to define equality as essential difference (see Grosz, 1994a) in order to avoid reducing difference to biologically asymmetrical, and therefore unequal, bodies.

It is, firstly, historically problematic to feminist theorizing that these perspectives accept uncritically the structural assumptions, whether biologically determined or psychically developed, of psychoanalysis and moral psychology which fix women’s attributes (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987b; Jordan, 1992; Mitten, 1985, 1992a; Warren, 1985). They therefore are not compelled to critique the nature of an authentic, universal or developmental feminine self. Furthermore, they are not required to explain their construction of femininity, although it appears to originate in sexed rather than socially constructed identity, or how psychosexual development then enables a sexed psyche.

To use the same example from the literature, the somewhat casual justification for a feminist critique noted above (Mitten, 1985) precedes an outline of a women’s outdoor programme which is designed to meet the special needs of women’s groups in the outdoors. It is heavily relied-upon as the original feminist philosophy in practice in the outdoors ‘industry’ (see Mitten, 1992a, 1994, 1996a; see also Henderson, 1996). It never adequately links Chodorow’s feminist reworking of psychoanalysis to the ensuing prescription for safe and supportive all-women programming. In subsequent literature, in discussions of the effects of girls’ and women’s feminine socialization on their outdoor experiences, structural premises found in the much paraphrased assertion about women’s mothering practices that “women define and experience themselves

relationally,” (Chodorow, 1978, p. 207) are simply repeated and perpetuated (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987b; Kozolanka, 1995; Loeffler, 1997; Morse, 1997; Nolan & Priest, 1993).

This and the other oft-cited 1980s perspectives treat the feminine ‘strengths’ they embrace as essential to difference in order that they be irreducible. Most are less influenced by American feminist psychoanalysis, itself, than the Harvard-based studies in women’s moral psychology by Gilligan and studies of “women’s ways of knowing” by Belenky and others (1986). (Belenky, in fact, worked with Gilligan on the women’s moral judgements study and published with Gilligan, who actually founds her analysis on Chodorow’s work of the 1970s [Gilligan, 1982, pp. v, 7-11].) They are best described as cultural feminist perspectives—within the second wave delineation typical of American feminism in the 1980s—because they position nurturing and relational capacities as the core of women’s ontology and openly advocate a separate women’s culture.

Although growing from the same roots as the Anglo-American radical feminist movement, the arguments of ‘women’s outdoor adventures’ theorists are quite different. These perspectives do not define femininity as *sexual* subordination to men, they do not politicize the gendered relations of compulsory heterosexuality (for instance, in a sex/gender system) and they do not call for women’s sexual self-determination.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as noted above, they comprise a combination of cultural and liberal feminism: they valorize women’s specificities, while ignoring their bodies; they celebrate women’s potential to know themselves as whole and uniquely individual persons, but do not include knowing what their bodies can do as part of this human potential. The ‘women’s outdoor adventures’ arguments treat gender as based on natural asymmetry and not sustained in the practices of a gender order; male dominance flows from men’s natural strength and aggression, while women’s feminine ‘strengths’ represent their unrecognized human potential.

It is, secondly, therefore, *practically* problematic that cultural feminist claims about women are applied to prescriptions for enhancing women’s experiences in the outdoors. Biological femaleness as developmentally, psychically and morally relational is translated in practice to mean that ‘women in the outdoors’ are most concerned with

relationships with others before autonomy, safety above risk, trust and communication over technical skill and physical ability and the quality of the process rather than the outcomes of their learning experiences (e.g., Angell, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987b; Kozolanka, 1995; Mitten, 1985, 1992a, 1994). These claims are also declared to be validated in research (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991a; Kozolanka, 1995; Nanschild, 1997). One of the difficulties of this approach is that it takes representations of gendered attributes as an accurate and true account of what women “are” and “are concerned with” (e.g., Henderson, 1996). Quite often local, contextual and rich personal meanings are extended to a universal female experience, despite critical perspectives by (a very few) women of colour and (fewer) lesbian women. Moreover, whether personal or collective, there is no room to reconsider *experience* and its meanings as products of socially mediated forces (Bell, 1993c, 1996b).

In one of these ‘validating’ studies, to take another example, the description of the research context for a project on why women chose to join an all-women, 1500 km, Australian trek slips almost imperceptibly into the self-representations of the nine women interviewed and concludes that these are evidence of differentiation of social experience:

Women only settings enhance personal development. An emphasis on wellness and health awareness and a sense of being in harmony with the environment are important elements of an outdoor experience for women...Relationships are the most important aspect for women in considering what they do, where they do it, and with whom...The women in this study experienced connectedness with the outdoors setting...Most women in the study developed an awakening awareness of their feminine selves as they experienced a spiritual connection with the more natural setting...These women used the cycles of nature as powerful metaphors for their understanding and discovery of themselves...Through discovering their ‘inner wilderness,’ women came to firstly access and then value themselves as being open, caring and conscious individuals. They spoke of “coming home to the self” and

knowing their inner wisdom to be the truth...There is a distinct women's experience of outdoor recreation. (Nanschild, 1997, pp. 179-181)

It is not clear why this passage describes "a distinct women's experience."

The cultural feminist approach confuses gendered attributes for an immutable, sexed identity. It accepts this identity, though often inexplicitly, as singular and stable, based on fixed biological meanings and expressed through uniformly socialized attitudes and directly experienced inner desires. However, biological sources of gender may be genetic, physiological or morphological (Grosz, 1990) and these are not fixed, but subject to re-interpretation and they can be observed to change over time (Brumberg, 1997; Grosz, 1994b; Vertinsky, 1994). Socialization may be imposed, taken up and reproduced differently according to class, race, sexual orientation and *habitus*, among other socially produced conditions, such as history and culture, influencing sexed and gendered identities. Essential desires and qualities may be just as socially constructed through the very processes of establishing them as "a distinct women's experience" as are cultural differences across time and social practices. Experience is always mediated by biography and history as much as by personal intention and social forces (Mills, 1959; Scott, 1992), as I argue in Chapter 3.

A second difficulty of the cultural feminist approach in practice is evident in how it is applied to differentiate gendered aspects of experience and in the process to construct parallel, mutually exclusive versions of reality. The metaphor most commonly applied to a wilderness expedition in the United States is the hero's quest (Bacon, 1983). "Upon closer examination," writes Warren (1985, p. 14),

the heroic quest is a metaphor that has little meaning to women. Each stage of a woman's journey in the wilderness is a direct contradiction of the popular [in adventure programmes] quest model...While a man's mythical journey in the wilderness parallels his everyday situation, a woman's does not. Encouraged to be bold and aggressive in the woods, this style transfers readily for a man upon return. The woman who has learned to be strong, assertive and independent on a wilderness course encounters intense cognitive dissonance back home because these traits are not presently valued for her in society.

Beale (1988) offers a close examination of literary sources of heroic metaphors used in outdoor courses. She finds “a distinct focus on male experience, and where women do emerge, they tend to either take on traditional ‘male’ qualities, such as Joan of Arc, or alternatively they take supportive roles such as wives, lovers, assistants and whores” (Beale, 1988, p. 9). In women’s literature and autobiography, she finds more of a focus on inner journeys: “if the hero’s quest is typified by an outer journey and overcoming overt challenges, the heroine’s journey is primarily an inner one which involves self-doubt and learning to love herself” (Beale, 1988, p. 10). In adventure programmes, she contends that the metaphor is used to circumscribe men’s challenges as overcoming “fears” of hardship and difficulty and women’s challenges as overcoming “*self*-doubt and anger” (Beale, 1988, p. 10; emphasis added). Interestingly, she also finds that women’s narratives exhibit “an underlying certainty that deep within the human spirit lie healing, integrative and transcendent forces. Often women’s stories are centred around reclaiming these inherent nurturing capacities” (Beale, 1988, p. 10). Not only are mutually exclusive and oppositional male and female activities identified as one wrestles with objective dangers and the other with subjective inadequacies, and one is goal-oriented and the other is non-linear, but these become representative of ways in which men and women search for and discover their identities, to the extent that they do not participate in each other’s models. Beale (1988, p. 13) does concede, however inconclusively, that not “every man gains enlightenment by double packing across the longest portage,<sup>13</sup> and that [not] every woman will gain an inner sense of knowing as she sits on solo<sup>14</sup> and sensitizes herself to the energies in the universe.”

Later prescriptive literature uncritically extends the generalized binary opposition. Bialeschki (1992, p. 53) argues that late nineteenth century women were in part *motivated* to become involved in outdoor activities, because they had a “tendency...to view their experience as a ‘journey’ rather than a ‘quest’ ” and thus sought out the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of wilderness such as “beauty...and solitude.” She cites Beale’s (1988) examination of literary themes as her source. Kiewa (1994, p. 39) claims that as “women are more interested in the ‘inner journey’ than any outward ‘quest’ or ‘conquest,’” they prefer that the wilderness environment remain benign, uncontrollable and external to “our real needs, developing self-control.”

She cites Warren's (1985) recommendations as her source. In a final example, an Outward Bound instructor who writes that she has "spent several years on [her] quest for wholeness and embodied womanhood" (Arnold, 1994, p. 53) makes a suggestion for all-women outdoor courses. "Rather than being based on the heroic quest theme, which involves conquering the mountain, women's courses are more relationship oriented. Relationships with body, self, and others are processes which need to be honoured and given time within the course structure" (Arnold, 1994, p. 53). Each of these examples finds some way to link femininity to an inner essence which cannot include any aspects of masculine experience, values or identity and which thus reifies women's "real needs" in organized outdoor courses.

A third ambiguity of these applications of a type of cultural feminist approach stems very much from the first two. The difficulty lies in the limits for how interpretations of the adventure experience can be seen to be useful for women *as a group*. When women are culturally aligned with nature and nurturing, the argument rests on the 'naturalness' of their need to be in the outdoors:

Women consider themselves as a part of nature and they do not feel the need to dominate it. The traits that are typically associated with women are those that are evident in outdoor experience, including elements of nurturing, caring, community and wholeness. (Nolan & Priest, 1993, p. 14)

Herein lies a theoretical tautology seldom recognized by its proponents, which I see as ultimately undermining women. In the psychologized language of learning, leadership and therapeutics, the benefits of the practical and metaphorical activities are the very qualities and abilities which are said to be 'natural' or inherent in women. Women gain a deeper belief in their inner strengths through challenging outdoor experiences, it is argued, because their groups are all-women.

A substantial example of this third dilemma is found in a text advocating "the power of adventure" for women in therapy (although it is evident in non-therapeutic writing as well). The editors aim to illustrate "the symbolic value of wilderness accomplishments to women's mental health" (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 4). The authors then explain their approaches in introducing women to "the healing

effects” of learning from other women while affirming their natural connection with the earth. Overall, they see women’s moral needs and female values as absent in traditional outdoor learning. In response, one author recommends “augmenting traditional risk taking activities with a focus on balance, flexibility, cooperation and caring” so that “we bring our female strengths to the sport [of rock climbing]” (Arnold, 1994, p. 53). Another set of authors advocate that women learn “to take appropriate emotional risks” (Hart & Silka, 1994, p. 113). ‘Male’ goals such as competence in risk taking should be replaced for women with competence in problem solving. Feminist metaphors should be used to empower “women-centred skills including communication and community-building skills” (Hart & Silka, 1994, p. 113). Two more authors list the new skills and abilities which their women clients gain on the wilderness component of their programme as brainstorming, communicating, collaborating, organizing and leadership (Aubrey & MacLeod, 1994, p. 213). Finally, still another author presents her programme as helping women to “move past oppressive socialization and prescriptions of what is acceptable behaviour for women” (Stopha, 1994, p. 103). Her emphasis is then on being non-competitive, building trust and offering emotional support.

Yet, as with the others, these behaviours are hardly considered *unacceptable* behaviours for women, but are ostensibly skills which women are thought to possess. This author explains that the initial phase of “ice breaker” activities “adds to the ability of women to form connections with each other” (Stopha, 1994, p. 106), but does not explain why women would need such activities, or be challenged by them, if women already have such an ability. She sees activities aimed at overcoming fear as essential for women to do together and illustrates her programme’s effectiveness with one participant’s comment: “I felt very emotionally strong...more accepting of my fear” (Stopha, 1994, p. 107). The language of therapy, with a focus on nurture and healing, refers exclusively to psychological change and well-being. As the “strengths” which women gain seem more likely to fit dominant social constructions of being a woman than to defy them, it is unclear how deepening them is “empowering.”

The oppositional positioning of women as morally relational and men as morally autonomous is complicated by the juxtaposition of women as emotionally competent, inner-directed beings and men as physically competent, outer-directed

beings. Another author in the text advocating “the power of adventure for women,” discussed above, claims that due to their desires to—and socialized abilities to—meet others’ needs, women have little control over their own needs. Hence mastery activities in the outdoors<sup>15</sup> meet men’s needs, but have little relevance to women. She argues that internal control over self, anxiety and fear is more important to women than external control, that is, mastery, dominance or conquest. To this author, the self-control for which she argues is the choice that leads to self-fulfilment rather than the learned self-denial embedded in femininity. With this definition she recuperates an inner self-knowledge which must be guarded as a women’s domain to combat socialization (Kiewa, 1994; see also Joyce, 1988; Mack, 1996). Again, there is no dissonance ascribed to the objective of more control of and recognition for areas in which women have supposedly predisposed psychological tendencies. The circular and unresolved dilemma of these approaches to models for practice hinges on loosely conceptualized epistemological bases for feminist programmes, the aims of which are based on loosely defined ontological assumptions about women.

To avoid the tautology and redefine the object of the feminist analysis, feminists in the outdoors must turn to practice in two ways. The first is to emphasize the ways in which new skills and activities in the outdoors offer the experience of power to women. The cultural feminist approach of reexamining and celebrating women’s psychological strengths and inner, feminine qualities actively reinscribes in women the ‘naturalness’ of their predispositions, needs and capabilities. It situates women’s strengths within definitions of sexual difference which preserve the oppositional structure of the gender order. Furthermore, it continues to shape the possibilities for bodily action within certain physical and lived discourses. The second way to reapproach practice is to clarify and open up understandings of femininity as less a dimension of the psyche and more a plurality of lived dimensions of bodily identity and body practice. If feminists in the outdoors are to point to the gendering of experience, they must move away from mother-child structuring of the psyche as the source of relational desires for connection in girls and women to examine other social sites in which girls and women live, embody and themselves practise gender relations.<sup>16</sup> The seeds for such a reinterpretation already exist in the narratives of ‘women in the outdoors.’

## Empowering Women: The Desire for Physical Strength

To illustrate more specifically the substantive limits of the cultural feminist approach, I want to pinpoint what it overlooks. It appears that there is little attention to the contradiction of striving to enhance personal qualities and mental health through using *physical* experiences in challenging environments. Here I turn to women's accounts of their own experiences. In an anecdotal but revealing list of the benefits of all-women groups, McClintock (1996b) randomly collects reasons given by women (at conferences, for example) for why they choose all-women outdoor trips. One woman says,

I'm trying to understand what it means to be a woman and not be defined by men. In mixed groups, I feel like I am either going along with the men's image of who I should be or rebelling against that image. With other women I think I can sort out a definition of myself as a woman that comes from inside of me and other women.

She points to the need for a separate femininity, not 'male-defined,' though she cannot explain how the presence of men imposes "men's image" of women on her. If her sense of self "comes from inside," why is it unavailable or why is it redefined by men when men are present? Another woman says,

I think women come into their own in women-only events. Men are empowered and privileged in our culture and women are often intimidated and self-conscious when men are around. The power dynamics are unequal. Women tend to be more confident in women-only events.

This woman's perception is that men's cultural privilege elicits a psychological response in women and when women deny men presence, the gain for the women is psychological. In the same vein, another woman says, "I go home feeling renewed." I do not want to dispute that such feelings of confidence and renewal may be enhanced in women-only events, but I do want to explore far more intricately the conditions which constitute them in these particular terms.

Three more women do specify what they experience in groups, which gives more insight into what exactly is defined for them or at stake in groups including men. One woman says, "I don't have to watch (as much) where I pee. I can be more open about my body and not feel like the men are checking me out as a potential sexual partner." For another,

there's a different competition level when men are involved. Being stronger, they will always throw farther, hit harder, run faster, spike the ball harder, etc. When involved with women, a woman who can run faster, hit harder, etc., is someone I can admire. She provides a model and a resource for information on how I can better myself.

And finally, a woman says,

for years, I went on co-ed trips where, as a highly skilled outdoorswoman, I found myself caught between connecting with the men around our shared competence and skills or with the women around our identity as women. On these trips, I often found the women became resentful of me or were intimidated by my skill level. Now I prefer to go on trips with women who share my skill level. (McClintock, 1996b, pp. 18-20)

All of these lived experiences are helpful in assembling a thick description of what happens to women "when they step into the woods;" all of these comments are echoed by respondents in the study reported here in later chapters.

These women's comments point to aspects of their interactions with men which are disturbing to them. They identify issues of bodily presence, freedom and social meanings, from those differentiating biological functions to sexuality to physical skill. They imply that they experience these issues as heteronormative, but not specifically tied to male presence: for instance, a physically skilled woman might intimidate other women as much as they are said to be intimidated by men. Her bodily competence represents what men use to constitute their identity, how they express masculinity. Alternatively, it is possible that a physically skilled woman might offer a new mode of being physical to other women. She represents a 'new' confidence *through* expressing physical competence. It appears, however, that such physical confidence is not

necessarily possible to sustain when men are present. Nevertheless, in the last example a physically competent woman desiring the affirmation of other women's company does not renounce her physical abilities to be like other women, but instead seeks out women who share her skill level. Her physical skill embodies a difference (which she evidently wants to respect) from certain, but not all, women.

Each of these three comments, indeed all of the comments collected by McClintock, illustrate the ongoing effects of heterogendered relations (Neilsen et al., 2000) in the outdoors. Contrary to what cultural feminists maintain, heteronormative relations of gender exist, I argue, whether men are physically present or not. For it is not men's bodies, but their social representation, even through women's bodies, which construct the physical relations mediating gendered interactions. Further contextual analysis is needed for these anecdotes to provide greater insight. The themes, however, are not uncommon. The comments are interesting to consider in light of what researchers found when they surveyed 267 American women on why they chose to participate specifically in all-women outdoor courses. It is reported that

over 70 percent responded that they particularly wanted to develop a high skill level in a specific activity, and 68 percent expressed the fear that in a mixed-gender group, imposed gender roles would make this skill attainment more difficult. Over 75 percent rejected the idea that they sought outdoor adventure groups to get help with psychological or interpersonal problems. (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985, p. 49)

The theoretical conflation of "imposed gender roles" with men's physical competence, skills and bodily privilege serves to obscure a potential feminist analysis of the constitutive effects of relations of the physical.

The research results and the anecdotal comments raise issues from women's own experience which appear in the literature, but are not recognized or discussed. Indeed, the popularity of the cultural feminist solution to the problem of how to validate a women-centred identity means that prescriptions for what women 'want' in all-women outdoor experiences are profoundly misconceived on interpretation. The survey above reports that women are "looking for freedom from gender roles, an enhanced sense of skill in physical activity and a chance to share their challenges with other

women” (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985, p. 50). Two adventure-based trainers create a feminist learning model around a ropes course<sup>17</sup> and list the principles on which they work; in the middle of the list is their goal of “presenting physical challenges to empower women” (Hart & Silka, 1994, p. 113). A feminist ropes course instructor who echoes their principles, as discussed above, claims that “women gain strength, self-esteem, self-empowerment and a sense of possibilities for moving beyond assumed limits by seeing other women doing what society has taught them not to do” (Stopha, 1994, p. 106). A programme director believes that “in a nurturing and supportive environment born of group support, [women] participants gain confidence, competence and strength as well as new options” (Mitten, 1992a, p. 57). Finally, an outdoor instructor notes that

research indicates positive changes in body image and the perception of one’s physical abilities only occur when the exercise produces either increased levels of fitness or improvement in skill levels. (Arnold, 1994, p. 46)

The improvement of strength, skill and physical ability for women is acknowledged in the literature as part of women’s outdoor experiences. It is not, however, an aspect considered central by their instructors through which to facilitate women’s psychological growth. Whether women are looking for strength or instructors are hoping to use physical activities for challenges, physical skills are not emphasized, physical competence is not pursued and, above all, feminist models do not aim to give women the physical training necessary to develop muscular strength, to learn to protect themselves or to accomplish *bodily* self-knowledge and power—and thus empowerment. For women to want “an enhanced sense of skill in physical activity” warrants a mere mention in the middle of a list. Even in the context of psychotherapeutics, practitioners *do* acknowledge their participants’ desire for strong bodies when quoting from those participants: “I learned to like my body again...it could be strong” (Powch, 1994, p. 20); “I can relate to *my* strength when with my gender” (Stopha, 1994, p. 106; emphasis in original); “I learned how strong I am” (Aubrey & MacLeod, 1994, p. 212). Yet none of the outdoor leaders conclude that it is precisely learning how physically strong they are, first and foremost, that these women want,

'need' and could actually use to actively reinscribe the feminine identities attributed to them (attributed by both dominant masculine practices *and* by cultural feminists).

Rather than redressing a threat to women's 'femininity,' the focus of a feminist outdoor programming should be to undermine the bodily conditions which make certain femininities physically normative.<sup>18</sup> One outdoor leader working with girls' groups makes a suggestion to outdoor leaders:

the image of being clean, looking pretty and composed clashes loudly with the rough, tough, I-haven't-washed-for-a-week image that still lingers around outdoor activities. The issue of whether it is the girls who should change or the activities begs discussion still. In the meantime...don't put down the 'Madonna' image--just try to bend a little.

If she breaks a fingernail, ask "was it worth it?" (Lynch, 1994, p. 153)

She makes a strategic connection between emphasized femininity and a physicality which is "worth it" for the potential of physical experience. Instead of denying the girls a highly physical experience, she suggests not denying "material girls" their investments in femininity in order to achieve their participation. In later sections it becomes evident that such a move is central to the argument for a corporeal feminism. In the next section, I examine current prescriptions for women's programmes outdoors and ask why they do not make the same recommendation for the physical "worth" of the experience in order to appeal to those inexperienced women who they position as "ordinary women."

### **Performing Prowess: Physical Strength as the Source of Difference**

Why is the evident desire for a strong body not the cornerstone of current feminist theorizing about 'women outdoors?' Why cannot becoming strong, specifically training to develop physical strength and skill, be central to women's experiences outdoors? These questions must first be examined in the context of how women's physical strength and skill, themselves, are treated in the 'women outdoors' literature, with suggestions for addressing the answers drawn from the wider context of feminist literature. It becomes apparent that there is a deep-seated fear that a focus on

physical skill leads to a focus on prowess, considered narrow and self-serving in pedagogical terms, but, more importantly, unproductive for women who will be 'naturally' disadvantaged by their biology.

Predominant claims in the outdoors literature link women's inner identity to a feminine sense of self based on 'strengths' which, as asymmetrical to men's, cannot be physical. "Stepping into the woods" is less hazardous to a woman's femininity if her inner being is recognized and valued, instead of constantly failing the male standard of mastery. She can experience freedom to be truly feminine, it is proposed, by going to the wilderness exclusively with other women. I have previously highlighted theoretical limitations and empirical oversights in this literature. Now I want to suggest that the most damaging aspect of these now taken-for-granted claims is their foreclosure of women's bodily capabilities and physical strength.

Physical strength is the most powerful and least visible of the "gender issues" raised in feminist critiques of outdoor adventure models. Focusing on the technical and physical skills necessary for outdoor pursuits and expeditions, feminists widely argue that the expectations of skill development are a problem for women in the outdoors, though, curiously, for participants *and* outdoor leaders. They suggest that "traditional" skills and pursuits be adapted to women's "proportionately weaker" capabilities. Seen as a defining 'need' for women, this is often interpreted as the source of a social conflict for women. "Women do not work well in highly competitive settings" (Hornibrook et al., 1997, p. 157) rationalizes one study of the motivations for seeking a women-only programme after finding that one-third of the women are motivated by the absence of men. "The presence of men only highlights any feelings of inadequacy women might have," say two leaders of a women-only venture in New Zealand (Meduna, 1995, p. 31).

Summary reviews of the literature quickly take up the argument as social fact. Women generally do not participate in outdoor programmes due to "their lack of confidence in their physical ability" (Nolan & Priest, 1993, p. 14) and belief that they are not strong enough, concludes a summary digest. It is suggested that women need more "female role models in the outdoors," with little attention to how other women achieve strength, ability and confidence to role model these areas of deficiency; their

call is perhaps for the supportive role models of the programmes discussed earlier in which non-competitiveness and relationships are more important than physical skill and capability.<sup>19</sup> But generalizations such as these are not borne out by the large-scale American survey of women participants in all-women outdoor programmes which found that respondents “particularly wanted to develop a high skill level in a specific activity” (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985, p. 49). To those women, it is not the women’s lack of confidence in their own ability to improve their skill level which makes this goal difficult, but the presence of men in mixed groups. Clearly the two are not unrelated. Their interrelationship is discussed further as this project develops. Significantly, there is an apparent reluctance to examine the issue, and social constituents, of women’s physical strength closely. Gender difference is uncritically lodged within a sexual difference which produces developmental truths about women’s relational needs without considering other ways in which skilful bodies are implicated in constructing social privilege and difference.

The assumption in much of the analytical literature is that most “ordinary women” (Warren, 1985, p. 13) never achieve the physical strength which is privileged as natural in men. Discussions of gendered barriers in the outdoors more usually list problems of socialization, lack of prior experience, unequal opportunities for training and “the coed wilderness trip” as impediments to women’s participation (Warren, 1985). Cultural myths are identified which work to homogenize women’s and men’s different experiences and conceal the difficulties women face. One myth, in particular, is the pedagogical belief that nature provides an egalitarian learning environment which is “an ideal place to revise prevailing social conditioning” (Warren, 1985, p. 11); it is proposed that this disadvantages women, because their biology does not allow them to develop or participate in egalitarian conditions. It is argued that, as a consequence,

it is important for adventure course leaders to understand how wilderness experiences that subtly emphasize physical prowess perpetuate the myth of egalitarianism and undermine a woman’s experience outdoors. Since research has demonstrated that women have proportionately less absolute strength than men, wilderness course

components that favor strength discriminate against women. (Warren, 1985, p. 11)

According to some analyses, the neutrality of nature's consequences gives women an egalitarian environment which is gender-free. These writers attribute the egalitarianism of nature to its 'level playing field' of opportunity and its social 'blindness.' For example, rain falls indiscriminately on everyone in the expedition, the consequences of wilderness obstacles are 'even-handed' (Powch, 1994, p. 18) and 'the rock doesn't care' who is rock climbing (Kessell, 1994, p. 195). In contrast, Warren's (1985) argument is that experiences in nature are effected by, and actually determined by, the innate bodily differences of gendered adventurers. The problem for women which vindicates the essentialist perspective would be seen here as the subtle emphasis on physical prowess.

The problem of physical prowess is also the catalyst which can be used to open new areas of cultural theorising. I would argue that wilderness experiences and 'nature's consequences' are social effects already embedded in systems of power. Wilderness experiences require physical capability and strength, but these bodily practices are already implicated in gender, producing systems which rest on a "logic of differentiation" (Birrell & Cole, 1994). The politics of physical power is at work in the gender relations of "the wilderness classroom" (Morch, 1997). The implication is that the *desire* to live one's physical prowess defines wilderness experiences and outdoor adventurers as masculine. Physical prowess is about bodily competence, but it is appropriated by men through certain practices, such as leadership practices, training priorities, technical certification, language, constructions of meaning (the expedition 'epic,' the expert 'guru') and theorizing that protect the realm of mastery and "the hard, physical" (Bell, 1990) as masculine. Of significance to this study are the ways in which women experience and resist or comply with such appropriation. As long as gender identity is considered biologically determined then what has been called the "muscle gap" (Kane, 1995) between men and women is maintained unchallenged. Indeed, physical prowess is feared and men's physical superiority is reproduced as natural in this argument.

The unexamined basis to the "myth of egalitarianism" is not biological or psychological, but corporeal. It involves *how* the learning of physical skill takes place.

It is important to identify, as does Cockburn (1981, p. 44) in her study of male printers, how “the imbalance of bodily effectiveness between males and females is produced through social practices.” She asks how “a small physical difference in size, strength and reproductive function [in women] is developed into an increasing relative physical disadvantage to men and vastly multiplied by differential access to technology” (Cockburn, 1981, p. 44). In the outdoors, Warren (1985) contends that a woman’s lack of upper arm strength means that a woman must rely on perfecting technique in order to travel through the wilderness. A man unskilled in portaging a canoe relies on “muscling the canoe up” (Warren, 1985, p. 11) to his shoulders and he need not learn technique. Men’s muscular strength countervails women’s need for support and time to gain skill. Warren credits “the male body type,” an innate, biological status, rather than turning to social and corporeal practices for men’s physical competence. The weaker female ‘body type’ requires compensatory technique and skills for access to physical success. Women’s “failure and feelings of inadequacy” (Warren, 1985, p. 11) in wilderness pursuits are inevitable, indeed invariable, in light of the myth of egalitarianism. When women even attempt to rely on strength their “femininity is in question” and after failing their physical capacity is forever inadequate and self-esteem sabotaged.

The only solution in this view is for women to go into the outdoors with other women and *not* to perfect or prove their prowess. When rock climbing, women ought to remain “concentrating on climbs that emphasize less upper body strength and more grace” (Warren, 1985, p. 12; see also Arnold, 1994). Indeed, the goals of a well-established women’s adventure programme in the United States include among its “ten principles of leadership and program design” that “we travel the wilderness for its own sake, not using it as a means to an end, not to create situations to take risk[s], or prove competency” (Mitten, 1985, p. 21; see also Henderson, 1996, p. 115; Mitten, 1992a, p. 58; Mitten, 1994, p. 76; Mitten, 1996a, p. 79). This “principle” follows the “primary responsibility” of guides that they ensure a “safe” atmosphere for women.

Contrary to the view that nature is a great ‘leveller,’ Warren’s (1985) argument is that nature itself is not egalitarian because when its imperatives—light, weather, terrain—demand efficiency, men and women lapse into gender differentiated tasks and

roles in order to work together most efficiently. Thus her criticism of “the coed wilderness trip” (Warren, 1985, p. 11) appears to be about prior role socialization and the ingrained complementarity of gendered habits. Yet she actually argues that men’s and women’s bodies are unequally “suited to” the physical rigours of different wilderness tasks and that it is for this reason that women are slower, carry less and do the cooking. As women, they might seek out natural places for nurturing, healing and learning to accept themselves (Angell, 1994), but according to this argument, women must first accept that men’s and women’s bodies are naturally different. Women’s specific needs, then, are best met in mainstream programmes by “alter[ing] course components” and offering “realistic challenges based on women’s skills and abilities” (Warren, 1985, p. 12). She urges “de-emphasizing intensive physical strength in challenging situations” (Warren, 1985, p. 12).

It is, then, a “male model” in which learning physical skill involves proving prowess through physical risk-taking. According to two wilderness therapists, physical challenges have often been regarded as distinctively male...many facilitators continue to be males who receive little training in supporting the growth of women and these facilitators may use the ropes course experience to perpetuate gender-based stereotypes in physical settings. Unmodified, adventure-based training can become an exercise in proving one’s physical prowess rather than an opportunity for growth. (Hart & Silka, 1994, p. 112)

A modified model would empower women through providing “appropriate emotional risks” and applying feminist learning metaphors (Hart & Silka, 1994, p. 113; see also Mack, 1996). Another therapist argues that wilderness courses for women are more than just “a vehicle by which women can master skills that enhance self-esteem and a sense of control” (Powch, 1994, p. 25), but more importantly comprise a healing, spiritual experience. She dismisses the “male model” as mere mastery and, as above, attempts to circumscribe difference by recuperating a female model that is “much greater” than one about physical competence. She urges a more holistic “reclamation of the earth as a woman’s place” (Powch, 1994, p. 25).

The deeply invested cultural belief that men's physical strength is both natural and exclusive is necessary to the social construction and maintenance of sexual difference and the gender order. As a cultural belief, it has only recently been contested in sociological and cultural studies research (e.g., Birrell & Cole, 1994; Connell, 1983, 1987, 1995; Hall, 1987, 1996; Lenskyj, 1986; McDermott, 1996, 2000; Theberge, 1985; Whitson, 1990, 1994; Willis, 1982). Yet, as demonstrated above, it is the hidden foundation for arguments in the outdoors literature for gender difference. Critical feminist psychologists, sociologists and philosophers confronting structural explanations for social relations are finding new ways of defining gender difference independent of sex as an organizing principle. My study takes up such a critical framework in order to contribute new knowledge to the literature of experiential learning and 'women outdoors' about how physical bodies and bodily capacities are gendered. It engages with this emergent project (see also Andrews, 1984; Allin, 2000) through examining the lived relationship of gendered bodies to sexuality, class and corporeal subjectivities in the physical practices and life experiences of a group of women who work in the outdoors.

### *Action, Physicality and Physical Relations*

The theoretical impetus for this project is examined in more detail in Chapter 2, but warrants a brief introduction here. This research moves beyond the oppositional exclusion or complementarity of difference to explore the broader production of social subjectivities as the consequence of learned, skilled movements incorporated into "models of bodily action" (Connell, 1987, p. 85; see also Bartky, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977; Young, 1990c). It begins from the premise that gendered bodies and gendered experience are produced in physical relations, that is, in certain physical skills, movements and dimensions which effect social privilege and which are recognized and reproduced in social interaction. Thus, gendered bodies are much more than socially meaningful bodies and moreover not reducible to physical ("objectively" measurable or biologically/sexually determined) components. Indeed, as the pivotal concept of prowess illustrates, the physical body and its movement is the conduit for complex

social meanings and the socially-defined body may also represent “the *feel* of femininity and masculinity” (Connell, 1987, p. 84; emphasis in original). Both serve to give gendered subjectivity a physical constitution, that is, a physicality. And through physicality new forms of gendered subjectivity emerge, for physical relations produce bodies which are unevenly and specifically gendered in different ways.

In the outdoors, the wilderness expedition or adventure course may be taken as a specific “model of bodily action.” In the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature (there is not yet a literature on men’s experiences), physical strength is attributed to men and is the criterion for the gendering of outdoor activities as masculine. Parallel models of bodily action are used to normalize the constitution of masculinity through physical challenges outdoors in the historical construction of such learning experiences as “the moral equivalent of war” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 346). When outdoor activities are labelled the “male” model and the outdoors labelled a “male domain” they are dismissed as models of gender. They are rejected as constitutive of masculinity as an ontological identity, that is, of a masculine way of being, the essence of maleness. They cannot be considered for women within the essentialist dichotomy of gender.

It becomes apparent through its rejection, however, that the ‘male model’ is measured by the degree of *physicalness* (McDermott, 1996) required in its pursuit and there is little scope, then, within a gendered complementarity for understanding the appeal of outdoor activities to women in practice. Powch (1994, p. 25) concedes, above, that outdoor “skills...enhance self-esteem and a sense of control” for women and men. Yet she dismisses them as mere mastery, reducing the ‘male model’ to a model of bodily action. In the process, she links masculinity with a simple, brute physicality. What is masculinizing about the ‘male model’ is its sheer physicalness.

I would argue that the challenges of wilderness experiences are in fact constitutive of *masculine physicality*, that is, the potential for sheer physicalness, pleasure and power that has been attributed to men’s experience of maleness (Connell, 1983, 1987, 1995). Outdoor activities are delimited for ‘women outdoors’ by the consensual social processes of gendering physical experience, action and skill as pleasurable and powerful and thus for men. More importantly, they are also proscribed within cultural feminist theorizing in which women are gendered through the

oppositional linking of female bodies with an essential femininity to which strength, skill and physical prowess are not attributed. Thus, maleness is presumed to be a bodily experience, whereas, paradoxically, femininity is not. The crux of the matter is *how* exactly physicality is used as the basis for exclusionary social practices and this problem directs the empirical findings of this study and others in later chapters.

It is clear from the literature that “proving one’s physical prowess” is a defining concern in writing on women’s experiences outdoors. This is not surprising as it is the central purpose in the most common model of bodily action, competitive sport, in its particular role as a masculinizing practice (Connell, 1987; Messner, 1990; Whitson, 1990). Compared with sport, outdoor activities have been seen as an alternative model of bodily action, the wilderness a place in which “new” sports might emerge, because expeditions and adventures are thought to be non-competitive, non-confrontational and non-aggressive (Whitson, 1990, 1994). Feminist critiques have incidentally identified physical prowess to be a masculinizing practice in the outdoors as well. Prowess is performance at the highest level of competence. As performance, it is also linked to boldness, daring, courage, risk-taking and heroism. It is translated in the outdoors to mean mastery, conquest and superiority over adversity and, therefore, often thought of as domination over nature. Physical prowess means physical, but heroic, power. In this context, “prowess of this kind becomes a means of judging one’s degree of masculinity” (Connell, 1987, p. 85; see also Hargreaves, 1997). Proving one’s prowess evokes machismo, that is, pride in the embodiment of masculinity.

### *Feminist Approaches to Physicality*

Physical prowess is not just a factor in wilderness challenges and sport. A case study of physical education in four all-girls’ schools finds that the “girls are not stretched physically either in skill acquisition or, more specifically, in the development of physical strength or general fitness” (Scraton, 1992, p. 97). Instead, the girls are disciplined about their clothing, appearance, demeanour and uncontrolled movements; “neatness” and “finish” are more important than being aggressively active or adventurous (Scraton, 1992, p. 54). The researcher concludes that “through physical

education girls and young women learn a female 'physicality' which emphasizes appearance, presentation and control (desirable 'femininity'), while boys are encouraged to develop strength, aggression and confidence in their physical prowess (desirable 'masculinity')" (Scraton, 1992, p. 13). She extrapolates that "today 'fitness of the body for action in strength, agility and flexibility' remains the ideology of male physicality....For women, the ideology of the physical is...constrained in action and experienced as subordinate to and, especially in appearance, defined by men" (Scraton, 1992, p. 104).

Scraton's research scrutinizes the ways that physical activity is circumscribed for girls even in contexts of all-girl schools, all-women teaching staff and women advisors, with a curriculum historically developed by women. Despite offering some challenge to male dominant definitions of appropriate physical activity for boys and girls, physical education in the particular schools she studied was found not to be counter hegemonic or ultimately empowering for the girls. She defines the physical experiences 'allowed' the girls in these schools by what she calls "a construct of 'female physicality'" (Scraton, 1992, p. 97), by which she appears to mean the emphasis on grace, poise and modest movement, that is, bodily gestures and control required by hegemonic masculinity. It is a physicality which supports the western "contemporary patriarchal definitions of women's submissiveness, passivity and dependence" (Scraton, 1992, p. 127). As such, it produces a "compliant femininity" (Connell, 1987).

Other feminists conceptualize physicality differently and offer more depth to the alternative forms of "women's physical potential" to which Scraton (1992, p. 127) can only allude. Physicality must encompass "the full complexity and political significance of the woman's body, the full spectrum of power and powerlessness it represents," according to Rich (1977, p. 283). In her search for a more intelligible embodiment of feminine subjectivity, she asks

whether women cannot begin, at last, to *think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganized—our great mental capacities, hardly used; our highly developed tactile sense; our genius for close observation; our complicated, pain-enduring, multi-pleasured

physicality...There is for the first time today a possibility of converting our physicality to knowledge and power. (Rich, 1977, p. 284; emphasis in original)

For Rich and other radical feminists, women's physicality is the very source of resistance to the Western ideal of compliant femininity. It involves the contradiction in bodily experiences which is experienced by women *because* they are women. In one sense, it is consistent with the definition of physicality as a subjective and "physical sense of genderedness" (Connell, 1987, p. 84), while at the same time emphasizing that a liberatory physicality is also produced historically and culturally within the gender order. Physicality is more than an embodiment of gender in its dominant form or the potential for resistance to an ideal embodiment; it involves ongoing practical conversions, knowledge and power, that is, the exercise of physical relations which effect femininities as social subjectivity.

In a similar radical feminist analysis of sport, MacKinnon (1987) examines physicality which she generally takes to mean "being physical." She argues that physicality shapes bodies in specific ways. Being physically active generates physical presence, physical self-respect and physical self-possession. It also effects the embodiment of culture, the enforced normative shaping of bodies within the hierarchical gender order. The embodiment of culture thus materially shapes a subjective experience of self which is different for women than men.

Because of the history of women's subjection, physicality for women has a different meaning from physicality for men. Physicality for men has meant male dominance; it has meant force, coercion, and the ability to subdue and subject the natural world, one central part of which has been us. For women...when we have been physical, it has meant claiming and possessing a physicality that is our own...We have had to gain a relation to our bodies *as if they are our own.*" (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 121; emphasis in original)

MacKinnon (1987) would not agree with Scraton (1992) that a female physicality is tentative and submissive. Instead, she would argue that tentativeness is the "social meaning of female identity," embodied in residual experiences, that is, through the

“feminine physical pursuits that have been left to us” (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 119). She suggests that physicality is not culturally available to women unless and until they appropriate it. She sees physicality—being physical—as a mode through which women appropriate the social structures which objectify their bodies, give them new subjective meanings and develop “a physicality that is our own.” Women controlling their own reproductive changes or birthing processes is one example; women finding pleasure and sensuousness in the skilful use of their bodies is another.

Such examples appear to concur with Rich’s description of women’s “complicated...multi-pleasured physicality.” But to MacKinnon, it is only through being physically *active* that women gain self-respect for their bodies and a better subjective understanding of themselves. She specifically wants to afford women the experience of their “actual physical ability *to do*” (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 119; emphasis added) physical accomplishments, that is, to experience their bodily competence. Despite the distinctions, between ‘having’ a physicality and ‘doing’ physicality, for example, I think that all of these perspectives on women’s physicality can coexist. Of central importance to this project is that neither argument theorizes *how* physicality is accomplished. Physicality is not an attribute, rather it is a social effect, made and remade in physical relations. It is possible that a contextual continuum of physicalities may be identified (see also McDermott, 1996); a discussion of corporeal self-transformation in Chapter 2 offers further explanation.

The same themes are taken up by women investigating how femininity is experienced through their own relationships with their bodies in the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1980s (Haug, 1987). Their collective research demonstrates how it might be possible to claim one’s body as one’s own, as MacKinnon suggests, in practice. When the women record and analyse what it is that they actually *do* in their everyday lives, then not only their experiences of their bodies, but also their own participation in bodily practices of femininity become clear. They may understand that structures of gender dominate their possible decisions and position them as objects of men’s desire, but they see their bodies, physical experiences and compromises in living the social expectations of femininity *as their own*. They become the “self-possessing”

subjects of their experiences by analysing the historical conditions which produce the ways they *do* femininity.

In addition, the awareness that one engages in bodily practices in order to comply with or resist the dominant ideal embodiment of femininities at any particular time allows more choice. To McDermott (1996) this is a “physical agency” and it is located within the meanings of physicality. If women gain self-possession and self-respect through “being physical,” they are able, then, to choose to control those practices in which they engage or by which their bodies are used by others, they are able to rely on their bodies and know their own capabilities and they are able, above all, to defend and protect their bodies and selves. Agency is usually conceptualized as the ability to form and transform one’s existence within humanistic notions of the rational, autonomous, disembodied individual. Yet, Haug, MacKinnon and McDermott emphasize that within the restraints of social relations, specifically within gender relations which embody femininity, there are means by which individual women make personal meaning. These are physical means, that is, physical practices, and therefore constitute a physical agency.

Physicality therefore encompasses the physical shape of genderedness, the physical ways in which one lives one’s gendered subjectivity, the physical ability to enact choices for meaningful action, the knowledge of one’s physical accomplishments and the social practices through which one bestows self-respect on one’s body. In this sense physicality is never beyond the social and as such is always gendered. It is in total a practical effect available for appropriation and is always therefore involved in the production of gendered bodies.

Further work by Young (1990c) in feminist philosophy takes up another particular aspect of physicality which extends the work of both Rich and MacKinnon. She argues that not only are women’s bodies culturally objectified through gestures and movements, but women’s subjectivity is experienced, known and practised through actual bodily movement. She does not see ‘the self’ as separate from ‘the body’ and carefully scrutinizes feminine bodily movements, within a Western cultural context, for what they reveal about women’s gendered physicality as subjectivity. Thus, women come to know themselves through their bodies as they move intentionally through

space. She builds her feminist account on the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and his “theory of the lived body” (Young, 1990c, p. 144). Physicality may comprise a combination of sensuous feelings, practical habits and the muscles and movements of the physically capable body, but in “being physical” these then shape a way of experiencing the world, of knowing the self-in-the-world, through conscious, that is, “lived,” action. Young (1979, p. 49) theorizes what she calls “body subjectivity” as the way that, as Rich (1977) hopes, we might “think through the body.”

The concept of physicality, then, offers the key to understanding the fear of physical prowess on the part of feminists and ‘women in the outdoors’ writing. If physicality is constructed as those aspects of “being physical” valued as masculinizing practices in society (Connell, 1987, 1995; Whitson, 1990, 1994; Young & White, 1995), then the dominant associations of proving physical prowess with masculinity have very real impacts on women’s lived experiences of themselves, their bodies and their prowess. The theme of ‘proving oneself’ as an outdoor leader is discussed further in Chapter 5.

### *Muscularity and Natural Bodies*

Another dimension of physicality is an athleticism or, more accurately, muscularity. It is the socially constituted *physicalness* of the body itself, rather than that of the self or of the activity. Muscularity requires voluntary body practices to sustain it as much as to transform it. In this way it is both social representation and social practice. It is “culture ‘*made* body’” (Bordo, 1989, p. 13; emphasis in original). Gendering certain body practices “ensures that the distance between male and female muscularity is maintained and the...commonsense notion that men have a greater biological muscularity is continued” (MacNeill, 1988, p. 206). Although pre-course adventure programme materials for students often suggest an improvement of aerobic fitness, there is only one suggestion in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature that appropriate preparation for a new physical experience is by beginning to develop muscular strength. An outdoor leader working with girls’ groups recommends “a programme of fitness and strength training at school before the camp/trip,” including

wearing harnesses and using equipment, loading packs and walking around the local area and “distributing gear loads according to body weight” (Lynch, 1994, p. 153-154). Her suggestions are drawn from an empirical case study of the experiences of girls at a residential outdoor education centre.

Historically, the “new” cultural acceptance of a muscular femininity in strong women becomes especially evident after the increase in women’s participation in aerobics and other forms of physical activity in the 1970s (Butler, 1987; Kirk, 1993; MacNeill, 1988; Markula, 1995). It is one example of the way in which cultural definitions of embodied femininity do shift. Popular magazines representing the female body and inscriptions of femininity respond to and popularize such cultural shifts; indeed, it is argued that they participate in effecting certain shifts as well (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994). If the muscular female body emerging from the 1970s is one response to the controlled, domesticated feminine mystique (Friedan, 1963) of the 1960s, it is argued that representations of the natural woman from the 1980s is another response (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994). The natural woman, who is promoted as such in one women’s magazine because she is *not* obsessed with her hair colour, makeup, diet, body shape, clothing or aging, is considered to be ““more doggedly *herself*,’ more real” (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994, p. 17; emphasis in original).

The ideology of the natural body in the outdoors has little connection to, and thus obscures, a physicalness of the female body. With its constructions of the cyclical, flowing, sensuous and ‘earthy’ woman (e.g., Sauer, 1994), it also enshrines the belief that the real self lies deep within a pure and freely expressed, ontological femininity. The early ‘women in the outdoors’ literature attempts to represent women’s physical activity in the outdoors as more for relaxation, fun and friendship (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Mitten, 1985, 1992a) than either for fitness and a more muscular physicality or for resistance to a highly controlled, cosmetic femininity. Thus, paradoxically, the outdoors woman with a ‘natural’ physicality has little time for the “trim, taut and terrific” (Kirk, 1993) cultural bodily ideal constructed in the exercise gym. And ‘natural’ as real and not constructed in culture (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994) is successfully opposed to a muscular, constructed and, therefore, unfeminine strength. This is a significant aspect to the reply to the questions of, firstly, why the desire for a

strong body cannot be the cornerstone of current feminist theorizing about ‘women outdoors,’ and, secondly, why becoming strong is not made central to women’s experience outdoors.

### **Psychological Safety: Fear, Physicality and Sexuality**

It is my intent in this research to unsettle the dismissal of the ‘male model’ for women. I have suggested that the outdoor course or expedition is a model of bodily action in which biologically defined differences are produced through, rather than reflected by, the particular gendered physicality—that is, the proving of prowess—required for wilderness skill and travel. As *physical differences*, these are effected in *relations of the physical* as opposed to a static, culturally defined embodiment of biology. From the previous discussion, it is apparent that the theoretical reasons that seeking or proving physical prowess are not considered ‘natural’ to women are based in the oppositional definition of masculine and feminine essences and also situated within a humanistic metanarrative of the transcendence of the body. In this section, I want to analyse the specific and differentiating model of bodily action which is constructed in the feminist solution to the problem of the ‘male model’ in the literature.

Following the claims that women’s needs and strengths are more psychological than men’s, the model proposed for women which affirms such a “feminine culture” (Lovinfosse, 1986) is one that protects and enhances women’s “psychological safety.” But the very categorization of the ‘male model’ of physical competence as “unsafe” for women exposes the interrelation of relations of sexuality and gender in the physical experiences of ‘women in the outdoors.’ Lived experiences of women provide a useful way to understand this phenomenon. Why, for example, would one woman say that she feels “safer” in the wilderness, despite its cultural associations with fear, risk and danger (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994b; Griffin, 1978; Powch, 1994), with other women? She says,

I chose an all-women's trip because I wouldn't consider going on a trip with men I didn't know. It feels like a safer environment and I don't have to deal with macho or sexual stuff. I could be nude if I wanted to be and not have to be concerned with the opposite sex. (Mitten, 1992a, p. 57)

The 'male model' is defined as one initiated by the presence of men, and masculine aggression, as shown in the last section, but, more importantly, it revolves around their presence as "the opposite sex." It is a heterosexually normative cultural form, that is, one which is produced through the heterosexualization of its activities and skills (Nielsen et al., 2000). In turn, it produces the heteronormativity of physicality. Moreover, it serves to appropriate sexual desire for men as that which positions them as "active, desiring subjects" (Jones, 1994). This woman is quoted as refusing the position of desired object: "I don't have to deal with macho or sexual stuff," but in so doing she invokes her own objectification and vulnerability: "it feels like a safer environment."

The cultural feminist 'women outdoors' literature does not address issues of sexuality or the ways that dominant heterosexual relations produce an "impossible tension" (Jones, 1994) for strong women, "a tension through which [feminists resisting coercion] reconstitute ourselves as powerless and victims" (Jones, 1994, p. 2). I attribute such an impossible positioning for women to their rejection of the 'male model.' There is a small literature on homophobia and the experiences of gay and lesbian youth and outdoor leaders (Bradish, 1995; Davidson, 1994; McClintock, 1996a). As in other contexts of inquiry, however, heterosexuality is otherwise assumed as the norm attracting little scrutiny while homosexual experience is singled out as different (Chodorow, 1994; Davidson, 1994; Nielsen et al., 2000). The heterosexual construction of gender as physical difference is another aspect to the reply to the questions of why the desire for a strong body cannot be the cornerstone of feminist theorizing about 'women outdoors' and central to women's own experiences outdoors.

Anecdotes illustrate that some women in mixed outdoor situations have experienced a heterosexualisation of their bodies, verbal hostility, and predatory, even assaultive, social interactions with men. More empirically reported incidents are

presented in this study in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Even women who lead trips for women-only programmes have inevitably participated in professional training and/or been examined for certification in mixed groups. It is not clear why these experiences have not previously been problematized, but the constant reiteration of “the presence of men” indicates that “the coed wilderness trip,” as a model of bodily action, is a key site of bodily regulation. As long as the ‘women outdoors’ literature focuses on a singular, uniformly-sexed identity and corresponding “imposed gender roles” (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985) for women,<sup>20</sup> then the disciplining of women’s bodies through heteronormative male physical power and physical gender relations is not taken into account.

### *Femininity as Physical Vulnerability*

In order to examine the bodily regulation of women effected by the presence of men and, specifically, the masculinizing practices or the ‘male model,’ I turn to feminist analyses of femininity and women’s physicality. Along with the radical feminist argument that the (hetero)sexual objectification of women effects the social subordination of women, MacKinnon (1987) proposes that femininity itself means physical weakness and vulnerability to domination (see also Lenskyj, 1986). She insists that heterosexual relations of dominance which enforce an embodiment of femininity as normative female identity are predicated on “the systematic maiming of women’s physicality” (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 118). It is a striking image. In this view, the woman as sexual object is sexualized to be submissive or, in her words, “rapeable,” but the woman who is physically fit, strong and capable, who acts with her body rather than is acted upon and who ‘owns’ her body, is not sexualized, is not submissive and is not violable. She is not an object of (male) desire. She is no longer feminine. Women who are physically active

gain a different relation to our bodies than women are allowed to have in this society. We have had to gain a relation to our bodies *as if they are our own*. The physical self-respect and physical presence that women

can get from sport is antithetical to femininity. (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 121; emphasis in original)

This is not the same argument as the claim that in the wilderness “a woman’s femininity is at stake.” Warren (1985), Mitten (1985), Stopha (1994), Kiewa (1994) and others claim that feminine identity must be protected and validated through outdoor courses for women which are not intensely physical. MacKinnon (1987) and others (e.g., Griffin, 1982) claim that feminine identity itself is constructed through such a fear of the physical and rejection of a physical femininity. Both arguments pose a loss of femininity in physical activity, but MacKinnon’s (1987) juxtaposition of sexualized feminine weakness with women’s physical resistance to objectification helps to expose the deeper context from which emerges the fear of the loss of femininity in the outdoors. It is not only that gender role conflict or physical failure undermine women’s self-esteem, but that a physical femininity threatens the psychological structures of sexual difference and the (hetero)sexualisation of women in which femininity is constructed as much in discourses of outdoor education (Davidson, 1994) as in sport, physical education and other models of bodily action.

### *The Presence of Men: Competition and Deference*

It seems contradictory that becoming strong in the outdoors would be avoided by women because it is threatening to men and, in turn, creates a situation in which women feel “unsafe.” Yet, feminist arguments that women cannot participate in outdoor programmes with mixed groups almost always rest on an ambivalence to “the presence of men.” It is my position that the normalizing function of men’s physical presence, and men’s cultural appropriation of the forceful use of the body to define masculine physicality (Whitson, 1990, 1994), informs the desire in women to sustain dominant physical relations. When women resist male definitions of ideal femininity and pursue physical experiences of their bodies, they, too, gain physical presence, argues MacKinnon (1987); yet, they begin to appropriate the cultural construction of masculinity. It is evident in the outdoor leadership and women in outdoor leadership

literature, as will be seen in Chapter 4, that this is deeply disturbing for men. I contend that the literature conveys an anxiety that is just as disturbing for some women.

Furthermore, when women with physical strength and physical self-respect are labelled not only unfeminine, but also lesbian, “the relation between sexuality and physicality” is exposed such that “when a woman comes to own her own body, that makes her heterosexuality problematic” (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 122; see also McClintock, 1996a). Specifically, “it’s threatening to one’s takeability, one’s rapeability, one’s femininity, to be strong and physically self-possessed” (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 122). Incongruously, however, strong women active in the outdoors do experience and express fear of male violence in the outdoors. Strong, capable women in the outdoors are (hetero)sexualized, embodied and physically marginalized. The relation between physicality, gender and sexuality is clearly central to the problem of pursuing strong bodies for women outdoors.

Empirical comments illustrate that some women feel that competition in physical activities with fellow participants who are men regulates their movements and activities (Arnold, 1994). These women say they choose all-women programmes because they are promised a non-competitive, supportive and nurturing learning experience. The women speaking here appear cognizant that men’s ‘competition’ is doubly for their attention and their compliance. For one woman the value of a women-only wilderness experience is that there is “no competition for male attention. [It is] a chance for women to show their leadership, management and organizational skills” (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a, p. 27). Such normative relations of heterosexuality are not considered in pedagogical proposals for the outdoors, but they are visible in many narrative descriptions of women’s outdoor experiences and, as will be seen in Chapter 4, in those of women outdoor leaders.

One American participant, for example, tells her all-women group that she is “more comfortable on a trip without all the male-female games” (Mitten, 1992a, p. 56). A woman Outward Bound student says,

I personally wanted an experience where I was freed of male influence...I often feel more self-conscious, judged, less secure when a male is present. I believe that group dynamics can be significantly different with

male presence for other women as well. This often takes the form of increased competitiveness amongst women, more evident insecurities about appearance and body image. Therefore, all-women's experiences allow women to relax and explore themselves further in a chosen way without judgement that it will not fit with male expectations. (Arnold, 1994, p. 48)

Another woman Outward Bound student is reported as saying,

I chose an all-women's group because I did not want the feeling of competing with or being protected by men in the group. I sometimes feel that men feel the need to protect and instruct women in physical situations. We as women often defer to male physical strength.

(Arnold, 1994, p. 49)

In a British example, the deference to strength is extended to technical ability:

A woman on a recent Mountain Leadership Training course confessed to me that her husband always does the map-reading, although she clearly had years of hillwalking experience behind her. My own experience before going for Mountain Leader training was similar, having allowed male friends to navigate and take the lead. It is easy for women to slip into a secondary subservient role to a confident male, even though he may be considerably less experienced. (Johnson, 1990, p. 40)

Incorporating this sentiment, an American woman is reported as explaining that "on mixed trips she had always felt that she had been catered to and she wanted to see if she could do it herself" (Mitten, 1992a, p. 56).

Although recent empirical studies in the outdoors wrestle with this heterosexual dynamic of subordination (K. S. Bell, 1990; M. Bell, 1993a, 1996b; Morch, 1997), there is little guidance or insight within 'women outdoors' narratives or theorizing. I would argue that deference to men is not about male body type, physical strength or technical skill (as is implied in the arguments against "proving prowess"), but about compliance to a gender order in which competition is a masculinizing practice and deference is a feminizing practice. "It is naturally very easy for women to fall into accepted social patterns [in the outdoors]," concludes a British outdoor leader (Johnson,

1990, p. 40). The concern about the “coed wilderness trip” is not that women will actually engage in physical competition with men, but that women do *not* compete or strive to acquire skills at all while feeling “catered to,” incapable and insecure. These ‘feelings’ undermine women’s confidence because they are not actually about physical skills or competence, but about women’s desire and constant negotiation of heterosexual relations. All-women courses are viewed as “a non-competitive or safe environment” (Arnold, 1994, p. 48), a place in which women are free of the need for men’s approval in order to increase their self-esteem (Arnold, 1994). Indeed, an observer of an all-women Outward Bound course writes that

competition among women has always been a touchy subject, carrying with it the inevitable connotation of subtle and none-too-fairly-fought battles for the attention of men. Remove men from the equation, however—exclude them from the group, go off to the wilderness without them—and suddenly there it is: competition in search of one’s own excellence, competition for the sheer joy of it, risk-taking that seems less and less risky as the player learns to feel secure in her self-confidence, finding that both her body and brain can meet un heard-of challenges if only she will accept them. (Lichtenstein, 1985, p. 79)

These analysts and others problematize the issue of competition and gender in the area of psychological needs of and benefits to women’s personal growth, more specifically, self-esteem enhancement, improvement in body image, acceptance of a “mature” feminine embodiment (Arnold, 1994) and inner resourcefulness, self-reliance and self-confidence (Lichtenstein, 1985). Ultimately, such a perspective is inadequate because it holds women individually responsible for not being physical: physical challenges are possible, “if only she will accept them.” It does not recognize its own ideological constitution of femininity as the vehicle for, paradoxically, the determinant body (Arnold, 1994) and the transcendent self (Lichtenstein, 1985), while refusing the potential resistance to ideologies of the feminine which are possible in the physical self. It contributes to the marginalization of physical relations by asking of all-women outdoor adventures: “is the real reward companionship?” (Lichtenstein, 1985, p. 3). When a woman rejects competition from and for men and accepts physical challenges

with other women, “for the sheer joy of it all,” the outcomes are described as “intense bonding, cooperation and support” (Lichtenstein, 1985, p. 76). The argument has reverted to the concern that femininity is ‘at stake’ and may be successfully rescued in the oppositional “emphasis on relationship rather than competition” (Arnold, 1994, p. 50).

### *The Safety of Non-Competitiveness*

The way to examine this issue more closely is to ask *how* the coed wilderness trip is perceived as unsafe for women. If prowess is physical competence, but its performance effects relations of the physical through which women cannot achieve the physical competence of masculinity, then it is unsafe for women to attempt to exercise their physicality in situations of male privilege. In the outdoors literature it is argued that women are relatively weaker than men and so they, then, seek safety in all-women groups in which this identity will not be discredited.

Both physical prowess and physical weakness are also constituted as mutually exclusive constituents of heterosexual social relations. “Prowess” is a part of sexual aggression and dominance, accounting for why women report feeling “safer” when men are not present as sexual arbiters. The cultural feminist arguments maintain that the safety most important to women is their own emotional and psychological “safety.” But the insistence on a safe space ‘for women’ hints that the problem lies in heterosexual social relations. A safe environment for ‘women in the outdoors’ is defined as non-competitive (Arnold, 1994; Mitten, 1992a; Nolan & Priest, 1993). And yet, not examined is how heterogendered relations of competition position women as isolated from each other (supposedly in pursuit of men’s attention, protection and superior strength) and thus impel them into women-only experiences in order to overcome the effects of their rivalry, to ‘reconnect’ and bond with each other and to reinforce the ‘non-competitive’ feminine identity which was at risk. The ensuing gains for women in women-only experiences can be seen as no threat at all to heterosexual social relations. They reproduce a consensually compliant femininity that has made little progress toward unsettling the physical vulnerability which defines it.

The tensions constantly differentiating dominant forms of masculinity from compliant femininity systemically operate around an acceptance of “male expectations” and performance for men as a gender group. It seems that the type of femininity which is assumed by societal pressures to be in question when women become adventurous is the dominant cultural form, that is, “emphasized femininity,” particularly “oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (Connell, 1987, p. 183).<sup>21</sup> And yet there is little exploration in the literature of why women participating in sustaining this form of femininity—consciously or habitually—might be attracted to wilderness adventure. In fact, the usual suggestion is that they have *not* been attracted to adventure because they have not benefited from outdoorsy fathers, Girl Guides or summer camps. This notion is reconsidered in more depth in Chapter 3. Perhaps wilderness adventure is the very answer to the problem of emphasized femininity, the answer for individual women’s practices of femininity and for the institutionalization of femininity within social relations. The attraction of wilderness challenge is that femininity *is* at risk. However, if a compliant femininity is reinforced within wilderness contexts through heteronormative social practices such that it is *not* actually risked, then the attraction of wilderness challenge is that women may participate without developing any sort of competitive prowess and without substantially upsetting their self-image; the physical experience is psychologically ‘safe.’

I argue that women are socially regulated in the outdoors through this “impossible tension” (Jones, 1994) in which they participate. It does not feel safe to learn and practise physical skills in the presence of men, who have been found in one empirical study to respond to such activities of “gender transgression” with “enthusiastic sexual interest” (Nielsen et al., 2000, p. 291). Empirical examples of this are discussed in Chapter 6. The sexualization of women’s bodies, bodily movements and practices then produces relative physical weakness as the basis to the femininity which they are committed to protecting through seeking “a safer environment.” When women themselves argue that is safer to pursue physical activities without men, they are in a sense acting “in the interests of men.” In seeking to be gender-free, as it is explained in the literature, they in fact tie themselves to a consciously maintained gendered practice.

From this viewpoint, it is now possible to see that a threat to normative femininity itself is posed when women in mixed gender groups in fact engage in physical competition with men, *not* because they fear they will become unattractive to those men in the process, but because their prowess could minimize the “muscle gap” and physical strength as the source of difference. They could, as MacKinnon (1987) argues, come to experience and embody a physical competence which would disrupt and refigure heterogendered physical relations. However, the arguments for separate women-only courses do not follow MacKinnon to advocate that women who become strong are no longer feminine; they seek to protect a freedom “for women to interact using these explicitly ‘feminine’ behaviors” (Mitten, 1985, p. 20). The threat of a physical femininity is to the very heterogendered structure of physical activity in organized outdoors contexts. For *this* reason, strong women in the outdoors are sexualized, humiliated, harassed, insulted and patronized as threatening to men. And sometimes undermined by other women.

While a masculine physicality is dismissed by the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature which rejects the ‘male model,’ so too is a physical femininity in strong women just as problematic for the literature. Just as the exercise of a competitive, even performative, physicality encourages women to prove their prowess and compete ‘like a man,’ a physical femininity allows women to engage in ‘feminine’ behaviours ‘like a woman.’ However, appropriating physical power then poses risks to the psychological safety of ‘other’ women in mixed gender situations, those to whom a feminine physicality means physical dependence. Strong women embody an “impossible tension” by which they contribute to the feminist arguments in which it is “safer” for women not to pursue physical power. These themes in the literature are reviewed in light of empirical illustrations in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

### *Psychological Safety as Physical Safety*

What of the reported comments from women that they do not want “to deal with macho or sexual stuff?” A safe environment for physical activity is defined more instrumentally in the literature as one in which women are free from physical and

psychological harm (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993). Few arguments for psychological safety as a pedagogical principle in the outdoors make links to 'macho' and sexual social relations as being physically and psychologically harmful. Instead, "the basic unforgiving state of nature" is the obstacle, requiring "metaphors of uncertainty and daring" through which women seek empowerment to "break through gender barriers" (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 2). Cultural feminist arguments attempt to shift the blame from nature as unyielding or malevolent by recasting nature as nurturing and healing (e.g., Mitten, 1994; Warren, 1985). A safer environment for women is one which adopts "women's emphasis on merging with nature and the attention to spiritual completeness and process valued by many women outdoors" (Warren, 1985, p. 14).

More recent discussions of safety call for a recognition that a "women's fear" of nature originates in "traditional female socialization" that the danger of attack and rape lurks in dark, remote or unknown places (Powch, 1994; see also Griffin, 1982; Lenskyj, 1995a). Negotiating fears for one's own safety, then, becomes an issue about physical security: "females who wish to lead physically active lifestyles must face both the fears and the resulting constraints" (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993, p. 45). Therefore, it has been proposed to outdoor professionals that along with "food, shelter, logistics and general safety issues, the leader should also deal with women's fears of male violence in the outdoors, and provide participants with concrete strategies for dealing with the problem if it arises" (Lenskyj, 1995a, p. 7; see also Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993).

Only recently have examples of male violence towards women participating in outdoor pursuits or on outdoor courses been made evident. The everyday prevalence of it is made more apparent in the remark by one woman that she wanted to "not feel like the men are checking me out as a potential sexual partner" (McClintock, 1996b, p. 20) and so chose only all-women trips. In particular, there are individual incidents of attack (Millard, 1992), assault (Levi, 1991) and fear of rape (Loeffler, 1997) described in published personal narratives. There are also concerns raised by practitioners for sexual harassment (Loeffler, 1996b), inappropriate language (Jordan, 1990) and unethical professional relationships between leaders and students and clients (Hunt, 1990; Loeffler, 1996b). Loeffler (1996b) raises the issue of sexual harassment in outdoor experiential programmes in an exploratory fashion, but she does give examples of

women students targeted for sexual affairs while on their outdoor expedition or course, rock climbing routes named by men with explicitly sexual, homophobic and misogynist terms and ways in which sexually aggressive humour is justified as part of “fraternal bonding,” itself accepted as the basis to social relations in the outdoors.

In addition, her investigation finds that predatory behaviour is explained as a biological problem:

in the past, in some outdoor programs, it was considered a ‘job perk’ for male instructors to choose a female student to have sex with while on the course. The male instructors gave the rationale that they were away from their usual outlets and needed relief. (Loeffler, 1996b, p. 220)

It is also a psychological problem (for the clients): “there’s something very alluring about the appearance of control, self-reliance and power, and adventure guides seem to have it...they look to us for all the answers...it’s a huge dependency,” says the male adventure travel guide who claims that, “male guides have more of a romantic life in terms of numbers than probably anyone, [even] a playboy millionaire” (Loeffler, 1996b, p. 220). Then it is a cultural fact: “I don’t want to make like all our guides are gigolos....On the other hand, I’ve had an affair on almost every tour I’ve guided” (Loeffler, 1996b, p. 220) says another guide. The author concludes that in an adventure setting male bonding, sexual joking and sexual aggression are, “in terms of women’s safety,...no laughing matter” (Loeffler, 1996b, p. 221). The substantive part of her analysis involves proactive strategies for staff and students, including ways to challenge uncritical gendered generalizations, unequal attention and limited gender roles through language and behaviours. She also suggests that outdoor leaders ask themselves whether they always “assume a heterosexual model when referring to human behaviour” (Loeffler, 1996b, p. 223). She does not advocate self-defence classes or weight training for women. In their discussion of women’s fear inhibiting their physical activity, Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) do. Finally, it is a physical ‘problem.’ “Teaching self-defence,” they suggest, “may provide females with some skills should they ever need to get out of a vulnerable position” (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993, p. 47).

*Disciplining Women's Embodiment*

Women's psychological safety, then, is jeopardized in the 'male model' through, firstly, the heterogendering of competition and performance and, secondly, sexual aggression and predatory pressures. It is also, thirdly, at risk through the heteronormativity of women's appearance and body shape. As with the previous two, this third aspect of emotional and psychological safety for women involves the regulation of physicality through surface appearances. Body image has not been a central concern of women in the outdoors until recently as the literature generally presumes that women leave their "sex roles" to engage in physical challenge for the moral benefits of rediscovering a natural women's body and authentic feminine self. As the psychology of gender identity dominates feminist writing, concerns about protecting women's confidence are framed as issues of self-esteem and personal development. Recent focus on psychological fears, of ridicule and embarrassment (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Lynch, 1994), for example, around body size, as well as trauma around past bodily abuse, have converged with suggestions that all-women courses might impact women's body image (Arnold, 1994; Mitten & Dutton, 1993). This focus makes more visible in the natural outdoors the cultural context in which the 'male model' exercises power through disciplining women's bodies. It also adds a final component to the answer to the question of why the desire for a strong body cannot be the cornerstone of feminist theorizing as it is currently constituted about 'women in the outdoors.'

Anecdotal comments about women's ambivalent comfort levels with men in the outdoors are about nudity and sexual approaches, but also about their own appearance. The wilderness would seem to be an antithetical cultural site for the maintenance of emphasized or "ideal" femininity in women. MacKinnon (1987) proposes that strong, capable women would cease to be perceived as feminine and therefore would not be sexually vulnerable to male desire and objectification. And yet she admits that women athletes are sexualized and objectified. Arnold (1994, p. 45) takes up the issue of poor body image in women within the discourse of psychology of identity: "if programs like *Outward Bound* propose to help individuals realize their potential and increase self-

esteem, then courses for women need to address the issue of body image.” Her definition of a more positive body image for women includes “increased body awareness through skilled movement in risk-taking activities” (Arnold, 1994, p. 47). Her arguments echo MacKinnon: “we must work to physically educate women to feel good about their bodies, to claim them as their own, to feel their own strength” (Magraw quoted by Arnold, 1994, p. 53). However, she fails to consider cultural construction of women’s embodiment, despite alluding to eating disorders and other acts of compliance with and resistance to “the patriarchal ideal” (Arnold, 1994, p. 49). She advocates acceptance as resistance; women must accept their natural (feminine) bodies, strength and skill which lie beneath the inhibitions imposed by poor body image. It reiterates the problematic approach to ‘women in the outdoors’ that women’s (natural) femininity lies beneath imposed gender role socialization.

An American fitness leader also advocates that women will feel good when they feel strong. Susan Powter wants to empower women in resistance to “the carefully nurtured obsession of American women with thinness” (McNamara, 1996, p. 70). She does this by politicizing their body image in terms of physical agency. She emphasizes physiological health as enabling psychological health:

It has nothing to do with getting skinny...It has to do with women being strong. Physically. If you don’t have enough upper body strength to get through your day, how in hell are you going to plan a career? How in hell are you going to say to your husband who beats you, ‘No, you asshole, you can’t do that anymore?’ If you don’t have the cardio endurance to get through your life, how can you do anything? I don’t like myself because I’m skinny. I love the way I feel because I’m strong as shit.” (McNamara, 1996, p. 72)

The preoccupation with the slender body, according to Bordo (1990), is part of the normalizing function of power as it reproduces gender. The ideal of the slender body is maintained through bodily habits and “useful” skills of self-management by women, such that it cannot be seen as a male body. The masculine cultural ideal is a muscular body that represents self-control and restraint by men, while appropriating the *physicalness* of gendered heteronormativity. The muscular/masculine woman’s

unfeminine appearance is part of the anxiety for “ordinary women” in the outdoors around “the presence of men.” It goes beyond appearing attractive to men to concerns about appearing like men. Arnold (1994) does not advocate bringing muscularity to the transformation of women’s body image, even towards the “new femininity;” but instead argues for adding feminine qualities to masculine physical activities.

## Conclusion

The feminist response to the emphasis on physical prowess as the dominant pedagogical model is to advocate for a commitment to psychological safety for women. In contrast to the rejection of the first as the ‘male model,’ the second emerges as the affirmation of a culture of femininity. Coed wilderness situations are set up as the problem for women who become encumbered with traditional role expectations despite the “myth”—indeed proving its effectiveness as social regulation—that women can do everything that men do in the outdoors. Deeper analysis of these two preoccupations in the literature shows that such a polarization against physical prowess and for psychological strengths serves to sustain heterogendered norms of embodiment by suggesting that men engage in physical performance whereas women want emotional trust, support and safe space for less physical and risky activities. The underlying concern is clearly more about the dangers of the presence of men who reportedly dominate physical relations with coercive competitiveness, expectations of deference and sexual pursuit rather than the danger that as “society” views physical activity as unfeminine, women must engage in such activities solely in the presence of women to avoid “societal risks.” The societal risks, thus exposed, *and the feminist literature’s own responses*, involve disciplining women’s embodiment and its potential for their empowerment.

The next chapter examines the various ways in which social theory of embodiment and body culture in society have been taken up by critical theorists and in turn used by feminists confronting the same problems of the social power at stake in women’s experiences in physical activity.

## Chapter 2 From Embodiment to Corporeality: Power in Practice

This chapter presents the analytical background for the theoretical work of this project. It starts by surveying the emergent interest in bringing the body 'into' outdoor experiential education theory and pedagogy and reviews the ways in which interest in the body is treated. The feminist attempts to move past arguments for cultural difference focus on means for envisioning agency which do not take up difference as dispositional or disembody the sexually specific subject. They point to the embodiment of subjectivity. Few actually investigate a social agency or power for women as embodied subjects. They stop instead at reclaiming a unified ontology or the female experience of feminine bodies. As I indicated briefly in Chapter 1, it is of more use to the literature to turn to conceptualizations of subjectivity which consider the socialization of physical agency. I outline recent feminist sociology of sport research which offers interpretive insights into experiences women have of their strong, muscular and forceful bodies and the pleasures of physical power. However, even this emphasis on physicality does not tell us *how* bodies effect subjectivity within social constraints and discursive practices. I suggest that a model of corporeality supplies the analytical framework within which the women outdoor leaders' experiences of becoming strong women in this study are best interpreted.

In the 1990s, there are some signs of theoretical developments in writing about women's experiences in experiential learning, leadership and therapeutics in the outdoors. Critical overviews of theoretical foundations (e.g., Bell, 1993a; Henderson, 1996; Lynch & Simpson, 1993; Vokey, 1987) highlight the inadequacies of dominant models and "traditional androcentric views of outdoor participation" (Henderson, 1996, p. 116). As yet, however, there are few critiques of the feminist literature.

New perspectives begin by taking up and introducing to the overly psychologized literature different uses of the concept of gender; one use refers to ongoing effects of social practices which facilitate the active construction of personal and social identities through experience and subjectivity (e.g., Bell, 1996b, 1997). New perspectives diverge in their recommendations. Some writing abandons a concern with gender to reframe "women's leadership" as transformational leadership and,

specifically, “not just for women.” Also called ethical leadership, it returns to a humanistic transcendence of gender in which leadership is more respectful and empowering of all participants (e.g., Henderson, 1996; Jordan, 1992; Kiewa, 1997/98; Lehmann, 1991; Mitten, 1996a). Some writing traces the intersections of gender with race, ethnicity, class and sexuality to find ways of exposing and understanding hegemonic relations of power in outdoor learning contexts (e.g., Davidson, 1994; Roberts & Henderson, 1997; Warren, 1996a, 1996c, 1998a, 1998b; Warren & Rheingold, 1993). Some recent work does seek greater theoretical consideration of the resistance offered by less stable social positions through differences *between* women and differences *between* men, for example (e.g., Bell, 1997; Henderson, 1996; Lenskyj, 1995a; Roberts & Henderson, 1997). I argue that outdoor experiential education practices are an important site for producing gender difference in embodied experience (Bell, 1993c, 1996a, 1996b, 1997).

For all its engagement with articulating the empowerment of experience through physical challenge, theory in outdoor experiential education pays little attention to the lived embodiment of experience as the very site for the transformation of self. Critical social theory offers a way to redress the problem. There is not enough critical engagement with the social, aside from the few studies taking up perspectives in critical socio-cultural and poststructuralist feminist theorizing (e.g., K. S. Bell, 1990; M. Bell, 1993a, 1993c, 1996b, 1997; Brookes, 1995; Cowin, 1998; Davidson, 1994; Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996; Lynch, 1991; Morch, 1997). Arguments that gender, experience and nature itself are socially constructed (e.g., Bell, 1993c, 1997; Brookes, 1994; Davidson, 1994; Lenskyj, 1995a; Morch, 1997) are not common. In a critical socio-cultural perspective, gendering relations coalesce around consensual participation in and resistance to socially constructed and historically produced practices through which power is exercised. An unproblematic agency in humanistic constructions of human nature and its exclusion in structural explanations for social identities is therefore contested. Critiques concentrate on the equality arguments of liberal feminism and difference arguments of cultural feminism for their presumption of a coherent feminine, and in the latter, sexed, subject. Poststructuralist feminist approaches concentrate on an inattention to power in the formative feminist literature. They shift the presumption of

power as a trait or possession of the figure of the “traditional” or “transformational” expert to make space for the view that power acts everywhere as a discursive relation exercised through actions, beliefs, identities and bodies.<sup>21</sup>

A socio-cultural ethnography undertaken by Humberstone in 1987 provides an interesting example of critical feminist scholarship. Rather than look at ‘girls in outdoor education,’ she investigates gender as it operates in the everyday interactions between boys and girls at an outdoor education centre in Britain. In residential activity sessions, she finds that girls’ and boys’ perceptions of each other’s capabilities are radically altered by the effects of participating together and helping each other accomplish physical challenges, such as rock climbing. They no longer see each other in exclusive or complementary terms, but endorse usually unacceptable gendered behaviours, such as girls’ use of technical equipment or boys’ expressions of fear. The girls are empathetic and encouraging of tentative boys and the boys are more respectful of capable girls. They develop more supportive relationships as a result (Humberstone, 1990a, 1990b, 1995). Humberstone contrasts her findings with conclusions, such as Scraton’s (1992), that boys and girls reproduce stereotypical gendered behaviours through physical education. This leads her to propose that physical learning in the outdoors might expand possibilities for gendered behaviours in mixed situations: “there appeared a shift in gender identities and relations” (Humberstone, 1995, p. 151) and she attributes this to “ideological commitments of the teachers and the pragmatic necessities of the situation” (Humberstone, 1995, p. 152).

Humberstone conducted her initial analysis in a liberal feminist search for gender equality. Although she claims that “since that research, there has been no comparable research of this nature” (Humberstone, 1996, p. 47), she has not left her research study to ‘speak for itself.’ She has since revisited it numerous times to reframe the feminist analysis with a more reflexive, critical and complex approach. She found a dearth of critical perspectives available in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature (Humberstone, 1996) and turned to critical socio-cultural feminism in sport for acknowledgement of the effects of the gendered social relations which she identifies. In particular, she questions “traditional feminist” conceptions of gender, as structural difference, power, as possession, and research ideologies (Humberstone, 1995, 1996,

1997). She notes that critical socio-cultural theory in education has influenced outdoor experiential education very little. She proposes that “this [situation]...requires feminist ethnographers and researchers of PE [her term to include outdoor education] and sport to critically engage with postmodern and poststructuralist feminist notions and analyses of power” (Humberstone, 1997, p. 209). Hence, she recommends that researchers ask *how* “the processes by which hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities are created and/or challenged” (Humberstone, 1995, p. 146) are themselves constituted.

### **Embodied Subjectivity**

This study builds on the groundwork established by Humberstone’s ethnographic discoveries. While she promotes a critical analysis of power such that the practices of students themselves are taken into account to complicate a structural analysis based in social reproduction theory, she fails to account for their physical participation in the “transformative processes” of shifting gender relations which she observes in their outdoor education programme. The students assist each other into new positions as subjects of their relations with each other as each climbs and belays (secures) the other; they effect the shifts in “gender power relations” through physical movement and action. Bodily experience must be physically transformative to be subjectively and socially transformative.

In the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature, the benefit for women of learning with “a free adventurous physical self” to provide a less “restricted experiential base in their lives” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 83) is proposed. It is an unusual argument within the literature and not one which has drawn much attention. Miranda and Yerkes (1982) emphasize the importance for women of a more coherent and unified self and argue that it will only come with physical experiences to complement emotional and intellectual aspects of the self. Their definition of unity of self involves a socio-cultural turn to what is attributed in rational humanism, but denied women in structural relations, that is, experiences of agency and power. These authors propose that “adventure, risk and skill development out of doors may help build a new form of personal security, or...unity of self” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 83). It is unclear in their short essay

whether “personal security” means free will and autonomy of choice or security of the body against attack, but it appears that they are arguing for the recognition of a more fully embodied subject of experience. “If this is what women are seeking,” they ask, “how can it be achieved?” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 83).

Although they do not answer their question, Miranda and Yerkes (1982, p. 84) imply very early in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature that “personal potential” for women is linked to experiences of physical potential. They argue that the Cartesian mind/body dualism defines subjectivity and that the search for unity of self requires a means to overcome the imbalance. They do not apply a social analysis to gendered notions of self and subjectivity, but they do contextualize this mind/body “split” as based in “cultural attitudes which leave women with carefully constricted freedom” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 84). They argue that this begins when women are young, specifically—in points found empirically by Dewar (1987), Scraton (1992) and others—that girls are given physical limits which deny them free and adventurous play and that these limits are reinforced in “girls’ physical education” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 84). They conclude that “for women, this, along with upbringing practices and an overprotectiveness of motherhood potential, has led to devaluing of their own bodies as centers of action” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 84).

In a departure from the cultural feminist celebration of women’s distinct inner qualities and related ‘strengths,’ these authors propose, albeit obscurely, that “it may be that women learners are constructing a unified view of their social being through total immersion experiences in the wilderness” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 85). They appear to call for a consideration of the experience of physicality in effecting subjectivity, but stop short. While feminist theorizing is preoccupied with ‘gendering the subject,’ it has not been engaged in questioning the *constituents* of gendered subjectivity. My intent is to use the question “how can it be achieved?” as a starting point to demonstrate ways in which the concept of physicality and its constitution of gendered bodies within physical relations is useful in unsettling humanistic notions of disembodied subjectivity.

Radical feminist arguments that the physicality women experience when they are ‘allowed’ to be physical, that is, in unrestricted freedom of movement and

intentional action, provides important experiences of “self-possession” (MacKinnon, 1987) may be revisited in light of these proposals about women’s experiences in the wilderness. Miranda and Yerkes (1982, p. 84) suggest that perhaps women seek “permission to engage in activities not generally ascribed to women,” but do not detail exactly what these activities are. Here an inadequacy of the currently prevalent psychological explanation for gender in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature is apparent. If women seek activities which are not circumscribed by reproductive roles and domestic activities in the family, which comprise emotional and service work, why would it be assumed that women seek wilderness experiences in which they are nurturing, supportive and protective of each other (e.g., Mitten, 1992a)?

Miranda and Yerkes (1982, p. 83) hypothesize that, first, women seek physical experiences of “risk, work and play” and, second, that women seek chances to use and know their bodies as “centres of action” and not to be the expressive and passive objects of relationships. Both, they theorize, are necessary for coherence of self. Physical experiences of using, knowing and risking their bodies empower women to become subjects of their own lives. Their third hypothesis is that women seek other women with whom to engage in such anomalous activities in the natural environment. They do stipulate, however, that women-only groups may be “a temporary phenomenon as more women gain confidence in their skills” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982, p. 84). Until women gain a physicality which is enabling, a reliable physical competence, perhaps the “personal security” to which the authors refer earlier, they seek all-women groups in which to protect *not* their vulnerability, their difference, but their development of strength and endurance. Personal security and activities which develop physicality give women greater control over their bodies, possession of their bodies and thus a more unified sense of self in an embodied subjectivity. Miranda and Yerkes (1982) depart from the cultural feminist analysis of constraints on women due to gender role socialization and move to a more critical feminist analytical position, despite using terms like “women’s potential” and “unity” in mind and body without reference to social agency. I read their call for a more unified subjectivity as advocating for a more embodied subjectivity. In this sense, it is possible that the embodiment of (physical) power can effect new social subjectivities.

To shift the discursive power of rational individualism and constructions of identity as sexual difference, theorizing about gendered experience must first unsettle subjectivity. New theorizing must describe and trace the trajectories through which subjectivity is constituted through embodiment and maintained in social practices. Very little of the literature does this, but the means to do so are available in the feminist work which takes for granted the physical ability of women's bodies to accomplish outdoor activities, from whitewater paddling and extended canoeing expeditions to rock climbing and mountaineering expeditions, from which emerge psychological benefits. Entwined within such taken-for-granted ideas are dominant ideologies of the physical, embodiment, gender and power. It is the task now for empirical research to identify the social practices which give such ideologies cultural form in modes not previously considered by the literature.

### *Embodiment as a Form of Resistance*

Outdoor leadership practice centres on the instruction of technical knowledge and skills for safe wilderness travel experiences. Although the literature does not emphasize the processes of acquiring or teaching the physical skills, two researchers wonder if women outdoor leaders might actually be motivated to lead women's expeditions in order to help other women develop their strength and skill as a subversive act. For a brief moment, they conceive the possibility of a direct connection between the acquisition of physical strength and feminist resistance (see also Gilroy, 1989). Their investigation into women's involvement as students in outdoor programmes explicitly hopes to find this, but does not. They explain:

our hunch was that "liberated" female outdoor leaders were teaching other women that they, too, could be strong. We expected to find types of adapted Outward Bound programs. This sentimental image turned out to be wrong. (Yerkes & Miranda, 1985, p. 49)

Even so, women outdoor leaders are now exploring what they do as political strategy with practical consequences for their women participants. For example, an instructor writes,

it is tremendously exciting and rewarding to lead a group of women who begin a trip with little confidence in their abilities and very few technical skills and to watch them gain skills and a sense that they are capable and competent. On trips like that, I feel like I have made a small step toward combating the disabling forces that work on women every day—the forces, internal and external, that say to a woman, “You’re not as good as, not as capable as, not okay...” (McClintock, 1996b, p. 23)

Almost as if in response to Yerkes and Miranda’s (1985) speculation, my own reflection on my practice leads me to write,

one of the reasons that I am active in the outdoors and deliberately choose to take other women into the outdoors is to encourage them to feel strong in their bodies....I take into account the way norms of femininity are lived by women in white Western society, so that our bodies become a site of expressing heterosexual attractiveness, and our soft, gentle, nurturing “nature.” I see my desire to allow women to experience a different way to feel their bodies—harder, alert and effective in initiative and action—as being a form of resistance to a social code that shapes and directs our bodies, and our embodied experiences. (Bell, 1993c, p. 22)

Another outdoor leader also feels an unsentimental conviction that wilderness endurance activities allow women to experience their bodies as strong and powerful. Similar to the earlier set of “hunches” posed by Miranda and Yerkes (1982), she hypothesizes that “perhaps, all-women’s groups allow women to explore what a mature embodied woman is without the influence of the patriarchal ideal” (Arnold, 1994, p. 51). She reflects,

as an instructor, my greatest joy in teaching climbing is to create a success experience for women to demonstrate how graceful and capable our bodies are. I believe we instructors can deepen this body awareness by initiating discussions with students. How do we feel about our bodies?...What messages have we received about our bodies?...How have climbing and hiking challenged those messages?...It is important

for instructors to role model body awareness and acceptance throughout all of the course activities. (Arnold, 1994, p. 51)

While I do not see the outdoors as ever free of “the patriarchal ideal,” theoretically or experientially, this instructor opens the possibility that women’s (capable) bodies are a lived site of struggle *in the outdoors*.

It was not until issues around bodies, subjectivity and power began to surface in popular culture, feminist literature and some feminist interest in outdoor experiences (e.g., Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996), that these issues appeared as part of the general emancipatory project in the outdoors. They are emerging in the increasing focus on therapeutic applications of adventure, rather than in any sustained response to the epistemological and ontological issues raised by Miranda and Yerkes (1982). Written for instructors with an emphasis on practical steps through which to help participants gain a respect for their bodies, relevant topics range from the needs of survivors of sexual abuse (e.g., Meister & Pedlar, 1991; Mitten & Dutton, 1993; Rohde, 1996), to therapeutics for women with eating disorders (e.g., Mack, 1996; Maguire & Priest, 1994; Richards, 1999) and, as discussed in Chapter 1, the relation between increasing self-esteem and improving body image for women through outdoor activities (e.g., Arnold, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993). However, the perspectives are not always feminist and the social constituents of embodiment are not always taken into account, limiting the usefulness of the conception of embodiment as resistance to deterministic social structures. Nevertheless, they bring to the pedagogical goal of empowerment, that is, reaching a potentiality, a possible means by which theorizing can be disengaged from an individualized, psychic basis for consciousness.

### *A Critique of Ideology and Turn to Discourse*

As Cowin (1998) notes, the dialogues on social theory and shifts in specific analyses, like those of gendered meanings and bodily experience, are to date not as advanced in the outdoors literature as some writers (e.g., Henderson, 1996) assert. For example, a recent descriptive study asks women outdoor leaders to explore their experiences of gendered identity and they point to a dissonance between their personal

meanings, including self-reliance and empowering others, of being women leaders in the outdoors and the regulatory conditions imposed on them by fellow male outdoor leaders who reject “loud” and “assertive” wilderness women as colleagues (Morch, 1997). The research places the contradictions felt by the interview participants into an ideological struggle: the conflict between what it calls ‘hegemonic femininity’ in society and the ideology of heterosexual masculinity perpetuated by the Outward Bound schools, which employ strong, independent and self-reliant women within the illusory “myth” of liberal egalitarianism. The interviewees lament their confusion and disappointment at encountering a hostile community of male colleagues who will not talk about women’s experiences. Rather than working through the ideological analysis in terms of the function of such feelings in perpetuating relations of domination, the researcher concludes that the expression of disillusionment might be helpful to the next generation of young women. Although she reaches some very useful insights, to which I return throughout the dissertation, the researcher misses an opportunity to make sense of these women’s culturally contradictory positioning through actually challenging the shortcomings of an ideological analysis and, instead, identifying material, social practices regulating gender in their lived, physical experiences.

Yet, the new literature, within outdoor experiential education, on embodiment as a potential form of resistance does create an opportunity for social analyses to begin to confront the limitations of ideology. Such a project cannot be undertaken as long as foundational perspectives in humanistic psychology privilege consciousness as the site of knowledge, subjectivity and personal empowerment. Structuralist explanations view consciousness as the result of ideology; subjectivity is not an autonomous and voluntaristic state of the self-knowing being, as the experiential learning literature would portray it, but wholly constructed by ideology in social relations. In classical Marxist terms, once (class) “consciousness” is achieved, then the struggle against the conditions that sustain its inhibition is inevitable (Barrett, 1991). In critical terms, “consciousness” must be a new awareness of the conditions which produce social regulation. And yet, there is no evidence that even the psychotherapeutic sense of “consciousness-raising” is producing feminist struggle *as inevitable social action* in the separatist feminist literature detailed in Chapter 1. Embodiment as subjectivity still

functions as a means of individualizing a location for the ontological subject who is unaware of her constitution in relations of domination. I remain sceptical of the value of ideological analyses of gender relations in the outdoors which take up embodiment, but do not examine it critically. It is more productive for theorizing to turn toward conceptions of the socialized body as a discursive site for the material, social practices which constitute consciousness lived through physical agency.

The goal of identifying practices, rules and patterns of regulation, primarily, as opposed to studying dominant ideas, shifts the aims for social analyses of experience and power. Critical theory, with its origins in the Frankfurt School, historically challenged Marxist orthodoxy which saw social change as economic determinism and saw practical activity on the part of individuals as ‘socialized’ by a superstructure of ideas serving dominant class interests. Dominant ideas act as ideology, mystify the conditions which produce them and do not directly allow such individuals any action as agents. A critical social theory as it has evolved is understood now to challenge the rigidity of the Marxist tradition of ideology and to broaden it to a general definition as “processes of mystification that arise around other (non-class) social divisions and other forms of social power and domination” (Barrett, 1991, p. 167).

Foucault’s (1980) critique of Marxism, in particular, directs social theorists away from an oppressive ideology toward socially productive forces that he calls discourses. He contests the claim that there is a truth hidden by ideology; he shifts the aims of critical analysis to additional politics and material interests framing “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p. 131) at work in ordering social relations. He urges not just a process of dismantling the object of investigation to reveal its interests, but, more importantly, also one of reassembling the “statements” and issues once constituting the object to look for new configurations and new objects (Barrett, 1991). Unexpected connections may be found which illuminate different networks of knowledge fields, disciplinary practices and force relations; the latter is his view of how power coheres and shifts with changing conditions. Foucault (1978/1990) encourages the consideration of “discursive formations” which have a historical reason for being and are not dependent on an underlying structure of absolute truth (see Rabinow, 1984).

In the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature, a shift from ideology to discourse is necessary to move past—or dig beneath—the circuitous impasses, what Foucault might call “discontinuities” (Barrett, 1991), which characterize the trajectory of feminist theorizing I outlined in Chapter 1. The arguments for overarching ‘women’s’ experiences in the outdoors do little in the end to empower women in practice with men in their groups and staff teams until the conditions for these women’s (and men’s) professional practice are seen to be constituted in physical practices, as this study argues, and not in (gendered) pedagogical principles.

Such a step is also necessary as discourses allow an examination of more complex social arrangements than social structures. Feminist critiques taking up gender difference as psychic structure rely implicitly on assumptions of structuralism. Discourses, in Foucault’s particular critique of structuralism, rely on networks of statements, documents, habits, practices and institutions which act concertedly to produce and subject the objects of their social organization (Barrett, 1991; Weedon, 1987). Their purpose is to order and regulate the possibilities for the visibility of such objects. They employ social practices and yet also link to non-discursive practices (Barrett, 1991; Weedon, 1987). An example of the usefulness of this point is the ways in which the discursive practices taken up by strong women in the outdoors, which might comprise running, skills practice and personal adventures in which to test strength through extreme risks, connect to (but are not the same as) non-discursive practices, of class, for example, such as tennis lessons or weekends spent at a family bach, through which the potentiality of a strong woman having a well-coordinated and visible strength is already established. It is appropriate now to review briefly the arguments for analyses of social practices from within sociology.

### *Practice-based Sociology*

A practice-based sociology (Bourdieu, 1977; Connell, 1985, 1987) was conceived to shift social inquiry from structures and ideologies of power to social practices and their material, power effects. Through active practices subjects position themselves within—and thereby contribute to—structural relations, which may in turn

impose restrictions over which individuals have no control. This approach challenges the notion that social structures are fixed and unyielding, then, while not denying their organization of social relations. It moves beyond the determinism of structuralism; it sees human activity as influencing the social forces which themselves effect human subjectivities (Connell, 1987). Such a theoretical approach, therefore, strikes at the middle of the agency/structure debates in traditional sociology and acknowledges the constitutive nature of power that is exercised rather than the repressive imposition of ideology. It is not, though, an anti-structuralist analysis.

Social practices are empirically identifiable; Bourdieu's (1977) anthropological field work noted social practices through which social arrangements were forged or sustained. Bourdieu concentrated on the "unintended consequences" (Connell, 1987, p. 94) of such gestures, such as gift giving rituals, with the intent of uncovering ritualized interactions. He noticed bodily "dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 15) which were collectively/socially understood, but which also, importantly, generated the conditions for strategy. Despite highly stylized expectations of social acts, strategy implies that there is a reversibility to the pattern, for the 'agent' has a choice of *how* to participate (for example, in deciding how much time to take), while his or her very enactment is socially expected and therefore "*experienced as irreversible*" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 6; emphasis added) by the reciprocal party. Bourdieu contested "objectivist" theoretical models which ignored the practical strategies engaged in by those following the predictable sequences; it was not his aim to negate the very existence of such patterned, structural sequences. He developed a "theory of practice" in order to make practice visible as a constituent of social structure (Connell, 1987). He also revealed the process through which social structure is reinforced within a group: it "is nothing other than the cultivated disposition, inscribed in the body schema and in the schemes of thought, which enables each agent to engender all the practices consistent with the logic of" the social pattern (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 15).

Bourdieu's use of the word *habitus*, for learned bodily dispositions or body schema, is also used by other observers of social practices; it is thought that he adopted it from Elias' 1939 work on "civilizing practices" (Shilling, 1993). Both Mauss and Elias are also interested in processes by which people use their bodies and relate to their

bodies as they acquire social skills. Mauss (1973) began to classify modes of action as “techniques of the body” when he realized that activities requiring skills, such as walking or swimming, could actually change over time and among social groups (such as generations, sexes and societies). That is, bodily movements could be taken up or dropped through “the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason” (Mauss, 1973, p. 73). He wanted to convey that certain techniques gain currency as more than imitation or fashion, but involve both and, as cultural habits, contribute to collective memory and meaning. Mauss chose the Latin word *habitus* to encompass but extend the French word for habit, custom or practice, such that the individual in whom the series of actions and habitual movements accumulate learns to practise them for a greater social authority. To Bourdieu, this meant that embodiment was the acquisition of a social body, although he saw this as necessarily class-based. *Habitus* was, for Bourdieu, “an ‘internalized form of the class condition’” (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 268); one’s own *habitus* is one’s relation to one’s own body in the context of class training and the lifestyle through which one expresses the socially expected tastes and practices of that social location. It is a “practice-generating principle of social agents” (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988).

Sociologists positioning the body as the interface between self and society are interested in how the body is involved in social practices, how bodies are “practice-generating,” but also, more specifically, how habitual, everyday practices of the body produce social subjectivities (Turner, 1996). The new sociological theories in which the body is implicated range from “the body as merely a set of social practices,” as can be seen in Mauss’ work above, to the body as “a condition of action” (Turner, 1996, p. 24-25) for the practising social agent. Even within this general sociological framework, though, ‘the body,’ social practices, action and social ontology are not well studied (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996).

Turner’s sociology of the body revisits Marx who defines practical, social activity as “labour” and an expression of a universal characteristic of humans. Labour is the potential to appropriate and transform the environment through the efforts of human beings. According to Turner (1996), the view Marx takes is that human embodiment is sensuous, active and both condition and consequence of the practical

activity through which 'man' transforms himself into a conscious being or subjective agent. Therefore, "embodiment is a precondition to practice" (Turner, 1996, p. 219).

For Marx, according to Turner (1996), it is through social practice that human beings interact with nature as both subject and object, given that practice appropriates nature and makes it a social product, termed 'humanized nature,' and in so doing appropriates the very embodiment upon which labour depends and transforms *it*. Practice transforms nature into culture, 'acculturates' the body as the self and conceals the (embodied) conditions of consciousness. Social practice may be seen as labour with, through and on the body. Although, notes Turner (1996, p. 219), Marxist thinkers ignore the practical way in which labour is embodied as it produces subjectivity, "it is possible to develop Marx's ontology in a fruitful and constructive fashion to incorporate the notion of human embodiment." In particular, he argues, embodiment "is fundamentally social, since...ontology is necessarily social." As labour is a necessarily social product, the body, as part of the transformative activity, can be seen in the same light. Labour *on the body* produces both the body and embodiment of consciousness as a social product. Similarly, and like Mauss,

Bourdieu recognizes that acts of labour are required to turn bodies into social entities and that these acts influence how people develop and hold the physical shape of their bodies, and learn how to present their bodies through styles of walk, talk and dress. Far from being natural, these represent highly skilled and socially differentiated accomplishments which start to be learnt early in childhood. (Shilling, 1993, p. 128)

Furthermore, bodies and embodiment are objectified, coerced, exchanged and lost through social production in the process which Marx conceptualized as alienation.

Socialist feminist theorists have traced ways in which women's bodies are doubly produced (as subordinate to dominant, not just class, interests) through 'labour.' Women are alienated from their bodies in the sexual division of labour through which they lose control of their bodies, embodiment and transformative "potentiality," to use Marx's term (Turner, 1996, p. 216). But they are also alienated from their bodies because, in itself, "the female body is revealed as a task, an object in need of transformation" (Bartky, 1990, p. 40) and women's labour on their bodies produces

consciously feminine bodies. Women become alienated from the products of their labour when “standards of feminine bodily presence [and] their sense of bodily deficiency” (Bartky, 1990, p. 40-41) are generated by structural forces and not in their own control.

Social practices are, therefore, the micro means by which human beings actively and intentionally appropriate and transform their circumstances, within social conditions. One outdoor instructor writes about her outdoor experiences as transformative activity:

my experiences in Outward Bound as a young woman deeply affected my self-acceptance, self-esteem, and body image. I gained an appreciation for my strength and agility as I climbed, hiked, and became competent in back country camping. Rather than an object to be adorned and perfected, my body became an ally....After working my first all-women’s course I recognized that these courses, in particular, can provide a safe environment for growth and transformation....The technical skills and physical activities allow women to experience their body in an active, functional arena rather than an aesthetic one. (Arnold, 1994, p. 44)

Practical physical activity in the outdoors might be seen here as a means of ‘working on the body’ in resistance to structural forces (such as those which produce the feminine body as “an aesthetic one”), a means of combating the reproduction of sexual objectification and social alienation. But, *how* this is possible is not clear. If femininity is a determining structure, how is it that alternative experiences of bodies are possible? This author stresses role models, perceptions, norms, appreciation and cognitive awareness:

For the first time in my life, muscular and athletic women who didn’t fit the cultural norm of thinness were my role models and the mother Earth was my teacher. My perception of beauty changed as I began to appreciate the diversity of sizes and shapes of the female body....Challenging physical activities such as hiking and rock-climbing offer an opportunity for women to reevaluate and reformulate their own

norms for the female body. The wilderness setting allows for a conscious use of the Earth body metaphor as it relates to women's physical bodies....The all-women's group provides a safe place for women to explore their body image and self-esteem. (Arnold, 1994, p. 44).

There is not yet an adequate synthesis of ways in which social psychology might incorporate aspects of bodily action and interaction, that is, how personality takes on, or is shaped by, embodiment through movement, which could offer this analysis more scope. This outdoor instructor's proposal that she is engaged in "transforming body image through women's wilderness experiences" is unique in the 'women in the outdoors' literature, but, although promising, it is ultimately limited. Naturalistic definitions of the mental images and feelings held by the individual self *about* their body tend to rely on the notion that women's true, normal bodies are given in nature and distorted by culture (Shilling, 1993). Despite proposing that "positive body image" includes "being 'embodied,' connected with and present in one's body" (Arnold, 1994, p. 45), her analysis indicates that she intends to reclaim for women a "positive" universality to women "being 'embodied'" beings. There is no account of a socialized ontology. Finally, if "growth and transformation" take place in the mind, as theorized in outdoor experiential education, then the body is merely a pre-condition for the reflection that 'raises' awareness (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996).

Arnold's (1994, p. 45) hope is to transform the influence of body image so that women begin to "feel good about themselves" and thus "reach their fullest human potential." But researchers investigating physical activity and the embodiment of social class stipulate that

it is important to stress that the relation to one's own body cannot be identified with or reduced to 'body image' or 'body concept,' which essentially consists of objective representation of the body produced and transmitted back by others; [instead they argue for analysis of] a body *habitus* [which] is made up of all the dispositions one has towards one's body, themselves determined and conditioned by the material conditions of existence. (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 271)

Whereas Arnold's approach to naturalizing body image is overly voluntaristic, in which embodied consciousness is only really thought to produce change in an *inner* psychological schema, Bourdieu's body *habitus* is part of an overly structuralist theory of social reproduction in which bodily dispositions are unconscious and practices operate on or around the *outer* body (Connell, 1987; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996). Neither approach treats transformative *practice* as more than embodied action, that is, as producing social and subjective bodies. The response of sociologists of body culture is discussed later in the chapter.

### *Practices of the Body*

A practice-based, poststructuralist social analysis takes the approach that practices are lived and embodied and consciously directed within the constraints of social relations, while not determined by structural relations of dominance. As practice emerges from and in turn acts on the social, then the project of tracing practice reveals changes over time in social conditions. Thus, studies of women's physical activity in the outdoors must consider the gendered body and feminine embodiment as more than objects to be described and reflected upon—recent studies (e.g., Allin, 2000; Gilroy, 1989; McDermott, 1996) ask participants about “personal meanings” of physicality—but as the social effects of techniques, strategies and practical skills which are themselves both subjective and subjecting, enacted with and on bodies, through transformative action. It was the acquisition of strength, agility and competence which “transformed” Arnold's own lived experience; these are only acquired through “practices centred on the body” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838).

In the context of a sociology of sport, Bourdieu (1988, p. 154) urges researchers, first, to identify sporting practices and locate them in the socially constituted “space of sports” and then to search out the determining element of the system of “interests, tastes and preferences for a definite social category” and its “relation to the body, to the degree of engagement of the body, which is associated with a social position and with primeval experience of the physical and social world.” Few sport sociologists have followed Bourdieu strictly in analysing structural “social” categories as class-based

groups (cf. Laberge & Sankoff, 1988). But in the last decade feminists in the sociology of sport have shifted from examining ideological forces impacting women (and subgroups within the category) in sport (e.g., Hall, 1987) to identifying “sporting practices” and their constituent bodily practices within the heterogendered “space of sports.” It is a small literature and constantly refers back to itself (Lenskyj, 1986, 1994, 1995b; Theberge, 1985, 1991; Whitson, 1990, 1994), although empirical work has recently become more widespread (e.g., Chapman, 1997; Gilroy, 1989, 1994, 1997; Halbert, 1997; Markula, 1995; MacNeill, 1988; Miller & Penz, 1991; Rail, 1990; Scraton, Fasting, Pfister & Bunuel, 1999; Sisjord, 1997; Theberge, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999; Wright & Clarke, 1999; Wright & Dewar, 1997; Young, 1997; Young & White, 1995).

Examination of bodily practices has generally been descriptive of physical experiences, which has impeded a substantive theoretical development of physicality or its constituent practices. Three themes are evident in the literature. “Sources of pleasure and satisfaction” is one theme of empirical studies (e.g., Theberge, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999; Wright & Dewar, 1997; Wright & Dreyfus, 1998); physicality as experiences of physical power is another (e.g., Gilroy, 1989, 1994; Sisjord, 1997; Theberge, 1997; Wright & Dewar, 1997); and physicality as the ‘male model’ of sport based on experiences of aggression, violence and injury is a third (e.g., Theberge, 1997; Young, 1997; Young, White & McTeer, 1994). Within this group of literature, gender is occasionally understood as a practical accomplishment (that is, practised and “reversible”), but most usually as a social construction. The structural basis of gender in social positioning (in class “dispositions”) is explored by few researchers (cf. Wright & Dewar, 1997; Young, 1997) when examining physicality. Sporting practices are widely identified (from officiating to media representation) to the extent that in analyses they tend to dominate discussions of social practices of physicality.

In noticeable contrast to the suggestion that body awareness in women in the outdoors can, and ought to, be achieved through experiences of being “graceful and capable,” a more typical finding in the contemporary studies of women in sport is that body experiences tend to draw on “the possibility for the exercise of skill and force in athletic competition” (Theberge, 1997, p. 83; see also Halbert, 1997; Rail, 1990). One

researcher explores elite-level women's ice hockey within "the material and ideological conditions that structure the experience of physicality" (Theberge, 1997, p. 70). Even across a wide range of hockey playing styles and abilities, she finds that women gained immense pleasure from "being aggressive on the ice...of taking initiative, of being powerful and fearless" (Theberge, 1997, p. 72). They described the satisfaction of using physical strength effectively:

I think the most satisfying is the physical. When you run into somebody and you stand up and they're down, that makes you feel a lot better than if you outsmarted somebody. It makes you feel better, the physical part.

(Theberge, 1997, p. p. 73; also Theberge, 1999, p. 148)

Rules of play, however, prohibit forceful bodily collisions in which skaters either fight each other for possession of the puck or body check, that is, hit, each other with full body contact (in order to access the puck but also for punitive reasons). The study identifies, but only superficially explores, "the effort to de-emphasize the physicality of women's hockey" by the emphasis on—and production of—a game of "speed, strategy and playing skills...[rather than] power and force" (Theberge, 1999, p. 148). Unlike the calls for a de-emphasis on physical strength in outdoor adventure programmes, the fear of women becoming more like men in this context is already co-opted within material and ideological structures of control which construct and resource *women's* ice hockey. It is lauded as a game of "finesse," but the players affirm that "with or without body checking, hockey is a game of skill and strength" (Theberge, 1999, p. 148). The researcher, however, betrays some ambivalence:

I am suspicious of efforts to promote women's sports by distancing them from images of strength and power. While there has been much to criticize in the model of men's sport, in our efforts to devise alternatives we need to retain features that provide pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of empowerment. (Theberge, 1999, p. 155)

Another study of women's bodily practices in sport looks not at experiences of physicality produced in physical action, but at women's experiences of sport as "engaging in disciplines of body maintenance" (Chapman, 1997, p. 219) through achieving and maintaining the required weight for competition. As members of a

lightweight rowing team, the “sporting practices” of the small group of women involved are not tied to the category of women as, for example, in women’s ice hockey, but instead are tied to their smaller body size. Their physical practices are implicated as strategies used by women in the social production of feminine bodies and selves. Physical strength and skill are essential to the success of these athletes as rowers, but as members of a lightweight team, they participate in weight management techniques which act to constrain their physicality. These are identified by the researcher as “the practices of making weight” (Chapman, 1997). Of interest to the researcher for understanding these athletes’ embodied experiences of gender and physicality is how the women continue to relate to their bodies once competition is over; many have difficulties accepting their ‘normal’ bodies after experiencing the ‘low body fat look’ (Chapman, 1997, p. 220) and, in rejecting dieting for themselves as a specific and regulatory sporting practice, struggle with their self-esteem as they regain weight.

In one final example of women’s experiences of physicality through the acquisition of bodily practices, a study of women who take up physical activity in later life finds that the women do feel pleasure and confidence despite childhood experiences which were perceived as discouraging and even humiliating. This study is of women in sport for recreation, such as multisport competition, and other physical activities which range from belly dancing to self-defence. Their social and material circumstances are significant: they are older, predominantly lesbian, with more time, no or almost-grown children and what the authors call a “radical politics” (Wright & Dewar, 1997). Again, the premise of the study rests on the concept of transformation as empowerment: in this case “the movement of the body as a source of the kinaesthetic/sensual pleasures...which could be transformative, which had the potential for changing subjectivities and also women’s social reality” (Wright & Dewar, 1997, p. 80).

Here bodily practice is experienced as sensuous, practical action, the possibility of learning new movements and skills (whether for security, control or pleasure) is “exciting” and the authors aim to contest feminist analyses (such as Bartky’s) of practices of the body which construct femininity as alienation. Two aspects of this study stand out. Firstly, the women discuss negative experiences in physical education in school (of the activities themselves and of the social relationships produced in that

context, such as with the physical education teacher who has certain expectations based on body size or with the athletic student who must 'pick' members of her team from amongst her less capable, agonized classmates) preceding their discovery of physical activity that is enabling and enjoyable. Thus the effects of embodied structural relations can be viewed as incomplete and more complicated than concepts around *habitus* allow. And these authors do account for the interaction of structure and practice by first acknowledging that

discourses linking health with moral imperatives about exercise, body shape and weight are not totally absent from their stories....Several of the women...refer to participating in physical activity as a way of managing their weight, or creating a body shape with which they feel comfortable. (Wright & Dewar, 1997, p. 93)

And, secondly, they point to a way to understand embodiment as

the interweaving of the sensory and the social...while social circumstances assist in taking up alternate forms of physical activity which are self-enhancing, participation in physical activities which provide opportunities for empowerment and sensual pleasure may also provide alternate ways of thinking about our embodied selves and so shift our relationship to the social. (Wright & Dewar, 1997, p. 94)

It is clear from these brief outlines that empirical work is being undertaken which investigates many of the themes which are significant to women in physical activity in the outdoors; indeed, the discussions in each of the studies above echo discussions in the research reported here. I take up the conceptual tool of physicality as body practice, instead of body image or body *habitus*, in order to combine a search for the presence of structure in practice with a desire to find out more about lived experience of the moving body. Physicality, as movement, being gendered and living one's body entails practical action, embodied ontology, sensuous feelings and access to physical power. I prefer to position it within a discourse of physical relations rather than impose it as a descriptive cognitive construct (cf. McDermott, 1996). Therefore, in this study a practice-based sociology is used to show that physicality is an inscription; physicality is both a consciousness or feeling and a social practice constituted in

physical relations. I now turn to the importance of exploring *how* it is that physicality inscribes gendered bodies.

### **Lived Body Consciousness**

Several recent studies reveal quite influential, and unexpected, contradictions in women's lived experiences as outdoor leaders. These are descriptive findings and relate largely to young, white, educated, North American women.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the literature explains these women outdoor leaders' expressions of intimidation, tentativeness, lack of confidence and a need to control and perfect their technical skill mastery through social psychological learning theory, that is, in terms of role socialization (e.g., Loeffler, 1997). Women as leaders, it is then generalized in the 'women in the outdoors' literature, are not socialized to think that they can use their bodies skilfully or with force; they have internalized masculine claims to strength, skill and stamina; they are conditioned to express feelings openly; they favour different learning styles and "respond well to a non-threatening environment" (Johnson, 1990, p. 40; see also Nolan & Priest, 1993). The humanistic psychology underpinning these attributions reify gender socialization as a universal inevitability and then points to each individual's sense of self as their source. It is an atomistic and developmental model of subjectivity, such that socialization for a girl "becoming" a woman is constitutive of a later, mature, stable, and uniquely personal, psychological identity.

The overarching effects of socialization as ideology are shown to be incomplete by those women who do use their bodies with skill and force, women who know the feeling of strength and stamina, and women who pursue experiences of risk and danger in threatening environments. Eve Erdman explains:

my "solo" took the form of climbing a rock face in Zion National Park known as the Moonlight Buttress. I employed the techniques I have learned over a dozen years as a technical rock climber, and spent three days alone on that thousand-foot face "quieting my inner dialogue"...and coming to terms with why I feel a need to be alone in such extreme conditions. (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 5)

How these women are subjects of their own 'different' lives is not understood in the expression of their feelings and desires; descriptions of their passions inevitably rest on what they *do* or have done. There are recommendations in the literature that women try to combat the seduction of the "subservient role to a confident male" in the outdoors by "taking the occasional solo" (Johnson, 1990, p. 40; see also Loeffler, 1997) to restore their femininity. Time alone helps to recuperate an inner feminine identity. Eve, quoted above, who instructs outdoor education at the tertiary level, describes the requirements of her physical ability on such a solo expedition. To her, the empowering aspect of risk-taking is that "when I reach a threshold that marks a point of living or dying, persisting or getting hurt, I make a conscious choice" (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 5). She is able to illustrate the intertwining of physicality and consciousness and their ability to bring each other into existence. Yet she refers to "danger as a liberating element" (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 5); I would argue that her own physical sense of engagement, that is, a "physical agency" (McDermott, 1996), is the empowering element in her lived encounters with danger. She does not make a "conscious choice" to "restore her femininity," but chooses whether to use her body in action or not. The consciousness she produces as a result is a newly forged awareness of the conditions of her own actions.

Eve's huge desire to climb to a ledge or hammock on the Moonlight Buttress overtakes, she says, her ability to reflect at home at her desk and computer. Another narrator of a personal vignette relates an experience in which an inner need also overtakes and re-shapes her physical sense of consciousness of self. This woman has formerly guided women's trips outdoors. At the invitation of a group of women in training as outdoor leaders, she visits them as they return from an expedition. She wakes early and then writes in her journal before meeting the group:

I thought I'd left that part of my life behind. Now, in the exertion of running up the trail, I saw that in answering their call back to the subject of women and wildness, these young women were giving me back a part of myself that I had left behind so gradually that I hadn't noticed that it was gone—a sense of confidence and physical well-being. This morning in the mountains running, hot and wild, was giving me a chance to

acknowledge once again that I have a body, a woman's body, an opportunity to remember that I can have confidence in this body, and that I can find joy in this woman's body that for so long I had feared, hated, rejected, that I had sought to escape, to disguise, to forget, to leave behind, or to ignore. (Galland, 1994, p. 245)

She gives a glimpse into how physicality works through lived experience. It is not simply acquired and known subjectively, but must be continually re-acquired. As forces of 'socialization' may be overcome, they may also reassert their messages on women, specifically through women's own "gradual" forgetting and willingness to "leave behind" body practices. Although it is implied that physicality is possessed ("a part of myself"), to me this passage gives insight into how physicality is practised and, in the absence of cultural practice, may be lost. It is attached, however, not to will, desire or "conscious choice" alone, but to the actions of "this woman's body that for so long I had feared, hated, rejected."

Physicality is lived by different women individually, with different meanings at different times; "meaning subsists...in the movement and consequences of action; experience carries the connotation of context and action" (Young, 1990a, p. 13). It contributes to effecting subjectivity differently across time. It may be a means to consciousness or a means to embodiment: in order to think more clearly about her choices, Eve Erdman had to go out and do a multi-day, solo climb. In order to realise that she had given up something valuable, China Galland had to find herself in Yosemite National Park climbing toward the sun's rising warmth, unexpectedly breaking into a run. It becomes clear that consciousness and embodiment are not mutually exclusive. The many, varying imperatives of lived action for effecting embodied subjectivity are not explained in recommendations that women accept the essential 'strengths' which free them from inadequate role socialization. Nor are they fully accounted for within a practice-based sociology or poststructuralist theories of power as discursive.

There is a need for a new analytic: a way to describe and explore gendered consciousness and action, while moving beyond the psyche as seat of subjectivity and the pre-social (that is, pre-gendered or pre-socially marked) self as knower of the

objective world and toward the self who is marked in doing.<sup>23</sup> While feminist sport sociologists and other sport sociologists, as discussed above, are pointing to the use of the concept of physicality for analysing women's physical activity, they say little about how it may be used in an analytical method.<sup>24</sup> Rather, they argue for a feminist phenomenology (e.g., Hall, 1996). Rail's (1990) use of sociological and phenomenological analysis for a study of women's physical activity illustrates that its primary focus is the self and subjective feelings. When Morch (1997, p. 119) identifies confusing feelings as central to contradictory lived experiences in three strong outdoors women, she cannot fulfil her research aim to explain how this experience is socially organized other than by reference to "hegemonic myths." Rail (1990) and Morch (1997) investigate the self-described, felt experiences of strong women engaged in a physical contact sport, in the former, and physical endurance expeditions, in the latter. They both remain focused on experiences at a personal, individual level; Morch, however, loses sight of the lived feelings of a strong body as she focuses on everyday gendered interactions and prior socialization in femininity. She *concludes* by calling for an analysis of embodiment in future studies. It is apparent that "the individualistic nature of phenomenology prevents it from developing a systematic theory about the social structure which unequally distributes the government of the body" (Turner, 1996, p. 81). Neither researcher asks how subjective experience is practised and lived materially and how this is made visible through certain, and not other, productive discourses.

### **Corporeality**

A way is therefore needed to examine both the lived experiences of those who are positioned in a socially organized contradiction and also the practices through which they participate in shaping those experiences materially. For both, physicality is a key analytical concept, but it must be seen as *shaping* feelings and bodies, theorized as working on the inside and on the outside, organized as subjective and social, psychological and physical. For this purpose, the new vision of a more dynamic, corporeal process is useful. This study takes up the tenets of what has been proposed as corporeal

feminism (Grosz, 1987, 1994b) and applies them to the empirical experiences of women in the study in order to integrate more fully the physicality of their social identities and subjectively lived experiences of their strong bodies.

Corporeal *feminism* is an extension of feminist phenomenology. Early attempts in feminist philosophy to identify women's specificity, while rejecting biological and psychoanalytical explanations for femininity, took up phenomenological investigations into the lived world, that is, the perceptions and choices of the subject who experiences the world and comes to know themselves (e.g., Bartky, 1990; Young, 1990c). The subject becomes conscious through the dual processes of experiencing and forming meaning. Subjects are effected by their own meaningful reality, not by reflecting on reality and creating personal meaning, but in their own *corporeal* perception of the world.

Grosz (1994b) proposes that there is no physical body as much as there is no psychic self deep within the mind; they are the same entity and, within such an entity, neither exists. This helps to begin to unravel common (mis)interpretations of physicality as "the physical part" (Theberge, 1997) or physical action or attributes (e.g., Hall, 1996). Physicality is not a part separate from or underlying consciousness. Grosz (1994b) does not use the term physicality precisely because she deems it part of a "physicalist" perspective. She also avoids the term embodiment, because it reiterates a duality of consciousness and body, such that one is wrapped in the other by such a definition—the body is then a static container for an active, reflective self.

Instead, she wants a conceptual schema by which the physicalness of the body is acknowledged as a social construct and the subjectivity of identity is acknowledged as a psychic representation of that social construct. As social construct, 'it' is immutable and created as body; and as subjective interpretation, 'it' is open to circumstance, change, affect, judgement and possession as part of oneself. Grosz (1987, 1994b) uses the term corporeality to refer *specifically* to the exterior surface of material and malleable bodies upon which culture inscribes subjectivity. She theorizes that any 'interior' consciousness cannot know itself, whereas the 'exterior' can shape and produce "the effects of depth" (Grosz, 1994b, p. *xiii*). She also develops the term *more*

*generally* as a theoretical framework with which to overcome the interior/exterior dualism and any monistic combination such as that implied by “embodied subjectivity.”

Any adequate model must include a psychical representation of the subject’s lived body as well as of the relations between body gestures, posture, and movement in the constitution of the processes of psychical representations. Both psychical and social dimensions must find their place in reconceptualizing the body, not in opposition to each other but as necessarily interactive. (Grosz, 1994b, p. 23)

She proposes that the body cannot usefully be considered as just embodiment or corporeality, but rather as “embodied subjectivity” or “psychical corporeality,” although both these awkward terms are often shortened (e.g., Hall, 1996) and their purpose in attempting to integrate ‘both’ of these sides of bodies is wasted. I find neither of these terms particularly useful, even as delimiting a *surface*, as long as they separate twin components of what can then still be mistaken for an individual ontological state. And I think the important constituent of the body in society is lost in these labels, for in Grosz’s framework, it is *the social* and *the subjective* which constitute each other as ‘a (physical) body.’

In taking up her framework in this study, I aim to probe its congruity for investigating empirical descriptions and lived narratives of gendered outdoor leadership, physicality and empowerment. This is in response to her own hope: “perhaps the framework I have been trying to use in this book...will nevertheless be of some use if feminists wish to avoid the impasses of traditional theorizing about the body” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 188). The specific points of analysis which I introduce here and detail further in ensuing chapters arise out of two questions: first, how are bodies the site of subjects’ social production? And, second, how are bodies psychically represented and lived by subjects? These two questions, in effect, both centre and eliminate the “physical side” of the body from its own articulation in corporeality *as a social product*.

These two questions inform a series of inversions. Grosz (1994b, p. 189) herself alludes to them as a model, using the conceptual shorthand of “rotations...from the inside out and from the outside in.” Thus, she permits social practice, cultural

inscription and physical relations, as I have sketched them so far, to be plausibly understood as working through physicalities and bodies in constant rotations: from ‘the inside out/side in/side out’ and so on. Body shape, surface features and modes of movement are inscriptions that establish the sense of subjectivity and self ‘inside;’ in turn, inner desires, knowledge, even dispositions, as “dimensions of subjectivity” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 188), create the body that is lived and experienced as an ‘outside.’ Social inscriptions and subjective experiences rotate, or invert, in bodily movement. In a crude summary, Grosz’s conclusion is that human agents do not know for sure if minds exist, but we do know that we have bodies because it is with bodies that we actively appropriate and transform ourselves into selves who are conscious beings.

### *Corporeality in Sociology*

Attempts to reconcile apparently exclusive social constructions which deny their mutually constitutive investments are common in social theory. Bourdieu was attempting to do this in drafting a theory of practice in response to structural Marxism (Connell, 1987). Conceptual models similar to Grosz’s mobilize many new approaches to a sociology of the body. Featherstone (1991, p. 171), for example, uses “two basic categories: the inner and the outer body.” These are a means of depicting a relationship between external social organization of bodies and requirements of bodily appearances and the internal responses (“maintenance and repair”) of individuals to their bodies’ needs, health and functioning as vehicles for pleasure. He proposes that “within consumer culture, the inner and outer body become conjoined” (Featherstone, 1991, p. 171), but gives little indication of *what* they become when conjoined and *how* this constitutes an embodied process. Rather, he credits “the performing self” with activating and monitoring cultural meanings which it enacts to represent what is taken for granted as a pre-cultural, naturally ageing body. This body does little to *effect* its ‘inner’ side.

Turner (1996, p. 32) strives for the same when he argues for “the distinction between the objective and subjective body.” Turner (1996, p. 32-33) defines the subjective experience of embodiment as distinct from “the physicality of the body,”

which he designates as “the objective body.” However, he separates the ways the body is lived and known ‘on the inside’ from the ways the body looks and what it does ‘on the outside.’ Turner’s (1996, p. 33) illustration is taken from discourses of health: he suggests that it is possible to identify the “tension between the subjective experience of embodiment and the objective process of ageing and decline.” This approach, however, curiously places the physical (objectively measurable) body outside social practice and places the subjective self as the only (somewhat passive) mode of experiencing and knowing “embodiment,” while also being beyond or, in his quick definition, at least separate from social inscription. It sustains the very oppositional treatment of the mind/body which he aims to eliminate. Subjectivity pre-exists embodiment (in order to then “experience” it), rather than coming into existence *as* embodiment. Such a characterization again tells little about the body’s social effects; indeed, Turner (1996, p. 33) has been criticized for concentrating “on what is done to the body rather than on what the body does” (to which he responds in the second edition to his study of the body in society that his thinking has shifted and he endorses a contextual, phenomenological approach to incorporating experience into “the physicality of the body”).

It would be extremely discouraging to feminist researchers, however, in the sociology of sport in particular, to find that “the physicality of the body” was objectively knowable, not itself the subject of experience and controlled by inevitable temporal and biological processes. Wright and Dewar (1997, p. 94) develop a more constructive tension when they probe for the productive effects of “the interweaving of the sensory and the social.”

This view of “interweaving” forces, though, is also found in Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) “phenomenology of perception” and robustly promoted by Crossley (1995, p. 43) as the very “fabric” of a “carnal sociology of the body.” Crossley’s (1995) criticism of Turner’s “sociology of the body” argues that the body and self are treated as separate components of social agency in dualisms like “objective” body and “subjective” experience of it. In this depiction, as much as appears in Featherstone’s (1991), the “objective,” pre-destined body is not constitutive or active as an agent in the social world and is therefore overlooked in its capacity to embody and shape meaning.

Crossley (1995, p. 47) argues instead for a “carnal sociology,” a term used by Merleau-Ponty, to focus on the ways in which the body “actively interrogates the world.” Such a conceptualization relies upon the process through which bodies do this, that is, perception. To Merleau-Ponty, “perception is not an inner representation of an outer world” (Crossley, 1995, p. 46), but an activity in which both world and body are “articulated” into “being in-the-world” and not into inner, personal meanings. Significantly, this activity does not involve direct, unmediated human experience of a shared reality, but suggests that subjects mediate their own entry into, way of being in and way of making sense of the (one) shared space of ‘reality’ which may be perceived in *many* meaningful ways.

Additionally, Merleau-Ponty describes an inversion which he calls “reversibilities” characterizing the (carnal) embodied, perceiving subject comprising an ability to sense, that is, to feel touch, to hear sound, to be seen, to be perceived, as well as the ability to be sentient, that is, to touch, to see and to perceive the world. ‘The body’ itself is actually constituted in these reversibilities. “The body consists in sensible-sentience; it sees and can be seen, touches and can be touched, hears and can be heard etc” (Crossley, 1993, p. 411). And “perception is effected through habituated body practices. It is a socio-cultural practice. It is ‘done’” (Crossley, 1993, p. 411). Thus perception is a process of practices, a constant ‘interweaving’ of sensibility and sentience, an active interface of receptivity and intelligence; Merleau-Ponty suggests that the process occurs in the flesh, which is a surface both touching the body and touching the world (see also Grosz, 1993b, 1994b). “The perceiving subject,” according to Crossley (1995, p. 47), “constitutes a point within the visible world where that world becomes visible.” Making itself visible as part of the visible world, through viewing that world, the body-subject brings itself into social being.

The use of the terms sensible and sentient, for sensory and social, operate just as does Grosz’s term corporeality to denote a mobile constitution of social subjectivity and not specifically a physically material or “objective” body. Crossley (1995, p. 60) himself terms this process “intercorporeal reversibility.” Both, however, also stress a final point that is important for this discussion: that “the body acts and is acted upon by other bodies” (Crossley, 1995, p. 60). The corporeal body is a body in action. As the

active “embodiment of social action” (Frank, 1991, p. 95), it is always “volatile” (Grosz, 1994b).

### *Corporeal Feminism*

Grosz’s (1994b) inversions can be traced to her critical work on not only Merleau-Ponty and others who see the body as “psychical experience,” but also Foucault and those who see the body as “inscriptive surface.” However, her claim to a corporeal feminism rests on the inability of all of these theorists to account for women’s bodily experiences. The absence of any consideration of sexual difference in Merleau-Ponty’s body-subject, in particular, has been noted widely (e.g., Alcoff, 1997; Butler, 1989; Grosz, 1993b, 1994b; McMillan, 1987; Sullivan, 1997; Young, 1990c). Grosz theorizes corporeal feminism in direct response. She asks,

what happens in the bifurcation of sexed bodies—which is, in my opinion, an irreducible cultural universal—that is inevitably part of our understanding of bodies? If mind or subjectivity can be adequately and without reduction explained in terms of bodies, bodies understood in their historicocultural specificity, does this mean that sexual specificity—sexual difference—will be finally understood as a necessary (even if not sufficient) condition of our understanding of subjectivity? (Grosz, 1994b, p. 160)

She claims that the way to overcome the Cartesian duality of mind/body, in which the privileged mind is universalized to transcend or disavow difference, is to centre bodies which are indelibly different from each other (Grosz, 1994b). It is difficult to accept this approach without also accepting pre-existent, pre-cultural, differentiated body types. And as Merleau-Ponty’s clinical example shows that male embodiment and male heterosexual sexuality are used as the model for the “body-subject,” Grosz (1993b, p. 54) claims that his work must be read as an explanation

of male subjectivity...[for the] ways in which men come to be centred, unified, integrated subjects, active in the world, able to make decisions and undertake projects—it remains an open question for feminists to ask

if the same is true for women [which] may result in understanding female subjectivity.

Grosz (1993b, p. 53) suggests that different bodies and types of body effect different subjectivities in that the processes of corporeality which are inscribed and felt are the constituents of “an entire orientation, a framework from which the body-subject lives and acts in its world.” Thus corporeality, itself, has a sexual specificity, according to Grosz (1993a).

The difficult issue of the influence of sexual difference as psycho-structural determinant may be misleading as it is put here; for example, can sexual specificity become enacted into being? However, Grosz’s point in *this* analysis—she takes a different direction in her theorization of “Sexed Bodies” (1994b)—helps to identify the value of such a reconceptualization of the body for women. I accept that bodily orientations are the social product of inscribed and lived differences in bodies, but not that bodies are *always* perceived differently or perceived *as* different. And I think this can apply to sexual difference. The happy experiences of many tomboys are lived, physical orientations to activity and adventure which are not always ended by puberty. There is always the chance that the perceiving subject makes her meaning in interactions with the world in which (her own) sexual difference is not perceptible, or conversely, in particular intersubjective relations in which it *is*, such as in adolescence. Indeed, Grosz (1993a; emphasis in original) observes that “sexual differences, like class and race differences, *are* bodily differences, but these are not immutable or biologically pre-ordained.” I think its significance for a *feminist sociology* of corporeality is that bodily differences, like other constituents of embodied social agency, bring meaningful relations into being only when they are perceived as part of the subject’s world. Perception is always a social practice (Crossley, 1993).

Corporeality, in Grosz’s constant ‘inside out/side in/side out’ inversions, does not happen as just one event; its effects are not cumulative or, indeed, developmental, as suggested by those who see bodily orientations as primarily ingrained when a child is very young. Corporeal inscription does not trace its meanings across the bodies of social subjects such that it disguises or scars an underlying authenticity which might be recovered at another time. Rather, corporeality is a mutually interactive process of

writing, rewriting and *overwriting* the body from the outside in and the inside out. And social conditions and subjective relationships, in families, for example, are productive of different and conflicting, lived experiences of bodily difference and bodies themselves. Many women describe feeling “awkward and useless” as girls, living their sexual specificity as failure compared to other girls and then becoming strong and skilled enough to pursue “epic” adventures and careers in the mountains, for example, as adults; a theory of embodied socialized femininity does not begin to explain these experiential examples. It also does not help to explore the dissonance I discuss in later chapters felt by women who do acquire physical competence and self-confidence and emerge with a sense of corporeality (as Grosz would define it) similar to boys and men, but accompanied by a clear awareness of sexually specific bodily inscriptions. Sexual specificity, therefore, *must* be seen as one of many mutable bodily differences which are “etched” into being and thus “produced in the inscriptive process” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 227).

For the sake of scrutinizing these complicated, lived experiences of different women, I do not adopt a psychoanalytic approach to the signification of social bodies in a sexual structure of desire. A theory of “performativity” (Butler, 1990, 1993), for example, could offer another means to examine how gendered corporeal inscriptions are enacted by the subject as surface gestures which ‘express’ an inner self. As mentioned above, such an idea is also suggested in social theorizing based on Goffman’s (1959) work and applied to “the performing self” (e.g., Featherstone, 1991). Butler’s (1990, pp. 134-141) descriptions of gender as a “contingent,” “corporeal style,” a fictional performance which locates its own genuine original not by copying, but by *performing* it as real are appealing: in the outdoors, there is no strong woman prototype and each woman could be said to form her own version of her identity in the performance of her prowess.

A theory of performativity is, however, limited for this research because such a theory of gender alludes to gestures and acts as corporeal because they involve a physical body and does not account for bodily action or clearly describe *how* (physical) bodies are accomplished. It risks dislocating bodies from their historical conditions and implying that all bodies have the same potentiality for social inscription. Additionally,

psychoanalytic explanations of the unconscious and repressed desire for coherence inevitably lead to the problem of phallogocentric representation of the symbolic order and how feminist theorizing ought to participate in it (Grosz, 1988). I do not think that to argue that social and subjective bodily meanings are parodies of fantasies or repetitious social fabrications is useful to understanding how discursive meanings *effect* material, lived consequences.

Butler (1990) claims that temporal/temporary performances are tenuous and therefore may be displaced. As they invert the meaning of the performance from an expression of a 'real' identity to a performance that makes real an identity that could be anything, then performances may produce their objects in excessive ways.<sup>25</sup> It is not clear how this explains gender as a repetitive, "mundane," corporeal style with oppressive control of bodily action. I am not sure this gives us any more insight about the power relations regulating certain bodies in certain ways; once a woman "performs" her prowess, for example, why would she suffer from low confidence and feel either inadequate or guilty about her physical competence? Butler (1990) does not offer the means to understand the "reversibility" of the constitution of corporeality that Grosz (1994b) and Crossley (1995) do. Rather, I prefer to examine bodies as lived and made (corporeally) meaningful to specific women as they live their everyday lives within materially experienced, discursively intelligible contradictions (see also Alcoff, 1997; Marcus, 1992).

The importance of a sociological approach to corporeality for feminist theorizing in the outdoors is in shifting a reliance on theories of "sex role socialization" to a consideration of bodily inscription and lived body practices of socialization. It is not that a concept of socialization is outdated, but rather that it is treated in the 'women in the outdoors' literature too narrowly as a fixed and determining concept, whereas it might be more productive to construct its genealogy as a discourse relying on practices beyond a psychology of identity. Bodies must be the sites of reinscription and new perceptions that (re)socialize subjects, because individual experience and social relations, and, indeed, physicality itself, are never complete or final (see Alcoff, 1997). Thus, as Grosz (1993a; see also Halberstam, 1998) argues, bodily differences are "not

immutable” and the social productivity of bodily experience is centred over sexual specificity.

### Conclusion

In the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature it is argued that “the woman who has learned to be strong, assertive and independent on a wilderness course encounters intense cognitive dissonance back home because these traits are not presently valued for her in society” and therefore the quest to prove one’s physical prowess “is a disservice to women” (Warren, 1985, p. 14). In order to avoid the limitations of gender identities as “traits,” it is more useful to consider the lived experiences of acquiring gendering habits and new body practices as physicality. Women in this empirical study suggest that their experiences of physical prowess and what is socially defined as masculine physicality are at times quite pleasurable. They enjoy the corporeal “sense of freedom and also...being in control,” says Siobhan (I0397J:37-38), which accompany a capable and vigorous physicality. To wear comfortable socks and heavy boots and stride as they walk is a pleasurable experience and recognizable as one that contributes to producing gendered bodies (e.g., Mauss, 1973; Turner, 1996). Valerie recently felt self-conscious in a large city: “I noticed suddenly that I was striding along and all the other women were taking these little steps!” She says, “mmm, yeah, I really like that feeling” (I0397E:2948-67). Her physical competence, her prowess, is disruptive in the outdoors, but also in the city where her way of moving and its emergence from *and* constitution of a more muscular femininity make her perceive a difference in relation to other women’s feminine corporeality. The physicality of the stride inscribes on the outside the “woman who has learned to be strong, assertive and independent” on the inside, the woman who feels such pleasure in “striding along” that she incorporates it as a social practice that makes her body her own. Her physicality reinscribes any “cognitive dissonance” she encounters.

This chapter has argued that feminine embodiment is a static concept which does not allow the means to explore how bodily changes effect changes to femininity. It has suggested that the constant inversion of psychic experience of and social

inscription of corporeality through action, that is, kinetic, sensible, material and social alterations to and appropriations of one's subjective world, is a more informative explanation for the social process of how subjectivities are constituted in bodies. It is also promising as a method of unpacking experience. The next chapter tests its usefulness as an analytical technique to examine the lived experiences of women in this empirical study.

### Chapter 3    **Becoming Strong Girls**

Feminist discussions of ‘women’s outdoor experiences’ commonly identify three areas as the main source of women’s different physical competence in the outdoors. The arguments rest on the basis that women’s overarching gender role socialization as girls limits their opportunity to develop physical skill early on in their lives (e.g., Johnson, 1990; Jordan, 1992; Loeffler, 1995a, 1995c, 1997; Warren, 1985). As a result of having been “unable to step outside societal gender roles” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 15), they lack prior experience of technical skill development, physical strength and self-confidence. Skill, strength and confidence are taken for granted as aspects of children’s physical development, but their foreclosure for girls is accomplished through girls’ passivity in the face of socialization.

#### **Biography and Body Talk**

The next four chapters explore these areas in depth in relation to the lived experiences of women documented empirically. Respondents participated in various surveys of their experiences in the outdoors as women outdoor leaders and also spent a considerable amount of time recounting their life history. They also spent time recalling and writing memory narratives. In this chapter I examine the formative life experiences of physical activity and gendered embodiment as they were recounted to me or written.

My readings of this material began with my interpretation of how the women talked about their bodies in relation to themselves and their lives, which I called ‘body talk;’ I then looked for what might be characterized as a defining ‘physical moment’<sup>26</sup> in this conversation. Rather than begin with their earliest memories of the outdoors or with their activities as a very young girl, both of which inevitably came out as she spoke to me, my desire here is to explore what each woman herself perceives—not always self-consciously—as a significant period or time in her relationship with her body. It was not so much a semiotic exercise, but one of recognizing a phenomenological emphasis.<sup>27</sup>

When I was listening to audiotapes of or re-reading a transcript of a life history, it sometimes became apparent to me that something was still missing for the narrative to make sense and when the moment of its telling came, its felt grip on the woman narrating the event was evident. Of two women who had experienced adolescent eating disorders, for example, one woman answered two or three questions as if she was waiting for something and then said “I’ve been- I’ve had- I had a dis- an eating disorder” (Jo, I0397U:128), whereas another woman was well past her ‘life history’ and into the rest of our interview when she said, almost offhand, “Well, I was bulimic for three years. Which wasn’t nice” (Claire, I0397N:3055). It was apparent that the physical and emotional abuse suffered by the second woman (about which I had learned at the start of her interview) had had more impact on her in terms of her relationship to her body than the eating disorder. The bulimia was not unrelated nor unimportant, but was less of a *defining* kinesthetic experience. Many women experienced invasive, confusing and mobilizing body experiences and changes when they were girls and adolescents. I focus on those stories in this chapter and in the end, they help to challenge the belief that girls are passive recipients of society’s compulsory scripts of feminine vulnerability.

While many of the women in the study experienced similar things, I wanted to examine for each the moment of change, as I found it, in the biographical context of her body talk. Quite often the physical moment emerges as the point or process in which her physicality materialized, a moment in which her relation to her body, its physical potential and its social power all intersect. It may have been a point at which this woman glimpsed a relationship with physical power or it may have been a struggle with, or even, for some, a resolution in the tension with, being a girl.<sup>28</sup> It generally was the time in which her body, and not always her gendered consciousness according to these particular narratives, revealed to her its pliability as an object of social inscription and manipulation as much as its reliability as her own object of control and subjectively experienced mode or practice of being. Each identifies some sort of conscious desire for, or possession of, control over or through her body.

To me as the researcher, such a moment sometimes appears as a single remark or intervention by a significant adult and at other times it seems to coalesce from a long

sequence of bodily encounters over time which contribute to that woman's sense of self. It is not my intent to trace a progression or correlation with a developmental path beginning from childhood and ending with adulthood; indeed, some of these women recount discovering strength and skill in mid-life, despite having had children. A sense of physicality, however, was not absent in earlier life, but it had not been visibly 'unfolding' or 'maturing' toward a 'peak experience' as a life course approach to developmental experiences would imply (see Morss, 1996). Instead, the analysis places each particular defining moment in the social conditions which facilitate them. It situates the physical experiences within the wider context of culture, schooling, family/*whanau* dynamics and formative relationships. While it explores the kinds of physicality each woman learned as a girl, it also probes significant gendered experiences ranging from rejection of physical activity and instances of physical abuse to life-changing decisions around bodily orientations and body projects. In the historical and cross-cultural context of physical relations, an insight into shifts in gender inscription through the social bodies of girls emerges.<sup>29</sup>

The three oldest women amongst the interviewees did not 'discover' the outdoors as a place for wilderness pursuits and professional work until they were well into their thirties, while, in contrast, four of the younger women were involved in developing skills while fairly young and a significant number of women were already instructing outdoor skills to others by their mid-teens or early twenties. Even so, many women also adhered to "societal gender roles," becoming partners, wives and mothers in their early twenties and, but not always, training in traditional female occupations such as teaching, nursing and clerical work. In fact, of the 15 women who gave in-depth interviews for the study, ten trained as secondary school teachers. The choice of a 'non-traditional' occupation later is not generally congruent with a rebellious temperament or feminist resistance. It is far more the result of their own lived experiences of skilful ability, sensuous bodily feelings and access to a personally meaningful physical power. In light of the experiences of these women, I propose that *childhood* exposure to practical outdoor skills is not as important to later career choice or professional success as the literature claims. It may be more important to women's physical confidence as adults to have had some experience of the desire for freedom of

movement in their girls' bodies. The women in this study do describe an appreciation for and pleasurable sense of their bodily capacity in a wide range of contexts, activities and times of their lives. This chapter aims overall to analyse these varying experiences for their contributions to a sense of corporeality in these different women.

### **The Problem of “Prior Experience” Arguments**

“Lack of exposure to outdoor activities” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 20) as children is often cited as constraining for women, as if missing out on this developmental phase prevents women from being able to achieve fully in the outdoors. The argument does not account for those women who do not have positive childhood experiences, but who do become active in the outdoors, as is the case with some of the interviewees in this study. Many women most certainly have outdoor experiences as children, especially in New Zealand, and do not become outdoor leaders. It is therefore not the intent of this chapter to claim that outdoor leaders are women who were physically active and adventurous from a young age. It is a significant argument in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature, however, because it serves to construct a group of “ordinary” women as normative, and by implication, “normal,” with shortcomings which are the result of their “lack.”

In exploring how 25 women outdoor leaders developed their interest in outdoor leadership, one study makes this mistake. The women’s opportunities for outdoor activity and skill development (through family, Scouts, camps, high school and college outdoor leadership preparation programmes) are arranged chronologically and causality is implied: “these women acknowledged that their lives would have been much different if they hadn’t had outdoor experiences as a child” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19). And yet within that research some women mention that, as girls, they were discouraged by their families and others that they did *not* have an “outdoorsy,” interested father or the opportunity to develop outdoor skills in Scouts. They “missed” what the author calls “early developmental experiences” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19) and which one of her participants simply attributes to chance: “I was lucky my dad took us out so much” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 20). In the end, the author inconclusively decides that one of “a

multitude of constraints and influences” shaping women’s choice of outdoor leadership as a career is the “presence or absence of early outdoor experiences on women’s careers” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 21). Although what she finds is interesting, it lacks social context and is of little use to understanding the social regulation of women’s physical competence through gendered outdoor leadership.

The purpose of exploring life narratives is not to find causal factors for later choices nor even to identify common life experiences among women. It is clear that there is no set path to a career in outdoor leadership for women (Loeffler, 1995a, 1995b; Miranda & Yerkes, 1987) and no clear corollary between being an active, strong and capable girl and becoming a physically competent and confident outdoor leader. Of more use to an understanding of how women achieve their gendered subjectivity through physical experiences is a picture of how they became ‘exposed to’ a physical ability which becomes their own and what significant events or changes in gendered self-awareness, that is, in consciousness, accompanied their bodily experiences.

Inquiry must be into lived experience in which the self is known through the processes and effects of embodiment. But such experience is not discrete (as in the “presence or absence of early outdoor experiences”); it must be considered “in terms of [a woman’s] own embodied biography” (Shilling, 1993, p. 4). There is a place, therefore, for “prior experience,” in the sense that the lived, embodied self has a history, its own process and a relationship to social meanings. Indeed, “the body has a history” (Turner, 1996, p. 27). And it is the purpose of researching life narratives to find histories of the body in personal, lived experiences shaped by and viewed in relation to social structures and change. ‘The body’ outdoors has a history and women in the outdoors live embodied biographies which help give far more incisive accounts of the historical inscription of the social at the level of ‘the body’ than do “developmental” chronologies.

As many narratives presented here illustrate, bodily experiences begin with “patterns of body training we receive from our parents” and other social institutions (Shilling, 1993, p. 12). It is a mistake to think that they *rest on* these patterns, however. Body training encompasses, but also expands, *habitus* or class training on and through bodies. It is very much through practices and processes that bodies are achieved. In

personal, socialized practices, individuals become their social identity (Shilling, 1993). The very “process of becoming” ensures constant change and therefore leaves behind or makes visible these patterns in “a personal history of social practice, a life-history-in-society” (Connell, 1987, p. 84).

And so the inquiry into prior outdoor experience, the lack of which is generally blamed for women’s low confidence (e.g., Warren, 1985), is only useful in the context of the lived practices of physical relations. It is common supposition that society’s norms and relations are not as fixed in the outdoors and therefore it is not generally even considered that bodily norms are society’s mode of functioning *within* physical activity. The context of gender construction in the natural environment is less the ‘naturalized’ patterns of social order (the sexual division of labour and public/private “split”) and more the heteronormativity of bodily skills and physical relations. Thus “constraints” against women, such as those identified by Loeffler’s (1995a) study of women outdoor leaders, are thought to be demystified once we become more aware of them, but if the normative modes through which they are accomplished as lived, socio-historical bodily practice are not identified, social change is less likely to be practicable.

### *The Context of Physical Relations*

A component of the lack of prior exposure argument is that women lack preparatory, mechanical experiences as girls which inhibits their later adeptness and progress in outdoor learning situations (e.g., Warren, 1985). Similar to the developmental argument, this view is that bodies share the same capacities until girls miss out as a result of gender role socialization and social conditioning. Boys receive “technical conditioning,” but as girls do not their “mechanical unfamiliarity,” “math anxiety” and “technical apprehensiveness” (Warren, 1985, p. 12) around equipment inhibit their chances to handle and appropriate the necessary outdoor technology. If girls are taught the same physical skills as boys, then their innately capable bodies will excel.

While on a commonsense level (and in years of ‘women in the outdoors’ claims) this argument has been useful, its assumptions about the body leave little room

for understanding the pervasiveness of women's putative low self-confidence in the outdoors, especially in various highly skilled outdoor leaders, as found by Loeffler (1997). And its under theorized account of gender identity has been detrimental to an understanding of physical relations in the outdoors. For example, once girls are taught how to tie knots and light fires, what happens to their gender "socialization?" Is "femininity" lost in this activity; conversely, is it untouched? If technical skills are the panacea to gender role stereotypes, how is their pursuit in outdoor programmes "masculinizing" in practice? If girls and boys may be taught how to route plan and navigate together, what are the grounds for arguments that girls and women must do outdoor courses alone with other women? What is the connection between skill and subjectivity?

Feminists analysing physicality argue that women are not somehow forgotten in their bodily training, but are taught as girls that femininity is about being uninterested in manipulating mechanical equipment and unable to use their bodies with skill and force (MacKinnon, 1987; McCaughey, 1997; Young, 1990c). The physical abilities of boys are so effectively naturalized in heteronormative cultural meanings of family, school, sport and physical activity that girls are not "*unconsciously* discriminate[d] against," as Warren (1985, p. 12; emphasis added) claims wishfully, but in fact practically and rationally excluded from participation. They are not simply inhibited from using natural abilities, but rather they are taught physical inability as their natural embodiment. One group of researchers interested in "the contemporary female experience of throwing," for example, are asked by a girl beginning their study, "You mean, someone has to teach you how to throw?" (O'Reilly et al., 1999, p. 46, 58). Girls are taught in schools that non-contact sports, such as hockey and tennis, are better for girls' innate non-competitiveness (Scraton, 1987). Historically in New Zealand, despite the separation of girls' physical education, there is evidence that tennis skills were taught to girls based on their potential to enforce feminine qualities, such as modesty of dress and movement, and to not upset the delicate feminine bodily comportment (Smith, 1997). Girls-only settings do not always provide the missing preparatory experiences so formative for boys.

The critical issues briefly introduced here are not discussed and debated in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature in part because of the reliance on the psychological constraints literature of leisure studies (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991b; Henderson et al., 1989) and the lack of life history analysis and ethnographic research which could provide empirical insights into lived specificities of gendered experience (cf. Humberstone, 1995). They do not appear in part because of the uncritical use of role theory to explain gender, which treats social attitudes and scripts as fixed character (as opposed to rehearsed postures and habits) and further treats roles as equal between girls and boys and equally oppressive of ‘the true self’ within needing liberation (Connell, 1987, pp. 50-51; e.g., Jordan, 1992). They inform much of the discussion in later chapters of this study.

The commonsense argument of “lack of prior experience” is reiterated in the literature without question. It is important for understanding women’s experiences of physicality that this catch phrase be examined for its wider implication in the cultural imposition of lived, gendered, physical and social action and its ideological function of producing girls’ passivity and women’s “lack” of desire. Girls’ experiences cannot be reduced to a “lack of prior exposure;” any lack of prior exposure is, more precisely, lived exposure to the social privileging of men of physical efficacy for boys. Girls are defined as girls and not boys by the cultural imposition of certain types of embodied skill, such as non-competitiveness, complementary to those which must be learned by boys. Indeed, Valerie tells me that she learned to move through “growing up with boys.” As a tomboy, she is socially marked as desiring a boy’s physical skill and why that makes her feel “great” is at the heart of the project of this study.

In the sections that follow, I explore the experiences of some of the women in the study in more depth. These are not cases; the sections group shared features of the defining physical experiences for different women. The ‘moments’ which situate each woman at the intersection of gender, heteronormativity and physicality are constitutive because the relations of physicality trace their visible inscriptions across her body and comportment. But they are not final or permanent ‘moments.’ As Charlie Cooper says, “you can always get your strength back” (I0397M:6446). They may yet be reinscribed as each woman lives her corporeality in her own biography.

**“I Grew Up Thinking I was Pretty Useless”**

When Elaine Ross got to high school in the early 1980s, she was “pretty unhappy.” She recalls now, “I felt that I just didn’t fit into what the feminine stereotype was. And I was sort of uncoordinated and I could never dress properly....I felt there was something wrong with me, because I didn’t fit into it” (L0405R:2-7). A feeling of ‘not fitting in’ is often the source of misery and discomfort for girls and may become the point of dissonance for them in their consciousness of gender (Brumberg, 1997; Pipher, 1994; Rogers, 1993). However, it is not always a catalyst for finding an alternative physicality, as it was for Elaine; it is more often the psychic inscription of femininity itself as difference. Being a girl *means* feeling “useless.”

With her two sisters and parents, Elaine went on camping trips when she was growing up, in which they would go to the most isolated spots, sleep on sacks on the ground and occupy themselves happily in endless ways in the bush and streams around them. When it came time to go on school camps, though, Elaine was disappointed. It may have been that she had some outdoor experience, but camps in those years were “a bit limited” in her view now. Her biggest insight is that “it was the social aspect that always let me down” (L0405R:105-06). She “felt comfortable in the outdoors, but not with people” (L0405R:110). Because she was shy and felt awkward, she thinks that she did not gain as much from the school experiences as she could have. She makes the connection between physical and social awkwardness, as a corporeal product, even though she had many backyard adventures with her sisters.

Elaine was shy and did not have brothers. She says these factors meant that she did not talk to many boys and preferred to play by herself. “If I wasn’t as shy, I think I would have got on with the boys quite well. And if I had been better at motor skills and motor sports, you know, I might have played with them more. Because I wasn’t very good at that” (L0405R:116-19). She sees a link between her social awkwardness with boys and a lack of ability, indicating the way in which her lack of physical coordination had particular social effects.

She was not unfamiliar with the outdoors before these first formalized camps, but she did not feel confident to be comfortable in mixed-gender activities outdoors,

because she felt she had not the “motor” coordination. It was not so much a lack of prior experience that restricted Elaine, but the lack of an easy social ‘fit’ for which she says she would have liked to feel skilful and coordinated. She mentions the family doing Saturday athletics, but her father and older sister always excelled, whereas she did not. She “ran races and did the discus and stuff,” but stopped athletics by the time she went to high school. She did play hockey for her school and mentions that her mother had played representative hockey, for which Elaine now feels some admiration (L0405R:138-39). Although Elaine played sport at school, on an all-girl team playing a sport deemed appropriate for girls (Scraton, 1992; Smith, 1997), in her talk she juxtaposes this against being on the debating team, watching a youth news despatch and being “bright,” “very conscientious” and “good at school” (L0405R:141-42). She left high school after sixth form at age 16 to work for a year as a news reader/writer.

“I couldn’t have coped without the Girl Guides,” she says now. Everything changed for Elaine when she joined the Girl Guides at age 13. The next year she became a Ranger Guide and was introduced to the skills for camping, tramping and sailing. It was through the four years she spent in Ranger Guides that she “grew to love the outdoors.” More importantly, perhaps, she experienced social acceptance in the all-female environment at the same time. She recalls, “and that’s where I started to think, ‘Hey, I’m really enjoying myself. People are laughing at my jokes here. They don’t mind that I don’t quite dress right.’ And I think that kept me going. So the outdoors have always been that source of solace for me. And made me feel really good about myself” (L0405R:7-16). Elaine received leadership training through Guides and did some skills instructing to other Guides (L0405R:218-33). While all the girls in her family have since gone into the outdoors for their own leisure, she says that, of the three sisters now, “I think I am probably the most epic one” (L0405R:38).

Elaine seems to characterize the outdoors as a place in which she found a comfortable niche during “a difficult time” (L0405R:405-06), that is, adolescence. She is now a resident teacher at an Outdoor Education lodge. She says that she pays particular attention to 16 year olds when teaching sixth formers leadership and activity skills (L0405R:392-413). The fourth form students in outdoor education groups, especially the boys, do not often give the 16 year old girls respect (in fact, she says they

have “completely no respect for their female leader”). For the girls’ leadership training, she says, “I really care about building them up and making them into good leaders and into strong people. For me that was very, very important” (L0405R:407-09). At 16 herself, she had found in Guides less pressure to be feminine, dress right or curb her sense of humour. She had found genuine friendship with other girls, lots of skills and opportunities to teach those skills. This would have been important to her given the prevalence in her ‘body talk’ of the desire for motor skills. Now, she notices the students in her school groups who are Guides: “you can usually spot them because they make fires and tie ropes together” (L0405R:424-25). Her ‘physical moment’ highlights finding a way to be less “frustrated with being female” through a comfortable physicality, both of which began for her in her teen years with a small group of girls in the outdoors. For a short but crucial time, Girl Guides gave Elaine the “protected space” (Pipher, 1994, p. 266; see also Miranda, 1985) which helped her see herself as a strong woman.

Marnie Webb, who grew up in England<sup>30</sup>, also felt that her body was awkward and troublesome. But in contrast to Elaine, she did not find a comfortable physicality until she was a mother in her thirties living in New Zealand. As a young girl, Marnie had a lot of people remark on her body, because she liked to take her clothes off. She says, “it was enormously scary for [other people]...I just liked being nude” (L0405I:58-60). She felt that people judged her as abnormal, “she must be lesbian” (I0396I:1905), although she says nobody explained why she should not take her clothes off. She knows that she was considered unfeminine (although she doesn’t use that word herself). She was told “lots of things at school” (I0396I:1838) which conveyed the message that with her embodiment, she should have been a boy; “people’d say ‘a disappointing woman’ ” (I0396I:1841).

Marnie was particularly surprised at this reaction to her body because she went to a boarding school for girls. Such comments seemed to make her aware that she was different from other girls, although she is not completely conscious of this even now. When I ask her if this affected her then, she says, “I don’t think it mattered probably...Um? Well, yes, I suppose it di- Sometimes, it was sort of hurtful. If I

thought about it. I mean, if you had a few things to xxx xxx, but it's okay" (I0396I:1839-50).

Marnie disliked sport and did as little as she could (I0396I:2352). She did not know that outdoor activities could have given her an alternative to playing sport and she feels "cheated" now that she never knew (L0405I:15-19). She has since discovered what for her is the pleasure of challenging experiences and the changing geography of the outdoors, although her 'body talk' is tinged with some sadness still. A tension seems to exist for Marnie, characterized by feelings of being "so excited and so disappointed" by a recent tramping trip, for example. It is also an anxiety she commonly feels about physical activity: "there's always that dilemma of dreading the physical challenge and then really enjoying it" (I0396I:195-97). "But," she says, "I like being on that edge of being anxious and being challenged" (I0396I:200-02) and later she reiterates: "I like the struggle" (I0396I:2480).

Almost analogously, she says that she has a "love-hate" (I0396I:213) relationship with her body, especially when she sees "old photos of myself" (I0396I:232). Again, there is a sadness, which seems to be because despite having four children who she and her husband taught how to sail at the local yacht club, she still felt uncomfortable through this phase of moving to New Zealand and becoming a young mother: "I never thought of myself as having a very good body" (I0396I:233). She related mostly to her body as "a thing that produced babies" (I0396I:1674-75). She had "to prove it by doing things" (I0396I:234). Now, at 50, she says she is "still finding it hard really. So, it's something to do I guess with social pressure" (I0396I:235-36).

Later, Marnie tells me again that when she saw her body in photographs she could especially see that she did not look "like a lady," although she had wanted to at the time. Like Elaine, she felt that she did not have a socially "useful" body in Bordo's (1990) sense, that is, a docile, disciplined, feminine body, which would have made her feel that she 'fit in' as a girl. However, nor did she know at that time what her body could do and it is likely that her comments about not "having a very good body" refer to not knowing that hers could be a strong and capable body. She is especially surprised that at an all-girls boarding school she was reproached about her body and desire for more freedom (as if perhaps it should have been a more permissive environment than a

mixed school). If she thought that she had not ‘a very *feminine* body,’ she may have felt sad because it was not “obedient” in a gendered sense. Yet, her compulsion to “prove it” more likely relates to proving that it could be effective and useful, even if not feminine—rather than trying to make it more feminine—that is, proving that her body could be “good” in a physical sense. Now, in embracing those things that *do* make it a “good body,” she is happy to adopt the negation of her femininity by describing her physicality as “being like a bloke.” When she says that she still finds it “hard” due to social pressure, she is referring to overcoming the *feeling* that her body has let her down in her desire to be “big and boisterous.”

Marnie sees physical freedoms for women as part of feminist change. She says that for women, showing that they can be physical and do things themselves is “the struggle of getting equal, isn’t it?” She experiences interpersonal tensions with men generated by the desire to overcome her gendered sense of physicality: “it feels like [women] *are* dominating, feels like we want extra turns...we want more chances” (I0396I:1011-18). She implies that crossing the ideological boundary between masculine strength and feminine weakness puts women in the position of wanting something undeserved in their relations with men. For the most part, however, Marnie does not dwell on these feelings and says that she has not really stopped to figure out these issues before. She has taken on the “joy” of feeling physical, “the total excitement” (I0396I:2253-54) and the comfortable feelings of being outdoors and decided that those are what she likes and to ‘get on with it.’

If the ‘physical moment’ in which Marnie’s body ‘materialized’ her physicality and made her aware that she was different occurred when she was a schoolgirl, it was reinforced for her as a daughter and a wife. But it was resolved for her in New Zealand the day she saw a group of trampers come out of the bush wearing red and blue checked Swandri jackets and tramping boots, distinctly having a good time. She says, “I longed to have the gear” (I0396I:268). So when her youngest child was three, she applied to take an adults’ course at Cobham Outward Bound School at Anakiwa in the Marlborough Sounds and began to train for it. Up until then she had not done exercise (aside from look after small children!). About her body, she says, “I suppose I didn’t trust it for many years. I mean, I didn’t do anything physically—any kind of exercise.

So, um, there was quite a lot about it that I didn't know. You know, I didn't know I could run" (I0396I:243-47). When I ask what got her started, she replies, "desperation?" (I0396I:255). Marnie was 35.

Following her Outward Bound experience, Marnie did more outdoor pursuits, a lot of tramping and sailing with women and then also women's triathlons. Today she goes to the gym three times a week, goes mountain biking and guides women's yacht charters. She still talks about the pleasure of wearing boots: "I like the movement, because it's okay to stride around with your legs apart, with your boots on and be like a bloke, yeah....I can walk the way I was built to walk" (I0396I:1773-86). For her this is tied to independence and a huge sense of possibility: "I can move around the world with my own strength" (I0396I:2526-27).

But as much as big boots signal physical pleasure to her, they also still signify the pervasive contradiction in her 'body talk:' "there was a moment a few years ago when I was leaving England, leaving my family, and I had those really big, green- you know, the old New Zealand tramping boots? The really big, green ones with thick soles. And Dad just shook his head and said, "Oh, what sort of a girl would have- ? Why do you wear those big boots?" He was so disappointed. On the last trip he said to me, "You *should* have been a boy" (I0396I:1814-28).

### **Learning to Use her Body with Force**

As the eldest girl in a large, Irish New Zealand family, Siobhan O'Brien helped her mother a lot with the care of her younger siblings. She remembers her mother as constantly exhausted by many pregnancies, children and shifts for their ever-growing family. She describes her parents as "very conservative, very old fashioned and very staunchly Catholic" (L0405J:53-54).

As Siobhan watched her mother become overburdened with these demands, little money and an abusive husband, she began to question Catholicism. At age 15, she decided to leave the Church. She saw her parents' marriage and relations in the family deteriorate. To Siobhan, her mother absorbed a lot of the abuse at home and just worked all the time. According to Tolerton's (1994, p. 78) research, this was a

commonplace situation in many of the Irish New Zealand Catholic families of the time; Catholic wives were expected to be servile to “macho, drinking, selfish husbands” who could be intimidating and abusive. Worse, it was never spoken of and normalized within the Church. Siobhan says, “we were always being horrible- We were all just being normal really. For a lot of families like us” (L0405J:550-52).

When the children were growing up, she says, “Dad would smack us. He’d yell at us. He was always telling us off. We lived in fear of him coming home. He didn’t ever beat us up, but he smacked us, sure. You know, he would come in the door and the first thing he would say was ‘Why haven’t you kids put your gumboots away? God, you are all so useless.’ There was never anything good” (L0405J:162-68). Siobhan also recalls her mother slapping her face and calling her a slut or a bitch on one occasion when she appeared in a short skirt (L0405J:244-46). Her mother worried about her clothing, the onset of puberty and “what I was doing with boys” (L0405J:235-36), all while there was little communication between them and her mother was still worried about toddlers. Siobhan, like many other Catholic women, blamed the Church for the unfairness of her mother’s situation (Tolerton, 1994).

She remembers that she thought it ludicrous that her mother would worry about her. “I couldn’t give a toss about boys. I had grown up with bloody five of them and who would want anything to do with them?!” (L0405J:236-38). She “had watched Mum having baby after baby and, you know, wearing yourself out...By the time I was ten I was thinking to myself, ‘This is absolutely nuts! Who the hell wants to do this?’ ” (L0405J:137-42). She knew even then that “there was no way you could really fit unless you were prepared to be subservient. And that wasn’t a road I was going to walk down, a road of subservience” (Tolerton, 1994, p. 155).

The emotionally abusive situation in her family was intensified by physical and verbal bullying from her brothers. Siobhan says she was very lonely as a child because “at that stage girls were girls and boys were boys and the boys always played together” (L0405J:116-18). She wanted to play with the boys “because I was basically a tomboy” (L0405J:124). She was not interested in girls’ play (dolls and prams) and did not have girl friends to play with or sisters close enough in age to be playmates. “I really wanted

to be running around the paddocks with the boys and as soon as I tried to join them...it was just 'Oh, you're a girl. Get out of here!' ” (L0405J:149-53).

She was physically “beaten up” by one brother so much that she retreated to her bedroom and read books. “I was a rough and tumble kid, but I was constantly put down and I got no confidence from my parents. Because I would go and do something and Dad would say, ‘Oh, you can’t do that. Here, I’ll do it for you.’ And Mum didn’t want me in the kitchen doing girls’ stuff ’cause: ‘there will be enough time for that later on. Go and do other things.’ ” But, she says, “in effect, what I did was nothing, absolutely nothing. I spent hours and hours in my bedroom lying on my bed wishing I could do something” (L0405J:124-32).

Siobhan says, “I wasn’t into girl stuff, so I spent quite a bit of time on my own” (L0405J:187-88). The defining moment in the biography of her body came for Siobhan in adolescence. When she was 15, in a Physical Education class in school, she was trying to avoid actively participating in a softball game and took a spot in the outfield. “I was fat, you see,” she explains. “I thought of myself as obese. I was always told I was fat by the boys in my family, so I thought of myself as fat and therefore useless at physical things, so I never tried” (L0405J:199-202). She describes the teacher as “a very large woman, a very big, muscular woman....She was a great big, energetic, wonderful person, always saying good things about us” (L0405J:205-09). When the ball was actually hit into the outfield and landed close to Siobhan, who stood and looked at it, the teacher called out to her, “For God’s sake, throw it girl!!” (L0405J:212).

With that one comment she interrupted Siobhan’s passive state. Siobhan threw the ball back as hard as she could, the teacher responded, “Hooray! Well done!” and Siobhan suddenly realized that perhaps she could do physical things successfully. It was a particular moment in which she learned that she could use her abject girl’s body with force. The effect, for her, of taking up that social practice was to begin a reinscription of her body and the feminine passivity into which she had been forced. It was not simply a learned pattern of embodiment, for Siobhan recognized at the time the restrictions within which she lived; she says, “I wasn’t really pathetic; I was angry” (L0405J:191-92). Anger exploded through her body that day. She was indignant that

her teacher didn't see that she was incapable of throwing with force because she was a girl—and fat. “I got so wild that..I chucked the bloody thing as hard as I could wanting it to land between her eyes” (L0405J:212-16).

This is a watershed experience for Siobhan, a key to her ‘body talk.’ It was the catalyst for many things which occurred for her the year she was 15. After that she became extremely busy: “so in the sixth form I played soccer, I played hockey and trampoline, I played squash, I played badminton, I swam, I ran, I did Ranger Guides, I was a house captain at school” (L0405J:310-12). They had a small tramping club at school that year and her class also visited the Outdoor Pursuits Centre in the North Island for a week. She got fit by exercising at home, walking everywhere, running to swim training in the morning, running or exercising at school in her lunch hour and controlling her eating. “I put myself on a pretty strict diet. I got to the stage where I knew exactly how much I had to eat each day, so that I could do all the exercise I was doing and I was- I had it fine-tuned that I knew when my body needed more energy. And I would eat something small” (L0405J:572-77).

She reflects now: “that whole 15 year old year for me, when I kicked over the traces as far as going to Church, and when that thing happened at school, it started a whole thing, I started rebelling” (L0405J:519-21). She began with small acts of resistance to her gendered subordination within the family, which included being prohibited from wearing jeans. She swore like her brothers and “was pretty stropky from time to time” (L0405J:559). She realized that she was independent. “Once I started doing all those things, like walking across town to training, I just got up and did it...I didn't tell [anyone] any more. It just happened. And I just took over my own life and drew a lot of strength from that” (L0405J:336-43).

Although this is a narrative of resistance, of ‘fighting back’ against cycles of abuse, a climate of fear and the psychological harm to her self-esteem, its potency is crystallized in one image for Siobhan. This image is of her body. Once she had learned to throw, once she had used her outrage to hurl a ball with force and in a sense powered through her own, socially constituted defences, she started to take action which was practical and empowering. But the image she saw which changed how she knew herself, the representation in which her physicality materialized for her consciousness,

was of her new physique. It consolidated the ‘defining moment’ which began a reinscription of her identity by changing her internal sense of who she was becoming. She says, “I was so fit when I was 16- I got a fright one day. I was getting dressed in my bedroom and looked- I happened to catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror. I didn’t realize it was me at first, because there was all this- My torso was all muscle. You could just see these rippling muscles down my torso” (L0405J:323-28).

Hinepare Maraiti (Ngati Kahungunu and Ngati Raukawa) also learned to use her body with force in her teenage years, literally taking up fighting. Hinepare had little choice but to accept the violence in her life. It came from her father. Its place configures one of the central contradictions with which she lives, for the very man who imposed a culture of violence against his wife and children was also the one who instigated self-defence as a physical project for the whole family. He appears as a perpetrator in one narrative of a beating and a tender nurse following another (a ‘beating’ in karate). He is her defender, teaching her that “you can do anything, you do it twice as good as anyone else” (I0397W:4817-18), and the abuser who puts her mother in hospital. As a child and a witness to her mother’s beatings, Hinepare still resented her mother for her powerlessness. She loved her father deeply. She acknowledges now that “it’s really only been through my adult life that I have really realized the stuff that I had felt then” (I0397W:991-1019; 1067-94).

Hinepare’s father was Maori, born on the land which she now farms. He had been close to his parents, who lived on the *pa*, and his *whanau*, although he was of the generation that did not learn *te reo* (L0405W:402-06). His successful career and travel were glamorized affectionately by those at home (L0405W:466-90). But, she says, “in order to be acceptable, he had to be white” (L0405W:409-10). “He certainly brought us up in a very European environment” (L0405W:414-15). He also drank, gambled, had extra-marital affairs and beat his wife and children. The situation is normalized in her mind, not unlike in Siobhan’s: “And our neighbours, um- He used to beat his wife. And he had a drinking problem too. And it seemed to be around. You know, that was very much the culture down our street” (L0405W:599-601). Hinepare comments, “I guess, you know, looking back on it, it was a fairly violent- It was a very violent upbringing. It was around us all the time” (L0405W:584-86).

The worst beating for Hinepare, “the time that, um, he REALLY- um, he BEAT me” (L0405W:569), happened when she “had snuck out the window to meet a boy” late one night and her father caught her climbing back in the window. He stripped her and his physical assault left her “battered and bruised” (L0405W:580). She accepted his authority: “that was all part of disciplining your children” (L0405W:583). As the eldest child and the only girl, she held a position of responsibility for the three children. “If ever anything went wrong, regardless of who it was, um, I got strapped first, because I was the oldest and it was my responsibility” (L0405W:560-62).

It was also her responsibility to attend Mass on Sundays on behalf of the family. The boys did not go to Church, but she had to, walking two to three hours each way, dressed in her best clothes, with hat, gloves and “the right hair” (L0405W:604-21). As Tolerton’s (1994, p. 54) interviews evidence, it was not unusual for a girl to get herself up and go to Mass alone if her parents “did not practise the faith.” In memories of other women, “the over-emphasis on ‘the hats and gloves syndrome’ ” still “rankles” (Tolerton, 1994, p. 19).

Hinepare’s grandmother arranged for her to take ballet classes. She danced for seven years until her father stopped her and instead organized the family to take self-defence lessons with the families of his employees. This began a period of regular, daily and very intense training in martial arts which lasted until she was 24 years old. It is a distinct turning point in her life, although it offers little apparent contrast in the sense that her body had not really been in her own control up until this point and for the next 13 years it was controlled mostly through her father’s involvement in training and practice. (Even after the “worst” beating, her father woke her early the next morning, as was customary, to go to training. Although sore, she says the greater humiliation was that the evidence that she had received a beating was revealed in public (L0405W:569-82).) She eventually left karate as a martial arts discipline after two professional fights and says she still enjoys doing the meditative “formations.”

Although karate was imposed on her, Hinepare also took it up actively. When the family sessions evolved into a club, she also organized other girls into a club. “I used to have a team of women and we would travel the country and fight- compete. And for us- We would run the streets. And try and get outdoors as much as we

could....And then [have] big weekend camps” (L0405W:214-19). She was also playing representative netball in high school, one of the youngest competitors at that level at that time (L0405W:661-65). But martial arts dominated: she went to Australia to compete in karate when she was 15 and the event fell so close to her exams that she failed School Certificate and repeated fifth form the following year. She says, “so that was my focus. I didn’t do much swotting” (L0405W:648-49).

In her family, the children’s turbulent teenaged years only amplified the problems of their family relations and the deterioration of their parents’ marriage (L0405W:80-100, 254-69). Hinepare “mucked around” at school, played a lot of sport and got into mischief, but training “sort of kept me together I guess” (L0405W:627). She coached her team “of women fighters,” drawn mainly from friends. She also served as Head Girl, visited the Outdoor Pursuits Centre and completed an Outward Bound course.

Reflecting on this intense period, Hinepare says, “as I say, I really loved those years...the physical and mental and spiritual sort of challenges that it gave me...just taking my body to the extreme really in some situations. Um. And yeah, quite abusive in- in lots of ways...it’s just amazing what you’ll do because you’ve been told to do it” (L0405W:126-35). She describes the old wool store in which the families met at the beginning. “I remember distinctly we were made to do press-ups on our knuckles and then jump press-ups until our knuckles were really raw...from sitting on your knees sort of thing up to a jump squat and then back down onto your knees, and we were on a concrete surface, hence the knees are not great any more” (L0405W:140-45). She still has scars to remind her of those days. On Sundays, she says, “we would often run to the beach as a group and conduct our whole training session on the beach in the surf. And then either have a picnic together or a gathering, go diving, getting seafood...[for] a big barbecue at the end. And it was very much a family affair. That’s what it was like. So, it was just wonderful” (L0405W:207-12). She elaborates: “when we would train in the sea, um, we would go into a press-up position and the surf would be coming in and we would just continue to do press-ups in and out of the surf. So it’s that sort of thing. It’s how you can put yourself against the elements. And regardless of how tough it is. Of how extreme it is” (L0405W:230-36).

And, she says, “it WAS tough” (L0405W:167). “I learnt how to take my mind beyond the pain. Because, as I say, you just didn’t question it” (L0405W:146-48). She dispels the shocking nature of the experiences with humour: “our instructor...was really tough...Actually my cousin and I were laughing about this. And we would be sitting at meditation and he would come along and break a board over our heads! It was that sort of thing! It’s like, you know, you were meant to be meditating!...Or, um, we’d be training away and he would kick us or give us a really good punch in the stomach just to make sure that we were, you know, doing the things that we were meant to be doing” (L0405W:238-48). “I think the stuff that I went through and the things that I went through physically, myself, was for the fitness side to attune my body so that it was prepared” (L0405W:249-51).

Hinepare was one of the youngest women competitors in martial arts, which became significant when she was examined for her first degree belt. “So there was only me, as a 15 year old girl, and four other guys. No other females coming through. That was a pretty interesting experience. I mean I’d been training sort of seven-days-a-week style, building up to it. And certainly had faced men before. In grading situations. But for this particular grading...on the first day, Saturday, I had 48 fights with men. I think it was the last sort of 10 fights were with Brown Belts, like, so they were advanced students. And it was literally just a beating. By the 48<sup>th</sup> fight, I collapsed and my dad just picked me up and took me home. And a hot bath and- I lay in the bath and then slept and then had to be back on deck the next day. It WAS tough....And it was fine. Like, I was, you know, I say fine- That was- I look back on it now and I think ‘wow,’ you know, I mean- So that’s the sort of stuff that I was into. I loved it. Really loved it” (L0405W:155-171).

Hinepare’s ‘body talk’ indicates how she managed to integrate the often contradictory layers of her embodied learning. “For me, the ballet was great. Just in terms of my physical development. And also in, you know, the mental stuff as well. But with the martial arts, that really took me to another dimension in terms of self-control and the self-discipline and the mental attitudes...it became very much part of my life. Right through” (L0405W:107-13). Despite the different degrees of acceptance and appropriation, obedience and discipline, and with the influence of the men who

taught and at times betrayed her, and her father, who supported and at times beat her, she learned a trust in her own body.

The ‘physical moment’ for Hinepare was not fighting particular people in her life, nor even fighting men, but learning to fight itself. It was a way of reinscribing a bodily disposition and resisting patriarchal and Catholic subjection through the teaching of men. The ‘women in the outdoors’ literature has little to say about men and fathers as ‘role models.’ Learning to use her body with force and to trust it, she says now, “really is the thing that allows me to do stuff. With my trust I can get my bearings” (L0405W:194-96). Later in life as a teacher and outdoor leader, Hinepare had only two experiences of fearing for her safety, both at times of emotional distress. She “felt really vulnerable, didn’t trust myself, didn’t- And, yeah. That’s probably really the two times that, um, I haven’t had the confidence in my own physical being” (I0397W:4772-86). Given the tremendous physical stamina and the physical reserves which she acquired while she was fighting, it took an experience of extreme crisis—in one, of being overseas, ill and “out of control”—to unsettle her physicality. Hinepare says she is not a feminist, but instead prefers to think of herself as *wahine toa*, a woman warrior (L0405W:512-14). That better embodies her consciousness of using her body powerfully.

### **A New Physique: Exercise and Eating**

Charlie Cooper calls herself “the tomboy in between the sexes” (L0405M:7-8). She equates her middle child birth position to a shift which occurred for her when she lost interest in being like her two older sisters and played instead with her two younger brothers. She remembers, “When I was 13, I wore make-up and miniskirts and at 14, I had t-shirts and jean shorts and was riding bikes with my brothers” (L0405M:9-11). Although close to her older sisters, they had started having boyfriends and their activities changed. Her implication is not so much that she was excluded, but that they had become somehow more passive at a time that she was not ready to give up her active interest in things. In many ways, Charlie still follows her self-styled

“philosophy,” as she heads off overseas to compete in the World Championships in her extreme sport and sells her successful outdoor instructing business (L0405M:1033-40).

Charlie “never had any boyfriends” in her early teens, she says, dismissing as “boring” one boy who “just wanted to hold hands and pash” (L0405M:17-18). “I just wanted to get on with life and pass my School C and write music and play guitar and go play games with my brothers and make bicycles because we were going to save the fuel crisis!” (L0405M:18-21). Her idealism and exuberance are typical of girls before puberty, according to one therapist: “Most preadolescent girls are marvellous company because they are interested in everything—sports, nature, people, music and books....Girls of this age bake pies, solve mysteries and go on quests” (Pipher, 1994, p. 18).

But although Charlie tinkered with her brothers and all five siblings did athletics together on Saturday mornings, she was not always allowed to do what the boys did. The boys liked to sleep in a tent in the back yard, but Charlie was not allowed to join them. When her father built an addition onto the house, she did sleep under the stars on its balcony, where she was safer. Later, her father was sceptical when Charlie received her first job offer to be a botany field officer based on his belief that a woman would not want to spend three weeks at a time in the field with “all those people you don’t know, all those men.” She regrets not taking the job and says now that it was “the first and the last time he influenced me” (L0405M:609-14).

When Charlie went to high school, she left her tomboyishness at home. She went to a large private girls’ school with a strictly enforced school uniform, including tie, stockings, hat and gloves. She was a bit overwhelmed and became shy and obedient. A teacher happened to notice her more outgoing behaviour at home and began to get her involved at school in drama and public speaking. She did become more active, although she was also bright, intellectually curious and always worked hard. She excelled at music and soon music theory classes replaced Physical Education and the Saturday athletics. She had hated athletics, because she had always been last. There were no outdoor camps, but the school tramping club did occasional weekend trips in which she participated. She took on leadership roles and served as Head Girl in her final year, becoming quite good friends with her Maori Deputy Head. She realized

at this point that she was ignorant of Maori culture, surrounded by a white Catholic neighbourhood and middle-class families with racist attitudes toward other ethnic groups. She learned a lot about Maori life and explored the bush on horseback while on weekends away with the family of her friend.

The summer before her seventh form year, Charlie's mother, at one time a keen tramper and nature-watcher, encouraged her to be a YWCA Camp Leader. There she was supervised by a Recreation Worker who put her in touch with Graeme Dingle at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre in the central North Island. She had decided that she wanted to be a park ranger, inspired by the first woman ranger who had worked in Tongariro National Park. In the May holidays of her seventh form year, she visited the Centre: "I bought my own pack, bought my own boots, bussed down there, never been away from home that far by myself. And, um- did my first- seeing snow, did my first kayaking, did my first BIG tramping...I was stuffed!!" (L0405M:349-55). She was invited to come back in December holidays to join a more adventurous group and so she and her Deputy Head decided to do a cycle trip around the city to get fit.

She was 17 and a half and it was a project which changed her life, starting with her physique. She was waiting to hear from staff at the Centre. "In the meantime, Sarah and I went cycling around Auckland, by ourselves, for our August holidays. I went from ten and a half stone to nine stone, I did yoga, started eating- not white bread, got out of white bread! So my body changed. Yeah? My body went from a useless, overweight, fat blob to probably the same physique I have now. That had a major effect on me, [my instructor] and that course, the May one. Then I went back again and did the December one. But by then I was a changed woman" (L0405M:366-74). In between the two introductory outdoor skills courses she had acquired a new physique and it had profound effects on how she saw herself as a woman.

Charlie's body talk is characterized by comments about how "useless" she was. She tells me that she habitually thought of herself that way: "I used to say, 'Oh God! I'm useless!!'" (I0397M:5330). As this is an expression particular to New Zealand, I found it unfamiliar and it stuck out for me in the interview. Charlie was not the only woman to use it about herself. But, unlike Elaine Ross who found that she could be true to herself (in Girl Guides) in spite of her awkwardness, Charlie's 'physical

moment' crystallized around the change in her physicality. For her, weight loss, healthy eating and increased exercise produced a new body shape and physical awareness which converged with a discovery of what her body could do and how that could be part of a meaningful career. A new inscription at the surface worked its way inward to shift her sense of being "useless."

Notably, it was not the first time that she had changed in body shape. Charlie had taken up running with one of her brothers at about age 16 and remembers that the "skinny little legs I used to have as a 12 year old...put on muscle." However, "that also meant I had a fat bum compared to my upper body" (I0397M:5005-08). With this new activity came a weight preoccupation usually part of being a teenager, but which she also thinks of as genetic: "once I started all that running I became a fat little podgy bottom and my mother has a very large "[mother's maiden name] bottom" we called it!" (I0397M:5077-5100). In seventh form, she was seconded to run in a school cross-country race one weekend and surprised everyone by finishing in the top fifth of the field, ahead of the regular team members. She was "rapt" to discover an endurance activity. But those events did not particularly imprint a new consciousness of physical potential for Charlie. Rather, the experience of reshaping her own body in order to continue her rock climbing and kayaking pursuits was so important "because it was such a dramatic change" (I0397M:4998) *in the lived context of* having associated disappointing bodily changes with increased physical activity and genetic inevitability.

A significant part of the drama of this 'moment,' still active for Charlie, rests in her Catholic upbringing. She had taken her faith seriously and was organizing youth masses at age 18. The issue which confronted her beliefs was sex before marriage; her first relationship broke up because she had abstained from sex, but found her boyfriend in bed with his flatmate one day (I0397M:1927-29). While devastating, it helped her decide that she had been misled by "unnatural" messages for women about sex in marriage which were not equally prohibitive to men. She wanted things to do with her body to be a natural and celebrated part of her self-expression. This recognition coincided with her graduation from high school and tramping club trips away during first year university; unchaperoned weekends meant that she could be sexually active and not 'wait' for marriage. She acknowledges now that she was still bound at the time

by a rather complicated negotiation of sexual self-regulation which impeded important relationships. Although now no longer in the Church, she has avoided marriage and when I ask about her marital status as part of the interview, she replies cheerfully, “unattached, but recent lovers!” (I0397M:3230-31).

When Jo Patterson was 18, she started to compete in multisport events. She had always enjoyed swimming, as she had grown up living on the lakeshore and her family had spent a lot of time boating, sailing and camping on, and fishing and swimming in, the lake. She had played team sport in her younger years, such as hockey and basketball, and coached junior hockey at her high school. She had also been a runner. Toward the end of school, in the same year in which she also served as Head Girl, she switched to individual sports. Putting in long hours of training began to change her physique.

It was uncommon for a woman to do multi-sport events in the mid-1980s, she recalls; “it was pretty much a male-dominated thing” (L0405U:130-31). And so she was one of the few women doing this sort of physical training in her town. She says, “when I look back, I actually think I was incredibly self-disciplined. And I- You know, at quite a young age. I mean, the hours I used to do training” (L0405U:132-35). She was accepted to study Physical Education the following year and that summer she did a lot of training. Jo says she had been generally happy with her body shape until then, but she began to realize that she would do better in her races if she was lighter and worked on her diet (L0405U:232-36). “So I started from a competitive angle and then I thought, ‘well-’ you know. And my body shape definitely started changing about that time” (L0405U:236-38).

Her parents were away all summer, preparing to shift north for their retirement. She went off to university at the end of the summer, living away from home for the first time. “I went through that first year at varsity and it ended up being an obsessive thing, you know. It wasn’t- I wasn’t that healthy” (L0405U:135-37). She developed an exercise obsession and an eating disorder.

Part of the pressure Jo felt came with doing a degree in Physical Education. “The image that went with that, um, basically for women, um, is very much- yeah, it was very much a stereotype of how you should appear physically and I didn’t fit that

mould. Um. And the majority of my peers that I associated with I would've put in, you know, into that category, so I guess there was insecurities there in a lot of ways with that" (I0397U:149-55). "And I'm sure it's still that way and I think it's really sad that that's still there. I mean, at that stage- I don't know if they still do it now, but we were all being weighed and measured, like, because there was such high incidence of anorexia and bulimia" (I0397U:171-76).

What was the ideal female body image for women students in Physical Education at that time? "Quite lean. Still strong. Like, with definition. You know, muscular definition. But- But, quite lean. And, um, small-breasted. I remember that was- And pretty much medium to tall height" (I0397U:201-04). How did she know that this was the desirable shape? "Because of male pressures..I think there was pretty much a lot of that going on" (I0397U:224-26). She is referring to orientation activities such as "slave sales" of women students, 'sold' to upper year students for a day's service, and expectations of dating within the Physical Education cohort (I0397U:206-17).

Research conducted very soon after Jo's first year at the then Faculty of Physical Education indicates that a portion of the women students in the "first-year intake" were measured and classified ("phenotyped") for body type and additionally surveyed for personality factors (Williams, McNaughton & Mann, 1989, p. 6). In contrast to Jo's description of the female body ideal, this study found "a predominance of endomorphic mesomorphs" (Williams et al., 1989, p. 6) or women with a softer, compact build. In other words, although first year women Physical Education students were classified as having softer, rounder muscularity, for Jo at least there was lived pressure to exhibit a leaner and well-honed body build. The women studied at the end of the 1980s were 18 years old on average, the same age as Jo when she began her first year of university three or four years earlier. It is likely, given the results of the somatotype study, that she was not the only woman to feel that her body "didn't fit that mould."

Jo was going through a big transition: leaving home for university, gaining independence but feeling some pressure to succeed, moving to a different city than her boyfriend, joining a faculty with strong peer pressure around an ideal female body shape and knowing that she would complete a number of practical skills sessions in her

first two years which exposed people's bodies to each other (such as doing aquatics). She says, "I've wondered if I used it as a way of escaping, a little bit. Sometimes. Because I could just switch off and go training instead. Yeah. I would train quite a lot. I would lie about the amount that I trained. Sometimes I would get up and be at the pool at six and swim for an hour and then go down and do an aerobics class from half past seven to half past eight and then go to a nine o'clock lecture. And I mean, I remember a friend saying that sometimes I would come in and sit down and they'd say to me, 'oh, did you have a good swim this morning?' and I'd say 'oh, I haven't been swimming this morning.' And I'd got goggle rings around my eyes" (L0405U:139-50).

She reflects on her feelings at the time: alongside a desire to improve her times in multisport races and reduce her body weight, she also says that she "had a sort of um- a pretty warped self-image, really, I think, when I look back" (L0405U:160-61). Eventually, in a slightly roundabout way, Jo relates this to her father's insulting nickname for her: "a cow." So, when I ask if her parents had noticed changes to her body over the summer before varsity, she reacts vaguely, and then I realize that it has to do with this familial context of subtle, but penetrating, insensitivity and disrespect. She says her father can be quite critical: "like, you know, he puts my mother down. Verbally. And he doesn't mean- I don't think he realizes the impact he has, you know. And he often comments on her shape and, um, her physique. And I know he ha- Like- This is going to sound awful, but my dad used to call me a cow.. I think at times, as I got older, I picked it up definitely the wrong way... I don't think he was particularly complimentary...through those years. But, unfortunately, yeah, that's still a trait he has. I know, even now, Ian gets offended when he talks to Mum in a certain way" (L0405U:247-61). She did talk to her father about it once, but he "became quite defensive and said that I was over-sensitive" (L0405U:265-66), she recalls.

Researchers agree that "it is well documented that a distorted perception of body-image and the subsequent distress about body-image is powerfully associated with the eating disorders anorexia and bulimia nervosa" (Brodie, Bagley & Slade, 1994, p. 147; also Hesse-Biber, Marino & Watts-Roy, 1999). Feminist counsellors argue that "by exerting control over their bodies, women hope to gain self-esteem and an increased sense of power and control over their lives. Powerlessness and dissatisfaction

can be replaced by the self-satisfaction, social approval, and sense of accomplishment won through weight and shape control” (Brown & Jasper, 1993, p. 17). And they point to the “tremendous conflict [that] exists between social expectations and women’s subjective experience of their capacities” (Brown & Jasper, 1993, p. 32). In the context of the study of human movement and physical education practices, Jo faced social expectations of her physical performance overlapping with those of her gendered physicality *and* appearance. In a place in which the endomorphic body might be readily accepted on a continuum of somatotypes, there was heteronormative peer pressure to approximate the ectomorphic type. But Jo was not just conforming to the social influences of her peer group, she was reinscribing herself overtop of the raw grip of being cast as bovine. She was enacting the very contradiction of feminine embodiment in Western culture: her pursuit of “the thin body image incorporates both the patriarchal conditions of women’s lives and women’s opposition to patriarchy” (Brown & Jasper, 1993, p. 30; see also Gilroy, 1989).

Jo’s bulimia involved fasting or eating “just a minimal amount” for a few days. These few days would also be full of physical activity, itself a mode of purging for many in this sort of cycle. “And then, um, I’d end up bingeing. And then sort of making myself sick after that and- And that behaviour went on for a while. And I mean, alongside that, I mean, I lost- I lost quite a bit of weight...Noticeably so...not so much to me, but to others around me. I guess I- Yeah. Yeah. I was feeling that my body shape was- was being altered and, you know, I was becoming a more desirable shape and losing body fat and [getting] fitter- I mean, I must admit- I mean I- I was feeling- I did feel through this time there, I felt really good. I mean I felt really strong and really good. But then there was this side of me that was finding it very difficult to live with myself, because I knew that I was lying about things. I knew I was becoming addicted” (L0405U:164-77). Jo seems tentative, but her experience here is not as idiosyncratic as it might sound. When women focus on

‘improving’ their bodies in order to feel better about themselves [it] distracts them from the actual sources of their discontent...a socially and politically generated problem becomes personalized. When women say

they feel better when they are thinner, they really mean it. They actually feel better about themselves. (Brown & Jasper, 1993, p. 17)

Jo was persuaded by her parents and concerned friends to move away from “that male Phys Ed image” (L0405U:221-22) for women in her second year and to be less abusive of her body. She also participated in outdoor education camps as student and as peer leader and attended an Outward Bound course in the May holidays that year. She became a professional outdoor instructor at Outward Bound after graduating from university.

Jo Patterson’s ‘physical moment’ both embodied and exposed the strain of dealing with the pervasive insensitivity which surrounded her growing up. She knows that “a lot of that [strain] stemmed from...insecurities” and says now of the eating disorder, “I came out of that quite lightly” (I0397U:130,132). She feels much more “in touch” and aware that she has “a strong physical side,” which can dominate her sense of self. She has at times had a ‘go for the summit’ approach (I0397U:222) to her physical pursuits and says that, while still enjoyable, she finds it is less influential now in her overall goals. When I interview her, Jo is preparing to go out with her high school Outdoor Education class for an overnight camp mid-week. Later in the year she hopes to compete in a run of the Keplar Track in the South Island.

### **Fighting Femininity: Tomboys and Rebels**

Valerie Berg had a rural upbringing on a North Island farm, with two brothers and German parents. Her parents had come to New Zealand with very little and were not experienced farmers. They were successful at farming, though, enforced by a strong family work ethic. Valerie loved to work outside as the outside jobs were more interesting, but she found early on that they were also more highly valued on the farm and not for girls. Men’s and women’s roles were so rigid in her family that she had to “fight” to do jobs her brothers were doing on the farm. She typically encountered resistance when she would ask to be shown how to do something; when she went to her mother, she would be told to get one of her brothers to do it.

The motif in Valerie's 'body talk' is the fight she went through, although it was not a physical fight. "If I wanted to do something I would have to fight quite hard to be- Especially if it was a skill that needed to be taught to me. Like tractor driving, backing tractors, using mowers, that sort of thing. Using machinery was definitely something that I- I had to fight to get to do" (L0405E:51-55), she says. And she was "not always successful at persuading them that I should be allowed" (L0405E:56-57).

She "got on" with both brothers and does not remember playing with girls when she was young. It was not assumed, though, that she could "tag along" with them. "Often it was, yeah, like the sister that was in the way if I wasn't keeping up to their pace. Yeah. [So] I tried bloody hard [to]! Yeah. Yeah. No, I did do a lot of stuff with them, so it must have been a good time" (L0405E:148-53), she says dubiously. The memories that come to mind now are of "having to fight a lot for everything. Yeah. I think I- Oh, I learnt a lot. And um, I have- I think it's one of the things I'm grateful for now! But I wasn't at the time" (L0405E:143-46). She would have liked to be able to consider taking over the farm, but knew growing up that it would never be possible for her and one of her brothers is now share milking on the farm.

When she was 11 or 12 years old, Valerie got a horse and started riding and could range further from the farm and her struggles there. She remembers doing more things with girls after that. It was expected of her that she would be a mother and housewife one day. However, her mother had left university early, herself, and encouraged Valerie to get university training for a professional career. Valerie wanted to be a vet.

At age 16, she went to Germany for a year on a Rotary Exchange scholarship and lived with four different families. She came back with a greater sense of the world and her family heritage. She also did not want to live at home or do a final year of high school and so she opted not to pursue veterinary studies, but enrolled instead at the University of Otago to study Zoology and Botany. She dropped out after a year, though, finding the drinking culture "dull," and went tramping to Stewart Island with new friends. She travelled and worked and then began a yacht charter business with her partner and, among other things, Valerie started to plan women's sailing trips.

One of her other interests had been reading feminist theory, meeting with women's groups and working with women suffering domestic violence. She also did a self-defense course. While she says she was not a victim of physical violence, there was emotional violence in her family home growing up; she had felt consistent injustice, in particular, in not being listened to because she was a girl. After leaving the yacht business, Valerie did an overseas adventure trip which involved solo sea kayaking in Alaska for a time. "Just spending time in that sort of a very cold, wet environment and camping and being comfortable and- gave me a lot of confidence in my ability to be in the outdoors. And that certainly- Yeah, it certainly did give me the confidence to apply for the course" (L0405E:297-301). She took a year long outdoor skills course back in New Zealand the following year. She has been a professional outdoor leader ever since in outdoor centres serving local schools and at the Outward Bound school in the Marlborough Sounds.

Valerie was older than the other students and one of only two women on the outdoor training course. She found the young men very macho and spent a lot of time confronting the disrespectful behaviour in the group. Although she almost withdrew from the course, she says now, "I decided that if I was serious about wanting to become an instructor, that was the group that I would end up working with the bulk of the time. And so this would be a really good opportunity to learn how they function! So off I went...And I hadn't played competitive sport since I left school and- And sort of my experience...working at Women's Refuge had been very much into consensus and co-operation and working together. And then suddenly I was in this environment that everything, absolutely everything, was a competition. And I just really struggled with that. I found that really, really difficult to deal with" (L0405E:319-32). She was more interested, in contrast, in gaining solid technical skills. She says, "it was still a long year" (L0405E:346).

That year produced Valerie's 'physical moment' in action and context. She reflects on the training experience quite often in terms of her "survival" and how she managed to cope in such a social situation. She says, "I learnt an incredible lot. And I still view it as learning things about how I don't want things to be rather than learning things about how I want them to be. Yeah...I've thought about it a lot in terms of why I

choose to do the things that I do. And why I choose to do things that are difficult, that aren't what's expected and that, you know- I have this real strong preference for being in all-female spaces and working with women and yet I've put myself in, like, employment situations, in just about all the jobs and work, which have been male-dominated industries. And I continue to do that. And I sort of ask myself 'why do I keep beating myself over the head like that?' It's partly because it's like- yeah, when I'm here and out there doing it with a group, it's- I love it" (L0405E:382-97).

The deeply ingrained work ethic she learned from her parents underlies the power of her 'physical moment' as a defining experience in her life. The year she spent in Germany gave her what she calls a romantic sense of travel and adventure (she lives on her own yacht when not in the outdoors), but, significantly, it gave her a sense of self-comprehension. "I could certainly see some of the ways I behave are quite Germanic I think! Yeah, I do carry a lot of that with me" (L0405E:10-12), she says. Her students notice it in her body compartment, too; she is told by one group that she is a "machine." When I ask her how she learned to move, she says, "I don't know. I think it must have been just on the farm, growing up with- with boys. Yeah, I guess" (I0397E:2993-94). She was called a tomboy and says that she felt "great" about that; "I didn't want to be- I didn't want to be [whispers] a GIRL. Girls always did dumb things!" (I0397E:3002-07). And yet, she had to fight to learn to use 'machinery' like the boys, to overcome the femininity that determined that her role on the farm and in the family should be one of doing "inside work." Even her mother, she says, would have liked her to spend more time inside (L0405E:57-58). But she did not. She is not sure why she makes these choices, even now, especially in light of such an intense clash with her feminist principles and "real strong preference" to work with women. In many ways, her place on the farm as female was reiterated for her in the fight she put up to be recognized. Her 'physical moment' is embedded within the physical relations of heterosexuality and comes at the expense of an easily understood coherence of self and physicality.

Miriam Eales had a semi-rural upbringing in the central North Island, where her father was a forest ranger and her mother was a nurse-midwife. It was a bit of a rough childhood, not because her family was not a close one, but because her mother had four

children within five years. Miriam was the most difficult for her mother to control. “I was a little shit when I was small,” she says. “I was the one that was sent to work with my father to give Mum a break. He had come home from work one day and found me tied to the clothesline...The weather was wet and horrible and- So one day, Mum had just had enough, she couldn’t look after us all. So she tied me up, I was the worst one, to the clothesline! I was quite happy apparently. I had all my toys out there and I couldn’t get into mischief!” (L0405L:342-57). She spent whole days with her dad after that: “going off in the Land Rover with Dad to the bush” (L0405L:362-63). “I used to love listening to him talking to the other forest rangers on the radio in the vehicle,” she says now, “and he used to talk to me about the birds” (L0405L:364-67). It became part of their special relationship around the outdoors.

Miriam and her older brother were very close in age and they fought a lot. He was a bully and would especially intimidate his sisters once they were older. She says, “he wasn’t nice. No, he wasn’t. I mean, he would beat us up when mum was at work...He was bigger than us. And he used to knock us about a bit... We used to just call him a bastard. Oh yeah, [he could have hurt us]” (L0405L:282-95). Physical intimidation was “part of the culture at the school we went to, too. I can remember being beaten up at school and knocked about and I had a couple of friends who were really tough and I remember that they- It was probably why I was friends with them” (L0405L:295-98). She learned to protect herself: “there were certain areas of the school you just didn’t go to. As a girl. And as a- Yeah. ‘Cause there were rough elements in the school, that if you went to certain areas of the school you’d get the shit beaten out of you. Or else you would get, you know, felt up or whatever by the boys!” (L0405L:300-04).

Pakeha families were in the minority and Miriam’s schooling was imbued with Maori language, culture and teachers. Maori protocol and relationships were central to her father’s work and love of the outdoors; as they are now to her own. At the times he found sacred Maori sites during his work, she became part of the rituals which were required. She learned a history of the land and wanted to be an archaeologist one day. She has worked in the outdoors in the same area since and many times returned with Maori students and their *whanau* to the native bush and mountains.

In her younger years, though, it did not occur to Miriam to go into the outdoors for physical recreation. The family did occasional car camping trips, once tracing family ancestors in the South Island. While she loved sleeping under a big canvas tent, one that she had learned in Girl Guides to put up by herself, she was not particularly a tomboy, nor was she labelled one. She also hated sport, although she run through the planted forests around home for her own pleasure. She knew from the harrier races in school that she was fit and very fast among the girls. But, she says, “I have never been interested in sport. I am uncoordinated and I am a bit of a klutz with a ball” (L0405L:1192-93). Instead, Miriam was more interested in having an active social life. She knows her class probably spent a week at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre at some point in sixth form, but was too busy partying to notice at the time (L0405L:1177). She had such a social year in sixth form that she failed her University Entrance exams and left school.

When she was accepted into Teacher’s College, Miriam felt lucky and knew that she would have to work harder to complete her training. She kept up the lifestyle she had enjoyed in school: she calls herself “a real booze artist...at the pub every Saturday...very social!” (L0405L:1180-83). However, she “worked jolly hard and I passed with very good marks. I lived hard and I played hard and I worked hard” (L0405L:1183-85). She “passed with distinction.” When she started her first teaching job the following year, she weighed about 14 stone and became worried about her heart (she was not the only person in her family to be overweight). She went to Weight Watchers and lost 5 stone and took up daily running. She became “a real fanatic” and a “strict vegetarian” (L0405L:1227-29). She says, “after I got off the booze and into the healthy lifestyle, I suddenly got into the outdoors, really” (L0405L:1240-42).

The nonconformity that echoes through Miriam’s ‘body talk’ also surfaces in later narratives, especially about her choices as an outdoor adventurer. It is not about defiance, nor about being a victim; she was just mischievous, argumentative and a bit of a rebel to live life more fully. She recounts the stories of being bullied by her brother and beaten up at school, taking the hard route through teacher training and radically altering her body size, weight, diet and exercise in such a short time with a hint of the adventure in it all. It is the same enthusiasm she has for the remedial teaching job she

got at age 19, preparing first time offenders in the local prison for their outdoor expeditions; she was tough enough that they never forced her to run from the classroom as they did with teachers they did not like. She conveys it in the stories of hitchhiking around the South Island's remote West Coast with three women friends and cycling across Australia's Nullarbor Plain with her (female) cousin, chasing off men peeping into the women's showers on a cycling trip through Malaysia and getting caught, alone, lost, at dark on a glacier in India and having to sleep out for a night.

The sheer drive she called on between the ages of 16 and 19 has also made an indelible mark on her. She says of the turnaround she made in order to succeed in her teacher training: "I was accepted in the- the bottom 10 per cent of people. Like very few people were accepted without UE. And I graduated in the top 10 per cent! It really made me work like crazy. Yeah. And I think I still am hung over from that. I think it is part of- probably part of my perfectionism and workaholism" (I0397L:1093-1103). She receives tremendous satisfaction from her drive, but is driven by it in obsessive ways as well.

Miriam's 'physical moment' is embodied in how she balances the need to 'fight on' for what she wants and for sheer accomplishment and the need to know when to rest and redirect her energies. This theme reappears throughout her interview and in the memories which she writes. In this one, she chooses the theme "heaps of endurance" as the "trigger" for her memory:

One such experience which remains in her memory is a climbing trip in Ecuador. Travelling on her own, by bicycle, Miriam was reasonably fit and game, but was limited in some opportunities by her lack of a travel companion. She arrived one evening in a town nestled at the foot of a volcano which she had heard was relatively easy to climb. She was keen, but unsure of whether she would find someone to go with or how long she would need to wait until someone came along. That night at the guesthouse a couple of Swiss travellers were talking of climbing the volcano the next day. Although weary from her particularly long ride that day, 120kms through mountainous terrain, she palled up with the pair and asked if she could come along. They had not

much climbing experience, so were pleased to have Miriam join them when they found out she had climbed a few volcanos in New Zealand. The three went along to the local mountain-gear hire shop and hired crampons, ice-axes and boots for the trip. Miriam had remembered seeing gear like this in the historic section of a National Park Visitors' Centre at home. But others at the shop who were returning their relics after having climbed the mountain said that, although heavy, the gear was adequate for the climb.

Miriam and the Swiss couple were up before dawn and on their way to the first *refugio* (hut), which was a 6 hour trek through tropical bush to the bushline. That night, they met a German traveller and an Israeli couple who intended climbing the next day also. They all decided to climb together. The rest of the hut occupants were on their way down, having climbed the volcano that day, so Miriam and co picked their brains about route information. The following morning, the party of 6 left the hut at 5am, well before dawn. Within an hour, the Israeli couple decided to return to the hut, as they had no climbing experience and were not comfortable in the terrain, which left 4 in the party. The Swiss couple were experienced trampers, but not mountaineers. The German guy had a little experience trekking in snow in Nepal. Miriam found herself leading the keen and fit party. It was a non technical climb, achieved mainly in whiteout conditions, and everyone enjoyed it immensely. They summited at midday and were back at the *refugio* by 4pm. After a quick snack, they decided to head back to the town and arrived at 8pm, having tramped the last 2 hours in the dark. It had been a 15 hour day! Miriam felt exhausted and exhilarated. Her thigh muscles were particularly tired, being much more attuned to cycling than thumping down hill for 8 hours.

On arrival back at the guesthouse, Miriam met some travellers she had met a few months before in Peru. They were preparing for a trip to climb a different volcano the next day and asked her if she would like

to join them. Feeling exhausted from the last few days, but keen not to miss the opportunity, she said yes. She got to bed at midnight that night after cleaning and organising her gear for the next trip. They caught the bus early the next morning to the road end. Miriam slept the whole hour on the bus. It was a two day trek into the alpine meadows to the base camp for the climb. The weather prevented a summit attempt, so the party of 3 trekked out in one day. Miriam's thigh muscles had not yet recovered from the 8 hour descent from the first volcano, so they were screaming for mercy by the time the group reached the small village where the bus had dropped them to begin the trip. In minutes they were surrounded by local kids, all wanting to carry their packs around as they had done 2 days earlier, a great game. Miriam played with the kids until the bus arrived, envying their youthful vigour and amazed and proud of her own mental and physical endurance over the previous days. This knowledge of her own endurance levels was to give her confidence in many situations in her future career. (Miriam, M0501L)

### **Family Privilege**

Catherine Chen grew up in a large North Island city with her brother and two parents, who are first generation Chinese New Zealanders. She recalls enthusiastically the private girls' school, which she attended from age 11, and the opportunities which she had there for competitive sport and outdoor experiences. She loved school so much that she would arrive at 7 o'clock in the morning and would not leave until 7 in the evening. She was inspired by the young women teachers who did outdoor pursuits, such as windsurfing, with the girls "in their own leisure time" (L0405Q:15) and who also organized the two hours per week of free recreational choices that the senior students were permitted. Catherine "just loved" her first outdoor camp in fourth form and by seventh form she was going away for weekend tramping trips about which she was also very keen. She says, "I loved going away from home anyway, just going in a

group of friends” (L0405Q:27-28). She was an active, energetic, cheerful and social adolescent. Her ‘body talk’ is filled with activities.

Catherine’s family spent summer holidays at a bach<sup>31</sup> in the Coromandel Peninsula, where they enjoyed the beach and she learned to sail with her father. Later, talking about taking her fellow students sailing in Teacher’s College, she mentions the catamaran races with her father and refers to regattas and “lots of stories around that. So, I’ve grown up around water” (L0405Q:274). She then describes her extensive and accomplished water safety involvement, including representing New Zealand at an Asian Pacific Life Saving conference in Australia. She “got the very top honours [including] the examiners’ and instructors’ awards” (L0405Q:279-80). She adds, “I’m also from a swimming background. My dad’s a strong swimmer. And we had a pool at home” (L0405Q:283-84). She explains that she has “been a competitive swimmer all the way through school. So, naturally, to take up the lifesaving was not a problem” (L0405Q:289-91). When she was 10 years old her father took the family on a ski holiday to Queenstown. Her parents normally took separate holidays without children, but they “were always really supportive of what we were doing. Ferried us around to sport and stuff” (L0405Q:71-72), she says.

Catherine’s attitude to her studies was slightly different from going to school itself. She says that she would have done better had she “pushed” herself and done some homework. She was not mischievous, but heavily involved in extra-curricular and leadership activities. She managed to gain a B bursary in seventh form in preparation for university, “but that was only because I didn’t do any work” (L0405Q:336). She was immersed in sport and did not know of a professional career path for someone with her interests. To please her father she “did stupid things like Chemistry and Physics and things that are going to give you a career” (L0405Q:324-25). Her father had hoped she would study medicine, but was pleased when she chose Physical Education, as he had also attended the University of Otago. She did not specialize in the human sciences, though, and gravitated toward the social issues of sport and later went into teaching.

Catherine’s ‘body talk’ is imbued similarly with a casual attitude to her own physicality. She says she is active and enjoys a physical life, but when I ask her what

appeals to her about being active she says, “Oh, I’ve just grown up with sports, so that’s part of my nature. I don’t know anything different really. Yeah. It’s been part of the routine” (I0397Q:3345-51). By implication, it just *feels* natural to her. Somewhat contradictorily, she then says that her “leisure choices are sporting choices or, um, physical choices, rather than, I suppose, passive ones. I don’t know why. Maybe I get more out of it” (I0397Q:3362-64); “most of the time I’m a couch potato” (I0397Q:3356-57). Curiously, she characterizes herself as passive “most of the time,” but active by “nature.”

Reflecting on her narrative and the obvious capability about which she is almost offhand, I came to see in the way she talks about the appeal of physical activity as natural to her reveals just how easily it has been constructed for her. The backyard pool, bicycle, boats, bach, school activities, after school recreation time, weekend trips away, competitive sport, swim training and instruction—her lifestyle is depicted with the cheerful confidence of someone who has not had to work hard to accomplish it. She is tremendously skilled, knowledgeable and capable, for which she has undoubtedly worked very hard, although she allows her family’s material support for her activities and the pleasure of her own physicality to meld together into a “natural” physical disposition. When she describes herself, Catherine says she is not feminine, but is “in the sporty group;” it is more important to her that her identity be physical than gendered, by her own distinction. She explains that she sees in everyone “levels of assertion and there’s levels of passiveness” (I0397Q:4600) and she clearly projects herself as not being passive.

The tension of what appears to me as more of a contextual, lifelong ‘physical moment’ than an event for Catherine is embodied in her apparently passive acceptance of her privileged bodily training as “natural.” As a constituent of her subjectivity, it is challenged intensely when she is a student on an Outward Bound course while in university. She says,

I think what I took out of Outward Bound was a totally different sort of process than I’d ever been through before. Um. It was more getting to know ME, knowing my limitations, how far I could go. And being pleasantly surprised that I could, you know, reach 17 hours and not- and

still get up and do it the next day. You know. And I still look at it and look at, okay, what I am doing each day and, well, look at what I'd done at Outward Bound and think 'geez.' You know. There's so much potential that you could be doing, but too many of us take for granted that tomorrow we'll do it. Yeah. And you're not really tired at all. You don't know what tired is until you've been on one of those things- I mean, I- I lost 3 stone on that. (Catherine, L0405Q:572-84)

Catherine was pushed physically on the Outward Bound course—she describes coming out of the bush after a tramping expedition and being astounded en route to the School for dinner to be told to run the rest of the way back—but her attitudes and engagement with her own physical accomplishments were also challenged. She says, despite her tremendous athleticism: “I felt my most vulnerable” (L0405Q:559-60). She had to confront her own motivation to work hard for something in a tension that would change her embodied psyche as much as her outer body, that is, her sense of self ‘from the inside out.’ She explains that she actually lost weight because she felt too tired to eat. She learned that her own desire was internal to the “natural routine” of extending and developing her physical accomplishment of an assertive self.

### **Conclusion**

Inevitably, there are women in the group for whom identifying a single theme in their ‘body talk’ or a defining moment of bodily consciousness was difficult. Some women had quite specific physical experiences which were impactful, but did not effect a dramatic shift in their self-efficacy. Others had constitutive experiences involving their bodies, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse or particular relationships, even reproductive choices, which did not have a discernable connection, when explored by the women with me, with their outdoor choices and careers. Though we may have discussed their experiences at length, I have chosen not to outline them here. They would contribute to a much more in-depth biography of the lived body for that woman, a function of their ‘body talk’ which is beyond the scope of this project. I do take up

relevant aspects of their outdoor leadership experiences and insights in the next four chapters, however.

Nevertheless, many of the women experienced similar events and activities growing up. Although what was impactful for one girl was not necessarily for another in the lived contingency of her situation, they were not necessarily all 'relative' in their importance. While Ranger Guides provided Elaine Ross with a protected space during an awkward adolescence, it was too "goody goody" for Jo Patterson and she dropped out. Miriam Eales had such positive experiences in Girl Guides that she was pleased to be able to return as an outdoor leader and offer risk management training for Girl Guides leaders. When Margaret Rutherford was growing up, Girl Guides were not even established in New Zealand. But, for Elaine, Ranger Guides 'changed her life.'

Despite similar activities, the women embody differently lived responses to events. Like Hinepare Maraiti, Mandy Harris trained in martial arts as a teenager. Although her experience of fighting was just as pleasurable, the particular *context* of family power relations did not produce the same lived experiences as hers did for Hinepare. Neither Siobhan O'Brien nor Hinepare 'fought' through to a feminist consciousness,<sup>32</sup> but their fitness and physical fights themselves effected a particular gendered subjectivity. Siobhan fought with her brothers and adopted a stropky, combative disposition; when she began training she gained success at physical activities independent of her brothers. Hinepare developed an uncompromising disposition through training and fighting and engendered her body consciousness in the power of aggression with men rather than in resistance to men's violence. Margaret suffered physical battering as a young wife and mother, but did not take up self-defense or martial arts. Claire Armstrong suffered physical battering as a girl, but never once fought back in her own commitment to the power of a non-violent body.

Miriam and Mandy both experienced sexual harassment in the insidious feeling of being sexually objectified as an outdoor leader, but Mandy walked away from the group of men involved at the end of the day, whereas Miriam dealt with invasive touching for an entire training weekend and it took her years before to name her harasser publically amongst her outdoor peers. Hinepare once went on a mixed weekend rafting trip with some family members and was shocked when one of the men

fired a gun into the hills beside the river, but she was especially angry when it appeared that the action was to show off to other men on the trip. Elaine knows that some of her teenaged female students are worried about encountering hunters in back country huts; Ianissi Gray teaches outdoor first aid skills to deerstalkers and hunters. Two women amongst the interviewees themselves served in the military: Siobhan practised with the Territorials when she was 20 and Claire was employed professionally and taught outdoor skills in the Air Force for five years. The women here each have quite different relationships to these aspects of male social power and the forceful use of physicality which defines masculinity. Yet, their lived experiences contribute to how these women participate in the discourse which constitutes strong women as willing to practise their physicality differently.

The discussion in this chapter revolved around the analytic of a *defining* ‘physical moment.’ I have referred to this concept as a process and not necessarily a specific incident or point in time. I also use it to mean that such a process or experience was definitive for the woman as she recounts her experiences to me and not just through my interpretative construction. Thus I tried to describe the experiences in which a woman was ‘exposed to’ (vis à vis a “lack of prior exposure”) a type of physical ability that she then made her own in a subjectively meaningful way. One woman distinctly recoiled against being called a boy; another felt “great” when called a tomboy. Both responses produced a certain mediation of the type of physicality each woman tried to embody, as will be seen in Chapters 5 and 6. And I also did not interpret the defining moment as the directive for the life course or future choices for individual women. I meant it to indicate a new relation of discursive forces, as opposed to overdetermining social structures, which reconstituted that women’s physicality and shaped a new consciousness of self.

The analysis in this study follows that of McCaughey’s (1997, p. 132) “physical feminism:” that skills “instructors do not release a more real, albeit dormant, instinct. They impose a new behavior, much as the women’s old behavior, for instance the inability to kick hard, was also at some point culturally imposed.” McCaughey’s (1997) unique application of concepts of corporeality to the experiences of women participating in marital arts training and self-defence classes also begins from the

premise that cultural inscription effects as much as is effected by the lived subjectivity of bodies and movements. It is therefore important that studies of physicality ask, as I do in the next four chapters, how the felt grip of consciousness contributes to narratives of corporeality, how socially produced types of body are constituted by the self ‘from the inside out,’ as Grosz (1994b) would say, and how “changing the body...[changes] the self,” as McCaughey (1997, p. 137) argues. Siobhan O’Brien’s anger and frustration at her own passivity and fat body impel her to hurl the ball to her Physical Education teacher, not a desire to ‘be physical,’ and in that one movement a whole life is reinscribed with new possibilities. Of crucial importance for outdoor skills instructors is that we do not know which movement *or* moment will be defining for students; each must start with ‘exposure’ to her own embodied biography. The next chapter looks at this dilemma for women outdoor leaders as they practise and embody their own physical competence and worry about how best to help their women students to develop skills and confidence themselves in the outdoors.

#### Chapter 4 “Superwomen:” Women Outdoor Leaders Encounter the Problem of Strength

The Victorian belief in female frailty produced a social regulation of women’s physical freedom and control over their own bodies (Vertinsky, 1994). In the Victorian outdoors, women’s active involvement as explorers, guides, leaders and camp directors for girls belied any lack of strength, ability and independence.<sup>33</sup> In the last one hundred years, women have been active in the outdoors and their experiences documented.<sup>34</sup> Today new “myths” circulate to regulate women’s freedoms.

The egalitarianism of nature, that it is a place for ‘naturally’ and equally empowering physical activity, is one such powerful cultural belief. Feminists respond by arguing that the belief that ‘a woman can do anything a man can’ (Bell, 1993c; Morch, 1997) in the outdoors carries with it a new orthodoxy. The “myth,” however, does not conceal what is really unequal about nature, but *produces* an unequal physical standard as natural. Now that women are proving themselves far from frail, but keen and capable, they are further regulated by expectations of the gendered standard. Even contradictory social myths (physically frail/physically equal) serve over time to perpetuate the ideology of femininity as female weakness. *How* this happens, and how such ideology might work in light of women’s growing participation despite its effects, is not explored in the current outdoors literature. Women are warned that their femininity is at risk when they step into the woods and that they are safer if they go to the woods without men and refuse the ‘male model.’ Indeed, “outdoor education programs need to acknowledge that all-women’s courses are different from standard courses composed of all women participants,” argues Arnold (1994, p. 52; see also Mitten, 1985; Warren, 1985). The physical standard is accepted as the source of gendered difference behind the “myth of egalitarianism.”

Rather than providing the solution, though, this argument continues to obscure the social relations which produce it. The problem does not lie with physical skills or challenge activities. Contrary to Warren’s (1985) approach which urges less of an emphasis on physical strength for women, Morch (1997) suggests that it is not what women do, but that they do what men do. The problem for strong women in the

outdoors is not with the obstacles to reclaiming the “feminine reality” of women’s psychically sexed identity. Rather, gendered experience cannot be theorized unless women’s experiences are seen in relation to men’s. For example, one educator notes about her students that,

When residents of Prescott feel particularly disdainful of Prescott College and its [wilderness leadership] students, one of their favourite sayings is, “Oh, that’s where the men are men and the women are, too.” What they mean is that women at Prescott College tend to sport hairy legs and underarms, thick socks and hiking boots, and large backpacks. What they also mean is that Prescott College women give the appearance of being strong and independent, and of course women aren’t supposed to be that way. (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a, p. 3)

It becomes clearer that the social myths are still so powerful in mystifying their purposes because it is *in the presence of men* that “women aren’t supposed to be that way.” The ‘women in the outdoors’ prescriptions continue to accept gender as autonomously determining social ontology, rather than organizing women and men in discursive relations.

This chapter is about highly skilled women in the outdoors. They are women who cannot be easily dismissed as inexperienced novices, waiting to reach the physical standard necessary to be (re)integrated into mixed-sex outdoor programmes. They cannot be told that they do not belong in the woods, that their physical capabilities are unnatural or that they are unfeminine, for they have already made choices which reinscribe these social sanctions. They have skills deeply ingrained which shape a certain material possibility for action. The last chapter explored the rich contextual detail of what skills were learned and how: many times a woman was “useless” at sport, but found she was far more comfortable “traipsing around in the mountains.” Different circumstances meant that physical abilities were sometimes learned at a young age in family activities or on camping holidays and tramping club trips. For those women who grew up on farms and worked outside, as much as for those who used the outdoors as their playground, these bodily capabilities were acquired almost unconsciously despite struggles. There are examples of how fathers were the first to take their

daughters into the outdoors or physical activities; these experiences are recalled with enthusiasm and, for Miriam, Hinepare, Claire and Jane, with great fondness. These are not women whose experience is distorted by masculine 'role models' or, indeed, who lack experience of confidence, self-esteem or self-knowledge. They have very positive perceptions of their physical outdoor experiences and want to share what they have felt with other women. In a typical comment, Canadian outdoor leader Julia reflects:

I have always loved being outdoors. I love the way my body feels after a hard day of paddling or portaging. I love how my spirit soars when I see a bald eagle circling in mid air, or when I feel the hot sun beating down on my bare back, or solid rock against my touch. (Morch, 1997, p. 12)

Nevertheless, some women leaders seek only to share such experiences in all-women outdoor courses and on recreation trips for themselves with other women. McClintock (1996b) includes as one of the repeated themes among all of the reasons women seek all-women situations that they want a "comfortable environment for being a beginner and learning new skills and, alternatively, for being highly skilled" (McClintock, 1996b, p. 18). She finds indications in her collected anecdotes that it is uncomfortable for women to learn new skills in mixed situations, but it is *also uncomfortable* for those women who are highly skilled. The literature offers little explanation. Inexperienced women are said to be intimidated by experienced, even just confident, men. Why would experienced and confident women be uncomfortable in the presence of men? Discussion in Chapter 1 focused on the belief that physical risk-taking benefits "ordinary women" in their improved mental health, feelings of self-esteem and increased emotional strength. But the prevalence of psychological interpretations of notions of self-consciousness and empowerment acts to limit consideration of the social effects of the embodiment of subjectivity. This chapter continues that theme while examining the social representation of and prescription for experienced women outdoor leaders.

The feminist critique of participation in the 'male model' shifts in this context. It has been argued that 'a woman's' femininity is the cause of the failure of her physical capability. Furthermore, her identity is perceived to be at risk because she participates in the masculine domain of physical challenge. Yet, in the situation of women outdoor

leaders, it is argued that these women's femininity is at risk because they succeed physically. In this case, a strong woman is neither an appropriate role model for "ordinary" women, nor representative of all women. She is still required to prove her prowess and, as is empirically explored here, is no safer from physical or psychological harm or confusion surrounding her bodily competence. There is not yet a substantive body of literature on 'women in outdoor leadership.' Hence, this study is concerned with what happens when the feminist literature itself is "disdainful" of strong women outdoor leaders. How do physical relations practised in outdoor leadership when "the men are men, and the women are, too" (Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994a) effect gender through discourses which challenge the inattention to bodily experience? The chapter concludes that the feminist belief that strong women are primarily role models for "ordinary" women is itself a powerful myth that works to undermine the corporeality of strong bodies through which women outdoor leaders identify themselves as strong women.

### **When Women Perform Prowess: The Shift in Context**

Outdoor leadership practice operates on the premise that even when women's 'strengths' are defined in their psychological awareness and moral values, women outdoor leaders and guides do "give the appearance of being strong and independent" and do ultimately take responsibility for the physical needs and safety of their clients and students. They must embody physical strength and employ physical expertise, skill and knowledge daily and over long periods of time. In order to avoid differentiating them *as women*, as physically strong and capable women, outdoor leadership theory is built on the representation of outdoor leaders as autonomous, competent, rational decision-makers (Bell, 1993a, 1993b, 1996b; Davidson, 1994; Jordan, 1990, 1992; Henderson, 1996). It effectively disembodies leaders and their students, focusing instead on a hierarchy of technical conditions which precipitate appropriate decision-making (e.g., Cockrell, 1991; Dixon & Priest, 1991; Langmuir, 1984; Swiderski, 1987). Women's outdoor leadership models, developed to counter this universally normative 'male model,' seek to represent outdoor leaders with "a different voice" who are

responsive to girls' and women's unique needs and specific socialization. A universal model of leadership for women is then constructed and is itself theorized on a disembodied basis, without definitions of competence or skill while still referring to the physical challenges of wilderness travel and the experienced judgement of 'the guide,' in favour of norms of psychological safety and collective leadership (e.g., Mitten, 1985, 1986, 1992a, 1994, 1996a). Leadership practices for women and girls are also elevated to be a corrective for all outdoor leadership practices and renamed transformational leadership to effect a final erasure of cultural difference (e.g., Henderson, 1996; Jordan, 1989, 1992; Kiewa, 1997/98).<sup>35</sup>

One way in which to examine more closely the social construction of women's outdoor leadership in lived contexts is to identify varying ideological explanations for why women are effective in outdoor leadership. Women's presence as outdoor leaders is accorded different social meaning in different contexts. Most approaches do maintain a focus on women's unique contributions based in their sexed identity—similar to arguments for the needs of women students. Morch's (1997) study, for example, tries to identify the ideology of femininity at work for women leaders whose work locates them as 'women in nature.' She begins from the belief that sexual difference would make the wilderness a 'natural' place in which 'women in nature' are adept and capable. She is confused when, in institutional situations with other outdoor leaders, she finds that "speaking up or out or admitting to physical differences only confirms that this is *not* our 'natural' sphere" (Morch, 1997, p. 16; emphasis added). Her lived experience of a naturalistic femininity as a strong woman is contradictory and confusing. Instead of just identifying ideology, unpacking the way in which ideological arguments are constructed better allows their social constituents, and those leading to such experiences of contradiction, to be made visible.

Women's outdoor leadership for all-women groups, for example, is described by respondents in one empirical survey as having *minimal need* for "the ability to maintain a margin of excellence over participants in relevant skills" (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 18). Respondents imply that differences in physical ability between women ought to be imperceptible, presumably at the expense of professional expertise for the women outdoor leaders and, likewise, at the expense of skill-based programme

objectives. Minimizing physical skill differences is a goal based on the conviction that women's groups value "other aspects" of shared experiences outdoors. Women leaders are therefore responsible for diminishing their own skill level even while instructing skill development for women in their groups. The authors of the study make no comment on the social effects of physical skills and none on any correspondence of skilled ability to gendered embodiment.

A woman working with outdoor groups of adolescent men found that her presence as the sole woman on the field staff team was also not valued for her skills. In contrast to the views of the women instructors above, however, a male colleague reportedly gave a newspaper interview in which he said that the presence of a woman instructor in an all-male group is most useful in motivating the students to achieve physically (Lovinfosse, 1985, p. 3). A sole woman instructor plays a dual role: if she can do an activity, the men know that they can do it, too, that is, her performance is the bench-mark for male physical superiority. And once she does the activity, the men are compelled to do it better than her. In the words of one student, "I can't let a woman beat me." Their attitude is dismissed by the male outdoor leader as merely masculine competitiveness (Lovinfosse, 1985). The outdoor instructor herself defines this scenario as contributing to the exploitation of women in outdoor leadership (Lovinfosse, 1986).

Aspects of the appropriation of women's bodies in outdoor programmes are discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Here I want to relate the two examples, of leadership for all-women groups and leadership for an all-men group, by suggesting that *in both* the threat of the woman outdoor leader is that she is too strong. "The moment we enter the wilderness, we are led to believe that our gender does not matter," writes Morch (1997, p. 16), but "what becomes problematic is that our femininity is always being contested."

The shift in context from ordinary women's experiences to skilled women's experiences allows us to see that women's outdoor leadership is incorporated not in their femininity, but in the very bodies which the literature denies. Women's bodies are the social constituents of ideologies used against women. They are used as means by which to allay the effects of difference (between women in one example) and as means

by which to establish and heighten its effects (between men and women in another example). The examples reveal the limitations of physical definitions of difference located in “sexual dimorphism” (Hood-Williams, 1995, p. 291), that is, two and only two interpretations of sexed, physical bodies. Additionally, the persistent emphasis on women’s difference as found in a shared and unquestionable feminine psyche inhibits change to theorized areas of women’s leadership beyond becoming more like women. It offers little direction for women who enjoy and want to convey to others the ‘hard, physical’ experience of being skilled beyond becoming more like men. In turning to women’s bodies and their appropriation as social constituents, I want to suggest that ideological explanations alone for women’s experiences in leadership, such as Morch’s (1997), are inadequate for extending new theorizing.

### **Competition and Coercion**

Physical capability and skilled competence in outdoor activities are the substance of all conditions for outdoor skills teaching and leadership practice. Yet, or perhaps because of this, they are not mentioned in outdoor leadership manuals (e.g., Cockrell, 1991) and they are not found in lists of the “top ten” competencies of an ideal outdoor leader (Priest, 1987, pp. 22-23). Skilled competence may be assumed under the components of “activity skills,” “safety skills” or “basic competency in outdoor living;” physical capability is occasionally specified as “fitness level” and “motor skills” (Priest, 1987, p. 25). One quantitative study places “maintaining physical fitness” into a “physiological” category of the professional “hard skills,” indicating the role of an outdoor leader for promoting physical health and fitness among their students (Swiderski, 1987, p. 30). But physical fitness in leaders is not mentioned as a professional competency.

In another quantitative research study, Priest (1987) finds that outdoor experts across five countries consider physical fitness to be among the least important of 14 components of good outdoor leadership practice. Yet, it is listed close to the top, that is, most important, of criteria for the selection of outdoor leaders prior to professional training. The experts surveyed prefer that outdoor leaders be hired already possessing

these components. The desirable selection components include “physical fitness, healthy self-concept and ego, personable traits and behaviour...along with motivational philosophy and interest, as well as awareness and empathy” (Priest, 1987, p. 94). It appears that physical attributes are considered to be innate, personal traits and not part of what an aspiring outdoor leader might develop through training.<sup>36</sup>

Women in outdoor leadership, however, often feel under pressure to prove their physical attributes (Bell, 1993a, 1996b; Loeffler, 1995a; Miranda & Yerkes, 1987; Morch, 1997). This clearly signifies the ‘absent presence’ of physical capability as a constituent factor in the lived experience of outdoor leadership effectiveness. The pressure comes from men students. In an American quantitative survey, women working with mixed groups expressed great frustration at “the resistance of male participants in accepting them as a leader” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 19). Almost 80% of the 79 respondents who worked in mixed-gender outdoor programmes thought that it took longer for them to be accepted by male participants. To some women this meant that the men in their groups demonstrated “the need to compete with women leaders” and to some this meant that they had to adjust their leadership to “maintain higher standards than males” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 18), presumably male students and male colleagues. And almost 40% of the subgroup of 79 respondents comprised women who “were the most likely to find working with a male colleague difficult and the most likely to strive for physical and skill attainment as a means to ensure their legitimation as an outdoor leader” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 28).

Interestingly, the women who reported working with a male colleague to be difficult were teachers who held seasonal positions as outdoor leaders, most probably over summer. Almost half of them had tertiary-level degree qualifications in outdoor education or recreation and they had attained similar outdoor leadership certification to those women employed full-time, year-round at national and international wilderness expedition programmes. The researchers found that the women who experienced difficulty working with men, students and colleagues, were more likely to see themselves as role models representing “‘the leader’ as female” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987, p. 19, 28) rather than to see their leadership as facilitating and encouraging shared group values. Most probably this was born of the male/female co-leader pairing and/or

students' responses to this, although the researchers do not elaborate on this point. One might conclude that this group of women decided that the quickest way to demonstrate their "higher standards" and defuse competition from men was to prove their physical prowess. In contrast to the responses of women working with women who thought that their own high skill levels should be minimized (reported in the same study), it seems clear that the impetus for these leaders' emphasis of their higher physical competency was the presence of men.

When the same theme came up in qualitative research with a small group of women outdoor leaders in Canada (Bell, 1993a, 1996b), I did not, as a participant-researcher, perceive this association as clearly. The women instructors participating in that study described the same commitment to being positive role models and the same sense that men could be a "nuisance" due to the constant, "subtle testing" (Bell, 1996b, p. 151). It was discussed by one woman as occurring when she was working in an all-women instructor team and had students in the group who were men. Although I do examine the misconception of the woman outdoor leader as a role model for other women, I did not perceive at the time how it might be constituted as a heterogendered concept, that is, relying on the presence of men to enable its effects. It appears to me now that significant insights emerge in the comparison of responses from women working with women-only groups and women working with men and mixed gender groups. The responses of the women in the American study need further detail and analysis to be conclusive. They might, however, point to ways in which physicality itself might be analysed as a heteronormative discourse, that is, never free of its heterosexual and gendered constituents. The experiences of the women outdoor leaders in the present study might be productive in further exploring this possibility.

The lived experience of feeling coerced by men to prove one's physical prowess is given by one outdoor instructor as the reason she chooses all-women expeditions in the outdoors. She writes,

as a woman leader on coed trips I've often been challenged by male participants who push me to prove my competence and ability to be a leader. Often this happens with men who are at a beginner skill level in an activity that [sic] I am at an expert skill level. It feels as if they

challenge me because they can't believe a woman could really be an expert in an outdoor activity. I've never experienced this kind of "testing" on women's trips I've led. (McClintock, 1996b, p. 22)

Presumably this woman prefers not to lead men's or mixed trips in order to avoid participating in heterogendered physical relations. Is this perhaps how 'gender' is established as a relational social force (such that working with men is never "gender-free" for women) and practised in "male culture" outdoors? The desire in strong women to be a "role model" is appropriated such that their own actions, in proving their prowess, make them complicit in "the privileging of coerced dualism" (Epstein & Straub, 1991, p. 3).

### **Technical Competence**

The invisibility of the dependence on physical strength as a constituent of outdoor leadership and its significance to men's exclusive embodiment of masculinity are revealed through the experiences women have of testing, competition and coercion from their men students. An additional way in which strength is masked within professional practice is evident in one explanation for why women's outdoor leadership careers stall.

The most influential reasons that women might be under represented in higher positions in outdoor organizations are found in an American study to be "the presence of powerful male networks" and "hiring and promotion standards" (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 18). Specifically, when more detail was provided in interviews, the respondents "thought the standards may be unfair to women because they tend to emphasize technical competence" (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 18). One woman, however, interprets her situation: "I've progressed more slowly compared to male counterparts, *by my choice*. I seem to have a higher desired standard of performance or competency and will work harder to get my skills solid" (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19; emphasis added). In addition, "some women mentioned the challenges they faced because some co-workers and participants doubted their physical strength and technical competence [and] co-workers of another woman questioned her technical competence once she became a mother"

(Loeffler, 1995a, p. 20). There are clearly links between gender and physicality in physical competency-based promotion standards, “men getting promoted more quickly than women” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 18) and “women’s lack of confidence [in] their ability to develop technical skills” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19). The author’s related work pursues integral issues of the women outdoor leaders’ self-confidence (e.g., Loeffler, 1997), but here she overlooks the underlying effect of skill mastery which points to the operation of the discursive practices in relations of the physical: “one woman observed that women in general tended to like to learn outdoor skills in formal learning environments, whereas men are more willing to go out and ‘wing it’” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19). Women’s ‘choices’ (controlled skill mastery, motherhood) and bodies are the source of their lack of success, whereas men’s bodies are the source of their success. Studies such as this cannot be generalized to the situation of all women leaders in the outdoors, but they do offer the opportunity to identify gendering *practices*, those which construct and maintain oppositional physicalities, enmeshed in institutional relations.

In another institutional example, women outdoor leaders’ opportunities to demonstrate physical strength are directly linked to their technical competence.

It is important that women are actually in charge and not merely token females...Women must have real skills and be capable of taking control, otherwise the subliminal message is, “We’d like to give you responsibility but we don’t really trust a woman to do the job.”...One obvious way to avoid such situations is by having an all-female team working on women’s courses. The only covert messages are about strong, competent women. (Johnson, 1990, p. 39)

An anecdotal list of women’s ‘problems’ includes the low numbers of women on training and assessment courses, the lack of confidence women display in their physical abilities and their different learning style to men. But, surprisingly, this author’s conclusion about the best way for women to develop professional competency is fairly instrumental:

at present one of the most productive ways forward appears to lie simply in good instructional practise [sic], a learner-centred approach supportive of the needs and feelings of the individual. If, through this,

we can encourage more girls to continue beyond the initial stages in outdoor activities, then we are on the way towards developing more female instructors and ensuring more continued participation in the outdoors by women. (Johnson, 1990, p. 40)

Authors who contrast women's tendencies with men's without question actively construct gendered definitions of the physical. Whereas Warren (1985) assumes that women's need to learn appropriate skills is a physical deficiency based in a biological inevitability, Johnson (1990) situates it in a psychological context. Women have a gender-specific learning style requiring sensitive attention: "this is not to say that women are not capable of high performance in the more adventurous activities—they simply have a tendency to have a different learning curve" (Johnson, 1990, p. 40). Warren's (1985) recommendation is that strength-related activities are "de-emphasized" for women as a consequence. Johnson's (1990, p. 40) are that "more non-patronizing encouragement is needed to persuade women to attend courses." Also needed is more awareness that "it is easy for women to slip into a secondary subservient role to a confident male," because, "after all, female instructors are subject to exactly the same conditioning influences as their students" (Johnson, 1990, p. 39). After conducting her women's career development study, Loeffler (1995a, p. 20) recommends that organisations (providing mixed gender outdoor programming) offer "single-gender training [for] women [outdoor leaders] to learn in a safe and nurturing environment where they feel more comfortable taking risks" and "reduce bravado and macho aspects of programs."

Empirical anecdotes of women's physical bodies used as both the source of their 'legitimate' prowess or weakness and the means of their humiliation may be restricted to experiences with mixed or men's groups. The literature on women's outdoor leadership (providing all-women programming) takes physical skill and strength for granted, overlooks them or generally treats them as "mechanistic" (Powch, 1994). For example, in one programme a woman instructor is described as "a skilful outdoor recreation specialist," there "to insure the physical safety of the participant...yet do so in an unobtrusive way that does not diminish the participant's perception of being exposed

and in control” (Powch, 1994, pp. 15-16). What constitutes her skilful competence and how it guarantees the physical safety of the participants are not explored.

In another example, women instructors in adventure therapy are credited with having “the outdoor and technical skills on which the client is dependent for her very survival...Sensitive, aware, and respectful professionally trained leaders are key elements in the quality of the outdoor experience” (Mitten, 1994, p. 81). There is some hint that such skills may constitute relations of power: “this power difference,” writes the author, “needs constant respect and maintenance” (Mitten, 1994, p. 81). But it is not clear if this is a therapeutic consideration or an acknowledgement of embodied difference (and how that should make a difference). The solution that “more emphasis needs to be placed on leader training and supervision” (Mitten, 1994, p. 81) seems somewhat cursory and moreover to miss the point.

The conclusions reached by these writers do little to defy or threaten the oppositional positioning of women’s skill as inferior to men’s competence in the context of ‘women in outdoor leadership’ theorizing. In spite of the instrumental and pragmatic approaches to outdoor leadership, women’s outdoor leadership and women’s “conditioning,” none of the writers explicitly argues that women must develop physical competency above all else. Two fears appear to underlie a reluctance to do so. One is that women will become more like men and the other is that, whatever they become, they will be less like women.

#### *“Becoming More Like Men”*

One writer in the United Kingdom accepts that women outdoor leaders *are* like men and argues that this is “quite normal” when one considers the circumstances.

We tend to be trained by men and, like our colleagues in industry, subconsciously learn that they way to get on is to be like men, to approach our students in the same way as men approach their students. This is not to say that there are not a lot of excellent male instructors in the business, nor to denigrate the soft skills that many of them possess.

Nevertheless, women are still in a minority in the profession. (Johnson, 1990, p. 39)

An American theorist rejects the notion that “becoming more like men in their leadership” (Henderson, 1996, p. 112) has any benefit for women, attributing this desire as part of the impossible liberal feminist agenda for equal opportunity. The aspiration of women to emulate men, she fears, “seems to be a popular approach and is accepted by many people interested in getting more women involved in outdoor experiences” (Henderson, 1996, p. 113). The idea that women practise leadership like men is viewed as “catching up” to and “competing on equal terms with men” (Henderson, 1996, p. 112). It is rejected on ideological grounds that “the values that dominate male outdoor culture and male leadership will be internalized by females who wish to be leaders” (Henderson, 1996, p. 113). The author criticizes any conception that becoming more like men is desirable, or even possible, because “it assumes no biological explanations for women’s subordination and assumed participation rates; thus an assumption of culture not biology acts as the barrier to women in outdoor leadership” (Henderson, 1996, p. 112). She holds that sexual difference informs women’s particular leadership styles and that these must be respected. But, unlike humanistic complementarity, she appears to want women’s biologically-based, socially-defined characteristics to provide resistance to the dominant culture in outdoor leadership. She goes on to propose a non-gender-biased model of leadership at which women excel because of their innate qualities. At the risk of oversimplifying their arguments, both of these authors, Johnson (1990) and Henderson (1996), seem to fear the operations of women’s subconscious in internalizing and normalizing a universalized male culture in the outdoors.

How does this happen? How might male cultural values be “internalized” by women? And how do these women outdoor leaders then produce the effects of masculine culture? Experienced women leaders who do develop physical strength and “acquire exemplary competence in all outdoor skills” (Warren, 1985, p. 13) are said to be unintimidated by traditional definitions of wilderness as “historically a masculine domain” (p. 11). It is not clear *how* this happens, but it takes years of hard work and experience for a woman until she is “proficient,” “confident,” “comfortable” and in “complete command of her camp stove, compass and canoe” (Warren, 1985, p. 13).

Far from being “liberated,” as other theorists suggest, and teaching women that they too can enjoy and excel in travel and adventure outdoors, strong women are represented as intimidating to other women. They are accused of being “superwomen” (Warren, 1985, p. 13). They betray other women, especially beginners, for whom such a physically competent woman is not accessible as a role model. They are undone by their own competence. Their lack of fear leads students to think: “I can never be like her” (Warren, 1985, p. 13; see also Lynch, 1994). The superwoman is represented as having become an exception to what is normal, an anomaly, not really a woman; she is discursively positioned by her confidence and ability.

### *The Superwoman Dilemma*

Rather than arguing that this position is precisely what would free women from sexual difference to achieve a ‘gender-resistant’ embodiment for women, writers and practitioners display great anxiety around how to cope with the superwoman dilemma. One woman outdoor leader decides that “it is hard to get away from people’s preconceptions. However, ‘it’s all right for her, she does this all the time,’ is probably a slight improvement on ‘it’s different for him, he’s a man’” (Johnson, 1990, p. 38-9). She then suggests that girls on outdoor courses “may be more reassured if they see a woman dressed in normal clothes, who looks not so very different from themselves” (Johnson, 1990, p. 38). The superwoman is not a reassuring figure.

In a similar vein, another outdoor leader urges competent women leaders to dispel the notion that they are not really like other women by “sharing...decision-making, demystifying competency and revealing vulnerabilities” (Warren, 1985, p. 13). At the time when their very gender identity is supposedly in question, women outdoor leaders are advised to restabilise it by reconfirming their vulnerabilities as ‘ordinary’ women. The implication is that femininity cannot encompass physical strength as a mode of empowerment without betraying the relational core of femaleness. A position of potential resistance to idealized social meanings of femininity becomes compliant with a dominant culture requirement in the outdoors in which physicality and competence are practices historically constructing masculinity. Hence, physical

competence is (re)constructed as a threat to women, femininity and sexual difference. Superwomen are strong, but they are not like women.

Betraying other women, female values and “the tenets of a feminist vision of outdoor leadership” (Warren, 1985, p. 13) is one way in which women outdoor leaders are criticized for “internalizing” male culture. They may also participate in subverting the effects of difference in bodily competency. They are then accused of being admired and respected for their prowess. There are two manifestations of this scenario. The first is in the attempt to treat bodily action as pre-social and therefore unconstrained by gender prescription, such as in this account by two women watching a third woman climb written for a national newsletter:

Every move was executed with control, statically, and so slowly. The body was relaxed. Each foot was secure on tiny pocket holds. One hand locked off on a two-finger lay-away as the free hand calmly searched for the next minute hold. The climb was near vertical there yet the climber failed to convince us of its steepness. With ease, the sequence was methodically worked through. Once or twice I saw a hand dip into the chalk bag while the climber waited, contemplating the next step. This seemed to be the only sign of implied nervousness. Never once did we see a quiver or shake of a muscle, nor hear a panicky ‘watch me!’ as was so familiar in our own climbing partnership. Climbs that we’d struggled up were a ‘cruise,’ climbs that we thought we could never aspire to were performed with slow poetic poise. (Lynch, 1989, p. 129)

The second is in women enjoying those “typically masculine” skills which might be likened to sports deemed the “flag carriers of masculine hegemony” (Bryson, 1990, p. 174). In outdoor pursuits, the skills producing masculine prowess are the ‘hard skills.’ The appeal of ‘hard’ skills to women is a useful issue to examine more closely, for in the ‘male model,’ or what Henderson (1996, p. 113) calls “traditional masculine-based models,” they are significant to the ideology of the physical. They are treated as the “real” basis to competence. Johnson (1990, p. 39), for example, argues that if women are not to be token leaders, they “must have real skills and be capable of taking control.” She raises the tension between the ‘real’ and ‘hard’ versus ‘soft’ skills.

Approaches emphasising soft skills are condemned for not being the 'real' approaches to physical stuff of outdoor adventure. All-women leadership approaches are not deemed to produce 'real' outdoor leadership because their 'soft' emphasis on human relations is thought to be tangential to the 'hard' skills of technical expertise and instruction (see also Jordan, 1990). Thus 'hard skills' are the "real skills" which produce and inscribe a certain physicality in those who pursue them. They also effect the "real" representative of the pursuit: for example, Bell (1990, p. 25) finds that the "real" trampers in the clubs she contacted were men considered "keen on 'hard' tramping activity." The men were characterized as more goal oriented, that is, getting to the top, doing the fastest time possible and relentlessly pursuing the "hard physical" experience (Bell, 1990, p. 90). Mitten (1992b, p. 208) writes that her purpose in taking all-women expeditions into Nepal is to give "women an opportunity to gain more mountaineering skills and experience being at altitude, something usually reserved for 'serious male' climbers."

Women's appropriation of 'seriousness,' getting to the top, doing a 'hard physical' route or proving their prowess might be regarded as internalizing male culture and becoming more like men. It is important to notice that women transgress gender boundaries when they do *what men do*. Joyce (1988, p. 25) observes that "here at [an Outward Bound School], a woman who excels at climbing is marvelled at and appreciated/respected." The implication is that she is admired by the men for achieving a masculine physicality. Joyce (1988, p. 25) explains: "in our present white male dominant culture, women who have typically masculine competencies are valued. Men who have typical feminine abilities are not."

In order to avert the internalization of male culture, another outdoor leader suggests that women recuperate *what men do* to (re)produce bodily difference:

Rock climbing is the one sport I have participated in where men and women are performing equally in competitions across the world....Climbing depends on balance and flexibility, female attributes, rather than strength and speed, male attributes. Women's legs and hips give them the strength and balance to be good climbers, strong hikers and stable rapellers. (Arnold, 1994, p. 51)

She attempts to make 'hard skills' more acceptable through women's specificity: "climbing, hiking, and rappelling give women a chance to experience their bodies as allies rather than imperfect objects" (Arnold, 1994, p. 51; emphasis added). She wants women to do what men do, but as women.

Joyce (1988) draws a deterministic sketch of the complementary ways in which men and women might "naturally" be attracted to different aspects of the same outdoor activities. Echoing the view that women's bodies are naturally suited to some pursuits, she suggests that this also determines social relations: "men have a predilection to expressing themselves and relating through an external vehicle and women have a predilection to do the same through the body and intuitively" (Joyce, 1988, p. 22). In the cultural pairing of masculine/external competency and feminine/internal expression, climbing rocks or paddling fast water are "considered a 'hard skill' because [they are] physically challenging, technical, action-packed, visible and outside the body" (Joyce, 1988, p. 24). Joyce's (1988) fear is perhaps not that women want to become more like men, but that men want women to become more like men—or rather male-dominant cultural practices reward women for becoming more like men. She urges outdoor leaders to recognize that the teaching "metaphors of rocks and rivers are deeply embedded in our psyche...[as] male and female" (Joyce, 1988, p. 23) and not to lose sight of the less visible "other part(s)" of any metaphor. For example, "the river can be used to touch the 'feminine' halves of our psyches" (p. 24). She concludes that "we, as men and women, have both mountain and river within us" (p. 25). Joyce (1988) and Arnold (1994) would both argue that there is a female, complementary physicality and that it does not undo feminine, whether psychically defined or culturally inscribed, bodily difference.

### **Amazon, Superwoman, Wild Woman...Hostess?**

When women were first hired as outdoor leaders at American Outward Bound schools, tension surfaced with apprehension on the part of men leaders. The women joined the first women students (the earliest arrived in the United States in 1965, in New Zealand in 1974). In the United States, they were hired specifically because they

were married to men instructors (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 290). Descriptions of the entry of women acknowledge that

one apprehension was that women were not up to hard physical stress or meeting traditionally male kinds of physical challenge. Another was the “Amazon syndrome”—a concern lest Outward Bound have a defeminizing influence on girl students, or attract “Amazon types” to staff jobs....There was another concern....There was strong feeling at that time among those valuing and cultivating Outward Bound’s machismo image that the success of women in similar experiences would diminish that image....The situation was compounded by the coincident tensions generated by the feminist movement as it surfaced in the late Sixties.

(Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 160-161, 289)

Despite conceding that men’s fears existed, historians of that time hold women responsible for creating problems for the men in “a very male world,” to the extent that “at times the males would be slow to perceive that the problems were there” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 288). The problems created by women, specifically, might undermine what being a (heterosexual) man is all about (McClintock, 1996a; Morch, 1997).<sup>37</sup>

I began this chapter by suggesting that the shift in context allows us to see how strong women, as the target of this discursive formation, are positioned. Both when working with men and when working with women, the threat posed by women who are skilled and capable is that they are *too* strong. I consider this the context which makes available the discursive subject position which I call the strong woman. “The Amazon syndrome,” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 160), the “superwoman syndrome” (Galland, 1994, p. 252), “the archetypal wild woman” (Morch, 1997, p. 84) and “the hostess concept of leadership” (Mitten, 1992a, p. 58) all appear in prescriptive theorizing<sup>38</sup> which seems to claim, counter and retreat from, but ultimately confirm, this threat.

Women’s primary motivation for choosing a career in the outdoors in the United States, according to a study by Miranda and Yerkes (1987, p. 18), is their love for “sharing and teaching skills.” Yet, the outdoor leaders in Loeffler’s (1995a, 1995b) and Morch’s (1997) empirical studies express insecurity about their own technical skills. Loeffler (1997, p. 119) describes the lack of self-confidence as a major constraint to

women's outdoor leadership careers and proceeds "to examine the concept of competence and how gender-role socialization influences competence development." She does not analyse this "constraint" critically or in terms of the literature on women in outdoor leadership. Morch (1997, p. 87) also finds empirical examples of women outdoor leaders who "struggled around the issue of competency" and confidence, but, although she offers rich detail which contextualizes their struggle within the lived gender relations of outdoor leadership, she does not identify the conditions which produce and sustain it. It is a critical problem, furthermore, when this general lack of confidence is regarded as commonsense knowledge in other commentaries (e.g., Johnson, 1990). Feminist analyses of women outdoor leaders must scrutinize this contradiction, for it lies at the root of the superwoman discourse.

There are two sides to the paradoxical situation of 'the superwoman:' she is strong and capable and finds satisfaction and pleasure in being so; she may also be competitive, driven, compulsive, goal-obsessed and self-denying. Social criticism of "the superwoman syndrome" is particularly of women who are simultaneously wives, mothers, homemakers *and* career women, and manage all these aspects of their lives well; it is labelled a syndrome in order to pathologize individual women who resist the "feminine mystique." The censure of the superwoman is constitutive of a discourse that is both productive of its subject (the strong woman) and repressive of its social effects (insecure about her strength) at the same time. The superwoman discourse carries out these tactics through the very bodies of women participating in and resisting the social strategies of gender. It might be expected that the feminist response to any criticism of women who succeed in resisting domestic roles and compliant femininity would attempt to disrupt and expose the hegemonic interests of gender. However, *feminist* criticism in the 'women outdoors' literature *also* argues that highly skilled women in either situation are "not normal" and "unrepresentative" of women and of women outdoors (Warren, 1985). That is, the criticism which labels 'the superwoman' a mythical figure participates in making women responsible for their own undoing. Their downfall, according to Warren (1985), is their hard-earned competence; they are told they are not high achievers as much as, perhaps, gender *under-achievers*.

Examples from the outdoors literature illustrates the contradiction which women take up against themselves. In my Canadian study of four feminist outdoor leaders, one participant told me that although she is not very big, she knows she is strong and she is proud of her strength. I then discovered that, “at the same time, she is concerned that perhaps she does not look strong. Although, she also hopes that women do not see her as a superwoman or too capable. ‘I don’t know if other people, women in particular, see me as physically strong’ ” (Bell, 1996b, p. 149). It is clear that being conscious of the image of the superwoman in the outdoors is complicated; she wants to look strong and inspire confidence in her students and does not want to look too strong and risk inhibiting her students’ learning. Despite being an object of some admiration, she does not symbolize something which women might admit striving for. The dilemma is that she *is* strong. She is qualified and contracted to provide professional capabilities. She is proud of her strength and wants her students to know she is strong. To “ordinary” women and men, she *is* a superwoman, a strong woman completing extraordinary activities in the course of her day, her work and her choice of lifestyle and leisure. In fact, this woman is tall, lean and lithe and when she is not in the outdoors, she is also a Wen-do, or women’s karate, instructor (Bell, 1996b). What is being admired is her physical strength. And she told me that “it’s really, really wonderful for me to see women getting in touch with their strength” (Bell, 1996b, p. 147).

In another example, a mentor for an all-women, outdoor leadership training group reflects on the women’s account of not completing their goal:

Didi adds that losing a [group] member and Andrea’s injury gave her an opportunity to observe her own tendency to take on extra responsibilities, no matter how large a burden she is already carrying. It was typical of her need to be a superwoman and it made her exhausted and sad when she realized it. Once she realized this, she was more able to establish her own pace, to slow down, to not have to carry the biggest burden. Several of the young women struggle with this “superwoman syndrome,” as Terry calls it. I share it, too, I realize, in my unconscious longing for them to have made the ascent of Whitney—regardless of the consequences. (Galland, 1994, p. 252)

The addendum to the passage is revealing. With this comment the author extends her understanding of the personal issue for Didi to encompass physicality. In so doing, she interprets the “superwoman syndrome” as the need to prove prowess. She says, “their decision gave me a chance to examine and begin to loosen yet another knot in my own psyche, my own drive to go for the peak, regardless of the price” (Galland, 1994, p. 252).

Other outdoor leaders are also gripped by the dilemma. One participant in Morch’s (1997) study of three women in outdoor leadership wrestles with the intersection of physicality and gender:

There were a lot of things that hit me like the myth of the super woman. Like this hit me personally cause I think a lot of times I try to be someone who is strong and tough and do the portage all on my own. So I will often take a lot of pains to prove that I am as strong as anyone else. Or as strong as a guy. Which is a sick thing (laughter). No it is true. Like why do I have to feel like I have to be as strong as a guy? I am a lot stronger than some guys but there is some kind of image that you have. That you have this really strong macho guy and I feel as if I am as strong as them. It bothers me that I feel that I have to do that. This is something that I have written in my journal. I do not understand why I feel like this or where that is coming from. I just feel that doing what I do as a woman is not enough or that I have to be superwoman in order to be good enough...I really personally do want to be that superwoman. Parts of me don’t want to change that because parts of me want to strive for excellence in myself. I am just trying to be the best person I can be. Other times I wonder well, am I just trying to be better than any other woman? (Morch, 1997, p. 69)

The woman speaking in this transcript extract, Oak, “has the physique of an athlete...is a woman of great physical strength...[and] as a marathon runner and triathlete, she has earned her nickname ‘the iron woman’ ” (Morch, 1997, p. 63).

The demise of the superwoman advocated by Warren (1985) has a powerful and perhaps almost paralysing hold on at least these few women in outdoor leadership, in

part because the proposal that the “myth” be abandoned offers few ways out of the lived realities of women’s contradictory experiences. Combating the superwoman figure by ‘revealing’ that strong women are *not* ultimately empowered is one of the literature’s most penetrating messages. To these outdoor instructors, it is one of the most worrisome. The charge of false consciousness has significant psychic effects.

The discursive positioning of superwomen is illustrative of the threat of strong women to feminist theorizing in the outdoors. The feminist appropriation of the “myth” is a double move. It attempts to falsify as “myth” the patriarchal imaginary of the superwoman. ‘The superwoman’ is a recognizable figure, an extension of women’s ‘natural’ capabilities as nurturers and homemakers to absurd levels, a woman at fault for creating her own burden beyond what she is capable of doing each day. The superwoman serves patriarchy well as a superhero, an effect of desire, through which women are blamed for wanting more than their lot, wanting so much more that it exhausts them and they struggle to prove that they can cope. They do not ask for support, they do not admit to needing help and they certainly do not confide dissatisfaction or disappointment to other women. They are overwrought with guilt on multiple fronts and any means of struggling with hegemonic forces is silenced by the presumption of agency and choice. The superwoman is a figure exploited by men, but used most effectively by women against each other and themselves.

Women in outdoor leadership would appear to be remote from the effects of such an unattainable fiction. After all, they demonstrate their competence materially and daily. But feminist theorizing claims that the superwoman desire is successful in disciplining women outdoor leaders and blames women themselves for alienating other women while trying to ‘have it all.’ The image emerges of an exemplary, but lonely woman “in an ongoing struggle to gain parity in a male dominated profession” (Warren, 1985, p. 13). She is blamed for wanting more than being a woman, but not quite being able to become more like a man. She is unlike women for she is too strong, but she is not a man. Her “struggle” is futile. Instead of her identity presenting a new hybrid of gendered subjectivity, it is labelled a “myth.” Strong women gain nothing from vacating/risking the position of ‘woman’ and the myth “robs the competent outdoor leader of her opportunity to be a role model” (Warren, 1985, p. 13). The perceived

value of naming 'the superwoman' as disruptive is that the gesture serves to (re)construct and naturalize the masculine/feminine strength/vulnerability dichotomies. It aims to prevent a position of resistance to femininity being exploited by men, but also by women. The dominant feminist analysis hopes to eliminate the possibility of 'the superwoman' actually threatening the universal and immutable "special needs of women in the wilderness" (Warren, 1985, p. 10). Instead, it creates a new "problem that has no name" (Friedan, 1963, p. 15) for strong women in the outdoors.<sup>39</sup>

The passages above illustrate that it is not overtly their strength which strong women experience as a problem, rather, it is their own anxiety surrounding it. The anxieties they express are often embedded within heterogendered relations and stem, I think, from the knowledge that their disruptive status is productive of daily interactions with students, colleagues and co-instructors. Again, Oak comments:

still, in this [Outward Bound] organization, which you would think they [sic] had their gender shit together, one, as a female, constantly needs to be on her toes, forever proving herself etc. I guess I am realizing just how much this has shaped who I am, always trying to do more, be better, be stronger but for whom? For whom am I doing this? For other women? For myself? For men? Women are perpetually trying to catch up and in doing so end up never fully accepting themselves as women.

(Morch, 1997, p. 72)

"Trying to catch up" to men's level of performance is one source of anxiety. However, some women are also trying not to outperform men. Loeffler (1997, p. 119) interprets her findings that "women perceive themselves as less qualified or competent...[and that] a lack of self-confidence in their abilities limited them in their outdoor leadership careers" as evidence of their socialization. In the outdoors, she says, due to "the socialization that women should be less competent than men in a mixed-gender environment, some women may not demonstrate their competence for fear it would show up the men in the group" (Loeffler, 1997, p. 122). She advocates that women learn their outdoor leadership skills in "single-gender training opportunities" to reduce their fear of being too capable. She concludes somewhat inadvertently that the problem is a heterogendered one, in that women are "inhibit[ing] themselves rather than

emasculating a man” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 122), although she does not discuss gender, sexuality or subjectivity and reverts to the now-familiar argument that an all-women situation is, as a consequence, needed as a safe space.

Consistent with the psychological formulations of self in the outdoor leadership and experiential education literature, Loeffler (1997, p. 120) advocates strategies to minimize the difference between a woman’s professional competence and her sense of self-competence influenced by “society’s perceptions and responses.” Another way to approach the discovery of this lived, contradictory experience of being physically competent but feeling insecure about it is to examine it in terms of physicality. The way that women outdoor leaders move, use their bodies and learn physical, technical skills contributes to an embodied sense of self. Young (1990c) argues that initial perception is important, because when women do not perceive themselves as capable of coordinated muscular strength in a task, they do not use the full bodily strength available to them. She proposes that women’s experiences of embodied femininity distract them from concentrating on accomplishing physical goals through the power of their bodies.

In entering a task we frequently are self-conscious about appearing too awkward and at the same time do not wish to appear too strong. Both worries contribute to our awkwardness and frustration. If we should finally release ourselves from this spiral and really give a physical task our best effort, we are greatly surprised indeed at what our bodies can accomplish. It has been found that women more often than men underestimate the level of achievement they have reached. (Young, 1990c, p. 147)

Loeffler’s (1995a, 1997) study seems to illustrate cases which bear on Young’s (1990c) hypothesis that women are anxious not to appear too strong and that this occurs especially in mixed gender situations. And yet her participants are experienced, trained and qualified outdoor expedition leaders, hardly likely to be judged too strong. Two considerations warrant clarification here. The first is the heterogendered relations in outdoor programmes to which Loeffler’s data seem to point: that when men are present women are more hesitant to prove their prowess and less likely to challenge ‘unsafe’

environments of sexist intimidation and sexual harassment (see Loeffler, 1996b). The second consideration is that individual women in outdoor leadership *do* report experiences of being told that they are too strong. These remarks and threats are subtle forms of discipline and coercion worth noting as they help bring texture to the dual considerations which frame the embodied contradiction lived by strong women.

What do women actually describe as their experiences of being told that they are “too strong?” Empirically documented narratives range from experiences of professional censure through verbal abuse to physical abuse and harassment. One outdoor leader first made me aware of this specific disciplinary technique when she related it in a written survey: “Harassment has ranged from a bum pat through to obvious questioning of my competency as a woman with suggestions not to be “so strong” (Q0402G). Published narratives encapsulate a sense of the disbelief she felt:

I worked in the field of education for a while, with the illusion that all women and men regarded each other as equally competent, skilled, and knowledgeable. However, reality struck when I and other women were labelled as strident and outspoken by colleagues who became threatened by our confidence and competence. This led me to wonder why there were so few women, and people of color, in the arena of adventure-based and experiential education. (Roberts & Winiarczyk, 1996, p. 290)

In a Canadian study, participants discuss responses of their colleagues and students to their “directiveness” as outdoor leaders.

Astrid often spoke of her worries about having too strong a voice...“in some courses that has been a bit of my downfall. Especially on the women’s course when they see the instructors as ‘oh, of course she can do it cause you’re this incredibly strong woman that lives in the woods all the time’.” (Morch, 1997, p. 102)

It is notable that Astrid so easily links her “voice” with judgements by students that she is “this incredibly strong woman that lives in the woods all the time.” Willow gives more details about how her verbal assertion elicits the response that she is “too strong.” “Although Willow describes herself as ‘definitely more verbal and more assertive’ like Astrid, one of her personal struggles is with feedback from staff and students who said

her voice ‘was too strong’ and ‘assertive’ ” (Morch, 1997, p. 102). In Willow’s own words:

when I need to be assertive sometimes I feel uncomfortable and it does not come out the way I want it. It comes out stronger than the way I want it to or I get feedback that it was too strong...Is it because I am a woman and I get labelled assertive or is there a part of me that sort of over does it as well? (Morch, 1997, p. 77)

The researcher relates her own experience of feeling silenced by oppressive practices:

when I have taken a stand, have chosen to speak up...I have suffered the rebuke of being told that I was being too sensitive, or too aggressive, or have been reproached with ‘this is not a gender issue.’ (Morch, 1997, p. 109)

My own experience in Aotearoa New Zealand is similar:

I was being undermined, verbally and interpersonally, by men who were supervisors and co-workers...in public situations [like] staff meetings. I was being put down. I was...sometimes discredited by my male students until I proved myself [physically]. But I [always felt that I] couldn’t be too hard back....wanting to appear competent yet accommodating, not wanting to be labelled negative—too critical, too intense, too feminist. (Bell, 1996b, pp. 148, 150)

“Having a strong voice,” observes Morch (1997, p. 104), “often results in being labelled a ‘bitch’ or a ‘nag’.” A Canadian outdoor leader relates to her that along with being called a “nagging bitch,” another gendered snub she receives is being told, “do not be my mom” if she is directive with groups (Morch, 1997, p. 104). A woman outdoor leader in Aotearoa New Zealand tells me anecdotally that she was called a “fucking bitch” by a student for taking her outdoor group on a physical training run at midnight, common practice at the time among instructors for exerting added stress on group members. This use of the epithet “bitch” in this context points to the fear of powerful women intent on emasculating men. In another incident an angry male student said to the same outdoor leader, “I’m going to kill you, you fucking bitch” as he

struggled to complete a distance swim off the jetty on the first day of his outdoor course (personal communication, C. McCarthy, 16 January 1996).

Verbal abuse is not confined to student-staff relations. A woman outdoor leader in the United Kingdom was told that she was a “weak person, a ‘stupid bitch’ and ‘silly little girl’ *frequently*” (Levi, 1991, p. 7; emphasis added) by her outdoor centre Warden (supervisor) while working in isolated, residential and oppressive conditions as the only woman of two outdoor leaders on staff. Her treatment was ignored by her male co-instructor, her union and her local management body.

Jan Levi’s experience of verbal harassment and abuse is heterogendered; she was expected to supervise all school groups overnight in her outdoor centre as the ‘on call’ female staff and if she deviated from the maternal feminine role, she was humiliated. Permission from the male supervisor was necessary to stay off site for a night or to have “a boyfriend stay in between courses and sometimes permission was refused” (Levi, 1991, p. 7). She was physically assaulted twice by her supervisor, once “causing some bruising” (Levi, 1991, p. 7), after which she left the centre and entered therapy.

Other anecdotes of heterogendered verbal violence include the experience of an American Outward Bound instructor working with a group of all-teenage boys on a course for which she was the only woman instructor and the lead instructor:

The first night in camp the boys informed Terry that since she was the only girl around, they were going to have to rape her. “Just a joke,” they said. Terry blew up. There were no more such remarks made. (Galland, 1994, p. 247)

There is also the experience of an American raft guide whose summer job involved being periodically harassed by male guides and beer-drinking passengers. She had spent a lot of time rebuffing uninvited male approaches, so much so that she had nearly quit the job altogether. She was consistently having to stand her ground single-handedly. (Galland, 1994, p. 248)

The epithets produce confusion in the women around being found strident, too loud, too assertive, too sensitive, too aggressive, too intense or called a bitch, but in addition,

they convey a sense of the violent feeling behind them on the part of the men. Both the women's confusion and the men's hostility are evidence of the heterogendered significance of women's physical strength.

In light of these glimpses into the lived realities of women's experience, it seems completely incongruous that women outdoor leaders might be encouraged to prepare to lead an outdoor expedition as if they are throwing a party. In a ludicrous scenario, "the good hostess concept of guiding" (Mitten, 1992a) is recommended so that participants are comfortable and at ease with new friends and new challenges while their every need is cheerfully served. It is theorized as providing the necessary principles of safe and empowering experiences for women and girls. As Morch (1997) argues, it is time for feminist outdoor leadership analysts to move on from the problematic reliance on "reactionary role models" and normative difference. Whether the happy hostess is a *response* to the superwoman and the Amazon, both also heterogendered figures, or not, it is debatable that she offers strong women in the outdoors means to protect themselves. Morch (1997, p. 85) prefers to think that for "an Outward Bound instructor, work in the wilderness provides a social space for the wild woman to emerge." She miscalculates the effects of physical relations in shaping such "social space."

### **"You Can't be Aggressive" to be a "Really Good Role Model"**

The tensions within the narrow prescriptions for strong women in the outdoors are raised by women who are practising what the feminists of the 1980s prescribe. They are valiantly "role modelling" for girls and other women, yet they are uncomfortable when they "experience dissonance" (Morch, 1997, p. 123; see also Bell, 1996b; Richards, 1999). In a salient vignette from Canada, Julia Morch concludes an Outward Bound wilderness course and prepares to farewell her students. She sits for an individual photograph taken by a male course participant, telling him that she would rather not pose. A woman student expresses the same reluctance, although she has already posed for his photograph of her. Julia, one of their two instructors, is devastated when this student tells her that she did not feel that she could refuse. After

24 days in the wilderness, impelling her students into experiences through which to develop new self-knowledge and freedom, it seems to Julia that in the everyday social practices which shape gendered relations once again a woman complies with a man against her will. Indeed, she felt it herself.

Julia cannot understand how the course has failed. But she is doubly uncomfortable. Despite telling the student that “of course you can say no” (Morch, 1997, p. 4), she was herself complicit in the compliance underpinning heterogendered relations. She spoke her discomfort, but posed for a picture which she felt was to serve to objectify her. She did not speak up to assert the right of all the women to refuse the photographs. She later pinpoints this as possibly “the exact moment that resulted in my recognizing my/our contradictory positions” (Morch, 1997, p. 127) as strong women.

In a study prompted by her sudden recognition, Morch and three other women outdoor leaders discuss the intersection at which their desire to be strong and physical, their frustration with being female and their practical attempts to resist femininity all meet. Their conversations and journal reflections centre on the same issues as those of women in this study. Similar desires and ambivalences are expressed. How can strong women be role models to their students if their capabilities are beyond the reach of the women students? How do they communicate the embodied pleasures of a sense of physicality without undermining women’s gender investments? Can they redefine femininity? Julia’s hope is for a (re)naturalization of femininity: she is a wilderness traveller at heart, a “wild woman of the woods” (Morch, 1997, p. 84). In the end, though, the wilderness woman is rather “overnaturalized,” to borrow from Wrong’s (1961) analysis, as an alternative to sexed embodiment for women.

Expanding the styles of gender is not enough to negate the structure of gender (Connell, 1992). Instead, the everyday social practices with which women and men shape the gender order itself must be identified and then undermined by practice in turn. Because Morch (1997) defines gender as ideological identity, a social construct determined, in this case, through psychological essences, she cannot link her problematic of women’s rejection of compliant femininity with any practical resistance to male physical superiority. She accepts superior physical strength in men as natural and legitimate in practice, even if she also labels it “hegemonic heterosexual

masculinity,” and then predicates women’s gendered subordination on their inability to break their silence around male attitudes. She does not make overt the privileging of physical difference as a consensual, historical social practice. She does not see that much frustration and anger expressed by the women in her study, including herself, is directed at other women for not being stronger. The discursive disciplining of strong women occurs through more than the ideological structure of gender alone.

For example, seven men students on the coed wilderness canoe trip consistently cross the portages leaving “the heaviest packs...for the women to struggle to carry” (Morch, 1997, p. 2) and then wait for the women to arrive at the other end. Three women students in the narrative live their physical experience as a source of stress and difficulty. On a difficult portage, they drop a canoe and must rest the heavily-laden food packs. Julia stops to help them by solo-carrying the canoe for some of the remaining distance. Neither the women students nor Julia confront the men waiting at the lakeshore and the pattern is repeated on ensuing portages. At the completion of the course, a woman student bursts out, “I did not know you could say no.”

In Morch’s (1997) observation, the women’s physical strength is not lived as empowering and nor is it characterized in an objective or ‘outer’ way as such by her. Rather it is inhibiting, an obstacle to change in their own ‘inner’ attitudes. As one of their outdoor leaders, Julia expresses her own confusion. She says,

the frustration...increased because female participants did not follow my lead of role modelling and demonstrate that women were as physically capable as men...I realize that my assumptions of a woman role model made no impact on the contradictory ways our experiences are shaped by the confluence of gender, class and race. (Morch, 1997, p. 3)

She intervenes on the trail to support the women, which does little to encourage the group to confront its disarray as an expedition team and, apparently, also does little to help the women gain confidence or bodily self-possession. The heavy aluminium canoes are painful to lift and carry and her narrative of strong women in the woods becomes one of enduring pain, fatigue and silent anger. Julia is extremely frustrated by the men in the group for leaving the heaviest equipment for the women and not returning after transporting their own lighter loads to help their trip mates. At some

level she must be aware of the disempowerment which the women would experience were they to be relieved of their heavy loads by the men who have already transported theirs. Moreover, she does not judge her own actions by the same logic.

As researcher, Morch (1997) settles upon the metaphor of voice for assertion of self, in the absence, despite her own physical strength, of physical power. She applies feminist pedagogy to the politics of the wilderness classroom and inserts herself within the shared constraints of gender relations. She argues that “gender, class and race” are responsible for a social positioning in which she loses her ‘vocality,’ but not that the contradictions of the wilderness classroom lie in the politics of physicality. Morch does not argue that building women’s physical strength is the first and most important practice for altering the group dynamics, nor does she make explicit with the student expedition group the issues of physicality. She sees her intervention as appropriate on the grounds of gender solidarity, but cannot see that, as such, it is not a practice of resistance. Her own actions prevent her from negating the physical relations constraining her experiences and those of her students within gender. Indeed, she is upset with her male co-leader when he does not notice her inner “turmoil” around the situation, presumably on the grounds that they have a physically-based solidarity (Morch, 1997, p. 3).

While it is unwise to scrutinize a single narrative too closely, it does seem that the limitations lived by women as part of relations of gender are understood better if the constraints of gender are made more visible as lived through the physicality which generates physical relations.<sup>40</sup> The unanswered questions about relations of gender with which Morch (1997) ends her investigation are those with which she began, although the empirical narratives she collects do illuminate relations of the physical usefully. In fact, her research really uncovers ways in which physicality might constitute social subjectivities, the project of corporeality, rather than how women outdoor instructors *are influenced by* gender within a wilderness setting.

Julia Morch is not the only woman outdoor leader who feels confused about the failure of her “role modelling” efforts. Similar to Julia, many women outdoor leaders find that they are actually organized, that is, subjected, by the ways in which they may articulate and make visible the confusing contradictions of their gendered position.

Rosa Grace acknowledges this predicament in her experience in Aotearoa New Zealand. For her,

there's been times...where it's been important that I am role modelling a good professional woman outdoor instructor, because: 'you folk need to see this, because you need to change your attitudes!'...like I can recall having a male watch, um, who initially were, um, oh, just a bit slack with their attitudes to having a- a woman instructor. And, um, I'm thinking 'well, you can't be aggressive or- or fight against that because you just get people's backs up.' You know, the best I can do is just carry on doing a really good job, being a really good role model and showing them what can actually be done. And- and just trying to change their attitudes that way and being quite particular, you know, being- you know, making sure that what they see is a woman doing her job well and- and making them well aware that it's a WOMAN doing it.

(CC0315P:815-35)

Rosa's comments emphasize the reason that role modelling is not a complete or reliable social strategy: she is a woman doing her highly physical job well, but she cannot be an aggressive woman. In a Canadian context, Moon says "what I have to battle with constantly with a group are assumptions on their part that I'm not qualified, because I'm heavy...So I just quietly go ahead and do what I do and disprove their assumptions about a big woman" (Bell, 1996b, p. 149). She must fight her "battle" quietly. My own frustration with being challenged by men in public situations as an outdoor instructor made me feel that I was treated unfairly, but, similarly, "I [always felt that I] couldn't be too hard back" (Bell, 1996b, p. 148; insertion in original).

Part of the perceived difficulty of role modelling, not limited to situations of working only with women, is in not only embodying, but also performing, one's prowess so that it might be seen as such. The gendered 'threat' of the strong woman as anomaly is illustrated in how the excess in her physical capabilities is compensated for on the grounds of her gender. She may "carry on doing a really good job" with physical skills while using her feminine skills in non-confrontational instruction and leadership to compensate for her transgression. Indeed, Rosa emphasizes her femininity in the

very passivity of the manner, above, in which she lets the men students know that she is unusual; such indirect assertiveness seems to be what attracts labels of over-sensitive, too loud and shrill (see Morch, 1997). Ultimately, she is only successful in her strategy if the men see her as a woman actually challenging the conventions which effect *their own* privilege, but it is not clear how she can accomplish this while being careful not to “get people’s backs up.” After such an emphatic display of difference (“it’s a WOMAN doing it”) they merely blame her behaviour to be exempt from changing their attitudes.

While confident in and enthusiastic about her own physicality, Rosa herself sees her abilities as separate from a desire not to offend her students’ preconceptions of her as a woman. Two other instructors report that they try to offset their students’ perceptions of them, which they see as entrapping them in the myth of the superwoman, by apologizing directly to the students *for their abilities* (Morch, 1997). Astrid’s narrative reveals how convoluted a process this is for her as she elicits support and “acknowledgement” for how hard it is to tell the other women that she feels tired.

Like it was pretty neat because on my September Women of Courage Course, um, there were a couple of times on course, it was the end of the day and it was getting to the end of the season. And I was getting pretty tired out and there were a number of times where the women were asking, ‘Astrid can you do this,’ you know, and kind of physical helping out stuff around camp. And ‘we need your skills to do this.’ And just being able to sit back and say ‘no you guys can do that,’ ‘you know what to do around that’ and ‘I can’t right now, I need to take a bit of a break,’ to sit down and do some journaling or write a letter. And then saying to the group that night that that was extremely hard for me to say ‘no I can’t do that. I can’t look after everyone else right now because I need five minutes for myself.’ And that acknowledgement that I got for that was pretty neat because I have never done something like that before. Verbalized that to the group. It is really hard for me to say that. I always want to be helping out and in there and in there doing things and you see that very much on the women’s courses. Like you never have as

good a clean up as you do on a women's course as they are all used to cleaning. And that kind of thing. So that's what I kind of see as being a role modeling too. Not just doing but being able to communicate what it is like for me to do that, so that the women in the group did not just look at me and say, 'well, she's got it so together so she can easily take a break so she can take a time out,' but they needed to know how difficult that was for me to do. I felt like I had to. So it's role modeling things like that. (Morch, 1997, pp. 120-121)

Morch (1997, p. 121) summarises Astrid's approach to expressing "her 'breaking points' to the other women on the course [as]...part of her recognition that her lived reality is not different from other women's."

Oak also feels that her abilities might have "a negative effect on participants" (Morch, 1997, p. 122). She says,

so I was really conscious of this role modeling. A couple of times I would talk to the group about how tired I was physically and that I was feeling the strain and stress of things. I did consciously try not to be a superwoman. I tried just to be on the level of everyone else. (Morch, 1997, p. 122)

However, Oak has already described the competitiveness she cultivates in her life, which includes "trying to be better than any other woman:"

in my own personal life I will strive for something more...[that] will be really hard for me. I am a pretty competitive person. So I like to always push myself, you know, do as much as I can. You know when it comes to other women I always want to be the best out of those women...I really personally do want to be that superwoman. (Morch, 1997, p. 69)

Oak is expending much energy as she tries "to be someone who is strong and tough and do the portage all on my own" and then additionally tries to convey "the strain and stress of things" (Morch, 1997, p. 69) as a strong woman. Having only recently become an outdoor instructor, although an experienced multisport endurance racer, she says that she is uncertain about her competency as a 'good instructor,' describing herself "as 'not being really that confident' with her hard skills" (Morch, 1997, p. 88). Yet, why would

one model an instructor under strain if one is not confident to begin with? What does such an “apologetic approach” (Lenskyj, 1986, p. 76; see also Weiller & Higgs, 1994) offer these instructors once they have redefined their own once-pleasurable physicality as tiring and stressful? Must their view of sisterhood subordinate physical competence? How then can they be effective outdoor leaders if they are occupied with not getting “people’s backs up,” not being too hard, even too competent or too far from “the level of everyone else?” These questions are pivotal to the next three chapters and offer ways in which to reassess the discursive regulation by which women are accused of betraying other women by being too strong.

### **Role Modelling as Incomplete Corporeal Inscription**

In this study, it is apparent that some women outdoor leaders understate their own physical capabilities in order that their physical strength not be judged or, indeed, contested. In contrast to Rosa, Astrid, Oak and others, Valerie Berg tells me that she will disavow her own abilities as a means of covering up her physical ability. As her ‘body talk’ conveyed in the last chapter, she has worked in the outdoors ever since growing up on a farm. Her aim as an outdoor leader is “just being a role model of a woman who is physically- you know, comfortable being physical and comfortable doing things” (CC0315E:5-8). And yet, she acknowledges, “I know I do it verbally all the time, diminishing my competence” (CC0331E:47-48) and rationalizes it as eliminating the need to “prove” her prowess. “One of the things I do is, um- is, um, diminish my skills verbally. Yeah. [Like little self put downs?] Yeah....anyone who thinks that I can’t do anything- So I don’t have to prove it, because I don’t say that I can” (CC0330E:13-18).

Performing her physical skill in discrete situations, such as doing press-ups before a run, may appear to be a chance to put any skepticism of students or colleagues to rest, but, as a strategy, it is usually only temporarily effective. The aim is not, even so, a desire to outperform men, but rather to redirect their constant performance of physical masculinity. Instead, Valerie implies that if she diminishes her abilities, then others expect less of her and she is not under as much pressure or open to criticism.

She does not fear she will outperform men, as much as that she will perform a physical competence. She even finds herself

in situations where I know perfectly well I should do THIS and don't do it. You know, I should tie THIS knot, HERE, and for some reason I don't do it. And I sometimes wonder if that's some sort of subconscious message kicking in saying 'don't be competent.' ” (CC0331E:49-54)

It is not, however, a consistent practice: she says that she participates at times in the competitive staff room talk that occurs (CC0330E:29-30). She does get some pleasure out of the informal 'jockeying' into place through conversations about risks taken or feats of achievement (cf. Allin, 2000). She has, after all, accomplished “a three month adventure kayaking, trekking and eating whale meat in Greenland,” highlighted in the promotional material for the outdoor centre at which she now works.

Valerie's reflections illustrate another part of the difficulty of role modelling as a social strategy: her physical capabilities are shaped by her own gender training. She writes,

it doesn't pay to be too competent—it's far too threatening. As my sense of competency in the outdoors is closely connected with the strong use of my body, the messages about sitting with legs together and taking small steps get in the way. Also, with some pursuits where aggression (or energy) are required, e.g., kayaking, sometimes it's hard for me to connect with that as an energy force. (“Be meek and mild.”) (Valerie, Q0502E)

She struggles to sustain the aggressive, forceful use of energy for a strong body which she has learned in order to be competent in the outdoors. “Role modelling” is incomplete for her as a reinscription of her own body, because she enacts social “messages” about feminine comportment. In corporeal terms, her physical capacities are organized by social inscription, that is, her outdoor work, adventures and professional training have left their impression on the outside. Valerie describes her body to me in positive terms: “I think I have really nice strong arms and shoulders” (CC0316E:11-12) and she has a muscley back. She experiences femininity as “how I

deal with my body” (CC0334E:11-12). And this is very much dictated by her bodily perceptions, that is, in psychic inscription from the inside.

Certainly,...how I’m feeling about my body colours how I experience the world...If I’m having a “bad body day,” um, then, um, yeah, my experience isn’t as positive. And how I interact and relate to people isn’t as positive or confident...Probably when I’m premenstrual and just starting my period are usually bad days. I’m feeling yucky and my body hurts and, yea, I’m tired and-...“Bad body days” are also when I’m not feeling confident or [when I’m] feeling incompetent. I tend to feel not so good about my body...definitely things like being premenstrual, being tired, being stressed. (CC0333E:10-44)

The dual constituents acting in a dialectic on corporeal subjectivities are visible in this comment from Valerie. Bodily “messages” about comportment as identity are never just imposed from without, enacted upon the body’s exterior to determine a socialized demeanor, they are habituated from within. But even if feminine movements are resisted and replaced, they may be ‘dealt with’ ambivalently, on the basis of female experiences, such as menstruation, or personal experiences, such as feeling stressed and even incompetent. Having a “bad body day” mediates Valerie’s physicality, illustrating the contingency or unevenness of the inscription of physical abilities and skills as strength.

Her comments are echoed by Charlie Cooper, who says that physical injuries affect her moods and confidence.

I sprained an ankle...[and it] took a while to heal. I couldn’t jump from one rock to another...That threw my confidence for ages....If I’m not happy because something’s wrong with my body then that affects how I interrelate with other people. (CC0333M:84-94)

One wonders if the desire on the part of the Canadian outdoor leaders to diminish their capabilities for their groups by “modelling” the tired instructor is at all related to similarly experienced “bad body days.” Clearly, once steps are taken to “demystify” the superwoman as actually a woman under strain, the implications are that strong women become more like ordinary women when they are tired, injured, not confident, feeling

incompetent and alienated from their bodies. The “apology” for their superwoman position may be encouraged as a positive step, but their embodiment in the “myth” serves not to expand or “interrupt” femininity, but in fact to reinscribe it as bodily weakness and physical vulnerability.

## Conclusion

There is a discursive contradiction at work disciplining women’s strength and physicality which is enacted by women themselves when they take up role modelling as the feminist strategy to combat the “myth of the superwoman” (Warren, 1985). It is not solely a psychological decision or process; role modelling is a physical performance (even a parody, in Butler’s terms) and social practice. Morch (1997) recommends that women outdoor leaders reconsider and abandon reactionary role models, but it is important to reassess the corporeality of the practice itself.

Role modelling is a discursive practice in that it draws on more than structural effects of gender and is productive of more than resistance to gender norms as its outcome, if, indeed, it accomplishes this goal at all, while overtly defining itself only in terms of gender identity. And yet, it is significant that women who find it difficult working with men as students and colleagues try to represent “‘the leader’ as female” (Miranda & Yerkes, 1987). They feel they must do so, I argue, because of the unacknowledged network of physical relations in which they are positioned. They model alternative physicalities of gender. It is unclear why women working with women are told they cannot model ‘the leader’ as strong and physical: alternative modes of achieving physical prowess. The incompleteness of role modelling for strong women is an illustration of corporeal processes which are “volatile;” they “insinuate” themselves into the production of consensual purposes and meanings *invisibly* (Grosz, 1994b, p. ix; emphasis added). It might produce physical effects which undermine gender prescription for bodies; likewise, its physical manifestation is vulnerable to “bad body days” and their subjective destabilization. The lived experiences of strong women challenge prescriptions such as Arnold’s (1994) that women outdoor leaders simply “role model body awareness and acceptance,” as if such a cognitive act transcends the

felt, bodily experiences of feminine inscription. This chapter has explored women's experiences of dealing with the social regulation by other women, and applications of feminist theorizing, of their gendered presentation. The next chapter turns to lived experiences of the social regulation of women's physicality by their relations with men in the outdoors and explores in more depth the appeal of practices of masculinity and the threats which women pose to what might be called physical masculinity when they are 'too strong.'

## **Chapter 5    When Women are Too Strong: Corporeal Contradictions and Female Masculinity**

The lived experience of embodiment for women is often the experience of being limited by the discursive hold of corporeal contradictions (Bartky, 1990; McCaughey, 1997; Young, 1990c). Trained women outdoor instructors develop, perceive and put forward their own capabilities for ‘objective’ examination and certification. They must have the physical strength to perform the professional role, but, as argued in the last chapter, they find in practice that their strength is considered excessive and even as counter to feminist strategies for women’s empowerment. They are accused of being “too strong” to be role models for their women students. This chapter explores this problem for strong women further, in terms of how their physical strength appropriates practices of a physical masculinity (Connell, 1987) and how this relates to accusations of being “too strong” by their men students and colleagues. In particular, the chapter examines how the women in this study discuss and contextualize their own physical strength. Although many women dismiss the need for physical strength in everyday outdoor instruction, they acknowledge that it is “necessary” when they are coerced to prove themselves to men. Some women then make sense of their own participation in such competitive activities, including their own epic trips into the wilderness, by characterizing them as calling on their “masculine side.” The chapter leads into a discussion in the next chapter of how the women experience femininity.

### **Fear of Women Becoming Like Men**

Valerie Berg relates an insightful narrative, below, in which she became conscious that the embodiment of her capacities—or the freedom to enact her capacities—was effected by her gendered position as a woman. Her active embodiment is constituted, that is, shaped and influenced, in this situation by her responses to interactions with a male student on one of the courses she is teaching. Rather than be fixed in an internal psychic structure, her embodiment of femininity is produced, and

limited, by the active practices of physicality while cross-constructed by relations of gender. She says of a recent course for which she was the leader,

the subtle comments are really common in terms of, um, the put downs and the- you know, all the comments about sort of being male... We had one quite strong character in the course and he constantly- ...like he would constantly correct me. All the time... Every time I would say something he would correct me.... And, um, just make comments like 'oh, any man can do that, you should be able to do that.' ... And then at the same time as he was saying that, he'd, um, you know- he didn't so much to me, but to the other women in the course, he'd rush in and pick up heavy things for them and- and rush in and do stuff. So he wouldn't actually let them be physical and competent. Um. And- And it was really interesting to watch over the period how more and more withdrawn the women actually did become. (Valerie, I0397E:1994-2022)

Valerie is treated differently to her women students. Her physical strength is masculinized as she is judged against the standard of "any man." The women students, in contrast, could be said to be 'made' feminine, not 'allowed' to "be physical and competent," a situation accomplished—despite it being a strenuous, physical outdoor course—in symbolic gestures which serve in the end to produce the desired compliant physicality. Of her own condition, she says, "I was a bit of a wreck by the end of the course" (Valerie, I0397E:1998-99). Such symbolic acts are very much the physical stuff of social relations in the outdoors, that is, the physical relations which structure heterogendered social activity. They demand scrutiny especially for how they illustrate specific ways in which physicality and femininity are produced and may be lived as contradictory. For Valerie, herself, to be recognized as strong and feminine is empowering, whereas to be positioned as masculine (though culturally defined as strong) is debilitating, or at least draining, finally. And they reveal how physicalities and gendering are processes organized by heteronormativity: a strong leader must be different to her not-strong students, who may still be positioned in comparison as 'ordinary women.' Yet, as the gendered division of labour allows only men to provide

and protect, and to “pick up heavy things,” there is no available subject positioning in which for Valerie to be seen in the presence of women who (are told that they) cannot do so other than “being sort of male.”

The ‘women in the outdoors’ literature is concerned with why women are characterized as displaying a lack of skill, strength and self-confidence. Despite indications that not all women do lack physical skill and strength (e.g., Andrews, 1984; Bell, 1996b; Morch, 1997), the pedagogical literature accepts these characterizations in general. It posits the ‘problem’ with women and attributes the lack of confidence to psychological explanations for their lower expectations of success in physical situations and for the innate learning style unique to women (e.g., Johnson, 1990; Warren, 1985). Most often this view of women retreats to biological ‘truths’ about bodies and, as discussed in Chapter 3, to how sexed bodies determine inadequate preparation which women are given as girls for outdoor physical activity (e.g., Loeffler, 1995a, 1997; Warren, 1985). Both biological and psychological narratives are connected to the cultural naturalization of physical skill and specific abilities (to the extent that a high school girl asks, “you mean, someone has to teach you how to throw?” [O’Reilly et al., 1999]). The symbolism of sexed difference is etched into embodied actions through social, gendered and racial training<sup>41</sup> inscribed in bodily movement. The naturalization of (acquired) bodily abilities and the repetitive bodily manifestations of (habituated) gender identity are at the root of the problem for ‘women in the outdoors.’

### *The Culture of Male Physical Dominance*

Both sexed physical abilities and body practices of gender are acquired through culturally endorsed means. Thus, the problem is not so much with ‘women in the outdoors’ as with the culture which inscribes female bodies as gendered and incapable, a culture of male physical dominance. It is comprehensively documented as “rape culture” elsewhere (e.g., McCaughey, 1997; Marcus, 1992; Melnick, 1992).<sup>42</sup> Without denying the centrality of violence and the aggressive enforcement of heterosexuality to the maintenance of the gender order, I want to shift the focus for this discussion to

psychological coercion and physical strength as further means through which physical power enforces cultural divisions.

There are two ways in which a culture of male physical dominance is established in the outdoors, despite the ideology of nature as culture-free. The first is through the association of masculinity with moral character and the second is through the association of men's bodies (and by extension maleness) with physical strength. Through this culture, gendered bodies are produced by the dimorphism required by compulsory heterosexuality (Ingraham, 1994; McCaughey, 1997). But heteronormative gender identities are constructed and naturalized through the everyday social uses of mutually exclusive bodily capacities in men and women. Sites of heteronormativity range from sexual acts to fashion to sport. In the outdoors, bodies and physicality constitute physical relations as heterogendered in terms of how they define the division of expedition labour, learning styles, leadership skills, natural 'strengths' and particular knowledges in determinant terms.

In outdoor physical activity, as opposed to more overtly rules-based sport, physical ability and heterogendered dispositions converge around the desire for an unpredictable, rugged challenge; 'nature' is 'unknown' and provides for 'discovery.' Character, as the moral substance of gender identity, is to be 'found' in these exploration metaphors through self-mastery and selfless use of prowess. Little critical work has been done on the early English men's sporting tradition's association of physical prowess with moral character, imported into New Zealand in Victorian society and schooling (Phillips, 1996; Smith, 1997), and their links with the emergence of the "character building" ideal of organized outdoor experiential education. It appears that the Outward Bound alternative to the individualistic 'male models' of combat, primarily, and labour and sport was originally conceived to *resist* the Victorian "equation of physical prowess with moral strength" (Whitson, 1990, p. 21) and to overcome its gendered structure. Pre-figuring his later "short term schools" initiative which became the Outward Bound schools, founder Kurt Hahn's first school in 1920s Germany accepted girls and boys and both were required to do daily physical exercise, including the mandatory morning run with cold shower (Miner & Boldt, 1981). More recently, at least one critical social analysis of sport suggests that "wilderness sports"

provide a more egalitarian opportunity to redress the gender training of sport which promotes and privileges male physical superiority over female inability (e.g., Whitson, 1990).

However, organized wilderness challenges are susceptible to the same ideological purposes and mystification as sport (for discussions of sport, see Birrell and Cole (1994), Messner and Sabo (1990) among others). In particular, the “character building” component of experiential outdoor programmes serves the same purpose of regulating social deviance (Cameron, 1993). In the liberal democratic rhetoric of self-determination through personal control and moral compassion for the greater good (“becoming a better person,” not a better climber/sailor/mountaineer, in one of Hahn’s aphorisms) is a view of character as will. The philosophy has always been one of “training through the body, not of the body” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 33). Any focus on individual, personal bodies would have been narcissistic and irrelevant to both Hahn in Britain and Dewey in the United States, for whom the “better person” is a democratic citizen, a decision-maker (Miner & Boldt, 1981). Attention to one’s physical success is proscribed by the very organization of the adventure experience around an ethos of cooperation which drives the group will to accomplish huge physical challenges. In practice, embedding men’s ‘superior’ prowess within a moral dimension legitimizes the presence of the physical within the dominant term in the mind/body dualism. The moral superiority of men’s decision-making and judgement in the outdoors, as outdoor leaders in particular, naturalizes their constituents, physical strength and skill, without acknowledging that moral identity is ‘worked on’ in this model through bodily activity.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, I would argue that “character building” is achieved through “body building.”<sup>44</sup>

I recall a student in one of my own watches at the Cobham Outward Bound School when I was an outdoor instructor in the late 1980s, who arrived with the express purpose of training for multisport competition over the upcoming summer. He pursued his goal openly. He revelled in taking the heaviest packs possible, running up tracks and evaluating his performance in terms of his physical improvement. His fellow watch mates and I urged him to “dig deep,” to contribute more personal self-reflection to group ‘debriefings’ in the evenings, but he was unyielding—and uninterested. In a

sense, he lived the physical discipline of the experience more honestly and perhaps even with more pleasure than the rest of the serious, soul-searching young men. He embraced the physicality at the centre of the experience of both Outward Bound and masculinity, although he had not the awareness, nor had I, to persuade the others in his all-male watch of his 'discovery.'<sup>45</sup> He was already 'saturated' with the cult of body work (Featherstone, 1991) and simply appropriated the outdoors as his gym. He may not, however, have departed the course without a new sense of subjectivity; it was just that we did not then have a language to talk about the inscription of "personal growth" in corporeal surfaces of bodies.

Thus the contemporary outdoors culture perpetuates the 'mind/body' problem of subjectivity and social agency in its own particular way. The development of the self is not about the development—or superiority—of the physical: the mental is hard and "deep," while the physical is easy, but morally shallow and superficial. Moral self-development is hard and deep, then, not because it is physically difficult, but because it involves becoming detached from messy, emotional aspects of one's inner nature. It strives to achieve autonomy and emotional distance in order to make the 'tough' decisions which forge responsible character. A precondition of the Nineteenth Century ideal of character building would have been distance from the body's 'needs.' As rational masters, men would be expected to go beyond the easy mastery of their bodies to develop selves "through, rather than for" (Miner & Boldt, 1981) their bodies. Their moral superiority is predicated on a social recognition of the symbolic denial of its embodied inscription. Thus, the moral depth required for emotionally unfettered decisions is elicited by and therefore symbolized by the 'hardness' of the difficult challenge and the consequential, albeit easily accomplished, 'hardness' of competent bodies. Thus for one experienced in the particular models of bodily action in the leadership of expeditions or groups outdoors, to embody competence is to embody 'hardness.'<sup>46</sup>

As women's bodies are deemed beyond their control, their attempts at mastery of their own embodiment are seen as not only a struggle, but also unnatural and inevitably unsuccessful. "By implication, women's bodies are presumed to be incapable of men's achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal)

irregularities, intrusions and unpredictabilities” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 14). While coping with these feminine interruptions, from premenstrual tension to pregnancy, women can hardly be relied upon in the wilderness to embody the competence necessary for hard, tough decisions. Indeed, in one media representation, the woman leader of a climbing expedition is mistaken for the base camp manager by two men; the second defends the mistake by describing her as “petite, alluring, and [with] none of the hardness which most alpinists wear like a badge on their sleeves” (Roberts, 1992, p. 147). The positioning of women as unable to embody “hardness” is sustained further by the social constructions of experiential pedagogy and outdoor leadership: task/human relations functions, technical/people skills, rational/emotional, analytical/intuitive, hard/soft, forceful/yielding, masculine/feminine (Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996; Jordan, 1990, 1992; Joyce, 1988; Morch, 1997; Vokey, 1987).

These constructions are most often seen as complementary and equivalent parts of a coherent whole, such as outdoor leadership. But in their “objective facticity” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), outdoor pursuits and outdoor leadership attribute the moral dimensions of consciousness to the men who construct their social meaning. Historically, for example, the American camping movement and the British scouting movement foreshadowed the Hahnian outdoor experiential education movement by defining itself as providing “masculine moral community [which] sought to protect and nurture boyhood and establish the basis for what they called manliness—for them a moral conception” (Miranda, 1985, p. 7). Although the American Camp Fire Girls movement was initially designed to prepare girls for service and domesticity, private girls’ camps quickly responded to the girls’ desire for an adventure with “a bit of a swagger in it” (Miranda, 1985, p. 9). In New Zealand, girls reportedly pleaded with the leaders of the first Boy Scout Troops in 1907 and were permitted to form their own “Peace Scouts” before the end of the same year. They then engaged enthusiastically in the activities of boiling a billy, compass reading, tracking, tent-pitching, using a “sheath-knife,” carrying a “haversack” and travelling with a “wooden stave” to fight off “mad dogs.” Interestingly, letters of the time say that the girls were also taught Japanese judo and “how to deal with roughs” by using their hook-handled umbrellas in self-defence (Iles, 1976, p. 5).

Self-defence is no longer taught to girls and women in the outdoors. The Peace Scouts were short-lived, to be taken over by the international Girl Guides. And women's outdoor experiences have not since retained any sort of reciprocal design, parallel to the historical project for men to develop character, for women to develop strong, skilful and self-reliant bodies. Men were to be encouraged and trained to build character, but women's "virtue" was immanent and their bodies were by that very constraint not "built" for physical freedoms and active self-protection (McCaughey, 1997). The gendering of the mind/body disunity designated women's bodies as culturally "constricted" (Miranda & Yerkes, 1982) in order to serve the purposes of reproductive heterosexuality. Women's moral authority was confined to modelling ladylike behaviours for the domestic sphere, in which "pacifism and passivity, then, are part...of a system of compulsory heterosexuality" (McCaughey, 1997, p. 21). There was then little use for Japanese judo.

The dominance of 'natural' moral character in the outdoors was necessary for representations of leadership. It is traditionally theorized as accomplished through the privileging of a mastery of the self. It is critiqued by few feminist analyses; those that do generally follow the argument that:

in certain practices of outdoor education we see a privileging of the mind over the body where corporeality becomes a means to an end; the mastery of one's embodied self is an 'outcome' of a rationalist self knowledge. The body figures as a passive vehicle of a transcendent mind which strives for absolute control over itself and by extension others in the world. (Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996, p. 24)

Even in critique, the process is envisioned in the very terms of Cartesian dualism being criticized, for the disciplining of the body is deemed a pre-requisite, something *underlying* mastery and thus splitting the mind from its underlying material base. It is a process which then requires a body that is "passive." Corporeality is treated as the passive embodiment of an active self. In fact, if Grosz's (1987, 1994b) conceptualization of corporeality is applied in its intended sense as a socially constituted inversion, and not, as is wrongly presumed, as the ontologically "embodied self,"<sup>47</sup> then corporeality cannot be a "means to an end" without being implicated in the

process. The body in this case is not so much passive, I would argue, as culturally compliant. The socially inscribed disciplines of such a docile body must be envisioned as the constituents of the subjectivity of hegemonic masculinity and compliant femininity. The outdoor leader above, Valerie Berg, who is told by a student that she should be able to do what “any man” can do, is also called “a machine” (I0397E:1202) by her students, which implies dominance through mechanical obedience. Thus, in the practices of outdoor education, the physical core components end up on the side of mastery, autonomy and hegemonic masculine subjectivity to inscribe a superior type of body, while denying—or mechanising—embodiment.

The construction of ‘appropriate’ masculine character, then, through physical prowess is mediated by and *not* resisted in contemporary organized experiential learning contexts in the outdoors.<sup>48</sup> By the days of the American (all men) Outward Bound schools, “the hard physical stress” was clearly defined as “traditionally male kinds of challenge” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 160). In this context it is important to examine the ways in which the ‘hard, physical’ experience is related both to masculinity and to physical strength. I will turn to the constitution of men’s physical strength first. A clear sign of the imperative separation and privileging of the hard is the juxtaposition of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills in outdoor leadership guidelines (e.g. Green, 1990; Phipps & Swiderski, 1990; Swiderski, 1987). A common defence is that ‘soft’ skills are not as easily practised or taught, “because of their complexity and amorphous nature” (Phipps & Swiderski, 1990, p. 223; see also Joyce, 1988). In this strategy the hard is protected as physical and therefore ‘easy,’ when in fact it is clear that both feminist approaches (e.g., Mitten, 1985; Warren, 1985) and men’s narratives (e.g., Miner & Boldt, 1981; Roberts, 1992) do not view physically demanding challenges as ‘easy’ for women. I would argue that physical skill, strength and stamina are thus protected (as what “any man can do”) for the sake of masculinity and the gender order and not for any internal consistency in the skills and abilities necessary for the outdoors. As highlighted in Chapter 1, this turn is endorsed by accounts in the literature of women’s experiences outdoors which hold that women have other ‘strengths’ that compensate for lacking physical strength. In a pertinent example, it is argued that “what the woman makes up for in load transporting by her nurturing, endurance and facilitation is often not given

comparable acclaim because her contribution to the trip is more intangible” (Warren, 1985, p. 11). That which is ‘natural’ to women (and requires giving up heavy loads) is “more intangible” and that which is ‘natural’ to men (taking the heavy loads) is tangible (see also Joyce, 1988). Masculinity is made material in the body which provides and proves physical power in the hard skills. And ‘hard, physical’ challenges are rendered inherently masculinizing.

The most prevalent indication of the cultural construction of male character as physical power lies in the constant references to the ‘hard, physical’ in representations of the outdoors. If the conception of ‘hard’ meant ‘physically difficult’ or ‘tough,’ then such a term would be redundant. But instead, ‘physical’ is integral because ‘hard’ refers to mental toughness (Jefferson, 1998). While the hard man has historically been found in the Irish working class street-fighter and the German boxer (Jefferson, 1998), in New Zealand this character type has found its embodiment in male sporting heroes—both European and Maori—whose physical prowess was claimed to stem from the outdoor life of the pioneer, farmer and hunter of the backblocks and who displayed great strength and insensitivity to pain (Phillips, 1996). During early international tours, sportsmen were characterized as “fording rivers and crossing mountains to play in the backblocks rugby match” (Phillips, 1996, p. 113).

The practical self-reliance of such hard men is historically mythologized as part of the itinerant life of European settler bushmen. The subject of contemporary fiction has become this ‘good keen man.’ He is a Kiwi bloke who lives the hard life, similar to other historical figures of ‘hard men’ who emerged in reaction to urban industrialization (Jefferson, 1998). He embodies the values of ‘man alone,’ unemployed or freely roaming, carrying only tobacco and tea bags, rejecting weakness, pain, fatigue, loneliness and connection with others.<sup>49</sup> In fiction, these “‘good keen men’ were incredibly tough physically, shockingly crude in their language and behaviour, fond of their yarning and boozing, but terrified and contemptuous of urban society and appallingly misogynic” (Phillips, 1996, p. 266). The hard attitudes of blokes and sportsmen of the backblocks and the outdoor living conditions which required a denial of their bodies have come to symbolize the qualities of a nation, one which is constructed on the achievements of tough male Maori and European military

and farming bodies. “As the nation became increasingly urban New Zealand males needed the vicarious assurance of male heroes who had become a caricature of the muscle-bound pioneer” (Phillips, 1996, p. 122). “Kiwi bloke culture” is still packaged by the media which trade on the “fascination with, and abhorrence of, this ‘blokeness’ ” (Longhurst & Wilson, 1995, p. 219; see also Hawes, 1999; Hogg, 2000) by urban New Zealand audiences. “Hard masculinity” is depicted as a natural and ‘real’ response to the harshness of the rural-wilderness frontier (Longhurst & Wilson, 1995). Finally, as use of the remote outdoors becomes increasingly recreational, the “tramping” which was once a necessary mode of travel for miners and “swaggers” has become a social activity, but one which still affords protection of the hard, physical Kiwi bloke (Bell, 1990).

Women in the New Zealand outdoors today come up against remnants of the good, keen man in the mountains and in the mountain safety organizations. It is said that “this mythical male is ‘strong, tough and keeps his emotions to himself” (Dann & Lynch, 1989, p. 9). In tramping clubs in the Canterbury region, those nominated as the “real” trampers of the clubs keep the myth intact (Bell, 1990). The men recognized as fitting the stereotype of the ideal trumper “had been in the club for a long time and were keen on ‘hard’ tramping activity” (Bell, 1990, p. 25), which means a fast-paced, competitive, goal-oriented, physically demanding trip. In general, the men in these tramping clubs believe that men and women share similar experiences of tramping trips—a view contested by women interviewed (Bell, 1990). Nevertheless, it is also suggested that there is a spirit among women trampers of the “good keen women born in this country and a large number who have come to settle here precisely because they like ‘the free life of the bush’ ” (Dann & Lynch, 1989, p. 9).

Similarly, in the United States, “the advent of hard women rock climbers” (Andrews, 1984) is noted in the 1980s. When one woman started climbing in the late 1970s, she gained “a reputation as a good ‘woman’ climber” (Andrews, 1984, p. 22), an attitude to the few women rock climbing which was typical in the United States climbing community at that time (Roberts, 1992). But as other women climbed the hardest routes and established strong women as serious climbers, they could be seen as “hard women.”<sup>50</sup> And it could then be charged that climbing was not an activity which

'naturally' advantaged men's bodies. In contrast to tramping or other physically demanding activities, it is argued, "the beauty of climbing lies in the variety of skills it requires, and the unique way in which each climb draws upon those skills. The top-level climber exhibits physical and psychological control through movement, problem-solving and maintaining composure under pressure" (Andrews, 1984, p. 24). It is thus contended that the psychological components of physical ability are integral to constructions of a 'hard,' adventurous disposition or the body orientation of the risk-taker.

Andrews (1984) is one of the only writers among 'women in the outdoors' to argue that women must confront their own resistance to the physical skills they need in order to effectively reinscribe their bodily subjectivity. In clear contrast to Arnold (1994), Bell (1990) and others, she carefully argues that "in reality the physical limitations on women rock climbers seem to be relatively insignificant" (Andrews, 1984, p. 26), because women can acquire physical strength. "With training they can develop a high strength to weight ratio [as] the strength needed by the climber is determined largely by physical stature" (Andrews, 1984, p. 24). The more important aspect of women's "potential physical ability to climb the hardest route," to this author, is whether "women have the psychological strength to actualize their physical potential" (Andrews, 1984, p. 24). She points to gendered roles and socialization<sup>51</sup> in order to ascertain how women are inhibited by fear and self-doubt and concludes that "the roles customarily reserved for women did not require the development of many of the *psychological components* which earmark the skilled climber" (Andrews, 1984, p. 26; emphasis added). This argument has been mistaken in the literature for a claim that women are inhibited from developing *physical strength* and skill in their traditional social roles (e.g., Warren, 1985).

Andrews (1984) then also touches on a common issue for women in climbing, which is the expectation when they climb with men that they will "second" the man who "leads." The psychological state for a climber who is familiar with following a lead climber is additionally complicated by the expectation that more experienced men lead and their inexperienced girlfriends second; even as they become experienced, women comment on how difficult it is to "break the mould of seconding" (Roberts,

1992, p. 113). The core of the problem is that physical relations in practice, on the rock, are heterogendered: “given the impact of culture, male/female partnerships often make it more difficult for women to develop initially as climbers” (Andrews, 1984, p. 27). It appears that the association made by Andrews (1984) of the psychological strength needed to actualize physical strength is more about the social training received by the man who “keeps his emotions to himself” in physical situations, the quality necessary to taking the lead, taking risks and becoming a ‘hard’ climber.

Thus the context reinforcing ‘hardness’ as male distance *and* as threatened by the potential for emotional complications is heteronormative. An anecdote helps to illustrate this element of psychological strength.

I once witnessed an incredible example...involving two intelligent friends, a couple, both experienced climbers. When she got to a point of leading her climb where she felt stuck, she began to panic and lose faith in her ability to cope with the situation. Rather than tell her to calm down and cope, he attempted a rescue by dangling his leg (!) from his position ten feet above her on a neighbouring climb...She chose to go for the leg, reached it, and fell off anyway, adding about fifteen feet to her fall. Although this little drama has been the source of great hilarity among us, it was, and remains, remarkably telling. What on earth were they thinking? Obviously their responses were far more emotional than cerebral, or the situation would have never taken place. In his desire to protect someone he loved, he lost control of his senses. (Andrews, 1984, p. 28)

The author points to the cultural training which encourages an anxiety in women about physical self-reliance and observes that in this case “she chose to let him take charge when things got too committing. In fact, she encouraged him, by appearing to be unable to handle the situation” (Andrews, 1984, p. 28). She concludes that “because such dynamics are so deeply ingrained in all of us, many women find that climbing with other women can be an important part of learning to climb well” (Andrews, 1984, p. 28).

Pursuing the 'hard, physical' then links the deep interior with the surface exterior in a cultural corporeality which surpasses the confused exclusion of the psychic *versus* the physical. It is argued that in outdoor education pedagogy "a philosophy of 'maximum hardship' prevails, as one strives to discipline the body, to push its limits, to exert mastery over one's 'weaknesses'" (Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996, p. 23). But, in contrast, I think that 'hard, physical' activity demands 'mastery' of the psyche *in order to be physical*, rather than mastery of the body for the transcendence of the mind. The psychic and social are mutually productive of 'the physical' (Grosz, 1994b). Andrews (1984, p. 26) writes of her own climbing that "unfettered by doubt or fear, my body is free to climb with grace and finesse." The key revealed, perhaps unwittingly, by Andrews is that the psyche is socially constituted. Thus 'mastery' of the psyche effects a reinscription of the social body. Physical experience is *required* to produce confidence (and psychological strength) as much as to inscribe bodily strength.

It must be recognized that the culture of male physical superiority allows men to pursue physical power, even to the extent of merely appearing<sup>52</sup> 'hard,' without acknowledging that they are doing so. Most of the male trampers in the New Zealand study, above, 'normalize' their experience of tramping trips as shared by all (Bell, 1990). The culture of male physical superiority denies women access to physical strength and yet then enforces their emotional entanglement with low confidence. It bullies them (as Valerie Berg says, "the subtle comments are really common") and wears them down. The New Zealand study finds that women experience "ridicule, sexual innuendo [and] open hostility" (Bell, 1990, p. 87) for their desire to go tramping. This culture then "exposes" women as unable to do those 'easily practised or taught' skills and often such exposure is very public. At one Outward Bound school, for example, staff

had a brainstorming session where men listed the things that irritated them about women and women listed the things that irritated them about men. A picture evolved revealing men were often poor at "soft skills" and women were often poor at "hard skills." (Joyce, 1988, p. 23)

What was "revealed" in a public airing of irritations is the discursive formulation of a physical order (Foucault, 1977).

The contradiction experienced by women in outdoor leadership, or highly skilled women in the outdoors, is a *corporeal* contradiction when lived practices are in tension with desired and consensual meanings. It is constantly argued that ‘hard’ skills are not the ‘real’ basis for “personal growth” in the outdoors as well as for outdoor leadership competency (e.g., Powch, 1994, as seen in Chapter 1). In the Outward Bound school, above, for example, a programme course director tells his staff “that competence in technical and physical skills comprises one quarter of that which makes a good instructor” (Joyce, 1988, p. 23). Yet a seasoned woman instructor in his staff team points to the contradiction that although everyone agrees that the “men were often poor at ‘soft skills’...the majority of attention in staff training and general ‘worthiness’ is given to the teaching and recognition of hard skills” (Joyce, 1988, p. 23). And some women outdoor leaders *with* technical expertise still express self-doubt (Loeffler, 1997).

The corporeal ‘problem’ for women is that their unpredictable bodily surfaces and unchecked emotions are constructed as unsafe to the real, ‘hard, physical,’ character/body building experiences in the outdoors. Andrews’ (1984) anecdote illustrates the popular attitudes found by Roberts (1992) that the very presence of women (on a climb) is a threat to men’s ability to concentrate. Thus feminist arguments which establish women-only outdoor experiences as “psychologically safe” pathologise this problem, uncritically accepting its heteronormative constitution. It seems that perhaps the most significant obstacle to physical power for women is, therefore, a culturally endorsed fear of being perceived as unstable and not in control of themselves. The fear of failure which is noted in narratives of outdoors women (e.g., Andrews, 1984; Dal Vera, 1996; Lynch, 1989; Morch, 1997) is perhaps the fear that failure to succeed in ‘hard, physical’ outdoor pursuits will prove that women cannot succeed in them at all. Andrews (1984, p. 27) argues that

the willingness to be a bold, aggressive risk-taker is a trait fostered by experience...If more women want to develop sufficient skills to be recognized and respected as ‘climbers,’ rather than ‘women climbers,’ confidence is the quality which must be cultivated, for it is the key element underlying any calculated risk-taking.

Physical failure exposes the impossibility of unlearning femininity.

Skilled outdoors women's self-perceptions of lower competence and lack of confidence are not created and determined by gender role socialization, as is argued by Loeffler (1997), Warren (1985) and others, but produced through the heteronormatively organized physicality practised in outdoor experiences. Women in the outdoors do learn a new bodily disposition, evidenced by the Peace Scouts and "the advent of hard women rock climbers," which replaces compliant femininity with a new potential. They learn to move unself-consciously and with force, they take up weight resistance training to 'work on' a strong body and they confront "the need to learn to take risks" (Andrews, 1984, p. 27). But they also experience sanctions on their bodily identity and freedom. Their physical strength is masculinized. It was argued in Chapter 4 that inhibited self-confidence is a specific effect of the heteronormative regulation of strong women's physical strength by men, by other women and by some women within themselves; this chapter now sets out the empirical basis to this argument. It begins to answer the question posed in Chapter 1 of *how* women who work in the outdoors are challenged on the very grounds of their gender identity. It traces ways in which a strong physicality might be reinscribed by gendering practices.

### **"Nice Strong Arms and Shoulders"**

When the women outdoor leaders describe their bodies, they must negotiate the complexity of the social body by objectifying what they consider an aspect of themselves, their subjectivity, for me. Some women resist. One woman asks, "How do I do that? It's me. How's that?" (CC0316S:392). Another says, laughing, "Two arms, two legs. Now what would you like here?" (CC0316T:434-35). I explain that "I'm interested in how you speak about your body." Despite working with a personal trainer for the past three years on a strength development programme, she says, "I don't talk about it that much. This is more than I've talked about it for some time" (CC0316T:446-47). A third woman's first response is "my physical body?" and so I tell her that it is "whatever you interpret as your body" (CC0316E:5-8).

The interviewees tell me about their bodily features and their appearance—they detail the external surface of their bodies. Some also tell me how they feel about these various surfaces. There is a lot of laughter, perhaps revealing the tensions of identifying, or not, internally with this externally defined ‘body.’

Describe my body! Well! A gammy back and a gammy knee! [laughs]

Um. Describe my body. I like my arms. I think I have really nice strong arms and shoulders....I really like being in situations where I am using my arms and can feel, like, all the muscles down my back being worked and I can feel that strength. Um. And, I’m- um- Yea, I really like that.

I think it is really nice to have strong arms. (CC0316E:10-20)

“Short! Stocky. I think of myself as reasonably muscular. Um. Injured”

(CC0316J:85-86). “Strong, reasonably healthy, a bit injured lately” (CC0316M:185).

“It’s strong. It’s just the right size....For me! Um. I definitely think strength and power are a big thing for me” (CC0316N:206-16). “Heavily pregnant! Big! At the moment. Normally slim and athletic but- Hopefully it will be again soon” (CC0316P:310-312).

“Well-built. Muscular. Um. In proportion. Strong” (CC0316U:507-08). “I’m quite well-muscled” (CC0316X:567).

It’s got- I’m muscley. See. I’ve got a very muscley back, so everybody tells me, so I must have. I can’t see it. Um. And I’ve got- Oh it- Oh I- I mean, I think I’ve got a reasonable figure- Oh I don’t know, I’ve- . [Like figure like a woman’s- Shape? Body shape?] Um. Well yeah. No, I’ve got WIDE shoulders and, um- And I’ve got- No, I wouldn’t say I’m a typical woman’s sha- like that kind of pear shape. I don’t think I fit into that- I’ve got WIDE shoulders and kind of muscley legs and arms. Really. (CC0316V:515-533)

Along with injuries, women mention scars from previous injuries or incidents and other “damage.” “But my body is- yea, it’s damaged. I have fewer teeth than I ought to have. I have a scar on my leg” (CC0316J:95-97). “Notice these varicose veins growing. They’re hard to like” (CC0303I:39-40).

Probably average height, for a female. Um. Uh- Reasonably strong.

Um. Not terribly good condition—as to what my body is used to. Um.

Scars from, you know, sort of potential body abuse from all the martial arts stuff that I got into. Just the way we trained and that sort of thing. Carrying injuries and, yea, that sort of thing. So those sort of scars. (CC0316W:550-559)

As a field of power, the social body is a productive social site. I ask the women about their relationship with their bodies as a way of approaching the productive effects of bodily relations for these women.<sup>53</sup> Some are unequivocal. “I love it!! I love my body!!” (CC0303M:422). “It’s good. I need it!...I kind of like what my body can do. So, um, I’m pretty happy with my body” (CC0303X:984-994). They are also pragmatic. “It’s sort of a work tool” (CC0303X:989). “That it takes me from point A to point B” (CC0303S:609-610).

It’s quite a useful vehicle for getting around in...I’ve always felt that I’m very lucky having a body that is easy to move around the world in. I feel quite comfortable in my body....feel respectful of the vehicle side of my body. (CC0303L:203-222)

Others are less sure. “Love-hate!” (CC0303I:28).

Comfortable....A sort of love-hate relationship in some ways!! I hate being not fit and hate putting on- putting on weight, which I do pretty easily. Um. I don’t hate my body, but I- I don’t like it that it’s like that....And then I think to myself, ‘now, my body’s actually done some amazing things and it’s okay. It’s got muscles where I need them. That’s important!’ You know?! (CC0303J:163-172)

It varies! [laughs] It depends- It depends definitely on how I’m feeling and sometimes I- I feel like, um, it’s the best body there ever is! Then other times I think, ‘God, I just wish I had a different body!’ So, um- So, it’s definitely tied in with other things like whether I’m premenstrual and, um, how tired I am and- and, um, if- you know- Yea, I’m really aware that if I’m feeling unsure about things, then I don’t feel so good about my body, but if I am feeling confident, then I feel like my body’s fine. (CC0303E:6-20)

The relationship she has with her body reveals how a woman experiences 'having' a body and 'living' her particular body. As some of the women indicate, they do not usually objectify their bodies for themselves; they are engaged in living as a subject who is embodied, that is, who is conscious of being (in) her body but not of having a body. This is what liberal humanistic discourses of subjectivity encourage; we are our bodies, because "we" pre-exist, and act as controllers of, our bodies. And so there is a dramatic moment when, for example, as illustrated in Chapter 3, a woman "sees" her body from the outside, so to speak, in a mirror and realizes, on the inside, that *this* is *not* the body which represents who she thought she was. There could be a discrepancy, a gap between being and having a body. In this gap lies the possibility of a change in her relationship with her body, the possibility of corporeal change to who she "is."

Radical feminist critics argue that bodies are objectified for women by patriarchal culture, that is, the gender order, and that women are then effectively dispossessed of their bodies (MacKinnon, 1987). Recent work on embodiment as social practice (Bourdieu's "cultural capital" as much as feminist appropriations of Foucault) seeks to examine how women themselves engage in objectifying their bodies, in the interests of competing discourses, as discursive agents (e.g., Bartky, 1990). Whereas feminist arguments about gendering practices that follow Foucauldian (1977) notions of the micro-level, "capillary" action of power's effects sometimes overlook the structural assumptions of this view, they do point to the cross-cultural, 'raw material' of "biopower:" bodies as phenomena subject to interpretation, subject to discursive subjection (Bordo, 1989; Cole, 1993; Haug, 1987). Further feminist critique extends such a view to argue for more analysis of 'personal' choices made by different women and how their 'choices' allow us to understand the very different meanings which they give to aspects of their individual experiences (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994; Markula, 1995). Thus the embodiment of femininity, as an effect of power, can be understood better by asking how different women are produced as feminine by their (own) bodies. This project clearly helps to unsettle the notion of femininity as a purely structural force through showing how various women 'live' their 'socialized' bodies differently (e.g., Gilroy, 1989; Scraton et al., 1999).

When I ask Valerie Berg to describe her relationship to her body, she answers, “It varies!” Her attitude to her body depends on how she is feeling. She then relates certain feelings: “premenstrual” or “tired,” which could be interpreted as physiological, and “unsure” or “confident,” psychological states. She shows that her relationship with her body is not an abstract or simple relationship. She has mental feelings about her physiological body/processes. Her sense of self depends on her body’s condition, which in turn may depend on how confident, motivated and dedicated to it she is. Women variously answer that they have a good relationship with their bodies, because they look after their bodies, listen to them, respond to their needs. “I rely on what my body tells me” (CC0303W:952-53), says Hinepare. “If I’m unsure about things, then I don’t feel so good about my body” (CC0303E:17-18), says Valerie. Clearly, their perception of their body is not an objective judgement of biology or physiological capacity. In fact, ‘biological’ aspects of bodies such as menstruation have a social context which generates feelings related to the functions of the body as much as about, for example, physical activity outdoors, and, importantly, they are feelings which change over time and exist in contradiction (Lynch, 1996).

When I ask Catherine to describe her relationship to her body, she answers, “a rip, shit and bust attitude. ‘Go for it, you know” (CC0303Q:486). She has been involved in athletics all her life and has come to know that she can rely on her physical ability. She says,

I’m pretty clued up on the technical side of things, so if I know that I’m technically safe, I’ll just- It doesn’t matter if I’m going to fall off something or if I’m getting spotted or whatever, I’ll go for it, have a go.

It’s not too much of a problem for me. (CC0303Q:486-92)

She implies that technical knowledge and skill free her to pursue a desire for adventure and excitement. She seeks a “physical buzz” from “throwing myself off heights and things like that” (CC0302Q:318, 324-25). And she holds this attitude even when she is not completely fit.

I’ve got a- a knee injury that I’ve had- six years ago, that I’ve had reconstructed, so that’s probably a limiting factor for me. I’m conscious

of that. Um. But having said that I still go for it. You know? It doesn't matter. I'll have a go at anything. (CC0303Q:499-504)

She is "conscious of" a physical limitation and presumably the risk of further aggravation. And yet she seems to act as if oblivious: "I still go for it...It doesn't matter." She explains, "I've come from a heavily sporting background, so I'm- I'm physically active all the time anyway" (CC0303Q:497-99). As Catherine's 'body talk' revealed in Chapter 3, she naturalizes her physical ability: "part of my nature...part of the routine" (I0397Q:3345-51). Her body consciousness may routinize the injury to the extent that she is willing to take further risks with it, or despite it, and thus willing to control any feeling for it.

Miriam Eales also describes feeling attuned to her body, aware of a need to look after "the vehicle side of my body" (CC0303L:222), so that she will be able to be physically active in very old age. She is apparently motivated by a sense that she exerts some control over her body, as she does not want "abuse it too much, so that ultimately it will serve me well, I guess" (CC0303L:224-25). But when she explains that she attends to its needs, a conflict emerges between her desire to "feed it well and give it plenty of sleep" (CC0303:223) and her willingness to listen to its "rhythms," a conflict between accepting the needs of a *female* body as opposed to an active body. She relates a brief narrative about using her "vehicle" pragmatically, with a proviso that, "in terms of- of what it looks like and things like that, I feel reasonably happy and comfortable" (CC0303L:229-31).

I feel I know it pretty well and know, you know, when to- Well, I don't always know when to- Yesterday I was out mountain-biking with Daniel and another friend and I had just got my period yesterday and I was really- needed- My mind and- and part of me really NEEDED to get out and sort of do something difficult. But I felt like shit and I still went. So I thought, 'I probably should listen a bit more' or create other times...

Oh, I knew it probably would happen, because it's happened before. But the need to get out in the outdoors sort of overrode, um, the capability of the vehicle [laughter] to get to the tops of these hills- You know, climbing up these hills. I just needed to get off and sit and rest for

a while 'til the blood came back to my head. [laughter]...So, I guess, um, sometimes the mind isn't always in tune with the body. Um. I've noticed that it's a bit of a pattern, I guess. Sometimes other things overtake listening to the rhythms. (CC0303L:233-63)

Miriam equates her experience with not really listening to her body, although she did give herself a rest once out in the hills on her bike, and somehow following a mental need to do something that her body was not fit for. "The rhythms" of her body clearly relate to her menstrual cycle and in denying her bodily need for less exertion during menstruation, she is asserting her desire for adventure over the female bodily limits at this time in her cycle. It is not so much a narrative of the mastery of bodily weakness, but more one which aligns her femaleness with her body and bodily needs and then admits that these "part[s] of me" are frequently, even would "probably" be, overruled. She begins the narrative by saying that she is happy with her body and ends it with a further assertion: "So, yeah. I- I think I'm quite comfortable about feeling good about being a female...that part of my body is just really important to me. I'm glad I'm a female!" (CC0303L:263-70). Yet, her 'body talk' in between offers a contradictory "pattern" in which "being a female" is disregarded. Of all the times to nurse one's body, it would seem that those few days of losing blood and "not feeling mentally or physically in the right frame of mind to do [outdoor activities]" (Lynch, 1996, p. 22), as described by a woman in another study, are an important one. In a similar vein to Catherine, Miriam betrays some of her own drive when she says, "but I felt like shit and I still went."

It seems that menstruation in Miriam's talk is relegated to a concern of the body ("that part of my body"), as if the experience is not 'lived' or felt in the psyche, as if feeling "like shit" is not a mental experience as well as a physical condition. I take up this point further later in the chapter. Here, I want to pursue the not unrelated theme that these women appear willing in their own adventuring to pursue difficult challenges and activities even when injured, feeling unwell or knowing that they might be "not as strong on my first day" (Lynch, 1996, p. 22) of a period. Skilled outdoors women comment that they have been deterred from their outdoor activities less by menstruation as they have become more experienced. For instance, one woman says, "I've just

gotten bigger and braver and sometimes when I've been out climbing and haven't been able to change a pad, and have just ended up with reasonably blood soaked trousers, I just think 'Well, that's too bad.'...But usually it doesn't stop me doing anything" (Lynch, 1996, p. 22). The indifference is not just to pain and fatigue, but also to discomfort and inconvenience. This woman continues, "it doesn't stop me going surfing, even though the area I live in has a lot of sharks. I'd still go surfing with my period" (Lynch, 1996, p. 22). While sounding extreme, such comments do reveal a quality of compulsion, seriousness about risk-taking and even control of nerve which are attributed to men (Jefferson, 1998). Echoed by many of the women in this study, comments such as these make visible a willing embrace of the 'hard, physical.'

### **Loving the 'Hard, Physical'**

When I ask the women what physical experiences they seek in the outdoors, they tell me about learning the activity skills, going to special places and experiencing physical sensations. Mostly, physical experiences revolve around the intense physical effort required to learn the skills, travel to remote places and become immersed in an environment. "I like the challenge of learning the skills, uh, and, yeah, of being physically able to do the skills that are needed to do the various activities" (CC0302E:8-10). "I definitely do seek those challenging trips within most of the outdoor pursuits I am involved in. Because I like the physical stress it places upon me" (CC0302L:134-37). "I actually really enjoy climbing up things" (CC0302I:25-26). "I like places that aren't necessarily tracked...I quite like going up hills" (CC0302T:601). "Making it to the top of a mountain and being tired" (CC0302R:350-51). "For a long time it was probably the summit....And I still feel that physical need" (CC0302U:649-50, 680). "I put myself in situations where I want to test myself. In a physical sense as well as a- a mental thing and spiritual and all those other things" (CC0302W:829-32). "I like to challenge myself...I like a hard, physical experience" (CC0302V:732-34).

The meanings which they attach to a 'hard, physical' experience identify a "dilemma," as Marnie calls it. To her, "there's always that dilemma of dreading the physical challenge and then really enjoying it....It's often a bit, um, anxious-making for

me. But I like being on that edge of being anxious and, um, being challenged” (CC0302I:23-29). For Mandy, “you’ve been on the edge, but not so much on the edge that it’s been really scary. I don’t- I don’t operate well in those conditions....But I don’t think [fear] enters so much into it. It’s more being- feeling like you are on the edge, but not being totally out of control” (CC0302V:754-70). Miriam seeks

the experiences of drawing on my resources and my skills to, um, survive. But more than that. Not to survive, because that sort of implies that I am really on the edge, but, um- in some sort of territory where I am feeling that I am drawing on all the skills and resources I’ve got to carry out the activity and get a real sense of satisfaction and enjoyment and, you know, and thrill out of that. (CC0302L:137-49)

Central to the ‘hard, physical’ experience is a tension in pushing one’s ability while controlling one’s force and effort. The essence of the experience is the pleasure of this tension. Pat Allen writes that when she feels pleasure in her body

it comes from a combination of physical exertion, the exhilaration from the environment and satisfaction from having physical control and skill. For example, the exhilaration of speed, danger, being on the edge of control (but knowing you have the skill to hold it) and the grandeur of the environment when downhill skiing. Or the satisfaction and lovely glow of weariness after a long day tramping, a tough orienteering course, an aggressive day skiing, heavy sailing etc. (Pat, Q0102C)

Other women write notably similar reflections:

I feel pleasure when I feel either (a) really strong, (b) really relaxed and peaceful, (c) really “spiritual.” I feel strong if I am fit and more so after my period for 10 to 15 days, or so. (Joy, Q0102F)

I feel strong, my body is working, responding. I feel confident—I can feel all of my muscles working and they feel strong. This happens when I am feeling confident and competent. When I’m enjoying the group and the day. (Valerie, Q0102E)

I feel pleasure in my body when I feel I am working hard physically and not tiring. Usually I am also feeling lean—lost the city

flab I accumulate from not working physically (enough) each day....The best feeling is that raw power from muscle working efficiently, smoothly, in control.... (Siobhan, Q0102J)

A sense of potency and power when I am instructing in areas at which I feel confident and competent, that is on a ropes course. I have a heightened sense of my body at 'work,' my physical self. I revel in feeling muscles engaged and responding. I also feel pleasure when it is day's end and my body is satisfied with physical effort that's occurred especially has been a positive one for myself and students. (Ginny, Q0102G)

At the end of a physical day I feel peace and contentment, particularly in a mountain environment. The feeling is a balance of exhilaration and relaxation. Pleasure seeps in and tension drains out....I love the feeling of being physically tired and mentally alert and spiritually content. (Anne, Q0102A)

The combination of working hard, using all of one's body and skill, tenaciously pursuing a goal even at great risk to oneself and exhausting all of one's energy is a powerful, sensorial and systemically gripping experience. There is a visceral intensity to the 'hard, physical' challenge, the anticipation of which mixes anxiety with desire, the difficulty of which is dreaded and yet really enjoyed, the organic perception of which is felt in the pump of the heart, rise in skin temperature and sweat soaking one's back. A sweet exhaustion "seeps in" at day's end, while the "tension drains out." Miriam explains,

for my own outdoor pursuits and challenges, I like to do that. Really push myself really hard. And to, um, you know, particularly climbing, alpine climbing, um, you know, to actually really go hard out for 14 or 18 hours or whatever and then get back to the hut and absolutely DIE!...I really enjoy that, the physical sensation of it. Yeah, I like to- to feel like I've, um, pushed myself and really stretched all my resources when I come back. Especially if it is a means to achieve a goal as well. (I0397L:6002-13)

The women in this empirical study have chosen to pursue careers in the outdoors. They are women like the twenty-five North American women interviewed by Loeffler (1997), employed or recently employed in the outdoor field. Some entered jobs at times when there were few if any other women also on staff.<sup>54</sup> Some, like Charlie, have put in a hundred days practising an Eskimo roll in a kayak to perfect the technique, spent a year living out of the back of a van, like Charlie and Mandy, just to accumulate the invaluable hours of experience at major climb sites overseas and enrolled in a specialized Outdoor Educators' course (even outside Aotearoa New Zealand) *after* qualifying to teach Physical Education, like Mandy and Siobhan. They are from 28 to 52 years in age and have from as few as three seasons' guiding to as much as twenty years' experience. Their everyday working reality requires physical strength, skill, knowledge and competence. It is in this context and within the desire for 'hard, physical' experiences in their own adventuring that I am told repeatedly that in outdoor instructing physical strength is not really necessary.

### **Not Really Necessary**

One of the most telling insights into the ways in which women's physical strength is socially obscured is in comments from women outdoor leaders themselves that "I basically don't need much at all" (CC0321S:633). "I'd say strength," says Jo, "but not necessarily" (CC0320U:415). I ask the women what is important about their bodies when instructing, how they rely solely on their bodies when instructing and—an additional question following the pilot interview—how physical strength is important to their instructing. They respond that they want to be fit, healthy and able to demonstrate proper technique for outdoor activity skills. As Charlie says, "I can demonstrate and move for the necessity of the activity I'm doing" (CC0320M:133-35). While the activity presents some contingency, strength also has personal context. With an injury comes the potential that one might be "not strong enough to do it," says Marnie. The most common injury sustained was to the lower back, although the women concerned had not stopped instructing. Marnie tells me, "I had a really sore back last summer. It

comes as a shock really, when one bit goes wrong and then you're not strong enough to do it. So, I want to be as strong as I can be" (CC0320I:21-23).

Part of the "shock" of physical debility is that their bodies give these outdoor leaders confidence. Charlie says, "It's been horrible to instruct when you are not well. When I haven't been well, I haven't felt in control...I would worry if I had to go like on to hard yakka mountain stuff and I didn't have that body there to react" (CC0320M:138-43). To Valerie, being warm and comfortable helps her instructing: when her body "feels good" she has more confidence in herself (CC0320E:7-11).

It emerges as well that to some women an instructor's credibility is based on how she appears to students: "how they perceive me" (CC0320S:320) is important. This ranges from "wearing the right gear" (CC0320S, 321) to looking strong "enough to do the job well" (CC0320V, 437). Mandy says, "I would be concerned that I look like...I SHOULD look doing a physical outdoors kind of job. I should have the kind of body that would fit that" (CC0320V:437-43). A woman's appearance in this context must represent the right kind of body. To Margaret, this means body size:

Well, I actually think that if you're going to be a credible instructor, that you couldn't just appear as a giant, big, fat blob. [laughs] No, I worry about this. I remember having somebody on an assessment course who was very large and unfit and when the stu-...she had to be responsible for some students, she couldn't keep up with them. (CC0320T:356-63)

A certain body size means fitness: "I think you have to be- if you're going to be an outdoor instructor, that you have to be fit enough to look after your group" (CC0320T:370-72). But body size is normative and the *appearance* of fitness is socially constituted in a normative corporeality. Reminiscent of Jo's experience in her university Physical Education cohort, Mandy's thoughts on body size reflect her own experience:

And that was quite hard at [an outdoor centre], because I- I don't class myself as a THIN person and yet a lot of the instructors were quite kind of lean, thin people- The women. So I kind of felt like I wasn't- I kind of had- Yeah. That I should've, you know, looked more like that. (CC0320V:449-55)

Mandy's occasional feelings of not "fitting in" in the outdoors are inscribed in the class relations of her family privilege as much as the heteronormative requirements of women's appearance in society. When she wants to look lean enough to be an outdoor instructor, she encounters the feeling of not fitting in for a third time in her 'lived, socialized body.' When I ask Mandy "what is important to you about your body when you're instructing?" she answers, "basically that I- It's- That it LOOKS, um- that it looks like I'm, um, fit or, you know, enough to do the job" (CC0320V:437-39). If it does not look like a feminine body and it does not look like an outdoorsy body, at least let her body *look* like it is capable and fit.

Her comments signify the social context of outdoor leadership. As opposed to an expedition leader or an outdoor enthusiast, an outdoor leader's role often revolves around a set teaching progression for skill development, group cohesion and initiatives and challenges through which students practise elementary skills and experience accomplishments in the outdoors. A week-long school 'camp,' for example, at a residential outdoor education centre or lodge, might culminate in an overnight spent in tents after a paddle across a lake or a tramp into the bush. More advanced 'courses' range from those designed to teach a level of competence in certain skills or environments, such as in mountain biking or alpine back-country, to those which 'throw' students in 'at the deep end' and give them a month-long experience immersed in all elements through appropriate modes of travel with local area knowledge. In these scenarios, the leader is working closely with the small group in very controlled situations of managed risk. Oftentimes relationships of mutual support and trust are developed in which instructors become more like "fellow travellers" (Morch, 1997). Instructors may live at a centre or facility in a long-term contract and their capabilities become part of a lifestyle in which their physicality is practised and maintained on a level higher than what is actually used week by week in the set teaching pattern with one overnight camp a week. And yet they want others to feel the enthusiasm they have for this life even while at an introductory level. In this social context, appearances which give an instructor credibility among her peers might contradict those which inspire confidence among her students.

When I ask one instructor if there are times that she relies on her body when instructing, she queries if I mean “as a back-up?” (CC0320Q:274). Another says, “Uh? There may be, but I can’t- can’t recall it” (CC0321T:777-78). A third says, “Uuumm. Probably. Yeah. Not often, but every now and then” (CC0321V:837-38).

Catherine then explains that she relies most on her “physical fitness, I think. I mean, I am not challenged in the work that I do by instructing. I’m not challenged physically at all” (CC0320Q:277-78, 280). Charlie says, “you just don’t DO as much when you are instructing” (CC0321M:304). Elaine says that she expects herself to be competent; “like, I expect to be able to walk quite- faster than my kids and things like that...But then, um, hanging around third and fourth formers you don’t need to do very much to look good” (CC0330R:613-17, 628-30). Miriam echoes her thoughts: “with a group of young, you know, fourth formers, I mean, I can run rings around them all the way up to the head of the lake and- You know? You don’t have to paddle very fast to keep up with them, so it’s not an issue” (CC0321L:267-71). Ianissi instructs Outdoor First Aid courses, often involving treatment and rescue scenarios. As an asthmatic, Ianissi has instructed “on high doses of steroids and you still do it. So, [physical strength] doesn’t actually worry me,” she says. At her peak of fitness, she says, “you basically cruise through whatever they are doing and you think ‘oh God that’s slow’” (CC0321S:634-36, 665-66). When Claire describes her role during a Conservation Corps group’s final expedition, for which she and a co-instructor had prepared the group, she indicates that “they ran the whole trip. They told us what to bring. So, you know, it was a students’ thing. We were just there, um, for safety really” (CC0330N:358-61).

When I ask Hinepare “do you see physical strength as required when guiding or as a leader?” she says, “I think [physical strength is] only one aspect...I certainly don’t think it has to be, you know, first and foremost...But I think it’s [part of] a package that you work with” (CC0321W:896-902). Jane’s immediate response is, “I think it’s an essential ingredient” (CC0321X:946). And then she qualifies it: “but as a woman instructor I would use technique a lot more than a male instructor to- to end up in the equivalent place” (CC0321X:947-49). Miriam agrees,

Yeah, definitely. Not always brute strength, because you can always rustle that up using the combined power of the group. Well, I've always found that. And technique. And that is something I've really learned a lot about is technique. Because I'm not strong enough to flip a Canadian [canoe] by myself... You use the strength of the team, you don't use your own. (CC0321L:224-32)

Miriam then explains her strategy: she 'saves' her strength and resources for when they might be said to be *really* necessary.

And then if it's something really, uh- a situation where speed is required or whatever, then I'll do it. But I say to everyone, 'I don't usually carry the gear.' I hand it round the group and then I save myself for emergency situations, not just ordinary run-of-the-mill situations.

Because I know I am the back-up for the group. (CC0321L:237-44)

Serving as "the back-up for the group" is how the instructor positions herself as the invisible, but necessarily available, guarantor of the outdoor 'challenge.' The pedagogical situation ultimately relies on the physical presence, capability, knowledge and potential, in short, the physicality, of the outdoor leader. It is especially crucial on the water in sea-kayaks or open canoes, Miriam notes: "if I can't keep up with the group, I've lost them. So I'm totally dependent on my body to manage the group" (CC0321L:155-57). And then when students are fatigued, could become injured or are at risk, the outdoor leader must act quickly, decisively and effectively. Siobhan wants to know

that I have sufficient reserves, energy, endurance, strength, power, whatever- to do what is needed for the group or- or whoever my clients are. And that includes situations where- where you have things going wrong, in emergencies and stuff. So if I need to, um, run for six hours to get help, I can do it. That- that's important to me. (CC0320J:45-52)

Similarly, Jo says, "knowing that in an emergency that, you know, you have the physical ability to see things through, with the endurance and stamina" (CC0320U:410-12) is important. She summarizes: "it's alway- yeah, those crisis times, I think, when

you rely heavily on your physical side. And I don't think- in general instructing I don't think it's called on to any extreme" (CC0321U:819-23).

In the course of considering issues of physical strength, however, the women detail the ways in which they *do* rely solely on their bodies and the ways in which physical strength *is* really necessary. Rescues and evacuation situations are the most important. Elaine remembers a search in the bush for a lost group and running uphill with another instructor and group as they searched. In evacuations, Jo says, "carrying people" (CC0321U:808) is an exhausting situation in which she has "switched into automatic, really, and relied on my body to continue" (CC0321U:810-11). Rosa agrees that she relies solely on her body in "rescue situations" (CC0321P:336-37) and thinks of having to align novice kayakers for an upcoming rapid in a teaching river. She must frequently actually right the boat with paddler before nudging it along the correct line: "I'm glad I was- you know, had that sort of strength there. Um. Because it would have been quite a nasty situation if I hadn't been able to do that...It's purely physically demanding...Yea, that was quite a strength issue. But it worked. So that's alright" (CC0321P:342-55). Jane also thinks of river rescues.

It's been, um, yeah, probably in rescues and that that it's been that physical stamina and guts that have-...It's like, 'I know I can dig deep inside of me and not give up.' ...I'm thinking particularly of one- couple of rescues on the Wanganui in flood. Canadian canoeing and the river was flooding and, um, you know. And the chips were down and it was kind of- You do this or the consequences are going to get really, really bad. They're bad now, they're going to get really, really bad, really soon, for you. You know? And, um- And just being, you know, 100% focused and- and that kind of- when you fee- feel your muscles kind of ping a little bit, but you're just digging deep and go- going for it. (CC0321X:920-41)

Others mention tramping, river crossings, sailing (and sailing alone) and sea kayaking.

Siobhan talks of more routine assistance in which a student is struggling or in trouble under a heavy pack or in a river; "I just grab them and pull them up again. It's easier than getting out some piece of equipment" (CC0321J:66-67). This involves

quick thinking and even strategising beforehand; she will observe her students and might test their weight in physical play to see if she can keep them afloat or intervene on a climb. Similarly, for Mandy, “in gorging...when you’ve got to withstand the force of the water and stand somewhere as the safety person and grab someone out of a current or something, yeah, you need the strength in those sorts of situations” (CC0321V:866-71). Siobhan and Mandy both mention the routine physical strength they have for “carrying gear” (CC0321J:91) and “lifting kayaks onto the roof of vans or onto trailers. Just easy simple things like that. They’re damned heavy” (CC0321V:861-63). And Elaine concurs. “I feel, yeah, I’m strong. I can lift boats onto roofs and pull trailers around and do all that sort of stuff” (CC0302R:374-76). Miriam describes assisting students with her strength in an equally pragmatic way.

In terms of lifting heavy things or, you know, digging out a snow cave to get it done before dark if you need shelter for the group before hypothermia sets in, then I’m prepared to get stuck in, you know? I’m quite good, technique-wise, to move a lot of snow quickly, whereas the students might really stuff themselves trying to do that. (CC0321L:245-51)

In addition to the habitual aspects of outdoor leadership, Charlie describes a specific activity which her centre offers its school groups. It requires her to get into position without any sort of anchor while the students are waiting. It is a regular teaching activity and so she is familiar with it and must not become complacent about it.

So much of that is me setting up everything. Students are in there in their harnesses and stuff like that, but it’s a traverse so I’m the one who has to whizz the rope around over the big drop, over the cave which has the surging sea underneath, and not slip. It’s not hard, but I MUST not slip. My body has to be tuned, it has to be right there. ‘Right mate, clip everything on.’ Because I can’t lead it [e.g., place protection in]- I’ve got to do it. Solo it, you know. Put the rope out that way. And then I’ve got to leap onto an island, I’ve got to leap off the island at the end to clear the ropes off the Tyrolean. It’s a very physical activity for two

hours. And that's certainly where I'm relying on my body, plus my group management, but mostly my body. (CC0321M:281-94)

It becomes clear that the unseen management of physicality, bodies and equipment is an everyday aspect of instructing in the field. Charlie and Margaret call it having "a little bit over" (CC0321M:316-17) and "that little bit extra" (CC0330T:717). Instructors must have "appropriate" physical strength to be comfortable "within the realms of the activity," according to Charlie, but have a little bit "over the realms of what you need [in order] to call on it" (CC0321M:314-19). Moreover, instructors "have to be fit enough to keep up with whoever's there" (CC0330T:700-01), according to Margaret. And so while an instructor becomes familiar with the activity itself, her 'students' are less predictable and, in contrast to earlier comments, may be highly skilled. Charlie, Margaret and others in the study instruct and examine skilled outdoor instructors on assessment courses. However, the observations are astute. "You can't be the one lagging at the back. You've got to be up at the front, keeping an eye on where they are. And running between different people [checking their navigation]...I need to try that little bit extra to be up right on the edge of what- you know, of what's going on" (CC0330T:702-04, 717-18). When Miriam says that she doesn't "usually" carry gear, but splits it up among students, this is most likely her way of staying a little ahead of the group. When Claire says "they ran the whole trip...We were just there, um, for safety really," she is also saying that her role is to reserve 'that little bit extra.' In a safety situation, everyone relies on her physical strength, speed, skill and stamina.

There is, however, another concern in the collective 'body talk,' a "gestalt" or "hidden agenda" (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997) perhaps, although it is not surprising given the heteronormative context of physicality in which any 'body work' takes place. Siobhan reveals the concern behind what I hear as an incongruous disavowal of strength when she says,

Also, I think [it's important to me] that I'm not- I don't present in a way that is overwhelming for my clients and students. I don't want to have muscles bulging out of me, so that they are frightened by it, they think you have to be like that to be in the outdoors. (CC0320J:52-57)

When I check what I have heard with her: “So how would you put-? The physicalness of being an outdoor person or doing outdoor activities is important to you, but not looking too physical is also important,” Siobhan answers, “no, I wouldn’t say that” (CC0320J:58-62). She reiterates her thoughts, telling me that she does not want young women students put off because she is “musclely.” Siobhan fears that they will see her “as someone who has capabilities and a level of fitness that they couldn’t attain. So that therefore they couldn’t do the activities we’re engaging in” (CC0320J:67-70). She appears to be wary of “the superwoman syndrome.” Yet her concern about muscles exposes the heart of the problem far more incisively than does Warren (1985).

Siobhan favours a dual resolution (besides safeguarding for herself the pleasures of ‘looking physical’). Firstly, she claims being musclely as “a genetic thing” and thus not even necessarily attainable by others:

Not all of them. Not all of them. Not everyone has the- I mean, even about purely physiological things. I’ve been told that I’ve got a big heart. I know that I’ve got a big lung capacity, that’s through swimming. Um. A big heart is just a physiological, genetic thing. And being musclely is as well.

So I can get my heart rate down to the 40s. Which is quite low. Now, some people will never be able to do that. So in terms of being able to, you know, to walk- walk up hill, climb uphill for ten hours at a time, there are people who will not be able to do that. Um. Mentally they can’t drive themselves hard. (CC0320J:74-90)

Siobhan’s ‘body talk’ in Chapter 3 allows some insight into her own experience of muscles effecting a corporeal consciousness for her, of “these rippling muscles” providing the exterior and objective indication of profound ‘interior,’ subjective changes for her during the year she was 15. (It is curious, therefore, that she would perceive this sight as intimidating to teenage girls in her outdoor groups.) The inner need for an external armour of self-protection (Wacquant, 1995) is perhaps something which Siobhan attributes to her specific experiences of familial violence and therefore does not see as a motivation shared by girls in her outdoor groups.

Secondly, she sets out to reassure the girls in her outdoor groups that “anyone can do this,” as well as finding a way to demystify her association with strength: “I would deliberately, um, let them know that I was a mum” (CC0320J:100). I explore in Chapter 6 the use of the maternal meanings of certain gestures by mothers and non-mothers in the study. Here I want to analyse the way in which Siobhan rationalizes her physical strength as merely physiological and contains it as personal, that is, specific to her genetic make up, while at the same time finding a way in which her female students might see a commonality with her. She encourages them to see her as just like their own mums, in perhaps an ‘ordinary,’ comfortable, domestic kind of way. She hopes that they will come and talk to her about anything bothering them, because “I have a young child, myself, and I am aware of the sorts of things that young people need to deal with” (CC0320J, 121-122). She simultaneously places her strength, fitness and mental drive beyond other girls and women because of her genes *and* finds a way to be just like someone they know and might want to talk to when troubled. The role of ‘counsellor’ is overlaid upon that of ‘epic guru,’ the outdoor leader equivalent to the hard mountaineer, climber or paddler. (She seems conscious of this deliberate juxtaposition, for she implies when she says that “mentally they can’t drive themselves hard” that she means ‘the way I can’ or ‘hard, like me.’) She prefers to hold genetics responsible for those qualities which separate her from girls and (some) other women, while she constructs herself as feminine through her maternal experience and emotional availability.

The psychological effect of muscles is not considered in the role socialization literature. Mandy is also self-conscious of her “muscle” body and a stocky physique inherited from her father; it is likely that her desire for a thinner, leaner body size akin to other women outdoor instructors at her centre is based on a similar dislike of the public signification of muscularity in women. It could be that what is *really* ‘not really necessary’ to many of these women outdoor leaders is the social display of physical strength which is muscularity, and its concomitant bigness and hardness, which means, in effect, *appearing* muscle, hard, too big or too strong for a woman.<sup>55</sup> They want to be strong women, but not appear defined by their (physical) strength. They recognize (and get satisfaction from) physical strength in the practices of outdoor leadership, but

some do not want its messages imprinted on their bodies. They can accept the presence of genetic markers, from short legs to big heart, on their biological bodies, but they desire the 'hard, physical' only as subjective experience and want to refuse its social inscription.

### **Proving Herself**

Quite apart from social subjectivity, it is suggested that whereas muscular strength is possible for men and women to attain, it is less probable that women will develop their bodies in this way, in part because they do not know what their bodies can do and mostly because opportunities to experience bodily skill are discouraged at puberty. Women become engaged in embodying femininity as heteronormative appearance and men embody masculinity as (heteronormative) muscularity (McCaughey, 1997). Men are assumed to have muscular strength 'naturally' and women are assumed, and, it is argued, trained, not to have it (Jefferson, 1998; MacKay, 1994; McCaughey, 1997; Roberts, 1992). Therefore, it is one thing for a woman to embrace an active, challenging lifestyle in the outdoors while resisting and/or colluding in<sup>56</sup> the social norms which manage her physicality-as-appearance, but it is another for her to engage in strength-requiring activities with the aim of *teaching* skill and physical competence to girls, women and, indeed, boys and men.

In outdoor teaching and learning situations women step beyond the boundaries of being physical and induct others into bodily 'skilling' and a certain bodily consciousness. They may do this, as seen above, while trying not to convey a necessity for physical strength. In fact, they may act as strong women while deliberately denying that strength is part of their competence. In an interesting social gesture, they illustrate a capacity to appropriate strength and almost make a choice whether to accept its connection to masculine bodies and masculinity. Some women desire that connection and others reject it, as will be evident in the next section. However, aside from how the women themselves make sense of their strong bodies, the significance of the "coed wilderness trip" and variations of the heterogendered model of bodily action in the outdoors, such as one female instructor working with a group of 14 men students, is

that it contains the space for the retaliation of *men* who may not embody force and competence, but who know that embodying such physicality is the definition of hegemonic masculinity.

The responses of men to women's strength indicate just how "necessary" it is to their presence as outdoor leaders. And they illustrate the extent to which women's physical strength constitutes social resistance to a heterosexually complementary femininity. If physical strength and skill were indeed "not really necessary" and women's innate 'feminine strengths' could inform their instruction of expedition skills, then men themselves would not feel a threat to their "complementary" identity in having women leaders in the wilderness. Women would not be criticized as being "too strong" or "too strident." The responses of men students and men colleagues to these women, which range from physical challenge to verbal abuse and sexual harassment, indicate the importance of the social construction of physical ability to heterosexual gender identity.

Women outdoor leaders who are compelled to "prove" themselves as competent, despite holding qualifications and employment, experience one of the most effective tools of undermining this very competence. For their sense of corporeality is destabilized psychologically. One woman alerted me to her experience when she described it as an incidence of sexual harassment. Joy Gibson writes,

I was treated 'differently,' directed to work harder, in a context of having to prove myself to be as good as the men..it was implied that I only got the job because of my 'looks' by some men. This 'notion' was dispelled when these people saw me in action with my job...they never apologized though! (Q0402F)

The practice of coercing women to justify their actions, to perform certain tasks or to generally "prove" themselves is a means of retaliation among men against women who cross the boundaries and retrain their feminine bodily regimes to acquire competence, skill and force and perhaps even derive a sensuous experience of power in the process. It is also a means of (re)establishing the physicality of gender division. Once Joy, above, proves herself to be as good as the men, how could "they" apologize? She is

participating in the very practice of defining herself as a (strong) woman whose competency is questioned.

Other women write of experiences of being coerced to participate: “I felt coerced to jump into a fast-flowing river once” (Miriam, Q0302L); “Yes [when I felt coerced to participate] on one occasion on a river I asked to get off...It’s a scary feeling, loss of personal control. I feel almost invaded when ‘no’ isn’t respected unquestionably” (Ginny, Q0302G); “I have felt coerced by men to do things I would not have chosen to do myself. I felt frustrated or I tried to negotiate” (Joy, Q0302F); “Yes I have felt at risk. I have felt out of control and afraid, helpless. I have also felt coerced to participate which made me feel the same” (Valerie, Q0302E).

In one narrative, a woman felt pressured to provide the heteronormative “benchmark” for the “leader as woman.”

A colleague and I were taking a group of students for a summer walk up near [the volcano] Ngaurahoe. He wanted me to take the fast group on ahead while he came with the slow group. I didn’t want to be with the fast group (eight teenage young men who were on a mission), but he thought it would be good role modelling!! I took the fast group and all through the Mangetepopo Valley my frustrations grew because I didn’t want to be in that position. At the top of the lava flow we stopped for lunch, the slow group caught up and I said that they could take over the fast group—my frustration and anger at him and myself had just kept on growing. (Fiona, Q0302B)

When I explore this issue with women through in-depth interviews, I ask if they have ever had to prove themselves in the outdoors. I am told, “Oh, heck yeah. I still do!” (CC0330E:6) by Valerie after six years’ instructing in the field. Jane says, “Huh!! Zillions of times!!” And Elaine says,

I think we all do that quite a lot in the outdoors. Um. Um. As an instructor you do gain a certain amount of credibility by being able to do stuff...I expect to be able to do a lot of things...And I think if I [couldn’t do them], I would think ‘oh.’ Whereas I’m not sure- I guess I am proving myself all the time. (CC0330R:604-07, 613, 617-19)

There are important constituents to this cultural practice, a practice born of the culture of male physical dominance. Valerie and others make the distinction between proving oneself to one's students and proving oneself to one's male colleagues and associates. The 'proof' is also presented on multiple levels: that of physical capability in a skill or feat at a specific time (paddle *this* rapid *today*) or over a long time ("enduring long physical hauls" (Jo, CC0330U:744-45); that of making manifest a strength which is not 'natural' but different; that of willingness to risk one's body in a situation of competitive pressure, to act under coercion; and that of proving superior prowess, deliberate dominance. The associated feelings are often of psychological helplessness and being out of control, "which becomes a bit coercive after a while" (Siobhan, Q0302J). Furthermore, when some women describe their feelings when they are not as physically capable as they would like to be, their frustration is more often *with "being female"* than their level of success in the pursuit.

Some women outdoor leaders respond that they do *not* need to prove themselves and their reflections offer some insight into the conditions in which such 'proof' is secured. Pressure to prove themselves has little effect, they say, because they know what they can do. "I walked away" says Charlie, after being accused of competing at the top level only because there were spots reserved for women. "Because I knew what I was doing- Because, um, it- it wasn't worth me getting into an argument with him" (Charlie, CC0330M:309-12). Rosa agrees.

Maybe coming into the outdoors a bit older, um, sort of in a stable relationship and more confident and sure of myself. I haven't felt the need to 'prove-' to be accepted. I know what I can do and I know what I can't do and I know what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are and what I need to develop. And if people don't like it, I sort of seem to feel, 'well, that's your problem and you- you go sort it out. (Rosa, CC0330P:525-33)

Catherine echoes these feelings. She says people are seeking reassurance: "I think just the physical getting to know me and if I say that I can do it, then I- you know, then I can" (Catherine, CC0330Q:559-61).

The situations in which women do feel obliged to “prove” themselves are situations of pressure which range from competition to coercion. There is no simple act of demonstrating an ability. These women outdoor instructors know that in teaching skills they are demonstrating their abilities. Physical abilities, though, are not discrete qualities, but social products generated in physical relations. A key to understanding this situation is that women can experience pressure from themselves when they are teaching when they do not feel confident in their abilities. Confidence is corporeally constituted, that is, both social and subjective. Valerie wants her body to feel good so that she feels more confident (CC0320E). Siobhan wants to know that her body is able to cope to give her confidence (CC0302J). Or the pressure can be ambiguous: Siobhan says “I have to prove myself to myself,” yet she also feels “happier when I’m considered competent by others” (CC0330J:187, 190).

Physical abilities are lived and practised in contexts of subjective and social ambivalence about female strength. Jane says, “often men are, um, less sure [of me]. You know, like they’ll assume a male instructing can do something, where they don’t assume that I can. I’ll have to prove that I can do it” (CC0330X:864-67). Charlie tries not to succumb to pressure, saying, “I kept that always in perspective...because I knew that if I was pushing to try and prove to someone else that I was good, I’d have an accident” (CC0330M:273-76). Marnie’s experience of not knowing what her body could do and absorbing the culture of male physical superiority created a double restraint: “I’ve never thought of myself as having a very good body...I had a thing that produced babies” (I0396I:233, 1676). Now that she is more conscious and confident, she resists the compulsion to do a task of which she may not be capable. She says,

if you are in a group of women, you let the strong people pull the anchor up. I mean, you just do, because it makes sense...’Cause sometimes I s- I struggled with things like that to prove something!...Yeah, I think it’s something to do with having four sons. And living in a male household for so long. I does kind of- It does- it does rub off on me at times.

(Marnie, CC0330I:165-81)

An instructor working with an all-male group on a long-term course found that “those initial weeks, especially that initial week, um, they continued to physically challenge

me. Until they realized you're not really prepared to play the game" (Jo, CC0330U:764-68).

More than responding to assumptions and games, some of the women do feel "pushed into" a proof of prowess. In Claire's experience, it is not always over demonstrations of physical strength.

Well, I was doing a fire lighting lesson with them and they each chose a different way of lighting a fire...and he was determined, because he was so confident and everything, that he would try with nothing and-...And he said, 'well, you show us how it is done!' Like, pushing me into it. And I thought, 'I'll show YOU, you bastard!' So I went and got water out of the river and lit the fire. And got the fire going, which I knew I could...and he couldn't get his fire going...you know, basically he just got really shitty. Yeah. (Claire, CC0330N:384-401)

For these women, responding to that pressure from students becomes a tactical decision.

It's like, I guess I do it- It's like, 'Shit! Do I have to do this? Why do I need to keep proving myself? Why do I have to prove myself to these people? Why can't they-' They accept the male standing next to me and say quite happily 'oh, you must be the ropes expert' without knowing anything at all about him, having never met him. And 'why do I need to have to prove to you that I can do it, even though I've been with you for two weeks now?' Yes. So, yeah, I do use that as a tactical xxx. I just say, 'oh, yeah, I can do that'...'Yes, I *can* do 50 press-ups!!' (Valerie, CC0330E:134-44, 159)

However, despite the pleasure which comes from saying, "there you go, you bastards!" (CC0330E:155-56), there is sometimes little security gained from the singular act of proving one's prowess. "It usually clears- Yea, it usually does work. Um. Until the next thing" (CC0330E:147-48), says Valerie.

Instructors know that the competitive pressure is no longer there when the attitudes of students or participants shift towards them as women; "probably mid-midway through the- through the course, you know, especially with those all male

watches, they'd start moving out of that [mentality]" (CC0330U:756-58), says Jo. Claire's mostly male "students' trip" ended in disaster when the group found it had forgotten tent poles in a downpour on the first night. A male student held Claire and her co-instructor, also a woman, to blame.

He was assuming because we were women that we didn't have the skills or knowledge to take the group into the outdoors....And he was SO scathing. He was just calling us 'a bunch of wimps' and-...And then after that he was very judgmental of us until we went kayaking and it was like after the kayaking, we had sort of proven ourselves I guess. And one of the kayaks got into trouble and I had to tow them and so he changed his mind and it was like we had proven ourselves. (Claire, CC0330N:326-66)

There are fewer reasons for the climate of coercion to shift within a professional community, even when—or perhaps precisely because—all staff members are validated by their employment status. Valerie identifies certain practices used by male instructors at her centre: bullying as a means of coercion, shaming as a means of motivation and sexualizing women—observing new students on the first day of a course intake in particular. These conventions are successful because they are woven into the social fabric of consensual physical relations among instructing staff and instructors and students. They reveal the heteronormative dynamics which make 'proving one's prowess' such an unsafe situation for women in the outdoors. The 'women in the outdoors' literature identifies the desire of women students to be free of competition from men, as discussed earlier, but the social practices through which competition is constructed as legitimate are not named.

Valerie's desire to differentiate her instructing style from that of the men around her is pertinent to the culture of shaming.

Well, I- I try and- I try and create environments where people feel okay about asking questions and trying things and feeling safe about doing stuff, rather than shaming people to do things. [And do you think that's prevalent?] Yeah. I think so. Yeah. I think it's quite a strong cultural thing as well...You know, 'they're just wimps!' That comment's- Yeah,

they're still doing that here: 'they're just wimps.' Mmm. And I know- I know- It's been said that, like, some of the instructors here measure their success- They've had a successful scheme if they've had people absolutely petrified and that's certainly not the level I want to operate on at all. (CC0306E:26-44)

Past critical analyses in the outdoors conclude that women must have *choice* in their participation outdoors (Kiewa, 1994; Lenskyj, 1995b; Mitten, 1994). The problem may instead be in the social production of choices, physicality and measures of success or physical superiority. Women do have choices, in the abstract, but if they choose not to participate, they become women, shamed, not physical, not good enough to be 'trying to be men.' If they choose to participate, they become like men, willing to act under pressure and risk their bodies in pursuit of physical prowess. For Valerie identifies a central aspect of her experience of the conditions of coercion: if she chooses to paddle the river another day, free of peer pressure, she will not be given the same credibility as she would in proving herself under (heteronormative) duress. She narrates an incident.

One of the ones I remember fairly clearly is- is, um, not long after I came here, we had to do a river rescue course and this was all on the Buller at Granity Rapid. And I'd argued that we shouldn't do this because I can't paddle Granity, therefore I wouldn't be able to do any of the river rescue skills. Um. And I was told very bluntly that if I can't paddle Granity, I shouldn't be working here.

So. So, off we went! I was the only one that said this! So- And- And we did our stuff above and below Granity and that was fine. And did all that and somewhere in the middle of the day, I think, um, everyone- everyone paddled Granity. And I was just- Like there'd been this whole talk the whole way down about [whispering] 'oh, are you going to do it? Are you going to paddle it? Do you think I'll be able to do it? Are you going to do it?' And I just said 'I'm not going to paddle that.' I just- 'That's my- That's my decision. I'm not going to be talked into it by a few people who think that I should be able to do something. I'm not going to be bullied into it.'

And I just refused to do it. [And did that work for you?] Yeah. Yeah. [Is it a strategy you would use again?] Yeah. Yeah. [And would you work on paddling that rapid another time for different reasons?] Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, I'm fairly confident. If the water was low I'd feel quite happy with paddling that rapid. But it was more the, sort of- the feeling of coercion and the- yeah, that need to prove that you can do this that was going on that was really- Um. (Valerie, CC0330E:58-95)

As the women have previously described, they are quite capable of drawing on their physical prowess under duress, in times of crisis or urgency, times when they might not be expecting it, but are very much impelled into action. Being "bullied into it" signifies a social duress, an enforcement of women's physical strength which produces a certain subjectivity, as much as a physicality, in response to their bodily regulation.

The deliberate action behind forcing women into practical demonstrations of their strength, skill and stamina seems to be the crux. If women had the "choice" or more "control" over the circumstances of their participation, the outcome of their physical pursuit, it is argued, would be different. The implication is that the outcome for women in the wilderness with men is inevitable physical failure. And yet, as they concede that they do have physical reserves, it is not their physical achievement which is at stake as much as their confidence. Mandy says, "I spent all my time with men and I think that was half of my confidence problem, because I was never as good" (I0397V:3733-35). Lack of confidence, an aspect of subjective interiority, is usually deemed a cognitive problem, attributed to a lack of information. It appears to be the result here of physical relations (see also Andrews, 1984). Lack of confidence can be effected by physical activity and can, in turn, influence how physical activity is practised. The lived experience of those social relations in the outdoors can mould a woman's interior subjectivity, from the outside in, while also moulding her physical ability and exteriority, from the inside out. In this inversion lies the dynamic of corporeality. When Andrews (1984) tries to ask if women can develop the psychological strength needed to pursue the hard climbs, she juxtaposes this with physical strength, but overlooks ways in which physical strength is socially constituted.

When Valerie paddles the tough rapid another day, she inscribes her physicality with different social meanings than when she paddles it under conditions of coercion.

“Proving” oneself whether by consent or coercion is, however, not an absolute practice. Nor is it absolutely imposed. It can be chosen or contrived; Valerie says, “it depends on the situation” (CC0330E:44). She does participate in competitive conversations in which people retell their epics or challenge each other to greater feats (CC0330E:30). And she has proven her prowess just to silence the students: “Yeah, I’ll do it. You’ve seen me. I can do it” (CC09330E:130-31). Conversely, “there have been times when I’ve said ‘no way am I doing this,’ more as a statement rather than because I didn’t actually feel like I could do it” (Valerie, CC0330E:45-48).

### **My “Masculine Side”**

The gendered feel of physicality is produced in the relations of the physical which construct the possibilities for women’s participation. Whether women participate under duress or by choice, they must then negotiate subjective meanings which become part of their embodied experience. When discussing the effects of gender in outdoor leadership, Mandy Harris considers the experiences in which she has been treated differently because she is a woman. For her, “proving herself” is not about demonstrating the physical skill, but about overcoming the limitations of femininity itself. Proving herself is a condition of being a woman. She says,

I think, as a woman, sometimes in the outdoors you have to PROVE yourself a lot more than you would as a man...I think you often have to be, um, kind of not tougher and harder, but you kind of almost have to prove that you’re kind of *out there* with the boys, you know? You can hack the worst things with them, for some people to kind of think- to accept you...I think it’s harder to gain kind of recognition for your skills. I think you have to kind of be pretty *out there* to be seen as kind of a guru, compared to what a guy would have to do to be seen as a guru. Um. And I- ’Cause I also think that women will show their emotions more, so they might do the same thing in terms of skill, but because

they're emotional about it, people tend to think 'Oh,' you know, 'that wasn't-' you know, 'she was really scared.' Or- you know. Whereas, actually, that's just a woman showing the emotions that a male might be feeling, but they won't show it...Thing is, 'oh,' you know, 'she's good, but she's still really scared about doing that sort of stuff.' So she's not AS kind of good as the male, who might have felt EXACTLY the same, but doesn't show it...Yeah. And that's just the society that we've been brought up in. And that's why I think, you know, that's why I think people out there are really surprised that, you know, I'm a woman and I do these things. It's kind of like, well, why can't- Why SHOULDN'T I? You know? I'm no different than anyone else. And that always annoys me. (Mandy, CC0307:2329-76)

She illustrates the basis to the argument that women cannot appropriate 'the hard' because they cannot achieve the emotional distance or toughness that men can. In another comment she attributes the limitations of being a woman to not having enough strength (a comment not uncommon among the interviewees): "with rock climbing...I found it hard as a woman [when I was learning] because I was at the Quarry and it is a place you need a lot of strength- It does make a difference that you're a woman or you're a man" (CC0306V:1282-88). Despite wanting to believe that she is "no different than anyone else" and just as much "a guru" or expert when she is "climbing fit," later she says to me,

in many ways I wouldn't mind if I was a guy....I don't mind being a woman, but actually it would be kind of easier if I was a man, I think. Dare I say it!...I kind of think sometimes, 'Boy, if I was a guy, then things- some things would just be a lot easier and I wouldn't have to-' (Mandy, I0397V:3010-28)

If being a woman means having to prove herself as just as tough and just as hard, she wishes she could be a man to be "out there with the boys" instead of having to prove that she can be "out there" like a man. The sentiment is echoed by Siobhan O'Brien, who says, "when I was a kid I often- I often wished and wished and wished I was a boy. I spent a lot of time wishing I was a boy. And cursing being a girl" (CC0338J:121-23).

Some women “see people as a kind of a mix of both” (I0397W:2780-81), as Jane says. Hinepare Maraiti describes a woman’s body as embodying “a femininity, but I also believe that there’s a masculinity as well” (CC0337W:492-93). In her ascription, “rude strength” represents the masculine side, and strength, sensuality and beauty represent the feminine side. Jane Watt describes herself as “in some aspects...quite feminine, in other aspects I’m quite sort of masculine. I’ve got my tomboy streak” (I0397X:2784). She clearly relates this to being physically adventurous, “spirited” and interested in doing boys’ activities with boys as opposed to being interested in girls’ activities, such as sewing, clothes and hairstyles, like her older sister. She says,

I was such a tomboy....when I was 16, I took up hang-gliding, you know....the family joke was, um, that Mum would want to know when I was leaving home and when I’d be back, not what I was doing! She thought she worried less....‘oh, I’m off to paddle the Cromwell gorge,’ ‘Oh, I’m off hang-gliding for the weekend, Mum.’ ‘I don’t want to know!’...So, yeah, so they coped. They never, ever, um, gave me any messages that what I was doing wasn’t alright for a girl to do....You know. Like, caddying for Dad as a little girl. I was an eight year old, um- I was the only girl caddy I ever met. And all his old cronies would, um- He would introduce me, you know. And they’d go, ‘oh, “James,” is it?’ “Jimmy?” You know? And I’d burst into tears. ‘I’m a girl!’ And- And all I needed to do is look at Dad and he’d just be so proud. ‘This is my daughter,’ you know....He bought me a pair golf shoes, my size, little ones....I’m not sure why, but he never- He never tried to put me in a girl mode. In terms of what traditionally I should do....Used to walk everywhere. Used to walk to school. All my life I’ve walked to school which was, you know, even as a five year old- It was about two miles to school. To walk to school. We had no car. So- Being physical has always sort of been normal for me....So, yeah, I’ve always been physical. (Jane, I0397X:1840-1984)

Claire Armstrong had a similar experience to Jane and Miriam in finding that she had a special relationship with her father through being active in the outdoors. It also shaped her physicality.

We were very much a farming family. It was important I was like that. Um. As soon as I could drive a vehicle I became, you know, that much more valuable on the farm. Because like if we were making hay, I was too little to lift bales, but I could drive a vehicle. So I could drive the truck back and forth while they were loading. Yeah. And it wasn't, um- I was a tomboy, but it wasn't that, um- You know, Dad just treated me- Oh? I don't know. He treated me like a boy sometimes....He had always wanted sons. And, um, I don't know, there was a lot of disappointment. I was supposed to be a boy...I was called Billy right up until the moment I was born and then it's like 'oh my God it's a girl!' And that was pretty major. Dad had always wanted a son. (Claire, I0397N:224-56).

She does not mention masculinity as a part or side of herself. In the passage above, she says her father treated her like a boy because he wanted and could use a son and not particularly because she was boyish herself. She was a tomboy because she was comfortable outside; she recalls waking on summer mornings and “just going straight outside without even having breakfast and just wandering around the farm all morning” (I0397N:630-32). She was also a rebel and “hung out with ‘naughty Maori boys!!’ ” (I0397N:289-90). Later she describes always being aware of being a woman whether in the outdoors or not and feeling feminine as a pleasurable sensuality with no connection to physicality, as I explore in the next chapter.

Charlie Cooper also sees herself as a tomboy and, as her ‘body talk’ revealed in Chapter 3, happily accepts this as situating her in between masculine-identified and feminine-identified expectations when growing up. Now she appears to say that as a woman she combines them both: “I think I maintain who I want to be through physical things, 'cause there's that part of my being that's my body, right?...that physical side of me is still quite important” (CC0326M:173-77). Later she says that she has always felt that her emotions are her “feminine side” (I0397M:6435-36). Valerie, who also liked being a tomboy says, “the way I look at myself, the physical side of me is very big, very

much a part of who I am. Um. I think it's always been one of the ways that I define myself" (I0397E:3212-15). Her pleasure in defining herself by her "physical side" seems to be directed less at being boyish or accepted by boys and more at refusing the position of "girl." She does not take up an overt identification with masculinity and it is instead embedded in masculine physicality.

Jo Patterson does not use the term tomboy about herself, but instead says "I do have a strong physical side. Um. Which sometimes overrides other things, which I find- I do find that at times frustrating, I guess, that I allow...that to be the more dominant side. At times" (CC0303U:787-92). She explains,

I identify as being a female, although I recognize masculine parts of my make-up....And I guess that the masculine side is probably, you know, my physical side. My sort of- Um. Endurance is an interesting one because actually endurance is one of the qualities that I equate with women more than men. Um. Yeah. But, um. Muscular-wise, I suppose. And- and, um, power and strength-wise would be probably my more masculine attributes, I think. And even in some ways I- my physique....I see my body as- I see myself as quite well-built for a female. Quite strong. And I guess, even- even the physical appearance I see, yeah, sort of masculine qualities in that. My feminine characteristics, um, yeah, I mean, are still a large part of me- of my appearance, but probably my- um, my nature, at this stage. Caring and sensitive—more than males. (Jo, I0397U:2329-56).

Endurance is a physical quality in women which Jo does not associate with femininity; power and strength, for her, are still masculine effects and therefore strong women must have a "masculine side."

These women illustrate an acceptance of masculinity and some of the ways in which they refuse or make sense of the imperative that links masculine physicality with 'becoming like men.' They are so much like men that it would be "easier" to be one; they must be like men because that is already one "side" of their personality, albeit the "rude" body as complementary to their more sensitive and caring inner nature. The appeal of becoming more like men, besides being free of pressure to prove prowess, is

that they can be in their bodies without being sexualized into compliant femininity, they can be recognized for their “physical side.” The desire is to overcome the “natural inequality” attributed to women’s bodies and find “an autonomous and active form of corporeal specificity” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 14).

There are a number of unresolved problems with the mechanism through which these women attempt to appropriate and naturalize masculinity in themselves. As each constructs a personal meaning for her “masculine side,” it is unclear what type of or norm of masculinity is being wished for. For example, traditionally tomboys have been viewed as an acceptable form of masculine bodily freedoms in girls, a pre-pubescent phase indulged by parents. However, this view is criticized as one which encourages girls to mistakenly believe that they are ‘one of the boys,’ when they are only ever “token boys” (Scruton et al., 1999). One study disregards the expressed desire on the part of women interviewed to be boys and tomboys; “if anything, they rarefy masculinity by their aspirations to be ‘like a boy’ ” (Scruton et al., 1999, p. 108). Normative masculinity is reified by these researchers as an exclusive physicality accessible only through male bodies; to them, girls or women who desire it are deluded because they can never have male bodies.

The tomboy narrative is not solely one of disciplining the wild child into proper compliant femininity or even a “mature, embodied woman.” The tomboy is stigmatized as threatening femininity because she wants to become a boy, but she serves also to threaten women and the rigidity of heterosexual orientation as defining femininity. It is especially the figure of the adventurous, virile woman who has *not* relinquished her outdoor adventures into adulthood, who “pushes to its extreme the definition of the active heterosexual woman” (Creed, 1995, p. 96). I will return to this point in the next chapter.

In another example of how masculinity is inferred, Claire says “I definitely think strength and power are a big thing for me” (CC0316N:216) when describing her body, however, then also says that she would never try to convey power through her body, because she does not use her body as a weapon and would not want to hurt someone else with aggression or power (CC0331N). She cultivates a non-aggressive and capable

“strength and power” and clearly enjoys the immense strength she is able to experience daily in shouldering large, heavy packs of equipment when she guides bushwalks.

Additionally, masculinity and femininity are also constructed in opposition and as complementary halves of the whole person; while conceding that one “is” a tomboy or even “wouldn’t want to be a GIRL!” seems non-normative, it is not explicitly transgressive or a threat to the privilege of male bodies to appropriate force in relations of domination. Similar to Valerie Berg’s experience, Claire Armstrong finds that when she is “doing something physical” for her clients, such as carrying their luggage to their accommodation, “the men will rush to help me unload vehicles and stuff” (CC0397N:1154-55). Her presentation of a gendered identity maintains femininity (she wears lots of jewellery and dresses with clients) along with her pleasure in a physically strong body in a complex, but not necessarily disruptive way (see also Scraton et al., 1999). I return to this recognition in the next chapter, because masculinity is but one of a number of discursive forces through which strong women take up gender.

However, the issue of masculinity in women may yet be productively explored through corporeality as the process through which gender is constituted and not one in which ‘it’ is (unsuccessfully) confronted or disrupted. If women are taught to be *not* strong, then learning to become physically strong is not becoming ‘like men’ by ‘catching up’ on what was missed for girls, but allows the possibility of acquiring other modes of “strength and power” not associated with male bodies as weapons (e.g., Messner, 1990; Whitson, 1990, 1994; see also McDermott, 1996, for this point). It is one response to the fear in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature that women will inevitably become more like men if they embrace masculine bodily norms and practices. In practice, though, it is more difficult to accomplish the bodily experiences of reinscription in practice in the outdoors when women are being (re)disciplined by being pushed aside, bullied, shamed and coerced into certain performances, even disavowals of their own strength, which undercut their prowess.

## Conclusion

Women's lived experiences show that it is not a lack of confidence that inhibits women when they encounter the culture of male physical dominance, but the heteronormative policing of women's physical strength by men and women themselves. These access internal processes of confidence and will precisely because they operate through the physical. The accounts given in this chapter do more than provide evidence that women are capable of calling upon bodily strength as a professional asset when necessary or as gender "counter-practice" (McCaughey, 1997) when "necessary." They allow deeper investigation into the intertwining of the psychic and social across the physical; they offer more detail for the examination of the constituents of masculine physicality and female masculinity. It is apparent that 'hard, physical' strength is censured as inappropriate in women who are "too strong" because, in fact, they may learn to be emotionally tough and thus gain confidence. These are the characteristics which permit women resistance to the heterosexual feminine and hence their acquisition in the pursuit of 'hard, physical' experiences is so threatening to the men in these narratives. It is ultimately neither *physical strength* nor competitive prowess which must be subdued by heteronormative practices of sexualization, bullying and shaming, but women's access to the psychic inscription of hardness. The power of corporeality is that each is accessible only through the other.

This chapter explored the fear of women 'becoming more like men' for its signalling that what is at stake is the appropriation of *the hard* as the constituent of male physical dominance. The next chapter turns to the ways such a fear is enforced through a rejection of masculinity in women as deviant sexuality. In exploring how women make sense of their own habituated investments in the performance of femininity, the chapter asks how they come to know the embodied thrill of physicality and what it means to them within a heteronormative outdoor culture which expects all women, whether straight, lesbian or bisexual, regardless of race, class or religion, to be heterosexually feminine.

## Chapter 6 “You Don’t Have to be Butch:” Corporeal Subjectivity and Physical Femininity

If strong women pose a tension for the social constituents of masculinities and heterogendered physical relations, they cannot escape their inevitable impact on femininity. Strong women exemplify divisions among women through the possibility that there are “lots of different ways of being a woman” (Marnie, I0396I:1415-16). They embody the potential for social change in the gender order even while other women criticize their specific embodiment. Meanwhile, they are disparaged for trying to do what men do and they are rejected for trying to be ‘like men.’ They are ridiculed for being so butch that their embodiment no longer serves as feminist resistance, but is dismissed as deviant sexuality, a sign of lesbian ‘realness’ which interferes with their heterosexualized “relationship potential” (Nielsen et al., 2000, p. 288; see also Halberstam, 1998). They find themselves criticized for not being heterosexual enough.

This chapter focuses on the unexamined figure of the strong woman who is presumed heterosexually feminine, regardless of her sexual orientation or practice. In my New Zealand interviews the lesbian women tell me that they are generally out in their workplaces, but not with school aged students, and specifically not with fourth formers (14 year olds). They tend to respond honestly to student and client queries about their partners, but are not particularly political about sexual orientation. It could be said that in the small professional population nationally there is high tolerance for diversity, but that the homophobic ‘closet’ still operates in the outdoor experiential education field. It was noted that this is particularly true for gay men in the outdoors in Aotearoa New Zealand. The heterosexual women generally think that their sexual orientation has no impact on their outdoor leadership, because they are “safe” (CC0312P) or fit the “standard” sexuality (CC0312R). When I ask about its influence on their physical activity, they mostly respond as Valerie does, that it is something that they have “never really thought about” (CC0312E). What very little discussion there is in the literature focuses on enhancing the outdoor experiences of lesbian and gay youth and has not begun to investigate heterosexual normativity.

This chapter pursues these questions in part to examine lived effects of bodily changes on women's experiences of heteronormative femininity. Although some women embrace the performance of prowess for its sensual pleasure, they find themselves engaging in an apologetic for 'not being feminine enough.' They point to ways in which physicality may be construed as feeling sensuously physical, but physical strength and its effects are not generally considered as feeling feminine. I explore how those women in the study who are invested in being feminine actually define their gender expression as a degree or mode of physicality.

### **Fear of Female Masculinity**

The 'women in the outdoors' literature ignores the normative responses of heterosexualization to the physicality of strong women. It contributes to the very situation in which it is more 'acceptable' for 'women in the outdoors' to do what men do as long as they do it as women, that is, with feminine behaviours. The social correspondence between heterogender and physicality constructs sexed compliance. It permits the conception that trying to be "just like a man" is not useful for anyone who is "actually" a woman (Woodward, 2000, p. 40); yet it does yield ways in which women's experiences of normative heterosexual femininity may be illuminated and, if not contested, at least expanded.

Social change envisioned for women's experiences in physical activity will not occur on the basis of new prescriptions for gender alone, but consideration must be given to how gender is implicated in compulsory heterosexuality. In order to do this, the project must new modes of physicality. The last chapter asked how the limitations of active embodiment for women are constituted by heterogendered relations with men when women are criticized for being "too strong." It described the fear that women want to be like men as based upon the privileging of physicality as 'natural' to male bodies, and therefore the source of male physical domination, as the basis of social definitions of gender difference. This chapter explores how heterogendered experiences and practices are themselves effected by relations of physicality: that is, strong bodies and bodily abilities are defined by the heterosexualization of difference.

In “the heterosexual imaginary” (Ingraham, 1994), physical difference in strong women is regulated by the fiction of their availability to men.

The dominant, physical masculinity is consensually accepted as defining ‘real’ men and benefiting all men even while few men practise it themselves (Connell, 1983, 1995; McCaughey, 1997). Since outdoor pursuits have become recreational, men’s identity in the outdoors has been perceived as an alternative choice for those men who reject the confrontational contact sports of their peer group (Whitson, 1990; e.g., Roberts, 1992). However, there is also evidence that competitive talk, normative demonstrations of risk and the need to enforce heterosexual masculinity through misogyny and homophobia exist in the outdoors (e.g., Kiewa, 2001; Loeffler, 1995a, 1996b; Roberts, 1992). Hypermasculinity, in this sense, is the response to the anxieties of “fragile heterosexuality” (Sykes, 1998) rather than a physical masculinity at risk. As such it reveals the threat of the increasing visibility in the new ‘hard femininity’ of athletes (McKay, 1994) and the ‘hard women rock climbers’ (Andrews, 1984; Douglas & Beaumont, 1995) of female masculinity (Halberstam, 1998). For this reason, I investigate women’s experiences of femininity as productions of heteronormative physicality in which a potentially physical femininity becomes suspect as female masculinity and marginalized as lesbian butchness.

Femininity and its variants have always been physical. They are produced through the physical as much as are dominant and subordinate masculinities. Indeed, girls and women are reassured that physical activity will not compromise their gender identity, as if gender has never been a material practice and as long as the physical activities are modified (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991; Warren, 1985) or the physical effects are defined as health benefits (Bialeschki, 1999). Physical activity has no bearing on gender in this strategy. And yet tensions for a physical femininity are visible in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature, as discussed earlier. “Women’s strengths” are not physical; “the superwoman” is too physical to be a real woman; “Amazon types” might seduce the other women leaders on staff and really test the idea of sexual liberation as the “freedom of the hills.”<sup>57</sup> Without a glance at the barely concealed desires of strong women outdoors, such as those of Andrews (1984), the literature thrusts aside the “superwoman” and her competent challenge to heterosexual desire.

Now it is empirically clear that the whole-hearted belief in women outdoor leaders as “role models” rests on contradictory restrictions in practice. Highly skilled women outdoor leaders in this study and others are left frustrated with the persona ascribed to them. If superwomen are too threatening to the fragile, heteronormative relations of gender, how do strong women demonstrate what they can do? Outdoor analysts have been casting about for the lost components of a femininity separate from physicality: authenticity, choice, voice, self-representation, self-control, a *sense* of self-competence, an ethic of caring (e.g., Bell, 1996b; Estrellas, 1996; Kiewa, 1994; Loeffler, 1997; Mitten, 1996b; Morch, 1997). These, however, are not enough to sustain practical resistance to the structure of the gender order.

Physical activity practitioners are turning their arguments to women and girls who want to “retain their femininity.” In order to undermine the production of physical debility in gendered experiences for feminine women, outdoor leaders must first find and redefine the ‘power’ of physicality which ‘ingrains’ femininity across the bodies of heterosexually feminine, whether straight, lesbian or bisexual, women.

Women outdoor instructors are capable women because what they can do—and the fact that they know what they can do—shapes who they are. For this reason, Loeffler (1997; p. 122; emphasis added) advocates that women outdoor leaders be assisted “in developing both competence and a *sense* of competence.” They live their physical ability in embodied movements and practices that shape their perceptual experiences of self and of the social world. They know themselves and they know their world through experiencing both phenomenologically; moreover, they participate in the making of social meanings in a subculture of sensuous, skilled, enjoyable embodiment. Thus, if, as Connell (1987, p. 141) argues, “practice is of the moment,” these active women can use moments of physical practice to give them confidence about what their body has the potential to be able to do.<sup>58</sup>

How, in such circumstances, are they still socially inscribed as women? Merleau-Ponty (1962) disregards not only the social subject, but the socialization of embodiment through heterogendered physicality—the constituents of a physical body orientation.. Loeffler’s (1997, p. 122) research respondents tell her of the lived realities of outdoor instructing in which women’s corporeal perceptions are already gendered

until “they finally learned they were already competent” and they then stopped deferring to men as more competent. And with great enthusiasm even those who refuse a feminist politics want other women to enjoy the same experiences. The phenomenological effects of being a body-subject make it ‘deeply,’ personally meaningful. In “being physical” they find that “it’s everything together, like, it’s physical and it’s emotional and spiritual and intellectual” (Marnie, CC0325I:60-61). They can enjoy being physical as a mode of embodied subjectivity despite ambivalent feelings about their own body (CC0325I:136-144), sensuality (CC0324) or success or failure at heterosexual femininity. It is now argued that feminism itself has to recognize these bodily effects and must “get physical” (McCaughey, 1997).

Physical modes of embodiment which are alternative to dominant cultural practice must act to transform social structures just as do dominant practices (Connell, 1987, pp. 94-95). Becoming strong and capable, and knowing what one can do, does not always or necessarily act upon the restraints of femininity in an embodied way. Loeffler (1997), for example, proposes that all women in outdoor leadership undertake a solo expedition in order to exercise their competence autonomously. She appears to endorse the notion that a physical experience provides the means for psychic change. And yet in a vignette of her own experience, she recalls encountering a man in the remote back country and being instantly paralysed with fear. Years of experience as a capable outdoor leader in outdoor programmes had not prepared her to protect herself, though she decided that her “ice axe was a decent weapon if I could maintain control of it” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 121). Her body clearly responded to the situation as unsafe and she recounts that she was “terrified” that she would be killed or raped.

Cautiously, she moved closer and found that the threat was a bright yellow fungus on a fallen tree. She details her ensuing day expedition, which, she says, was incredibly impactful. It changed how I thought about myself and my abilities. The experience forced me to totally attribute my success to myself rather than to my co-instructors or students...It was the first time I could not deny or talk myself out of my competence. (Loeffler, 1997, p. 121-123)

Yet, Loeffler never comments on the fear of rape and danger that had halted and “enveloped” her, however briefly, nor on what she would have done had the threat materialized. She manages to separate this fear from the “feelings of exhilaration, competence and success” of knowing that she is a capable mountaineer. She appears to accept the physicality of her competence as more ‘real’ than the physicality of femininity as incompetence and vulnerability. If, despite walking the ridge tops alone for one exhilarating day, she is, after all, still living a heteronormative, feminine embodiment, then the solo is not a particularly complete or reliable means to autonomy or physical freedom.

Similarly, Morch’s (1997, p. 84) “wild woman of the woods” does not provide an alternative to sexed embodiment, because it offers little in practice which might begin to transform the structure of gender. Once she identifies loss of voice as a lived aspect of her experience, Morch does not seek a practice to counter the loss. The louder women speak in her community, the more they are labelled “strident” and, since this is a gendered criticism, the fewer means they have of defence. Social practice must operate upon the way the gender order constrains embodied experience beyond relations of gender. Strong women, for example, might practise “role modelling” for the cultural representation of and psychic possibilities of resistance, yet in lived models of bodily action they might find much more in common with strong men. Indeed, they might be “role modelling” alternative *physicality* for their men students (being a ‘subject’ in the outdoors is about changing physicality), while they take up alternative practices of *gender* for women (being physical in the outdoors is about changing femininity). Why, for example, would Loeffler (1997) include in her account of a “powerful” solo expedition the overwhelming panic she felt as a woman alone in the back country?<sup>59</sup> Feminists must “get physical” to investigate how physicality is socially undone and femininity itself is physically enforced.

Role modelling therefore has critical limitations as social practice, not least because it relies on a correspondence between imitation and identity (Bell, 1993b, 1996; Connell, 1983, 1987). Strong women must step back, not forward, when it is time for other women to live their own strength, and along with it all the frustration, exertion and pain that accompanies the forceful use of skill and stamina to build

strength. Rather than strive for the recuperation of the ‘natural woman,’ they must insist on the resocialization of women’s physical strength *as a social practice*. They must speak out for the practice of prowess, not against it, in recognition of the productivity of the division between skilled and non-skilled which disrupts and complicates the Cartesian complementarity of gendered modes of knowledge. They must distance themselves from the desire to be just like ‘ordinary’ women and, too, the desire to make it easier for other women finding their stride. In this sense, they must be ‘hard’ women.

It is evident from the discussion in the last chapter that the ‘hard, physical’ experiences of embodiment are not always available to women. Proving prowess is protected as a heterogendered practice involving proof of ‘hard’ masculinity and not often, as it could be, appropriated as a disruptive moment for female masculinity. It is worrying enough that social sanctions against women becoming ‘like men’ reinforce a dominant masculinity as the practice of physical strength and the embodied power of ‘hardness’ associated with all men. It is also of concern to the feminist project in the outdoors that women themselves may set the conditions in which women are not able to experience their bodies as ability, potential and that mobile threshold between social training and psychic desire. As long as ‘hardness’ is proof of (male) masculinity, its sensuous, physical appeal is lost to all those who reject masculinity in women.

For this is the essential aspect of the lived experience of both gender and physicality: their sensuous feel. This is what must be accessible to “wild women,” not a persona, but more of a momentary pleasure. To Morch (1997, p. 12), it is her “thesis problematic.” She says, “I love the way my body feels after a hard day of paddling and portaging” (Morch, 1997, p. 12), but she does not explicitly tie this to the “*feel* of femininity and masculinity” (Connell, 1987, p. 84; emphasis in original).<sup>60</sup> The sensual pleasure of familiar habits is not limited to feeling “at home” in the wilderness or gathering for rituals at the full moon; feeling awkward, frustrated, feisty or “stroppy,” to use a New Zealand term, are also pleasurable in their hold on bodies. This is what makes them potent against constraints of gender; virtuous, ladylike behaviours (even the wearing of corsets) must also have some appeal or sensual feelings of pleasure. It explains the thrill behind teenage rebellion: part of the excitement of skipping school

for Ianissi, hanging out with the boys for Claire or smoking behind the pool sheds for 15 year old Margaret is getting caught in the physical act of feeling “naughty.”

The project must then ensure that the feel of physicality is a productive and disruptive social practice for women, while not leaving it embedded within the heterogendered feel of femininity as inability. As Allin (2000), Andrews (1984), Arnold (1994), Bell (1996b), Kiewa (1996, 1997), Loeffler (1997), McDermott (2000) and Morch (1997) begin to consider, women’s concerns about gender identity in the outdoors must shift to account for, rather than dismiss, the practical transformation of their physical capabilities. However, as long as gender is defined as role and ideology and transformation is couched in cognitive terms, structure remains a determinant of the effects of practice. Social practices in the outdoors are physical practices and, as such, physical skills are sensually and socially transformative. In short, we act on gender by transforming bodies.

Bodily transformations are at the heart of the construction of heterosexual femininity and of the acquisition of the socialized bodily orientation. They are also the material practices that make women strong. Feminist critiques of outdoor programming miss this completely. They dismiss strong women as not women and overlook women’s concerns with their bodies as not natural, as discussed in Chapter 1. They lose the ground to argue that women desire physical competence to control their bodily destiny, that physical competence is necessary to “being in control” and that this is as much control of practices of femininity as of practices of outdoor skills. They are left with descriptive lists of women’s goals which emphasize having fun, eliminating competition and being with other women (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Mitten, 1985). Outdoor leaders become party hostesses (Mitten, 1992a).

The literature proceeds for over a decade to advocate instead for psychological safety for women. Yet, McCaughey (1997) finds that physical self-defence skills give the women to whom she talks tremendous psychological safety. The physicality of “psychological safety” can be ensured once women are encouraged to perform their prowess, develop a psychological armour to deflect subtle comments and competitive gestures and *feel* their physical competence inform their corporeality. Too often the reverse is the condition for gender: women feel femininity only as a sensuality which is

intended to inform a passive, aesthetic identity. The definition of the physical, 'male model' as 'unsafe' for women can be deconstructed for its heteronormative function alongside its physical purpose. The attachment to gender as an ontological construct in the 'women in the outdoors' literature must be undone by reinscribing the physical as social.

### **Making Femininity Physical**

A recent interest in the power of the outdoors to alter body image conflicts for women is one area that fruitfully links physical ability to psychological well-being, but not yet in a way which questions the cultural mediation of both. The literature stops short of a social analysis of how physical movement and body satisfaction are social constructions. It assumes that body image is a transparent and parallel reflection of self-esteem and can thus support the goal of improving the self-esteem of women who come to the outdoors. Skill development helps women to accept their bodies, and hence themselves, as they 'are,' because bodies are shown to be functional. Arnold's (1994) study does actually illustrate, but does not untangle, the interplay of structures of heterosexuality, gender and what I would call physical relations evident in the comments of research participants. It introduces to the 'women in the outdoors' literature at least a potential connection between issues of strength and skill and their relation to the social inscription of self.

Any consideration of the physicality of gender experiences must take into account more than the subjective interpretation of body image, but rather the constitution of the subjective in the corporeal. Like Loeffler (1997), Arnold (1994) is inhibited by the adoption of a social psychological perspective (see Snyder & Kivlin, 1975) which associates psychological well-being with the sociality of physical activity. She concludes that what would help women most is to alter their dislike for certain parts of their bodies, such as hips and thighs, through a new awareness of how useful these parts are in conveying a feminine grace while active. Arnold (1994) hopes that more successful instrumental uses of the feminine body's broad hips, strong thighs and lower centre of gravity will produce active women more appreciative of their

femininity. Such an approach does perhaps allow some access to the value of Morch's (1997) "wild woman" and, indeed, modes of female physicality practised by women in this study as well, in the belief that a woman's body schema effects how she practises femininity. The challenge for practice which Arnold (1994) fails to consider is in changing women's body schema.

This leads to another factor which generates embodied tensions in femininity for women. Aside from its physical feel is its physical look. Feminists argue that when women understand how both operate on their bodies to inscribe femininity in physical ways, then women will come to experience physicality as less constraining and more productive (e.g., Bartky, 1990; MacKinnon, 1987; McCaughey, 1997). Being strong is not inherently 'masculinizing,' although the feel and look of muscularity can elicit such cultural meaning for women. It is equally important to invert the mutual interaction to point to the productivity of bodily movements and acts on women's not inherently feminine selves. Becoming strong will reinscribe the way femininity looks. For body image is wrongly treated as an internal evaluation of one's bodily appearance; Arnold (1994, p. 44) interprets Freud as defining it as "the mental image one has of one's body." Yet Grosz (1994b, p. 30) explains that to Freud "the psychical cannot be unambiguously separated from the perceptual." Body image is not an interior image of an exterior object. It is necessarily, after Merleau-Ponty (1962), a lived relation to the objective world in which the look of the body is acquired in its spatial mobility (Grosz, 1994b). Body image is better theorized as a bodily perception, felt at outer surfaces and shaped by bodily contours, themselves the targets of social practices. What is taken up as body image is inscribed 'from the outside in' and then lived 'from the inside out.' It cannot be changed without reinscribing the exterior as much as the interior. Body image is constituted in bodily movement and possibility.

In this study, for example, Siobhan O'Brien says that being outdoors does not heighten her perceptions, as if it might impinge on her as a receptive body; rather, she says, "I feel more sensual when I am fitter and leaner" (CC0324J:45-46). Her sense of herself changes when her body is felt as ("when I am") more lean and fit than before. Her exterior perceptions are "psychically and libidinally mapped" to be felt as "self-image" (Grosz, 1987, p. 8) rather than the interior projecting its map of the physical

onto a blank image gauged against an ideal social imprint. To reinscribe the relation of subjectivity to corporeality, we must find ways that feeling physical produces both social image and self consciousness. New physical experiences can make bodies look and feel physical in new and different ways. Women in one study who learn new skills at an older age tell researchers of the pleasurable satisfaction they feel in learning to accomplish the unfamiliar movements, from dancing to fighting to chopping wood (Wright & Dewar, 1997, p. 92). In this study, Rosa says to me, "So what if I do things that are traditionally male? I still feel good doing them, so so what?" (CC0334P:289-90). For Elaine and others, feelings of being "awkward" and "useless" change when coordination and skill are developed. And so, as Arnold (1994), Richards (1999) and others in the outdoors literature imply, but do not articulate specifically, women will think differently about themselves once it feels good to move their bodies differently.

When I ask the women in this study what "being physical" means to them, they describe how they perceive themselves when their bodies are being physically active and working hard. Their responses begin to approach how a woman's particular embodiment feels and how her body gives her a sense of self through a consciousness of movement. The descriptions, for example, are not of objectified activity. The descriptions are often of a sense of subjective bodily awareness: how Miriam Eales' body, for example, is a machine needing fuel to move, with "bones and muscles and blood...pumping around and the steam's pouring off the back and the water's pouring in the front" (CC0325L:182-85). But, as "a fairly physical person" (CC0325L:192-93), she says that she usually hugs people when she greets them and she moves around a lot to motivate people in her teaching, hardly the subjective expression of an inert, mechanical task-orientation. Being physical gives her, Miriam says, "very much a sense of myself" (CC0325L:191-92).

As long as highly skilled women treat other women's physical efforts as psychologically bounded by the feelings of gender, the (fearful) lack of will and an undeveloped expectation of physical success, inexperienced women are denied the feel of their own bodily actions, intentionality and potentiality. They are denied the experiences which give them a sense of self and through which they can inscribe a new sense of self. When perception of self is based on how one's body feels, moves and

presents itself and how one's physical actions have social meaning as much as personal, then the significance of physicality to subjectivity is made possible. Even so, "the physical" is a misleading term as a discrete source of social action and it is necessary to theorize corporeality for explanation. How one's body *feels* and how one experiences and interprets one's "physical side"—in the words of some of the women in the study—are very much part of a social process structured by social interests.<sup>61</sup> Thus the feel of physicality is both a tactile, perceptual phenomenon and a socially and subjectively mediated one. The sociological resolution of the 'mind/body' problem lies in its reinscription as a subjective-social interaction.

This is the core of the social ontology within which a sociology of "the body" must incorporate physicality. Grosz' (1987, 1994b) corporeal feminism develops this idea and it is effectively exemplified in McCaughey's (1997) study of women's self-defence as "physical feminism." It is important to feminism in the outdoors that we find new ways of explaining gendered experience which shift definitions of gender as 'interiority' to ways of conceptualizing gender as the interaction between interior and exterior. Such a *constitutive* interaction is not at the level of competing ideologies, but of competing social practice, lived selection of social actions (including a practical inertia, according to Connell, 1983). The body is the site in which gender is practised or rather across which gender acts as constraint and practice: the body is more of a "threshold" (Grosz, 1994b) or "frontier" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 98) between the subjective and the social. The physical potential of corporeality lies between, but constitutes, and is constituted by, both the subjective experience and social inscription of gender.

It is perhaps useful to recap this theme within the context of this study, for earlier chapters have offered critical views of the literature in which the body is taken as a physical entity supporting a psychological being (e.g., Miranda & Yerkes, 1982). To say that physicality, along with the social meanings of the "physical sense of genderedness" (Connell, 1987, p. 84), informs psychological character is not useful to extending conceptions of gendering processes, unless it is made clear that there is no even match between the physical sense of genderedness and the experience of the physical body. Rosa Grace tells me, "people reject women's muscularity as 'like a

man.’ You see it as developing strong muscles, getting closer to your full potential” (CC0334P:268-70). And to Catherine Chen, “society” makes the labels feminine and masculine, “but to me, it’s no different. It’s like a continuum” (CC0334Q:384-87). “I switch between them” (CC0334Q:381), she says.

The grip of gender as constituted in “techniques of the body” observed by Mauss (1973), Sacks (1985) and others lies in how they are made to feel personal, familiar, sensible and automatic; they make collectively trained bodily sensations, movements, postures, gait and so on into one’s own bodily sense of self. Mauss (1973, p. 85) observes cultural influences upon a swimming stroke or a Maori women’s gait, for example, in order to study “physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions.” He tries to sort out a “biographical list of techniques of the body” (Mauss, 1973, p. 78). Sacks (1985, p. viii), in turn, investigates “the relation of physiological processes to biography.” He is fascinated with the physiological sense of belonging to someone which proprioception gives to ‘a’ body. That the body has a sense of self and recognition of itself is a significant place to begin with the suggestion that social subjectivities are formed in the perceptions and judgements formed by bodies about their own existence.

Whether techniques of the body are designed by the social world or the social self (Turner, 1992), their genderedness is preserved in a habitual, sensible feel which, it is argued, has little to do with actual physiological measurements or functions or processes, but becomes more important than those individual meanings. To return to Morch’s (1997) experience: the hot sun on her bare back is socially salient when she lives in a society in which women do not bare their upper bodies and are generally expected to wear extra (under)garments constricting their skin and uplifting their breasts. The physical experience of being breasted has generally little to do with its excessive hetero-social importance, the interests of which are served in the wearing of brassieres, but through habit the feel of a bra becomes as much a part of feeling feminine as is the lived sensuality of being nude and breasted (Young, 1990a). Thus the hot sun on a woman’s back contributes to how she holds her back and it marks her sense of her body even after she has resumed paddling.<sup>62</sup> As much as paddling itself, it

reminds her that she may effect her own embodiment by paying attention to how she lives her socialized body.

The desire for sensory experiences in the outdoors may serve precisely as a reminder—even redefinition or renewal—of the potentiality of corporeality (see also Wright & Dewar, 1997). Sensations are lived at the level of the felt, social body and as such they may be significant also in contesting the sense of embodiment from cultivated gestures and postures associated with “the city.” New sensations may be elicited once the body is released from the rigid patterns of routinized days; there is space for a new bodily perception.<sup>63</sup> One woman says, “I’m in love with the outdoors...I feel right when I get out there; I expand; I breathe more deeply—it’s a relief...It’s a high—I’m more of a person, I’m *huge* when I’m in the outdoors” (Johnston & Dann, 1989, p. 156; emphasis in original). The felt, social body is a sensual body and human beings are sensual subjects (Grosz, 1994b). Sensuality thus elicits investment in certain experiences (even urban work routines), but also contests such investments and evokes changes in the sense of self which are significant to the restrictions lived by women daily.

In this study, women describe special places they visit, special routines in which they indulge to feel present and well in the outdoors or specific things they do to experience sensual feelings not accessible in their everyday lives. While not unusual in itself, what makes them special, or strategic, is *when* women engage in these outdoor practices, such as exhausting their energy or baring their bodies; such experiences are not always possible when leading groups during which the outdoors becomes their routinized workplace with more sedimented relations of heterogender in place. Hinepare Maraiti, for example, bathes in water as soon as she arrives anyplace: “like cleansing myself in the area in which I am visitor” (CC0324W:627-28). “That is probably one of the first rituals that I am likely to do,” she says, “then I will do that each morning...just [to] feel the extension of the environment with me” (CC0324W:630-36). Bathing is also important to Charlie Cooper. She says, “when I was at Payne’s Ford, one of the most pleasurable things was going for a bath every morning in the Takaka River. I really loved it...I used to love jumping in [alpine] streams...[I’d take a bowl and] I’d wash my hair...That made me feel, right, really

sensual. I really like the cold, I liked being naked there, no one could see me” (CC0324M:114-31). Swimming naked was also mentioned by Jane Watt, Valerie Berg, Margaret Rutherford and Miriam Eales as “immensely pleasurable” (CC0324L:100). Valerie says that she seeks out these sorts of experiences and she would rather not swim if she has to wear swimming “togs:” “I know it’s not going to be as sensual as when I don’t wear togs” (CC0324E:18-19). The feel of diving into the sea is something she particularly enjoys.

Margaret will jump in and out of a cold mountain stream on a tramping trip, but of more pleasure to her is immersing herself in a hot pool. She feels that “there’s an amazing interface between the edge of the water and your skin” (CC0324T:423-24). She says “it’s all to do with the feel of it. It’s uh- It’s not to do with [air that is] cold. It’s to do with the interface between the two. It’s hard to explain that” (CC0324T:462-66). In feeling “the edge” of her body interacting with “the edge” of the environment, she feels her boundaries in a way one does not normally. In the feel of the environment, her perceptions come up against it in a way that actually constitutes surfaces for her which she would not ordinarily recognise. Thus, echoing Hinepare, the interaction itself extends the environment to include her. This is perhaps part of the reason some women seek outdoor experiences; they become reminders of our corporeal perceptions as constitutive.

On a more everyday level, Valerie and Miriam also mention the contrasts felt between being wet and getting dry at the end of the day or being cold and getting warm and more comfortable. “I can sort of tough it out,” Miriam says of wet days, “[but] when we get back to the hut and [I’m] getting into my dry clothes or my sleeping bag- I really love those contrasts” (CC0324L:72-74). Elaine says, “environment partly heightens sensual awareness, cold, you know, all those things that you become very aware of...That’s why you are there really isn’t it?” (CC0324R:334-47). And, to Ianissi Gray, “that gives you an experience nobody else can give you” (CC0324S:385-86). Sensual experiences are only available through one’s own body.

Nevertheless, they are not universal. Rosa Grace seems to be able to clarify the contextual aspect to her sensual feelings as a strong woman. She does not feel it so much in work situations when she has group leadership and safety responsibilities. But

with other women and on personal trips, she has felt “quite sensual” (CC0324P:248). For her, sensuality is a heightened awareness of being “very womanly, very feminine” (CC0324P:243).

### **Reminders of Feminine Sensuality**

Claire Armstrong tells me of a sensuality she evokes for herself in the outdoors, in order that, like Rosa, she can feel feminine. Claire guides walkers on a coastal walkway. Some evenings the group camps and others are spent in a local lodge. Even when camping, Claire may ‘change for dinner’ and wear a dress. She relates her experience:

well, that’s funny actually, because, you know, during the day I am wearing, you know, shorts and boots and stuff. And then at dinner I’m- I usually wear a skirt or a dress. [Do you?!] Yeah. I LOVE wearing dresses. And usually on the first night I just stun them. I mean, it happens often. Like, ‘don’t you scrub up well.’ Or, ‘my god you’re wearing a dress.’ ‘What’s the problem with wearing a dress? I love wearing dresses.’ And it’s just- They have this- I mean they’ve only known me for a day and xxx xxx it’s like they already have this perception of what I should look like. Or- [It sounds like you enjoy that.] Oh, I love it. Mmm. [Their discomfort as much as your, you know, just ability to shift and-] Yeah, cause they’ve- They’ve obviously built a conception of me that’s- I just blow it right out the window. So I change into a skirt or a dress. [So you DO play with it strategically.] Yeah. I guess- I mean- It’s an unconscious thing. I mean it’s an unconscious thing. [That’s fine. Because ultimately it’s for your own- because you enjoy it.] Oh yeah. Yeah...And that hasn’t been a conscious thing. It’s fine now that I know that it happens. But that’s- It’s- I mean, initially I wear a dress at night because it’s a change for me and I like the way it makes me feel feminine and I enjoy it. And it’s just

something- You know, I get sick of wearing shorts and t-shirts.

(CC0315N:748-84)

Later she says,

wearing a dress makes me feel really feminine. It's just another way to get in touch with my body. Um, I don't know. I feel more flowing and- I don't know, I kind of- Yeah, I feel different. Like kind of saturated with xxx- Yeah, some of it is sexual. Yeah. I move differently when I am wearing a dress. (CC0324N:211-223)

Claire feels the sensory experience of the outdoors in a holistic and "huge" way. When I ask her if she wears dresses as part of this sensory immersion, she says, "no, it's a different thing I guess" (CC0324N:210-11).

Julia Morch also revels in moments of sensual pleasure and seeks out new bodily practices, but she does experience a disruptive "self-consciousness" about deliberate alterations to her "civilized" body (Morch, 1997, pp. 128-129). She tries to embrace the sensory feeling of her bodily oddities as a more free, wild-haired woman who does not shave her legs or underarms and goes without a bra. She notes that the "archetypal wild woman" is a representation of woman's "inner nature" (Estes, 1992). Yet, when she shaves the hair off her head to free her movements (she must otherwise wear a baseball cap to keep it from blowing in her face), she says that she feels an immediate "sense of panic." She is so ambivalent about this new appearance around other people ("I felt naked, exposed and vulnerable"), that she covers her head with the ball cap until the hair grows in again. In this vignette she reveals how her "inner nature" is implicated in the outer presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). Separately in her research, without elaboration, she conveys some attachment to the practices of being "a fem" in which she has previously participated. Presumably growing her hair back serves to symbolise even some of this identity for her. And the reminders of femininity are also about class *habitus*, as the comments of her brothers and family expectations have a not insignificant influence in her reconsideration of her self-presentation (Morch, 1997, pp. 85, 128-129). In deliberately choosing to do something Western society does not allow, Julia becomes more self-consciousness of her social positioning as a woman (see Spitzack, 1987). Her resistance to heteronormative

that many young women now wear extremely short hair as ‘grunge’ chic and she says thoughtfully, “I think I would be treated quite differently if I did that” (CC0315R:1052).

It could be argued that short hair as an outdoors practice requires less time, fuss and “hard work” and is safer around equipment. Elaine’s practical act is based instead on a pre-existing condition of gender relations, although she justifies it as “actually cheaper.” It is practical for a person away from hair cutting services for long periods of time to adopt a style not in need of regular haircuts as long as her hair is more manageable once it can be tied back off her face. However, the most significant practicality of this strategy for Elaine might well be that she can practise femininity while not appearing self-conscious about it. She achieves the unfettered look that Julia is pursuing, which in turn naturalizes the presence of women in uncultivated places. Her comments betray the extent to which she is willing to invest her time (it is difficult to ‘do’ long hair as feminine without keeping it clean and tied back, according to even very basic feminine norms, requiring water, items such as Charlie’s bowl, and routine) in a social practice which she admits that she performs because it has heterogendered implications for her working relationships.

Such experiences of finding, or ensuring the visibility of, an enhanced femininity within the natural woman reveal the extent to which even the appearance of an unfabricated femininity is crafted. The cultural depends upon its own production of the natural. What serve as “reminders” of femininity, brought “into the hills” from another life, are (still) the investments which inscribe identity. Julia Morch says that she “long since gave up apologizing for wanting to be active in the outdoors” (Morch, 1997, p. 6), but she clearly does not like having no hair (“refused to take off my hat”) in the residential outdoor centre at which she works and in the city following the summer season. Elaine Ross provides another example. “I enjoy taking my knitting into the outdoors” (CC0315R:1591-1592), she says. “I feel really proud of, um, taking that aspect of, you know, the feminine identity- the embroidery and—that my mother taught me—and, you know, and taking that into the outdoors. So I- I have my knitting and just taking those- those female crafts and putting them into a different context” (CC0315R:1603-1612). The heteronormative identity is continually marked and

practices of femininity, from wearing long hair to covering her breasts, produces a new site of practice, but also elicits a sense of loss unsettling in its grip.

It is essential to the reinscription of physicality that women do gain a consciousness of their practical involvement in constructing femininity. When Claire says, “it’s fine now that I know it happens,” she is not necessarily saying that she has freely chosen her rather complex involvement in practices of femininity, but that she is more aware of how it ‘makes’ her subjectivity. *Habitus* is not about imitation or memory as much as “acquired ability” (Mauss, 1973, p. 73) within collectively mediated practice; varying modes of femininities are the same. As Elaine Ross says to me, “feminine implies a lot of hard work” (CC0334R:665-666). Her feeling is that in the outdoors women “don’t have the time to do that sort of feminine, fluffy stuff;” femininity means make-up, lipstick and *Cosmopolitan* cover girls (CC0334R:666-667). And yet, she recounts a similar experience to Julia Morch in terms of her hair.

When I was growing up one of the things that really got to me was- I had really short hair and I looked quite masculine. And I often got mistaken for a guy. And it was really devastating. It was a very interesting, um, thing about: ‘what is it that-? Why would it be so devastating?’ But it was. It just made me feel very, very small. Um. And so- It took me quite a lot of time to- to try- I think that is why I grew my hair long actually, because I wanted to look female. And now I realise that it’s actually cheaper to get- not to get the cuts. Um. So, I think, um, yeah, I wouldn’t try and look masculine because of those early experiences. So I- Yeah, I don’t have- I think I don’t have the freedom to do that option. I still want to be female. Yeah. There’s a lot in that I’m sure...I think I would have to be quite brave to try. I’m interested whether I would still look masculine with short hair. I’m not sure if I’d have the strength to- to have that- um, to be that ambiguous about my hair. (Elaine, CC0325R:1015-43)

Elaine keeps her hair long so that she will not be mistaken for a man and so that her appearance is acceptable to some of the local “middle-aged men” with whom she interacts in her role as resident caretaker of the Outdoor Education Centre. I comment

crafted *by women themselves*, as if, especially in the outdoors, it might otherwise be left behind and forgotten.

### **Apologies for Being Too Strong**

Valerie Berg, once again, gives insight into how her perceptions about having a “bad body” are not just personal, but are heteronormatively constructed. She says, the times when I haven’t felt very good about my body [have] actually stopped me from doing something or volunteering to do something, because I’m really conscious of my body and not feeling very good about it... Things like what sort of clothing is required... it’s like, what have I got on, I am going to be getting wet, how am I going to look when I’ve got everything wet? [And so would a wetsuit be a problem for-] Um. [Anything that would show a profile or silhouette, those sorts of things?] Yeah. Yeah. So- [Is it to do with...the ideal feminine shape?] Mmm. Yeah. [Not feeling like you have it?] Yeah...The bulges are in the wrong place. (Valerie, CC0328E:7-38)

These feelings acquire the force of psychic inscription in the context of the culture of male physical dominance at the outdoor centre at which she works. She explains, “certainly, I know that since I’ve been here I’ve become a lot more conscious of my physical shape. And that’s to do with the constant comments about women’s bodies that goes on here” (CC0319E:6-9). The male instructors openly discuss the body of one of the other women instructors: “there’s numerous comments about how, you know, she’s such a big woman” (CC0319E:19-20). They also discuss the bodies of women students. They point out the attractive women as the students arrive at the centre. “And, you know, standing there at the end of the morning run and talking about their bodies as they come by. And, you know, um, just things like that” (CC0319E:21-24). She believes that “it’s that sense that it’s alright to see women as sexual objects” (CC0319E:123-124) and has experienced it herself:

when I first came here as a single woman..I felt very much as if I was being checked out. People were sussing- you know, the men were

sussing me out...When I first came here I was the only 'available' woman- potentially available woman here! (CC0319E:169-82)

She is one of four women instructors on a staff team of 15.

Elaine Ross also uses others' expectations of her abilities as a means of contesting her sexed embodiment to her advantage. She says she does not diminish or downplay her strength, but she does 'play' with gender in her work. She enjoys using tools well around the outdoor centre and "doing masculine jobs," which she has learned how to do properly. These include slashing gorse or chopping wood. However, she says,

strategically, I also get other people to do jobs that I don't like. I mean, I am really good at hammering things. And a few things I'm sure I'm- I don't do it very much but I'm certainly- I would, you know, sort of, yeah, play the 'I'm not very good at this. Would you fix this for me?' sort of thing. (CC0315R:1005-11)

Her apologetic, here, is related in part to her admitted difficulty in communicating with "middle-aged men" (CC0315R:979-82). It is a problem also encountered by Siobhan, Claire, Catherine and Mandy Harris. Charlie Cooper recounts a similar sort of situation, although her action is not as deliberate, but, she says, is "part of my- uh, I don't know. It's something from way back" (CC0313M:615-16). It is also, however, to do with being in the outdoors with (though not necessarily middle-aged) men. A typical incident is one in which she found herself "asking permission" to do something because she was with a man.

I led up to a Grade 16. And I'm up on this climb. And I came up to it, the bolt chain, and I went [whispers delicately], 'so, shall I, um- I'll just abseil off this, eh?' And then I went back down to him. And I went, 'why am I asking you permission to abseil off when I'm a Stage Two rock instructor? But I put on-' He says, 'yes, you do that. You put on that little girl voice.' (CC0313M:605-612)

I return to the complications for women's physicality of being involved in a sexual relationship with one's climbing partner in the next chapter.

In another example, Claire Armstrong concedes that she finds it *useful* to ‘put on’ the little girl role with older men on guided bushwalks. She says,

Yeah, I guess I would use being a woman, “womanly wiles’ or whatever, um, especially with male guests on trips. Uh- Like in sort of- I often get a lot of elderly, fatherly types who sort of father me. And so, yeah, that works well with that. They sort of take a father role and I can slip into the daughter role. I can make that work. (Claire, CC0315N:696-702)

Finally, in a feature article for the popular media on a guided walks business, the woman leader is described warmly as “Camp mother, friend...and everyone’s darling” (Jaquiery, 1997). It does not seem much further to “party hostess” (Mitten, 1992a).

### *Be Strong, But Not Threatening*

It is Charlie Cooper who signals to me that these are examples not of a conscious and strategic use of gender, but rather of the heterogendered context of what I prefer to call physical relations which effects feminine physicality. The requirement of compulsory heterosexuality is that women must be perceived as not “threatening” those who they are leading, guiding, teaching and with whom they are working. And while they are dealing with the “superwoman myth” sanctioning their strength when around other women, they must also deal with the “butch,” “Amazon” and “ball breaker” myths (McCaughey, 1997) which narrow the means they have through which to demonstrate physical competence and strength when with men. In her study of women learning self-defence skills, McCaughey (1997, p. 37) comes to define femininity itself as women’s “habituated disavowal of [their] own strengths.” Valerie provides a lived example of the women outdoor leaders at her centre: “the women here will apologize for making their [leadership] decisions...And feel like they need permission to ask...particularly not to do something or to modify something because of the way they are feeling” (CC0338E:69-74).

Not only must women not be stronger than the men with whom they are working or guiding, they must act as if this is true of most, or even all, men. Many of

the women in this study juxtapose their physical capabilities to those of the men they teach or work with in terms of their preference for, or even need for, technique as opposed to men's natural, "brute" strength. They then offer almost irrelevant examples to rationalize this act. Valerie Berg, for example, says to me,

I don't have to be worried that I'm physically not as strong as some of the men here. Um. But there's ways to achieve the same thing. [Are you physically not as strong as some of the men here? Do you think that?] Oh yeah. They can beat me at arm wrestling and things like that!!  
(CC0315E:74-80)

Similarly, Elaine Ross refers to the chin-up bar in front of her outdoor centre. She implies that she is not as strong as men, because she cannot compete with the boys and men visiting the centre at this activity: "it IS still a bit frustrating being a female sometimes and not being as strong. You know, being able to do like a half a chin-up instead of ten" (CC0303R:525-28). When I ask if she develops her strength through training, she says no; the chin-up bar is a remnant of the days when the centre was a school house. Even Marnie Webb dismisses her arm strength, saying that she never thought she was strong because all she had been doing, as a young mother of four, was lifting babies with that left forearm. Losing at arm wrestling, failing at chin-ups and winning at bouncing babies are hardly the sources of embarrassment and weakness that they imply. But as long as they are taken as a measure of physical differences, then physicality is trivialized and male domination materializes through women's apologies for being too strong.

### **Playing With Gender**

The women in this study may engage in apologetic gestures which downplay their strength and thus try to fashion themselves as 'ordinary' women, yet some often simultaneously pursue strategies which they perceive allow them more freedom as women. Two general sorts of practices are evident. The first are those emphasising the heterosexual, "acceptable" feminine as appearance or role often adopted for its putative 'shock value.' The second are those subverting the subjective experience of femininity

by removing or, in a sense, redesigning its effects. I characterize these as “strategies,” because the women pursuing them do so not on the basis of ‘unconscious’ inclination, but on the basis of being strong women, first, that is, as already socially ‘unacceptable,’ to varying extents, subjects. Therefore, the women who say ‘I am strong and capable, but when I meet my expedition group I sometimes put on earrings and nice clothes,’ are using socialized femininity as a device.<sup>64</sup> As such, it may have a dual purpose: to put others at ease in a heteronormative setting and, not unrelated, to make a woman feel more in control of her presentation of self and thus perhaps also her psychological safety, in acknowledgement of such a setting. The women themselves know that the ensuing activities will challenge the very normalizing purpose of their gestures, which makes them interesting as choices. The women who are redesigning their female bodies to counter the lived effects of femininity also see their actions as temporary techniques. Indeed, the women describe practices which they know are negotiable, contingent and even reversible. In this light, some, though not all, find it appealing to think that they are picking up and inverting gender expectations ‘playfully.’

Many of the women outdoor instructors in this study, as in Morch’s (1997; see also Scraton et al., 1999), describe themselves as active and adventurous pre-adolescent tomboys. Thus they have had pleasurable experiences of physical freedom. These experiences very much form *their particular* feminine bodily training in activity (Halberstam, 1998), rather than always *resistance to* expectations of feminine bodily comportment or as an active embrace of masculine traits. Where tomboys are culturally assigned as wanting to be boys, this is socially inscribed on a psychic embodiment of non-feminine physicality. In the dichotomized gender options for girls, there is little consensually available other than “wishing I was a boy.” For there are narratives of conscious difference to other girls such as Charlie’s, Valerie’s, Jane’s and Siobhan’s, but these women say that they *felt* that they were a tomboy even when, like Siobhan, they were inhibited from embodying this physical *sense* or, like Valerie, they had to struggle to do what boys *do*. They have also spent years on farms, like Valerie and Claire, or at bachs and rural sections, like Catherine, Mandy, Rosa, Jo and Miriam, or joined outdoor groups and clubs, like Siobhan, Charlie, Jane and Elaine, at which they received early outdoor skills training. Learned feminine behaviours might be, as

Valerie says, above, still cross-ingrained and even inhibiting, but these women are working in the outdoors with some sense or bodily memory of entitlement to physical abilities forged in *their own* perceptible worlds. Women like Valerie, Miriam, Rosa and Pat have acquired strong movements in the outdoors and transported them into the city. When they express a consciousness of their contradictory gendered embodiment in that context, it comes with a desire to convey the pleasure of new strength to other women.

The most common “strategy,” then, is to represent a woman who is “comfortable being physical and comfortable doing things” (Valerie, CC0315E:7-8). This echoes the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature as intending an emancipatory aim. The “comfortableness,” to Valerie, “comes from knowing that I can try things” (CC0315E:62-63). It

also comes from having always done physical work, having discovered that there are ways I can do things that mean that I can do them...I’ve learnt that I can use my body or use things around me that enable me to do stuff. (CC0315E:64-74)

The strategic task is to find ways to encourage other women who might not have had past experience to develop a comfortable sense of ability, possibility and subjectivity. Marnie and Valerie say that they will dive into the sea first to encourage other women to swim on a sailing trip. Rosa and Siobhan say that they will “hoon around” or stand up on a sea kayak raft or grab a student’s hand and say “follow me!” as they start bouldering.<sup>65</sup> Inevitably, the rationale is about breaking down the barriers, even role modelling. Charlie, Jane and Siobhan will situate themselves as mothers, because “a mothering role” (Jane, CC0312:2142) allows for encouragement, caring and touch in supportive ways that they perceive are not heterosexualized by students. Before becoming a mother, Rosa continued instructing for the first six months of her pregnancy, partly out of her own desire to work and partly to show people that her physicality was not altered. She found her bladder under pressure as she grew heavier and eventually would ride her mountain bike alongside her group as the students ran. Siobhan specifically tells her students that she *is* a mother to give her a common ground with girls:

I wanted to say to them I'm a mum and I can do this, so you too can do it, you know, have aspirations to be a mum. Being a mum isn't- Being a woman, all that female stuff, isn't a barrier. But I didn't want to make a big song and dance about it, so I put it in terms of: 'I- If you want to talk to me over anything I may be able to understand more of it because I have a young child, myself, and I am aware of the sorts of things that young people need to deal with'...So I went about it in a round about way. (Siobhan, CC0320J:114-24)

Women like Jo, Miriam, Mandy and Hinepare, who feel uncomfortable with the suggestion that they might try to be ambiguous about 'being a woman' and say, 'no, that just isn't me,' often describe the role reversal exercises of male-female instructor teams (see also Bell, 1996b; Morch, 1997). They see themselves role modelling masculine tasks and skills as an appropriate and non-threatening strategy to expand students' perceptions of gender. Indeed, Elaine is not sure that she wants to be ambiguous about her appearance, as discussed above, but is more willing to express what she sees as an 'alternative' physicality. She says that she is aware that women do things differently in the outdoors (stand back and wait "until they are completely confident") and says reflectively, "I'm actually becoming a bit more fond of the guy's model...so, yeah, I look at everything strategically" (CC0315R:967-72). She explains in a narrative:

with the PTA working bee...we were having to slash a track and I deliberately picked up a slasher and deliberately did some really good slashing. I actually made sure that I knew how to do it first. And I quite- I've gotten- Slashing's quite easy once you learn how to do it. And it's- I really enjoy, you know- It's such a guy's thing getting a slasher and hacking out gorse. I love showing people and trying to see if they get shocked. (Elaine, CC0315R:985-993)

Additionally, Miriam, Charlie, Claire and Rosa deliberately juxtapose their competent outdoor instructor activities and appearance with a conventionally feminine appearance in order to surprise people similarly. Miriam's experience is typical of these comments:

you wear polypros to work every day and all that sort of thing. And I was at a point where I really wanted to come to the city and dress up. So I DID! And I remember shocking everybody there and partly I really enjoyed that, you know, just everyone was just used to seeing me on courses in polypros and the whole thing, and then I came in a- I had the high heels and the short skirt and the whole works. And the black stockings!...I loved it! And like I said, partly it was just cause I wanted to get out of the polypros and just FEEL like a woman. And being in the city and everything. And, um, partly to- Everyone will expect that- you know, we would all wear casual gear and I just wanted to blow that stereotype. Why SHOULD we have to stay in that sort of gear? You know? (Miriam, CC0315L:480-99)

In a reversal of the “stereotype,” she wants to challenge the perception that women outdoors are unfeminine or fail at femininity and are more comfortable in the practical “polypros” or plain outdoor clothing. She proves that she has the skills and class *habitus* to ‘do’ urban femininity. Conversely, Rosa Grace tells me that she feels “far more aware of my femininity hooning around in the outdoors than I would dressed up in a posh dress in the city” (CC0315P:229-31), perhaps because she knows what it feels like “putting on lovely dresses and make-up and...you know, feeling nice” (233-34). At her outdoor centre, she will sometimes wear a “really nice dress” to the evening meal “to show that you can still enjoy that” (CC0315P:861-62). While these are not acts of social resistance to the normative feminine appearance, they are deliberate interruptions to the singularity of the presumed, that is, non-feminine, bodily identity in strong women. Although they are not particularly lived as homophobic, they are ‘safe’ in terms of the culture of heterogender in at least Rosa’s outdoor centre.

Such strategies are perhaps only strategic in the lived context of the outdoor world in which strong women are already an anomalous “machine,” muscular “Amazon” or de-sexed “Camp mother.” They show that gendered subjectivity has a physical feel which is not incompatible with an active, strength-based physicality and may also require consideration beyond a sexual identity. A lived strength does not always signify sexual resistance—or deviation.

*Muscles*

In contrast to Rosa, who feels feminine even in her “smelly old t-shirt and shorts,” Margaret Rutherford sustains a feeling of femininity by taking time to “have a wash and get cleaned up and brush my hair” at the end of a day in the bush (CC0334T:1050-1115). Margaret is very clear that she could not be ambiguous about her gendered identity; “No, I like to be- I like to be clean and tidy in the outdoors...I don’t go out of my way to be- to be- to be whatever. [Gendered?] Gendered. Yeah. No, I don’t. I like to still look nice” (CC0315T:1340-49), she says. The feminine class *habitus* is deeply imbued in Margaret through her mother, a boutique couturière who made wedding gowns.

Margaret, however, is now a grandmother aged 50 and has begun training with a personal trainer in order to be more effective in her outdoor pursuit. She does not enjoy outdoor expeditions with a competitive ethos or authoritarian leader bent on ‘winning,’ nor is she an authoritarian or intimidating outdoor leader herself. She has changed her philosophy, recently, though, as a result of changes in her body. She devotes herself to a competitive outdoor pursuit, orienteering and rogaine (multi-day, back country, navigational running races), while also conducting professional peer group trainings. She works intensively with a personal trainer and allows her body to look as intimidating as possible to other competitors (women). She was caught by surprise one day:

well, I remember Trevor making a comment, saying, um- We were going up a hill somewhere and he was behind me and he reckoned that, you know, because I’d been doing a lot of leg weights—I must have had shorts on—he reckoned something about my legs were scary. Would scare people off or something, would threaten some people....I mean they’re not- they’re not- Let’s not get this wrong, I mean they’re not huge great seething masses of rippling muscles...But, on the other hand, I have developed toned muscles, especially around my hamstrings.  
(Margaret, CC0327T:737-55)

She is adjusting to the “psychological advantage in competition” (CC0327T:773-74) which she now recognizes she gains through presenting a muscular body. “People would say to me ‘you’re looking really good’ or ‘you’re looking really fit’ ”

(CC0327T:765-67) and she knows that

they all felt quite threatened by my presence...Well, they were all nice to me, but they always said, ‘do you train?’ and I said ‘oh, yes.’ And one of them said, ‘oh, she trains.’ You know, ‘ohhh.’ And I thought, ‘well, if you want to be competitive, you have to train,’ but they were a bit scared. (Margaret, CC0327T:784-90)

Margaret’s trainer, Roger, is focusing on her short-twitch muscle fibres and she does jumping exercises in which she flicks her feet upwards in order to improve her ability to run uphill. She says, “we’ve changed the way I run...and all these things have changed the shape of my legs. And...we want the upper body strength as well for tramping, carrying a heavy pack” (CC0318T:675-82). She concludes that, “my other goals are causing my body to change shape. [That’s obviously pleasing to you, from what you’ve-] I’m very happy with it. It’s a spin-off, yeah, from the fact that I wanted to run faster and be stronger” (CC0318T:640-49). The bodily changes have effected for her a new awareness of her physical potential, requiring a shift more importantly in her attitude: “Yeah, well, for a while, I- um, we did a lot of work- I did a lot of work with Roger about: it’s okay to win” (CC0327T:797-99). In an interesting illustration of the mutual process of psychic-social inscription, she was becoming stronger as a competitor in the hills and yet was “sabotaging” her performances with harsh self-criticism, which Roger told her was “in my brain” (CC0327T:803). She unlearned her previous attitudes to aggression, dominance and “winners,” perhaps embodied in her girlhood training, but also no doubt imprinted by experiences of physical abuse in her first marriage. She reinscribed new experiences across the psychology of feminine nonaggression in order to reassure herself that: “it’s okay to win. It’s fine. I’m allowed to win if I want to” (CC0327T:834-35). In addition, she knows that her physical achievements give her enhanced “credibility” in her mostly male workplace, especially since becoming the Australian women’s champion in the sport, and says that she now

(as a result) speaks out about social change in the organization. “If I’m going to speak up, I’ve got to be credible to do so” (Margaret, CC0315T:1247-48).

Margaret’s example of lived strength and the acquisition of a more physical body orientation shows how such changes are negotiated within the narrow margins of a binary structure of heteronormative gender, that is, a woman engaged in physical training or work tasks requiring masculine muscularity, a belief in mastery and a drive for dominance may choose to stay clean and tidy, shave extra hair and look nice in the outdoors on the basis that her maintenance of a female body guarantees femininity. Gender is, again, expressed in “how I deal with my body,” as Valerie says, and the only way to unseat masculine definitions of tasks is to do them with a woman’s body. Although she doesn’t carry a razor with her into the outdoors, Margaret shaves when she gets home. Although she is past menopause, she takes hormone replacement therapy to prolong her menstruation and the related effects of femininity. She can speak up on behalf of women when sitting on “committees full of old men” (CC0315T:1172), because she presents so unambiguously as a woman herself. And yet she *feels* that she has only gained the right to speak because of her indisputable physical prowess. Her physicality gives her “a certain mission” (CC0315T:1247). “And that’s what- why I keep doing things. Want to do things...it helps your, uh, credibility” (CC0315T:1275-87). The relations of physicality into which she inserts herself privilege the challenge of a powerful body and physical performance and, from the confidence which this elicits for her, she is able to reconsider appropriate social relations. Becoming a “threatening,” feminine woman can be strategic. Remodelling the body reconstitutes any ‘ordinary’ effects of femininity.

### *Menstruation*

Elaine Ross tells me of another approach to being strategic about gender through remodelling her body’s femininity in which she assumes control of her fertility. She takes this step as a matter of pragmatic convenience, but the effect is that she reorients her reproductive biology. As long as she suppresses ovulation, she will remain childless, culturally interpreted as barren—revered in some cultures as “manly-

hearted” (Héretier-Augé, 1989). For the women in this study, menstruation can be an experience which is felt as debilitating, forcing some to sleep for a day and becoming for others an added preoccupation with sometimes quite unpredictable body needs while in the bush.

Although Elaine is not comfortable with ambiguity in her feminine appearance, as discussed above, she readily uses the contraceptive pill to regulate her menstrual periods so that she does not bleed unless she chooses to. On long expeditions, she says, “it’s just a hassle more than anything else. Yeah. And you’re not very private and if you’re sort of leaking- you know, you wake up in the morning and you’re in a tent and, you know, ‘oh, how do I deal with this?’ (CC0336R:308-16). Elaine and her partner completed a traverse of the South Island that took them 107 days of back country tramping and mountaineering; she says, “you don’t really want your period” (CC0336R:294). She interprets her decision as “like redefining femininity to fit yourself” (CC0336R:340-44).

In a final comment on redesigning the feminine bodily orientation, one woman suggests that the most frustrating aspect of having a woman’s body to her is outdoor clothing. Ianissi says that she enjoys buying men’s clothing for her outdoors use and “with my stature, I look like a guy from the back” (CC0336S:356-57). Confused, I ask her what this means for her and she argues that outdoor clothing should facilitate for women the opportunity to urinate while standing. Women would not have to remove so much of their clothing and bare their bodies, especially at high altitudes and when exposed to the weather. Similar to Elaine, she cites convenience and safety; I am fascinated with the possibilities of such an emblematic cultural reorientation to gendered embodiment.

### **Modes of Physical Femininity**

Many women in the study do not like my question about whether and how they use their gender identity “strategically.” They do not grasp the approach or they reject the idea that gender is malleable or they dislike the suggestion that they would manipulate others to think of them in certain ways. The ‘natural woman’ is not

calculating or deceptive; ontological identity is not adjustable. And yet I was aware of many of the women expressing the feeling that they do not “fit” the generalized social expectation of women. Hinepare Maraiti, for example, says, “I don’t fit into the typical- the stereotypical way of a woman as people see that” (I0397W:3573). Marnie knows even in school that others think she is “a disappointing woman” (I0396I:1841). Siobhan says that she is “not particularly...attractive, ...not stunning...not someone who turns heads” (I0397J:4982-85). Few actually reject femininity, though, as an identity and many women specifically say that they like this identity for themselves. While they might “go back and forth between” more masculine and more feminine behaviours, actions or even appearance, many do experience these as social identities outside who they actually ‘are.’ They are aware that masculine and feminine are not exclusive polarities, but many are uncomfortable with any notion of adopting gender variation or preference when convenient. Alternately, they know that society ‘expects’ them to be feminine in a certain way and that they are not always feminine in that way. They make sense of how they take up and embody femininities and embrace more or less masculinity at the same time in their own particular ways. For some in this study such fluidity is not particularly troubling.

Women like Rosa and Miriam feel that their bodies are the determinants of gender. Rosa is married to a man who is more sensitive and thoughtful, whereas she is “outgoing, loud, aggressive and says masculine things” (I0397P:4303-04). But, she says, “I don’t see things I do as masculine, because I’m not a man” (I0397P:4320-21).

Hinepare, Claire, Jane and Valerie see their sexual orientation as a factor in their lived physicality. Hinepare says, “if anything, since I’ve been in a lesbian relationship, it’s probably enhanced my physical being” (CC0313W:1220-22). Claire echoes this thought:

I feel more strong now, because I am more in touch with, you know, my body and I feel so much more comfortable with, you know, how I am feeling...part of it is being with lovers who loved my body.

(CC0317N:482-92)

Both women refer to childhood experiences in which their bodies suffered abuse; Claire was told by a violent parent that she was not worthy of being loved and soon after

became bulimic. She “worked through” and stopped the bulimia herself, but had not felt that her capable physicality informed her sense of self until she found herself in a loving lesbian relationship. And for Jane, both inform her sense of inhabiting a transgressive identity: “being a woman outdoor leader...[is] kind of breaking norms and also coming out as a lesbian is breaking norms, so there’s threads from both that I’ve pulled together [to be a strong woman]” (CC0313X:1260-67).

Jane has “a group of lesbian friends who I love tramping with,” she says, “and I love being able to go out with them and feeling normal...if there’s too many heterosexual women [on a trip], they end up sitting around talking about their men” (CC0313X:1276-1284). She avoids male-identified, “gung-ho boys” and does trips with men who are women-identified: “lovely men...kindred spirits, even if they are in a male body” (CC0313X:1307-1309). Interestingly, her sexual orientation influences with whom she exercises her physical being, but she still describes a heterogendered physicality: “I’ll go for the real kind of gentle, enriching trips with women friends, but I’ll go for the hard epic with Dave” (CC0325X:892-894). Like many of the women in this study, lesbian and heterosexual, she has a steady expeditioning partner, Dave, who is male.

Valerie realizes that her bodily appearance fits the norm for the outdoor community in which she works where it is assumed that the women are heterosexual (CC0312E). She says,

I’m not sure if it’s particularly connected directly with my body, but certainly- Yea, I- I’m- I’ll retract that. Yes, I do. Of course I do. I look acceptable, I think I have an acceptable look. Yeah. So that definitely gives me a lot of advantages over somebody who doesn’t necessarily- who hasn’t got the long blonde hair and a reasonable body shape and- Yeah and, um, so I think that- that makes people react, um, quite differently than to somebody who- who basically is physically less attractive, like, you know? (CC0316E:31-41)

She jokes that femininity means “having nice arms and nice ankles” (CC0334E:7), although she is clearly aware that “nice” is a heterogendered privilege. It is one which she enjoys partly due, as she says, to “the body that I’ve ended up with” (CC0317E:15-

16). She knows that striding through the streets of the city in boots makes her feel quite different to the women she passes, but it does not make her feel particularly less feminine; she does not see a strong stride as detracting from ‘nice ankles’ or as making her feel or look masculine. Yet, being a heterosexual woman has, she says, “certainly made me a lot more acceptable” (Valerie, I0397E:2267-68) as a strong woman and an outdoor instructor.

### *Femme Physicality*

Most of the women in this study perceive their lived embodiment as more or less feminine. One group of participants in the study rejects any identification with masculine appearance. These women construct their femininity through a self-consciously feminine body. I call this a “femme physicality,” because it often rests on an emphasized femininity, in contrast to maleness and in relation to (all) men. For example, Valerie tells her expedition groups that they can use the “brute strength way” or “the intelligent way” of accomplishing tasks, such as lowering the anchor or rudder on a cutter (CC0315E); the implication is that women are unable to use forceful strength. She and other women “struggle” with men in their lives, but also with being female and with aspects of their bodily appearance. Miriam says, “I’ve breasts and a bum...those things are pretty hard to hide” (CC0315L); Valerie says, “the bulges are in the wrong place” (CC0315E), also hard to conceal in tight-fitting clothing. Nevertheless, despite feeling that their body surfaces are socially unmistakable, they want clear personal recognition that they articulate a specific physicality as strong women in the outdoors. It is important to Miriam that she is not just “an androgynous silhouette” in her mountaineering gear; for example, she tells students that it is a woman they are viewing in a slide show of mountaineers. The frustration and some disappointment in being female and sexualized exist with the pleasure of, on the other hand, “nice strong arms and shoulders” and the ‘security’ of an ‘acceptable’ corporeal inscription. In this context, these women experience their physicality as a feminine physicality, able to accommodate feminine adornment, not undone by “dressing up” in black stockings and a miniskirt, and remain non-threatening to others, even while it ensures a strong use of their bodies’ potential.

*Big and Boisterous Physicality*

There are some women in the study who perceive their physicality as sensual experience and seek opportunities in the outdoors to celebrate it fully as such. They design rituals, such as paddling a lake under the full moon or bathing in an old tub surrounded by remote native bush, which they associate with nurturing a feminine nature. They relish the exclusiveness of women's expeditions on which, one leader notes, women talk more about themselves, their desires and their bodies. Such 'body talk' is less man-centred than in other contexts. They celebrate washing hair, brushing hair, long hair, gray hair, wrinkles, hairy legs, being a bigger woman, being loud with other women and being "very boisterous, bang, bang, sort of thing, that I wouldn't call feminine," as Charlie says. There is a certain element of letting the "wild woman" emerge unself-consciously in contrast to the constraints of conventional femininity. As one woman says, "I like my sexual response...sometimes I can drive that relationship too, because I feel really okay about me" (CC0337M:145-50). These women are more likely to appreciate being sexual with a lover in the outdoors, in heterosexual and in lesbian situations, expressing passion more easily or freely.

*Comfortable and Capable Physicality*

Other women in this study eschew femininity and attribute their disinterest to their own inadequate embodiment of middle class, heterosexual femininity: big feet, weak ankles, "flappy" hands, putting on weight easily. They are often indifferent to women's groups and avoid all-women trips, although they are not unaware that their formative outdoors experiences were spent "traipsing around after men" in the back country. They oftentimes feel proud of being a woman in a man's world, but do not want the "hassle" of being treated like a woman in the heterosexual dynamic. These women prefer to embrace a more pragmatic sense of physical efficacy and comfort in the outdoors: sitting or sleeping on the ground feels normal. And in the city they wear comfortable clothes, have "practical hair" and keep fit and active. They describe themselves as "strong and healthy," "just the right size" and "reasonably muscular." They are not particularly out to 'prove' themselves as capable and expect respect for

their strength and endurance. Some adopt socially unfeminine behaviours, such as being stropky and aggressive, in order to fend off attention from men.

### *Staunch Physicality*

In contrast, there are also women in the study who embrace a lean-bodied muscularity and take some pleasure in embodying a “staunch woman.” They attribute their subjective embodiment to stockiness, a “muscle” physique or being “well-built for a woman.” One woman manipulates her menstruation for the convenience to pursue “epics.” Another goes into the outdoors no matter how uncomfortable she feels during a menstrual period, saying that she is “driven.” The desire to “stride around with your legs apart” and the feeling that “it would be a lot easier if I was a guy” seem to accompany the lived embodiment of this mode of physicality. Women in this group recall playing with boys and doing outdoor pursuits, such as river kayaking, as the only girl in their group. Some felt quiet “useless” at sport. Some had special relationships with fathers or brothers. Others have completed overseas climbing trips or epic expeditions with a male partner or alone.

It is important to make the observation that many of the women in this study think that they are being radical in their self-presentation and gender identity, perhaps not ambiguous, but certainly, as Jane and others say, “breaking down barriers.” And yet gender variation appears to remain within the heterosexual feminine, even among lesbian and bisexual women. Descriptions of identity given by the latter noticeably encompass masculinity to a greater extent than do those of the heterosexual women, but as gender *deviation* the practices and preferences of the research participants do not stray from dominant norms and remain in a sense “quite tame” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 28).

The fear of female masculinity, while encumbered by a cultural confusion with sexual orientation, pivots on an anxiety about bodily deviance in the dimorphous embodiment of gender. Halberstam (1998) argues that femininity in Western culture is quite precise in social practice, while masculinity in general is expansive and easily imitated. For women, regardless of their sexual orientation, there are few alternatives

to the heterosexually feminine body and certainly in the outdoors literature there is almost no discussion of ways in which femininity might be broadened, complicated or obscured, let alone how femininities change with various embodiments.<sup>66</sup> Margaret, for example, protests at the association of her legs with strength and intimidation: “I mean they’re not huge great seething masses of rippling muscles!” (CC0327T:748-49). These are not something which she feels outdoor leaders want to convey with their bodies, nor are they what Margaret wants to convey with her feminine disposition—that is, not until she is able to separate her practices of femininity from heteronormative non-competitiveness and non-aggression. When she retrains to reach new goals, she realizes that her bodily changes influence others’ attitudes toward her physicality and hence herself. ‘Physical’ intimidation is therefore strategically useful for the *psychological* advantage it offers her, in the back country and in the boardroom.

*“You Don’t Have to Be Butch”*

The comments of the women in the study are most interesting in relation to the girls for whom they have aspirations and for whom they want to be strong “role models.” Whereas many of the women recognize in their own bodily comportment the failure to unlearn femininity at certain times in their lives (“be meek and mild;” “put on my little girl voice;” “especially when I see photos of myself”), even while enjoying strength, “comfortableness” and being “boisterous and big” at other times, they seem to want to alter the social message for their students. They want to reposition ability as separate from identity: “all that female stuff isn’t a barrier” (Siobhan, CC0320J:117) and therefore, happily, “you don’t have to give up all those feminine things to be good in the outdoors” (Valerie, CC0318E:10-12). And yet these statements rely more on an acceptance of the narrowly heterogendered definitions of embodied subjectivity than any pushing apart of boundaries.

Valerie, for example, wants to convey to her students a sense that she is culturally adept at ‘doing gender’ when she says,

there’s times there when I- I make sure that I- I go and meet my group and I’m wearing earrings and I’ve got nicer clothes on and- and I look

more feminine than I do when I'm out in the bush and- Um. And I guess that's part of my- yeah, you don't have to be, you know, 'butch,' I guess is the word that comes to mind, to be able to work in this area or to be in the outdoors and enjoy the outdoors. (CC0318E:25-32)

In Valerie's description, the word "butch" appears as a concern about non-normative gender embodiment more than homosexual identity. She juxtaposes a butch presentation to "earrings" and "nicer clothes" and explains that these are part of an image which she selects: "I do think about- what sort of image do I want... 'I'm going to meet this group, yea, and what sort of image do I want to put across to them today? What do I want to do and how do I want them to perceive me?' " (Valerie, CC0318E:43-47). She hints at the possibilities that her group might perceive her as masculine without these feminine things (such as "out in the bush") and that there are days on which she might decide on a masculine "image." She understands how her bodily stance may be intimidating and, indeed, cultivates that when she is feeling "nervous" or "unsure" (CC0331E), but yet she does not envision a non-male-bodied alternate image for herself as a woman outdoor leader. She wants to avoid "that hard, brash sort of style" (CC0307E:136) which she perceives is exercised by the men at her outdoor centre. The deliberate intimidation of the 'hard, physical' is part of an embodiment of masculine power with which she does not want to be associated.

In this passage, Valerie's desire to maintain femininity and masculinity as exclusive rests on her desire not to embody all that is culturally masculine about a powerful physicality. Her students must see her capability as existing within a recognizable femininity. If the students see her as feminine, she will not be masculine—and will not be threatening. She knows that she has a "reasonable" body shape and uses appearance as the signifier of femininity. Butchness, or masculine physicality in a straight or lesbian woman, is treated as if it would be disturbing to a student group. The meanings of masculinity are attributed to a "realness" (Halberstam, 1998) of the embodiment of physical threat, not dress or accessories. In practice, butch identification may involve attention to clothes, hair, earrings and other jewellery; it is testament to how a butch woman is not selecting an image, but producing her butch identity across a masculine woman's body (Halberstam, 1998). And "butch realness" is

only one of a number of performative modes of female masculinity documented in contemporary studies (Halberstam, 1998). There may be other ways in which a butch body could be productive in “denaturalizing masculinity” (Halberstam, 1998), especially, amongst men and women outdoor leaders.

Valerie is here taking up accessories that (re)produce an acceptable identity across an inherently feminine (“nice arms and nice ankles”) body. She gives another example:

One of the things that I always used to do was paint my toenails. And that was just a way of connecting with the girls there, because it would mean that we could talk about something that we had an instant in-common interest in.” (Valerie, I0397E:2530-2536)

She wants girls to have a guaranteed identification with her when they see that she wears toenail polish (CC0318E:7-8), despite its frivolity. Perhaps the frivolity provides a distraction; she worries that they might see a butch body without it. Her physicality has, in the past, been called “the machine” by students. Her comment seems to be saying: ‘don’t look at my body, look at how I present myself and I don’t present as butch,’ which functions to restabilize the “realness,” and threat, of physical inscription in the face of the social adornment of gender.

When one woman in the study describes how she experiences her own butch identity, she reveals a more fluid range of identifications than portrayed in the apologetic comments of the straight women. Jane says,

I got to be the femme because she was so darned butch. And yet with [my recent partner] I got to be the butch and she was more femme... fun to be on both sides of the fence. Um. And to look at the assumptions that get made in a relationship....And I feel within myself very much both. (Jane, I0397X:5192-96)

Similarly, Catherine says,

it depends on what setting I’m in. Whether I- whether I have more, um, masculine traits in some social- whatever activity it might be. Or whether I perhaps have more feminine traits. I switch between them. As

I understand society xxx xxx xxx. But to me, it's no different. It's like a continuum. (Catherine, CC0334Q:373-87)

Hinepare agrees that her woman's body has "a masculinity:"

You know, I mean I th- I think I see, um- I have a picture of not only strength, I suppose, but also of sensuality, of- Um. . Of a real knowledge of, you know, the body itself. And how it functions and just tuned into those sorts of things too. Um. . And I think that a woman's body does have a femininity, but I also believe that there's a masculinity as well. And that's not- To me, that's not to do with, you know, having male hormones or that sort of thing, but it's masculinity, again in strength, sort of the rude strength and what that means. Because for me femininity is all about- It is about strength, but it's also about beauty. Masculinity is definitely about strength. Definitely. Um. . About . size. (Hinepare, CC0337W:486-507)

Butchness or female masculinity is not necessarily a facet of same-sex relations or lesbian identity (Halberstam, 1998). But Marnie says to me, "that's pretty strong, isn't it? That's what pushes against us" (CC0315I:313-14). The same impression is expressed by Loeffler's (1995a) research participants; women are worried that as outdoor leaders they are labelled lesbian in sexist "undercurrents" in their organizations. Rather than thus being isolated from the heterosexual dynamics of the organization, one example illustrates that these targeted women are then firmly entwined within them, criticized specifically for not being femme enough:

there was this one woman who was out winter mountaineering with another group. Some other instructors said, "She is so butch—who would want to be out with her in the winter anyway?" (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 19)

It offers a small glimpse at the complexity of the heterogendered relations of physicality which effect gender interactions. The text reads as if this particular woman is rejected (by male co-instructors) for her sexuality (which excludes any possibility of sex in the hills). The subtext, though, is that a lesbian sexual orientation might be 'acceptable' to male colleagues in the winter (when seduction might be impossible "anyway"), as long

as a woman has a femme physicality. A heterosexual female masculinity is so unattractive to men that even straight butchness threatens the heteronormativity of physical masculinity. The threat is to the psychic comfort levels, and, indeed, the physical identity, of the men travelling into the back country with this instructor.

If it is possible to begin to “reclaim the definition of being feminine and say ‘you could be feminine if you wanted to in the outdoors’ ” (Elaine, CC0334R:661-63), it must be equally possible to trace modes of physical femininity in the outdoors and to deconstruct the association of strong women with the deliberate use of a “threatening” embodiment of heterosexuality simply because they are capable and they know it. It is ultimately far more disruptive to gendered and heterocentric social relations to assure students in the outdoors that ‘you could be butch if you wanted to.’ After all, the vision of corporeal inversions as a process of the inscription of social and subjective identity is that each person enacts their own mode of embodying subjectivity through sensual, perceptual and physical movement; it cannot be ‘done’ by attitudes or assurances from others. And one of the “threats” to the literature of outdoors women taking up butchness as their ‘natural’ embodiment is the positioning of a masculine body as essentially “anti-feminist” (Caudwell, 1999).

## **Conclusion**

Becoming strong changes inward bodily perception as much as outward appearance. As gender’s bodily feel shifts it alters consciousness. And yet many of the women in this study, and others, put some effort into denying this in terms of femininity, especially when it comes to their teaching. Deviation from the heterogendered norms of complementary physicalities creates anxiety at times when it signals gender ambiguity. The construction of strength and size as masculine, as much as preoccupation with skills and conquests as masculine, forecloses opportunities for femininity to be inscribed in physical strength and accomplishment. When practice is based on the perception that girls in the outdoors will become interested once they are reassured of the femininity of their instructors, clearly masculinity for women is “at stake” as much as is femininity.

The ‘women in the outdoors’ literature displays similar anxiety, as if the possibility that women might become like men is so alarming that ‘women in the outdoors’ groups must quickly reaffirm and reinforce femininity in women’s emotional relations and rituals of trust and cooperation. And feminists continue to argue that gender relations will mature if staff trainings encourage more *discussions* in workshops on gender and power (e.g., Morse, 1997). It would be of more use to staff and students in the outdoors for ambiguous physical identity to flourish, for women to start on the first day of an outdoor course to take up martial arts fighting, perfect their chin-ups and train their fast-twitch muscle fibres for uphill runs. Could it be possible that heterogendered identities would no longer be produced across competitive and non-competitive, threatening and non-threatening and skilled and non-skilled physicalities?

The outdoor and experiential education literature contains traces of the recognition that the pedagogical and political issues have never been about gender: they have always been about ensuring the constitutive difference of physicality and bodily strength. Even strategies for dealing with the stress of being strong have been dressed up for the maligned superwoman as an issue of gender. The dissonance of strong women is produced by a conflict around being censured as ‘too’ physical, not by a ‘confused’ desire to be masculine or a conflict about being unlike feminine women, as Siobhan’s appropriation of motherhood makes explicit. Siobhan wants to be seen as feminine in order to be less threatening, but cannot rely on her “muscle” body to convey it ‘naturally.’ Just as Valerie meets her group wearing nice clothes, Siobhan tells her group that she is a mother. Even so, although she does not want to be *seen* as too physical, she does not relinquish its thrill for her own pleasure and subjective identity. This is what ingrains her identity at the level of her body and gives her the deeply felt, inner sense that “being physical” is “everything” for her, it is “life!” (Siobhan, CC0325J:148). The dissonance felt by the strong woman does not come specifically from the accusations that she is a lesbian, but rather it comes from her embodiment of the (presumed position of being a) heterosexual woman in pursuit of her own hard, physical and aggressive bodily power.

This chapter began from the position that the treatment of strong women in the literature must pay attention to how these women take up and exercise femininities

through their physicality as much as it tries to dismiss them for becoming more like men through their physicality. When the sensual constituents of femininities and the ways in which they are effects of the discourse of sexuality and heterogendered relations are examined, women's lived choices may become more clear. And the arguments for women-only experiences may be challenged for their notion of offering "safe" situations for women without acknowledging the potential sexualization of relationships between women; same-sex relationships are eclipsed under a "safety" which sustains men's position as able to intimidate and women as intimidated. When it is deemed "unsafe" for women and men to be in the outdoors together, whether from the point of view that unstable women jeopardize the risks that men desire or from the perspective that competitive and coercive men undermine the choices for women, then "safety" is a heterogendered concept. As such, it normalizes heterosexuality and subsumes lesbian relations. In fact, the literature renders lesbian sexuality and lesbian bodies invisible.

The next chapter begins from this conclusion to argue that in *this* light strong women will never be acknowledged as providing "safety" for themselves and other women through physical agency. The interests of heterogendered relations preclude women appropriating masculine physicality and reinscribing feminine subjectivities in a physical relation to men. Strong women must therefore embrace fully the interests of physical relations as a way of overwriting gender with a deliberately corporeal practice from within the power relations of compulsory heterosexuality.

## Chapter 7    Knowing “What My Body Can Do:” Physicality and Physical Relations in the Outdoors

Central to the project of empowerment, changing the conditions in which social and political forces shape systems and lives is finding the source for a new consciousness of personal agency. When the goal for social change is physical relations, then the target must be a bodily one, that is, the social inscription of bodies as physically normative. The source of a new corporeal consciousness of one's own power is not a psychological revelation, but an experience of efficacy, a physical moment. It comes in the midst of life circumstances which differ for individuals and groups across time, space, culture and social location, but yet, if recognized, is powerful enough to change life circumstances themselves. A critical consciousness, as envisioned by Freire and others, must be embodied. The transformation of moral character envisioned by Hahn, Dewey and others must be embodied. Feminist social change must be embodied on and across the very bodies through which power is exercised. It is only through embodiment itself that we can *become conscious* of the social production of *physicality* (Gilroy, 1989; Theberge, 1997; Whitson, 1994; Young, 1990c). We must come to a lived recognition that our physical selves are socially and sensually constituted as such; empowerment requires corporeality.

This chapter turns to the implications of corporeality for women's physical experiences. It draws together the 'problems' of the literature for strong women practising in the outdoors and the lived desires, choices, practices and body orientations of strong women practising in the outdoors. It focuses specifically on the critical issue underlying the urgency of questions of mastery, as physical/masculine, and safety, as psychological/feminine, for women's programming. It argues that in order to dismantle the social effects of physicality in which 'proving prowess' has come to be aligned with 'proving oneself,' theorizing of experience in the outdoors must make overt the processes through which bodies produce subjectivities. The last four chapters have shown that there are many, complex ways for the physical to effect the psychological. And yet, for each, that which has been dismissed as masculine is present at the very level of the body in constituting a physical femininity. The shift in the experience of

our subjective selves as powerful social beings comes in the material survival value of and visceral fascination with a physical moment.

Experiences of “personal growth,” the pedagogical term in the outdoors for subjective, psychological change through physical challenges, encompass a desire for wilderness immersion, a sense of territory travelled and the excitement of physicality, pleasure and power. Wilderness travel as self-propulsion is indeed the merging of “experiential knowledge” (Alcoff, 1997, p. 7) with the sensuous use of force and skill (Connell, 1983; Whitson, 1990). “I want to see what’s there,” says Ianissi Gray, who takes alpine tramping trips alone of four weeks on average. “I want to stop when I want to stop. I want to read a book when I want to read a book...I like to achieve my objectives, um, with the gear in my pack, wherever I am....As long as no one comes out [to rescue/search] for me” (I0397S:427-64). She sends food parcels ahead to Post Offices. Similarly, Siobhan O’Brien says,

it’s doing something that I decided deliberately to do, knowing that I had to take complete care of myself while I’m doing it and- I mean, if I was choppered out [rescued] from an area, I’d feel totally demoralized! ‘Cause I’d stuffed up!! Yeah. It’s that sense of be- And I use that, um- For me, it’s uh- helps- helps me to gain a sense of, um, um, confidence in myself, that I struggled- I’ve struggled with that my entire life. So for me, it’s one of the areas of activity where I have been able to gain a sense of self-confidence and competence...Being able to completely look after myself in outdoor environments without the support of the telephone and the electricity and all of that. (Siobhan, CC0301J:100-23)

Marnie agrees that “there’s a great attraction to being self-sufficient” (CC0301I:51-52). The ‘moment’ of corporeal consciousness comes with a new sense that one is reliant upon one’s own body, can be independent and autonomous, has “freedom and...control” (Siobhan, CC0301J:93-94), in a way not before known. Bodily reliance produces self-reliance. As an English outdoor leader says, below, it enables “a different sense of self.”

My first experiences in the outdoors allowed me to recognise a sense of being a powerful woman. It was a space where it was OK to be me and

develop a sense of physical competence...A key moment which I believe played an influence in restructuring my relationship to food was when I was in a wilderness environment and faced a decision with clear consequences for my physical survival. I needed to eat in order to complete the wilderness journey. As a result of this I became more attuned to my bodily survival needs and experienced a scenario where it was actually OK for me to eat...I recognized that I could experience a different sense of self, which lost associations with body image preoccupation and created a place of freedom from anorexia nervosa. (Richards, 1999, p. 23)

In the outdoors, consciousness of self is achieved only with bodily risk; rescues are resisted until life is threatened and the wilderness traveller takes pleasure in possessing the necessary strength and rescue skills “in reserve.” A ‘life and death’ situation might be imminent in a single river crossing; the action it elicits might happen before there is subjective awareness of it. And the lived effects of even one sole act of physical self-reliance reinscribe social subjectivity. In an American study, a woman outdoor leader recalls that her experience at “a three week backpacking camp when she was 15...totally changed her life” (Loeffler, 1995a, p. 17).

What emerges is not just a sense of capability, but a sense of knowing how<sup>67</sup> to control a situation physically, how to exercise knowledge and power together. It is not surprising that this happens in martial arts training: “I’d always been an athlete,” says one woman, “so thinking of myself as physically capable was nothing new to me. But *feeling* powerful was something else” (Solomon, 1994, p. 40). Another learns a karate “strike” and says, “for the rest of the day I thought about how I had just learned to kill someone with my bare hands...nothing felt quite like knowing that my body is capable of lethal force. I felt like I had been let in on a well-kept secret” (McCaughey, 1997, p. 86).

In this study, Jo Patterson says, “I think I already had that physical capability there. It was actually the skills that- that sort of- [gave me] the use of that physical capability in specific ways” (CC0322U:704-07). When I ask Charlie Cooper how being in the outdoors has affected her physical awareness, she puts it succinctly:

I think what it's made me is very confident in what my body can do, whereas some women don't know that. I think that's been a real- quite special part of being an outdoor woman is [that] you know your body can run you that distance and, you know- Or it can't, you know? You know you can do those things. (Charlie, CC0319M:326-31)

The defining difference between the women outdoor professionals and Warren's (1985) "ordinary women" is that trained outdoor women know what their bodies can do. It is not an experience that is common to women, even in childbirth and menstruation, nor one that is easily abstracted. It is more common that 'ordinary' women do not know what to do with their bodies when in physically demanding situations (McCaughey, 1997). Femininity depends for its very cultural definition on this 'not knowing,' on the inhibition of the subjective effects of physicality (MacKinnon, 1987). It is because bodies enable inscriptions of subjectivity, rather than the reverse, that not to know, or to have confidence in, one's own bodily capacities is immensely inhibiting. Valerie Berg reflects on her instructing that, "it's really interesting watching groups move in the bush and just how particularly women can't move....The women are the ones that are less sure-footed, and, you know, have problems placing their feet and take very short steps and- and, um, yeah, just they can't move" (I0397E:2980-86).

The lists of feminine attributes or tendencies and collections of cultural myths marginalizing women in the 'women in the outdoors' literature do not begin to explain how or why any lack of skill, strength and self-confidence in women is a complex, and not uniform, *corporeal* process. Conceptions of gender identity as biology under siege by narrow cultural stereotypes (e.g., Henderson, 1996) presume the pre-social existence of "the body" animated by psychological expression that reflects the state of the variously constrained internal "self." The inversion of corporeality allows an alternative angle to reveal the constitution of embodiment by the psychic and the social. Power lies in the pursuit of strong bodies, but not for physical reasons, that is, to be strong. And not for psychological reasons, that is, to be more confident. The exercise of physical power effects social power because strong women know what to do with

their bodies and they like what their bodies can do, while, more specifically, they also know that they can do what “ordinary” women, and many “ordinary” men, cannot.

Valerie Berg tells me that ‘being physical’ to her is “being in control” (CC0325E:5). She elaborates that it is “being comfortable with what I am doing...feeling like I can do what I’m doing. Yeah. Being able to deal with the situation whatever it is” (CC0325E:7-12). Hinepare Maraiti says, “I know that I’m a person that has to go through something myself..I definitely have to do it and feel it and all of those things first [before taking a group through the activity]” (CC0322W:772-78) and she recognizes that, as a result: “certainly I know, and I can trust myself, that if a situation occurred, that I’d be okay to handle it” (CC0319W:753-55). Rosa Grace says that being in the outdoors has made her “much more aware of...what I’m capable of” (CC0319P:401-06). She reflects on her work in the outdoors: “since I’ve been working in the outdoors...I’ve probably been the strongest I’ve ever been. Just- Yeah. And that feels nice, you know, being the strongest and most powerful I’ve ever been” (CC0319P:407-12). Catherine Chen also feels that what she has gained from being in the outdoors is “knowing how far I can push myself...and what I’m capable of” (CC0319Q:418-21). For Claire Armstrong, it is “knowing I can pretty much do what I want and knowing my body can do it, too” (CC0317N:506-08). Elaine Ross echoes the theme: “if I didn’t enjoy the outdoors, I wouldn’t be aware just how much I have got this body and how much I could use it and train it and do things with it” (CC0319R:500-03). And Jo Patterson: “I’ve definitely become more aware of my strength and my endurance” (CC0319U:691-92). Finally, Jane Watt says, “I’m kind of very ‘in’ my body. I love to be able to do something” (CC0319X:768-69); “I kind of like what my body can do” (CC0303X:993-94).

We need these experiences. Organized outdoor experiences need to focus openly on physicality for its corporeal effects: so that women know what they can do. We need to facilitate the physical moments that “totally” change women’s lives. At 50, Marnie Webb’s last child is leaving home and she is dreaming about a long cycling expedition. To her, a most “empowering” discovery is: “that I can move myself around the world, under- with my own strength” (CC0325I:100-02). Outdoor programmes must take this discovery as their explicit project.

We also need these experiences for historical and cultural change. We need to encourage the pursuit of the social inscription of strength on the ‘bodies’ of powerful women. Rather than building up a shared feminine identity, outdoor programmes are a site in which “women’s embodiment of feminine helplessness” may be perceived “and its undoing” (McCaughey, 1997, p. 59) begun. Twenty years on the literature has not really come any closer to realizing the implications of Miranda and Yerkes’ (1982) “hunches” about the constitution of subjectivity and agency in embodied physical potential. Gagnon’s (1974, p. 139) warning that “definitions of manhood and womanhood based on differences in strength are decaying, while new ones have yet to be established,” has taken a long time to reach the outdoors.

### **A New Culture of Physicality**

It is clear that the cultural feminist goals for gender-sensitive pedagogy and women’s programmes in the outdoors must be redressed for their production of heteronormative cultural practices. It is also imperative that understandings of agency, experience and power shift away from separate analyses of the psychological, the social or the physical aspects of subjectivity and consciousness. These components of consciousness are instead mutually constituent effects of embodiment. Agency, experience and power are bodily phenomena—that is, social—and as such they produce embodied subjects. Bodies and what they do are central to who we are and how society makes us. In this corporeal combination lies the possibility for resisting and reshaping the culture of male physical dominance, the culture which inscribes bodies as physical and physical difference as sexed difference. In the outdoors, outdoor leaders and wilderness travellers must find ways to undo the physical as a social construction and to construct a new culture of physicality.

A disappointing discussion of girls’ outdoor programming argues, for example, that the goal of the challenge activities in such programmes is “to foster self-confidence and not necessarily physical strength” (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 29). It revolves around the assumption that self-confidence has little to do with physical ability, that ‘the mind’ opposes ‘the body,’ and that it is appropriate to recommend that girls be

assisted when strength is required in order that they may nonetheless benefit from the activity. The authors specifically take their argument from Warren's 1985 article examining the "myths" which disadvantage women. As they believe that girls are unlikely to be able to manipulate equipment while holding their own weight (the authors are careful "not to suggest that girls cannot hold their own weight" and to allude to a general condition of femininity as relative and 'perceived' weakness), they recommend that the equipment be modified for girls in outdoor challenge activities. In this case, they attach to a cargo rope swing "a simple chest harness to aid arm strength" (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 29). They want to recognize that girls "are less likely to have built muscular strength, coordination and skill" (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 29), but fall short of arguing that outdoor programmes should actually begin to do this.

Rather than a sensory thrill generated by physical effort enhancing the pleasurable appeal of physical and social agency, these authors see psychological satisfaction achieved in assisted participation. Madonna and popular culture might say that "girls just wanna have fun," but it does seem strange that educators should continue to foreclose 'real,' lived bodily surges of power for girls and women. The girls themselves report that they want, in the words of one girl, "to know that you've actually done it" and seem fascinated with a new-found "courage" (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 30). American teenage girls working with one therapist are acutely aware of how survival situations create determination (Rogers, 1993) and opportunities for women to experience their bodies with force and skill can create courageous, strong women, as the research into women's self-defence indicates. One wonders what exactly is the substance of such any discovery of courage (see also Porter, 1996) in *assisted* challenge experiences outdoors.

This example is not an isolated one nor an uncommon approach to "the woman factor in OE" (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 28). However, once again, girls experience their bodies as cumbersome conduits of selves which must be assisted, selves which are made tentative by their feminine bodies even on the cargo ropes "confidence course" in the outdoors. Femininity itself is not negotiated, expanded, thought-about or embodied differently for these girls (at least in this brief discussion).

Presumably they “feel better” about being a girl in the outdoors, even when “girl” signifies not strong enough *not* to wear a chest harness and sit on a knot. In self-defence classes in the United States, as small steps and discrete skills are practised over and over, women practise assertiveness (McCaughey, 1997). If girls really want to “do things I didn’t think I could” and know that they’ve “actually done it” (Humberstone & Lynch, 1991, p. 30), why not give them the chance to *practise* their own physical strength?

There are different conditions in the organized outdoor experiential education context to those of women’s self-defence courses, but not as different as might be thought. Both revolve around physicality as a productive social force. Whereas women come to self-defence classes with a necessarily subversive goal, that of defending themselves, women do not come to the outdoors, according to the literature, with such a common or overt focus on physical goals. In fact, physical development itself is discouraged, both in the literature and, as the example above illustrates, in practice. Moreover, self-defence training results in self-confidence only with the practice, performance and imprinting of physical strength on the body’s memory (McCaughey, 1997).

Instructors in two studies of self-defence for women in the United States say that beginners must learn to overcome femininity itself in order to value themselves as women (Guthrie, 1997; McCaughey, 1997). In the outdoors, instructors do not teach women students to overcome the limits of femininity or a feminine bodily disposition. They do not teach them to “holler,” yell, grunt and swear. Skills are taught, such as how to lift heavy loads, but they generally do not include how to stride, how to squat, how to urinate in a climbing harness or while standing on a rock ledge, how to interrupt the menstrual cycle or how to mat one’s hair into dread locks while in the back country. And yet walking, sitting, urinating, menstruating and hair are notable themes in the ‘body talk’ of the women in this study. They certainly do not include the “sidekicks,” “spinkicks” and “snapkicks” of karate classes (Solomon, 1994).

Skills tend to focus on the harmony of wilderness living and meditation draws inspiration from nature’s solitude. The limits of femininity are treated as cultural stereotypes and women are encouraged to adapt skills and activities to their ‘true,’ inner

needs as women. Women-only courses simply endorse the cultural view that femininity is self-normative, that is, it aligns all women with female bodies, and that when men are not present femininity is not a subordinate social relation. In fact, the greatest obstacle to women's physical competence in the organized outdoors context is heteronormative physical relations and the everyday practices of gender maintenance, involving interactions with men *and other women*. If women cannot learn to exercise physical strength when men are present, then the culture of normative male physical superiority continues uncontested.

Women outdoor leaders who have accomplished skill training and recognized levels of professional competency have already begun the process of reinscribing physical habits. In the intense and repetitive practice in motor skills, they learn to overcome tentativeness: Elaine recalls a significant training course on which the male instructor told her group of women, "don't paddle like mice!" She says, "I found that a really intense...experience, just learning how to paddle and not be scared and to do it strong" (I0397R:2104-10). Charlie learned that practice enables her to stop inhibiting her attitude towards her body's own potential:

I had to learn that it was okay...to do 100 days in a kayak...[where others learn to roll a kayak in] a six day course...But when I've got it, I've got it...And it will stick, right? Whereas other people would have given up long ago and go, 'oh, I'm just useless. I have to-' Where I've stopped saying 'I'm useless' so much now. (Charlie, CC0322M:182-99)

Pat also reflects on how such physical experiences effect subjectivity:

my sense of competency in the outdoors makes me feel very much less at risk. It makes me feel (accurately or not) capable of handling physically threatening situations and being able to look after myself. For example, there's something very solid and aggressive about a pair of heavy, leather tramping boots and a steady, determined gait! The experience stays in your physical memory and effects how you feel about your body's power. (Pat, Q0502C)

It is curious, therefore, that an empirical investigation into a small group of American women's experiences as outdoor leaders uncovers a contradiction between

professionally certified, employed women leaders and their low self-perception of their own competence. A group of outdoor programme directors responding to a survey for the same investigation repeatedly describe their frustration that women on their outdoor programme staff teams want more training, are not confident in their skills, hold themselves back and tend to work in “controlled outdoor settings” in which they do not get experience in field-based decision-making and judgement. The women outdoor leaders do not “believe in themselves” and thus their “sense of self-competence and actual competence may not be congruent” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 120). If self-confidence is dependent upon physical competence, how could competent outdoor women have low self-confidence?

The unanalysed subtext of the research recommendations is, once again, heterogendered norms of physicality: Loeffler (1997, p. 122) concludes that “in a mixed-gender environment, some women may not demonstrate their competence for fear it would show-up the men in the group.” However, she defines competence as “associated with masculinity” and “a masculine trait” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 120) and so she can only assess this problem among the small group of professional outdoor women in her research as a fear they share of “emasculating” their colleagues. She recommends that women-only trainings would be “safe and nurturing,” “more comfortable” and “outside traditional gender-roles” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 122). There is a feeling expressed that “the same old battles of sexism” are so tiresome that removing women from mixed-gender situations frees them to get “the leg up to develop technical skills” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 122).

If a new culture of physicality is to be constructed in the outdoors, social practice must shift the notion that gender is produced only within culture (“traditional gender-roles”) and physical skills are accessible only beyond culture and are otherwise constrained. Furthermore, it is crucial to this project that the correspondence between masculinity and competence be exposed as the constitution of masculine physicality through the appropriation of physical strength and its maintenance as natural in male bodies in extra-cultural, ‘real’ environments.

New physicalities can be read over texts such as Loeffler’s. For example, it is conceivable that women can learn from other women while in a mixed-gender

environment and the reappropriation of physicality may still be accomplished (see Humberstone, 1990, 1990, 1995, 1997, discussing girls). As discussed in Chapter 6, the second-wave feminist perception that successful women act as role models for less liberated women must be revisited to account for heterogendered effects. Loeffler (1997, p. 122) argues that women-only groups “can provide support and opportunity to push beyond previously held limits,” but does not explore how, if the reverse is true, mixed-gender groups strictly enforce such limits—or may not do so. Unpacking these heteronormative practices would surely complicate the generalized complementarity of mixed-gender groups. It is presumed that men set “the agenda” in these groups, that women do not participate in holding these limits over other women and that people somehow revert to socialized “traditional gender-roles” in the outdoors. Yet, if the agenda is about masculinity as physical competence, it is only by consensus that ‘men’ are there to further their own interests. Some men do teach women to “do it strong,” as much as other men are peeking into their tents, touching their breasts inappropriately or ridiculing them in public conversations, as women in this study report, in the course of mixed-gender training sessions.

Why, to take the analysis of heteronormative situations further, is it an acceptable rationale that a woman feels more comfortable on a women’s trip where she does not perceive that she is being “checked out” as a sexual partner and on which toileting and nakedness are less of an issue (e.g., McClintock, 1996b)? Are sexual approaches on outdoor trips made only by men? Are women somehow less sexual about nakedness? How, for another woman, are “macho and sexual” behaviours in mixed groups intolerable and not contestable (Mitten, 1992a)? More empirical study is needed to examine the heterogendered relations through which the meanings of all of these social actions are constructed. It seems that women may even take pride in their masculine physicality (“machisma,” according to Lichtenstein, 1985), but when translated to physical dominance over (all) women, macho behaviours are abhorrent. It is the task of research into women’s (and men’s) different experiences of physicality to uncover variations in embodiments of sexual agency and gender.

Additionally, it is not ever argued in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature that women be encouraged to develop their muscles and hone their skills in order to

“outperform” and “show-up” men in the group; could the consequences be so great that such a situation would become “unsafe” for the women? By the same logic, all-women groups are deemed “safe and nurturing.” Problematically, “safe” has come to mean ‘where women are relatively less strong.’ In that case, it is doubly important that women realize that physical strength is necessary to outdoor competency, wilderness living *and* femininity. These are all issues which inform a new physicality for women in the outdoors and about which so far there is very little empirical detail.

Perhaps it is time for the profession to be more specific about the unspoken threat to women’s “psychological safety” which is a steady theme in the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature (see Galland, 1994, and Loeffler, 1996b, for such threats). One of Loeffler’s (1995b) respondents says that she was afraid while instructing in the field with a co-worker who thought it his right to sleep with the women students or women staff; he was removed from the field and fired immediately once she alerted the base staff. Miriam Eales, in this study, experienced a difficult training course when her complaints were not taken seriously. It took her many years to name her harasser publically following the events and to lobby for a sexual harassment policy in the certifying body overseeing the skills course on which she was repeatedly pursued. “[Once it was big hands coming from behind me] around my boobs, actually. It was pretty terrible,” she says.

Yeah- I find it- I still wonder to myself why I didn’t kick- turn around and kick him in the balls, but- If only I could re-live that. I actually understand the whole victim role much more after having experienced that...I hated myself for weeks and months after that, for not really reacting in a different way. (Miriam, CC0327L:320-31)

Although she had alerted the course co-ordinators at the time, the story was a great source of amusement to the other men on the course. She comments that,

I was the only female in that group and the male assessor who harassed me would NOT have harassed any of the guys on the trip, so they weren’t subjected to that...And, um, that definitely had an affect on my performance particularly after two or three days. And it had an affect on my confidence and the isolation I felt within the group, too. Especially

as some of the incidents were affirmed by the group or laughed at. They thought of it as good fun...Because I was female, I was seen as a target for it. (Miriam, CC0308L:391-405)

She did eventually write a letter to the perpetrator, who replied, somewhat mystified, that he had been genuinely attracted to her (CC0308L;CC0312L;CC0327L). The incidents were not just a threat to Miriam's "psychological safety," but also to her physical competence and sexual agency. Is it reasonable that the literature would simply direct her to seek the "psychological safety" of women-only training and courses in future? Threats to "psychological safety" are inscribed across bodies and must be redressed with physical skills and not physical inhibition. Miriam herself realizes retrospectively that it would have been appropriate to respond at the time with physical force.

It is also conceivable that the alleged fear of male emasculation has more to do with a fear of female masculinity, and its social consequences, and it is for this reason that the forces of compulsory heterosexuality are served by physical inhibitions. The strongly criticized "competitiveness" of the 'male model' is an as yet unexplored euphemism for goading<sup>68</sup> and shaming behaviours and bullying 'humour' of men hostile to both less skilled and highly skilled women in the outdoors. Indeed, the reaction of men to strong women in the outdoor world is not often one of emasculation, but more one of increased aggression and hypermasculinity.<sup>69</sup> The presence of strong women does not necessarily rouse men's softer, gentler sides, as Joyce (1988) points out. The teenaged boys' announcement that they would have to rape their female outdoor leader as she was the only woman present their first night in the bush is an example of this (Galland, 1994). The contemptuous remark about a woman being too butch to be desirable to any male co-leader, even if she was to be heterosexual or even if she is covered in winter clothing is another (Loeffler, 1995a). The men rushing in to lift heavy loads for women students or their guide is a third example.

Finally, the problem of physical competence as masculinity is not satisfactorily resolved for women outdoor leaders who do develop competence in women's trainings; it is conceivable that masculine physicalities may very well appear in all-women groups. Comparably, the women who "finally learned that they were already

competent” (Loeffler, 1997, p. 122) and stopped deferring to men or downplaying their physical accomplishments may also have a femme physicality, as preferred by some of the women in this study. There is not always a correspondence between a gendered physicality and a physical experience of gender. I cannot agree with Scraton et al.’s (1999) conclusion that those women soccer players in their study who are strongly identified with an aggressive, skilful physicality are exhibiting false consciousness and seduced by the men who control their active bodies and pursuits.

While these thoughts are exploratory, I believe they are plausible and worth considering in future ethnography and other research. In this light, the case for a new culture of physicality would reject the concept of a “women’s physicality.” Physicality, itself, is an historically constructed and discursively productive concept organizing gendered bodies around more than practices of gender. Feminist analyses have begun to deconstruct the etiology of the term, as does McDermott (1996), in order to expose its investment in the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and disconnect it from connotations of male physical prowess in sport. Additionally, researchers are taking up the term in order to “ground it in women’s sporting experiences” (McDermott, 1996, p. 27; see also Allin, 2000) and thereby reconceptualize its gendered signification. I believe a third approach is necessary, incorporating and extending these two. Women’s lived experiences of their physical bodies in physical activity in the outdoors inscribe historically masculinized social practices, such as the necessity of proving prowess and responding to competitive challenges. Similarly, the pleasures and struggles with physicality also reveal historical, corporeal practices of femininity. Physicality is lived in a way that produces *multiply* inscribed bodies at the same time and none of them is any more “grounded” or authentic than the others.

The problem with either of the first two approaches alone is illustrated by McDermott’s (1996) own work. Referring to her own experience, she writes that the historical representation of sporting physicality as facilitating particularly “male physical power and/or masculinity” actually has little meaning in relation to her own “lived, physically active, bodily experiences as a female” (McDermott, 1996, p. 17). She makes the mistake of assuming that the production of masculinity and powerful bodies relates only to men’s experience and male bodies. In the last two decades of

theorizing, in body cultures and in popular culture, the social practices constructing representations of masculinity have been increasingly disconnected from male bodies. The plurality of experiences of masculinities in 'both,' and other, genders is more accessible (e.g., Halberstam, 1998). One of the gains from the intense identification of the concept of physicality with masculinity *historically* is precisely an understanding of ways in which gendered identities are physically produced, lived *and altered* over time (Connell, 1995). There is no 'true' association, but a pattern of cultural production. McDermott (1996) overlooks this.

More importantly, though, McDermott (1996) fails to situate her own "bodily experiences as a female" in the social context and cultural meanings of being female, feminine and embodied as a woman of a particular social order organizing gender, race, class and sexuality. She bases much of her thinking on MacKinnon's (1987) arguments, but does not usefully apply MacKinnon's own definition of physicality. This might best be summarized as that women bring to "the physical potential of [their] body" the experience of the desire not to feel subjected, maimed and limited by the gender hierarchy "in [their] physical relations with other people" (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 123). The different experiences of physicality for women than men are always tied to "the history of women's subjection" for MacKinnon (1987, p. 121). Therefore, McDermott's (1996) use of these arguments should situate her own embodiment in the subjection and objectification of women's bodies in the gender hierarchy. Her own (and her research respondents') "active" physicality cannot be claimed *as if it is as evenly accessible* as that of men and then generalized in female experience. She approaches the issue of a "women's physicality" as if both terms are "grounded" in 'real' and mutually exclusive bodies. Similarly, Allin (2000) approaches the intersection of women's physicality and sexuality by discussing pregnancy.

I disagree with McDermott's (1996, p. 18) conclusion that the term physicality has "inherent gender neutrality" and is therefore useful to feminist sport sociologists as "a subjective construction that women both understand and control, built up from their own bodily experiences of physical activity" (p. 19). Physicality is a useful, and malleable, social construction, in which the social effects of physical experiences are made conscious through being lived in the plurality of heteronormative corporeal

practices. However, women never, as McDermott (1996) does infer, just experience “being a woman” through their bodies and nor is “feminine bodily existence” (Young, 1990c, p. 154) all that is acquired by women through movement and “living action” (Young, 1990c, p. 142). I think it is more important to recognize that all discursive formations, such as physical relations, and their constituent concepts, such as physicality, have an inherent *historicity* which prevents neutrality, but that this is the very quality which makes them less stable than they appear. That physicality is not a gender neutral concept does not make it less useful for women. Women will never “control” understandings of “women’s physicality,” just as men have never controlled the concept; “women’s physicality” is never separate from men’s dominant, subordinate and subversive physicalities.

This reservation about the focus on interpreting “women’s experience” from the qualitative analysis of local, in depth and contextual data also makes me cautious about approaches such as McDermott’s (1996) and Allin’s (2000) which aim to explore physicality as personal meaning for specific women in a small group. McDermott (1996, p. 25; emphasis in original) observes that “little effort has been made to examine the *lived body* in the context of women’s lives; that is, how women’s bodies are lived from the inside...[and therefore] exploring the female body through physicality may offer new insights into the ways in which women can be empowered.” And yet she concludes that the literature needs “a more critical feminist perspective...to assess the broader meaning and significance women derive from their canoeing experiences, particularly in terms of whether (and how) these experiences may contribute to their physical and social empowerment” (McDermott, 2000, p. 99). “Broader meaning and significance” seem to indicate an interest in social relations; she does not present or build upon (at least here) a phenomenological analysis of the ways her research participants’ experience their bodies’ intentionality and orientation when canoeing. She does not explain how the lived body mediates social relations or how physicality translates “physical” experience into identity, interiority and desire through social practice. The analytical framework of corporeality as the active and “infinite pliability of the body’s” (Grosz, 1994b, p. 210) social surfaces lived as psychic depth and

inscribed as physical through each other's subjection gives a far more specific means for viewing physicality as constitutive social process rather than "women's experience."

### **"De-Gendering" Outdoor Activities?**

A new culture which recognizes that discursive meanings of physicality circulate in physical relations rather than being accrued by certain inherent traits and made 'concrete' in 'real,' physical bodies opens the way to reexamining the social definitions of outdoor physical activity. The wilderness is not "outside traditional male society" (Mitten, 1985, p. 20) any more than it is a masculine domain (Loeffler, 1995a; Warren, 1985). The outdoors, and how we characterize relations in it, is as much a cultural construction as is sexual difference; indeed, "relations to the non-human world are always historically mediated...through specific conceptions of human identity and difference" (Soper, 1995, p. 4). The desire to live physical prowess, it is argued, is a masculine pleasure or coercive pressure. As a discursive social force, however, physical prowess is better seen as a gendering process inscribing bodily difference and a bodily process producing cultural difference. By this shift in the argument, physical activities in the outdoors do not reflect or reinforce gender meanings, but enable their social organization and reorganization through the lived, adventurous meanings inscribed at the level of bodies socialized as 'physical.'

In the empirical study, for example, Charlie Cooper narrates an anecdote about a rock climbing trip for which the plan was to complete 50 climbs. In the course of 15 days at a climbing cliff, she climbs 48 routes with a climbing partner, who climbs 57, himself, by the end of the holiday. She tells me that her training goal had been to return to her regular routes and "to flash" a grade 22 climb. She is so strong when she returns to New Zealand that she climbs the previously too difficult grade 22 effortlessly. In acquiring the strength required for her goal, has she overcome any gendered barriers to climbing, defused the gendering of the activity of climbing itself? Is she now more 'like a man' in her intense pursuit of an effortless force and a proven, quantified, prowess? It was, after all, her climbing companion's idea and a plan which he adjudicates, for she has to "wipe seven of them off," because she has been helped by

“hanging on the rope” as the second climber. As she explains to me, he tells her they “don’t count,” because “they weren’t good enough.” Even so, Charlie knows after this trip that she is at her most intensely-honed “peak” of physical potential (CC0335M:161-86). She returns to the climbing route at which she had failed for a year and “flashes” the climb. Has Charlie transformed the climb itself or the cultural context of climbing by the transformation in her physical abilities and body?

A recent American campaign to promote physical activity to girls and women emphasizes the health benefits and argues overall that inactive women bear economic costs to society. In the process of this new, “more direct approach” women in unhealthy lifestyles are targeted for disregarding important “physical health gains” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 36). In addition, they are assured that “improved self-esteem and confidence, which are a product of increased strength, endurance and flexibility” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 36), are important mental health benefits. In the discussion of how parks and recreation professionals can offer more support to inactive girls and women, they in turn are told that “girls and women need opportunities to acquire basic skills” and that traditional activities, such as “adventurous activities,” viewed as “masculine domains” must be “de-gendered” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 38). Girls and women will accomplish this shift in cultural meaning; they must be made welcome to develop skills, play competitive and friendly sport, do weight training and have outdoor adventures so that their participation will break down negative “cultural stereotypes.”

And yet, the low activity levels of many almost-adolescent girls,<sup>70</sup> the argument goes, demand another approach. The physical benefits must be separated from social perceptions of identity, that is, physical activity for girls and women will not change who they (really) are. The new separation relies upon girls taking up physical activity as girls. The achievement of strength and skill is not an appropriation of a mode of physicality if it is prevented from altering everyday practices and corporeal consciousness. The argument that “girls need to see that physical activity need not compromise perceptions of gender” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 38) does not encompass ways that gender is inscribed on active bodies and practised in heterogendered physical relations, but rather views gender as deep, inner and innate self-expression.

As girls are free to be girls in this view, they would not be encouraged to characterize their freedoms as boyish. Indeed, in my study, Rosa Grace says that she tries to tell people that “you don’t have to be a tomboy” (CC0315P:864). She wears a dress to dinner “just to show that I can be feminine and look pretty and still do a good job in the outdoors” (CC0315P:859-61). In a sense, then, just as Rosa does, this strategy attempts to disengage physical activity and skilled ability from those people (and inherent sexual difference, treated as discrete from productive social relations) who want to participate. It implies that without the masculine bodily associations, girls and women would want to participate in an activity that is “good for them,” and that once involved, the presence of their female bodies would diminish or eliminate the affiliation of such activity with men, masculinity and male bodies. It re-establishes the fixedness of gender as inner self or ontological meaning embedded in the complementarity of sexed embodiment. The only way to ‘de-gender’ physical activity is to ‘re-gender’ physical participants and reconstruct their bodies as physical vehicles requiring care. It replicates McDermott’s (1996) problem of taking up an analysis of physicality *because* of its gender neutrality to enhance “women’s experience;” Bialeschki (1999) uses health and physiology as neutral ground.

There is a certain artifice about undoing gendering practices of social activity by recuperating gender ideology. And two important incongruencies must be considered. This approach advocates that women and girls gain “increased strength, endurance and flexibility” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 36) in order to access healthier bones, reduced joint swelling, reduced blood pressure and better control of weight and so on. It does not consider the corporeal effects of the use of such strength by women in their participation in adventurous activities, effects which are exercised only as the girls and women produce themselves as subjects in their very participation. It tries to deny strength, endurance and flexibility as gendering constituents of such activities, much less as social practices which reinscribe gendered subjectivities. Increased strength is a discrete by-product of rationalized health (White, Young & Gillett, 1995).

Moreover, other women are required to reassure the women and girls unused to physical activity: “strong women role models also can help show how sensitive issues like femininity can be redefined within a woman’s own perceptions and experiences to

allow a greater degree of freedom and to enhance resistance to restrictive expectations” (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 38). Women and girls are assumed to take up femininity in a relatively uniform, non-physical and easily threatened way and are encouraged to hold onto it; yet active, athletic, “strong women” embodying alternate femininities, or perhaps masculinities, are “role models.” The incongruence of strong and muscular women as Physical Education teachers who enforce a curriculum of girls’ Physical Education including hygiene, appearance and comportment for an emphasized femininity is noted in Scraton’s (1992) ethnography of four girls’ schools. In this study, Siobhan O’Brien, among others, enjoys her own muscular physique and physical competence, but wants her students to understand that it is appropriate to have ambitions “to be a mum...being a woman isn’t a barrier” (CC0320J:116-17). She models a nurturing leader for the girls, rather than a competitive leader, which she provides for the boys.

“De-gendering” activities—although this unwieldy term is not actually clarified—by relying on compliant femininity to undo social practices central to dominant male masculinity, in particular with no examination of the social effects of building strength, skill, endurance and self-efficacy for previously inexperienced girls and women is a misdirected strategy. And yet it appears to be one shared by many of the women in this study, even if partially. It is appealing to encourage others by implying that physical activity has no specific social consequence and to believe that one’s inner, self-knowing being cannot be affected. It may explain the use of the chest harness for the girls at the outdoor education centre; for it might be deemed more important to let the girls be girls in order to encourage them to participate in the first instance. Indeed, it is the very modification to the cargo net activity that signifies that it is not being used by boys and men; perhaps in the end it “de-genders” the cargo net and swing as masculine. But what about the girls?

In some ways this anecdotal analysis points to the problem which lies in much outdoor leadership and ‘women outdoors’ theorizing. The object of gender cannot be the focus of inquiry until its social constituents are made more visible. Many of the strategies and approaches of women in this study are not about gender as social practice or even social location, but more about gender as “redefined within a woman’s own

perceptions and experiences,” as Bialeschki (1999) suggests, above, and such redefinition rarely designs an alternative to the ‘deeply’ ingrained, repetitive, heteronormative, feminine bodily orientation with which some women tell me they are becoming more comfortable as they grew older. As well, it has been noted that “American images of the socialization of girls according to a sex-role stereotype of simpering, passive, suburban femininity did not describe the reality of boisterous New Zealand country girls” (Middleton, 1992, p. 33). In this cultural context, and for theorizing informed by the gendered experiences of women in the outdoors in this country, one of the most visible and contested constituents of gender is physical strength. However, theorizing about “gender issues” in the professional literature itself may not ever have been about gender as anything but the effects of physical strength.

An Australian outdoor analyst proposes the same possibility, but in slightly different terms. She concludes a research report into competency and confidence for women outdoor leaders by reiterating

how important it is for women, even those with years of experience, to find ways to assess their skills objectively...the industry needs to see through traditional male practices, to look beyond stereotypes, to allow women to develop their own identity, their own ways of working and confidence in their ability...Perhaps the crux of this argument is not gender, but really more the issue of recognising and appreciating difference. (Carter, 2000, p. 78)

She reaches the same conclusion that “the crux of this argument is not about gender.” Theorizing about women’s gendered experiences may always have been about differences in men’s and women’s physicality rather than differences in innate identity. However, she stops short of exploring the ways in which embodied gender difference produces, while it disciplines, heterogendered physical strength. Whereas she, like Warren (1985), would want to ‘appreciate difference’ as diverse physicalities, I want to destabilize gendering relations of physical difference. Another analyst proposes that “it is not necessarily differences between the sexes which can create tensions, but rather differences in the images and perceptions of women in the outdoors and their femininity/sexuality in the working outdoor environment” (Allin, 2000, p. 65). Again, I

think she would also agree that 'it is not about gender' as "differences between the sexes," but feminist theorizing must be extended to how physicality defines and inscribes the corporeal experience, from the social to the subjective and back to the social, of gender as hetero/sexual regulation of bodies and their potentialities.

### **Seducing Strong Women**

When strong women use their strength and capability without thinking about themselves as women, they find that they achieve greater self-satisfaction from what their bodies "can do." A large-scale survey of Australian outdoors women finds that when they feel more aware that they are women, they report that they tend to feel less satisfied with their performance, abilities and bodily appearance (Kiewa, 1997). Arnold's (1994) respondents also feel that they are 'made' more aware of being women in their relations with men who 'cater' to and protect them.

Morch's (1997) study examines women's extreme dissatisfaction with outdoor leadership situations in which they or their women students withdraw, complain in private, but are silent in public and cannot confront men over issues which effect certain conditions for their own physicality. Morch focuses on the ineffectiveness of women's silence as an immediate, practical and political response and concludes that tacit expectation of men's physical superiority and deference to the men present are both failures in practice for strong women.

In this study, Valerie explains why the dilemma becomes more complicated when one could raise the issues as a group's outdoor leader. She says of being a strong, physical woman that,

it's usually not something I talk about explicitly with a group...I guess, um, I often have a dilemma about what concepts or what ideas or what things I should introduce. It's like, 'well, this is their experience. This seems to be what is important to them now. I can see all this stuff going on but this is what they are focusing on, so it's not-' I have that dilemma about 'should I draw their attention to this or should I just work with

what's important, what they perceive is important for them?' (Valerie, CC0315E:40-52)

Her concerns echo Julia Morch's frustration with the mixed group for which she was a leader that was not communicating about the issues of physical competence and heterogendered relations which were central to the group dynamics. The important question illustrated here for women outdoor leaders is why women who have become strong cannot use their capability and subjective redefinition of gendered embodiment to confront discursive practices of dominance at work in groups. How can self-awareness become isolated from physical agency at the time in which the subjective experience is indeed constituted by physicality? Valerie says, "it's usually not something I talk about explicitly." It seems to me that the feminist critique has misjudged the basis from which to contest sexed embodiment: physical challenges are metaphors and bodily changes are 'natural' consequences of being in the 'natural' environment and not 'talked about explicitly' in any context of the transformation of social relations. "Other than sport," writes one analyst,

it is probably the relation between men and women that most sustains the continuing sense of the role of physical strength in the maintenance of masculinity. Rarely is the belief on the part of men that they are stronger than women ever tested, since the patterns of deference are so well-learned that females rarely compete physically with men. (Gagnon, 1974, p. 146; see also Young, 1990c)

While such "patterns of deference"—around physical relations and not gender relations—have not been empirically documented in the outdoors, they have been presumed and used as the rationale for arguing that women are intimidated by men's prowess and, indeed, their presence (e.g., Nolan & Priest, 1993; Warren, 1985). The problem of deference to men is raised in research studies such as Loeffler's (1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997) and Morch's (1997) as examples in previous chapters indicate. It is also evident in this study.

Many young adults in New Zealand take a month-long wilderness immersion course for personal growth at the Cobham Outward Bound School. The narratives

about experiences at Outward Bound in mixed groups while the women were in their late teens are revealing.

Despite being a capable Physical Education university student, Jo Patterson did not have a particularly good time on her Outward Bound course. She says,

I felt frustrated as a student, because, um, I guess, personally I felt confident, but as- as a group I felt it took quite a lot to for us to come together to do things. I had, um, one male in particular in my watch who felt totally threatened by me. And, um- And- To the extent where he- I remember on [the first] Bush [expedition] him standing on the side of the hill and like- And at that stage, I remember we were- we were lost. But I was pretty sure I knew where we were. And, um- And I sort of indicated- pointed out, um, sort of features in the land. And sort of tried to explain where we were. And I remember him turning round and saying, 'what the fuck would you know?' And it was about that stage that I thought, 'Oh, I don't actually need this. I don't need to be treated to like this.' And I started just stepping right back. And became very-very- and not taking a leadership role at all. I just decided-...as far as my own sort of personal growth and development goes, I feel it was probably minimal. (Jo, I0397U:2237-66)

Rosa Grace had a similar experience. She recalls,

it wasn't until I actually got- I did an Outward Bound course when I was about 19 and it was a mixed course. And there were young guys there who thought that women weren't as capable and it blew me away, because I'd never ever thought that anyone-...thinking back, I guess I had difficulty, um, communicating and relating to some of the guys. I remember a big argument in the bush- yeah, with- with the guys, and um- because they- they just thought so differently. And I thought 'but they're wrong, they're wrong.' You know? 'We ARE capable!' And 'I CAN do this.' You know? And, um, and I guess it being sort of a new thing, not- not being able to sort of communicate or cope as well with that. (Rosa, I0397P:1586-92,1730-39)

Rosa points to the unfamiliarity of trying to speak from a position of being strong, capable and knowledgeable in the outdoors, trying to ‘fight’ against the positioning as helpless and incapable. Claire Armstrong writes a strong memory of the increasing uncertainty she also began to feel on her Outward Bound course when the group was map reading in the bush. Despite having been tramping since she was 15, she was overwhelmed by the “forceful insistence” of a domineering male student and became uncertain, listless and “quite content to just follow along behind the guys who were making the decisions and not even wonder whether they were right or not” (Claire, M0503N:45-48).

In a different setting, as an outdoor instructor Miriam Eales overheard two fellow instructors discussing her leadership performance of that day around the fire one night, aware and embarrassed that the students could also hear the conversation. She was unsure how to respond.

And I thought ‘fuck.’ You know? ‘I HAVE had the mileage. I HAVE- I AM good at that, and blah, blah, blah.’ And I was thinking all of these things. And I thought to myself how I had been over the day. And because they were there and they were competent- one of them was a really competent nav- navigator of trails and he was a hunter. And the other one was, you know, just a really experienced bushcraft instructor...And I thought to myself ‘I’m invisible, because I didn’t make myself more visible. And they just- just, you know, they were seeing what they wanted to see and not what IS.’ And so I remember the next day feeling really torn between showing them what I could do or just feeling so pissed off that ‘nah, stuff it. They’re not worth it.’ But in the end I ended up doing the first option. (Miriam, I0397L:4296-4316)

These are examples of instances in which physical strength has not been ‘the’ issue, but gender relations have openly obstructed the women from exercising power. They have taken certain action in indirect response, whether withdrawing or reasserting themselves in performance.

Other situations are more insidious. Mandy Harris, for example, has occasionally worked on management courses with mainly middle-aged men called

'clients.' Their outdoor adventure often ends at the evening cocktail hour. When I ask her if she has had any experiences as an outdoor leader that have limited her because of her sexuality, she says "no," but when I ask her about unwanted sexual attention she says, "Oh. Yup!" (CC0312V:1638). She responds to the incident quite strongly:

Yeah: 'Get AWAY! I want nothing to do with YOU! You're just a CLIENT!' Yeah. Actually I'd- I had a HORRIBLE experience at [name of outdoor centre] with that with- With management groups I found it the worst...they liked the instructors to socialize. And I just kind of- I ended up in the evening feeling like I was some kind of- They thought I was kind of some- not a bimbo, but kind of- Because I was an instructor and I was female, I was kind of theirs, and they could kind of- because they were employing me- you know? Oh, God!

And it wasn't- and it wasn't kind of quite so overt as that, but it kind of was. I felt it really subtly. I felt I didn't want to have- Oh, I just- It made me feel really quite revolting. I- Oh- Oh! That was- that's the wor- You know, I've nev- It's always- There's always- sometimes, you know, that you can kind of tell it- some kind of attraction from some male, or whatever, but THAT was REALLY horrible. I'll never forget that. That was just the most HORRIBLE evening.

[Was it all men?] No! Most of these men all had wives and everything. That's what for me made it even WORSE! And- But these- You know. And it- It just became kind of this joke that they're all- And- And talking to [a senior woman instructor], this wasn't the first time that it had kind of happened with this company. And I just thought- It was so revolting. And I- I just really walked out thinking 'Who do you think I AM? I'm NOT your thing to play with. I'm NOT, you know, some-' Oh! Oh! It was just revolting...You know, it was really hard to kind of- The next day I felt- We were still instructing, I think, the next day, and I really felt not really quite so into it...

[Were they putting their arms around you?] Oh, yeah, all that kind of-...I just kinda felt like they felt they had employed us and that we were, um, okay, we were th- their instructors, but they- I felt like they kinda felt like we were kind of the game for the taking? And I didn't feel like that at all. You know, like- It's like 'Hey!' You know? 'This is- This isn't on. I'm not here- I'm here because I have to be, because you want me to socialize with you. Um. But I'm not here, you know, for anything other than a work kind of thing, nice social interaction.' And I- I just- It gave me a horrible feeling. I just thought 'I can't believe this!' It was really horrible...You know, that- that kind of took me unawares, because I- I haven't really come across much of that sort of stuff really. (Mandy, CC0312V:1642-1716)

One is left with the impression that she could not actually withdraw from or confront the situation and felt a visceral reaction to the situation of being sexualized while at work. Her physicality, however, offers little protection and few resources for her in this situation.

The significant link between experiences of feeling powerful and those of feeling powerless is the extent to which social relations reinscribe a helplessness over top of how strong a woman 'is.' Mandy, above, felt "revolting" following her evening with the clients and says that she felt averse to instructing the same group the next day. Miriam, earlier, says that she did not perform well when in a training situation in which she was pursued and touched constantly. T. A. Loeffler (1997) feels paralysed by the fear of a stranger in the mountains, but overlooks it entirely when describing her solo expedition as "empowering," as if her physical competence has no relation to this fear.

In one study of a group of active sportswomen, qualities such as "bodily competence, perception of a competent self and the adoption of a proactive approach to life" are explored. The women see empowerment as "opportunities to develop skills and other qualities that could assist in challenging their disadvantaged position in society" (Blinde, Taub & Han, 1993, p. 51). But if the outdoor competence developed by outdoor leaders does not actually "assist in challenging their disadvantaged position," within the context of instructing and residential outdoor communities, then

how is it empowering? If “a proactive approach to life” can be undermined so quickly by even one experience of sexual harassment, then certainly a new approach to understanding the conditions that produce and regulate strong women is required.

This is where it is possible to see the relations of gender, sexuality and the physical, and corporeality itself, as discursively constitutive rather than linear or in any way in discrete correspondence with each other. One incidence of sexual harassment or an experience of being doubted once one becomes a mother while in a career as an outdoor instructor (e.g., Allin, 2000; Loeffler, 1995a) reinscribes in the body a new pattern. The psychic effects of an experience are as intense in marking the physicality of the body as are the social norms shaping physical surfaces. The relations of the physical might effect certain surface shaping and relations of heterosexual sex or reproductive femininity might effect new body surfaces to be perceived and known as embodying subjectivity. We can no longer say that physical development starts in childhood and develops progressively and incrementally or that experiences which affect psychological states of mind are independent from those building strong bodies as if these are parallel entities.

An interviewee in a recent study, Elizabeth, for example, develops a heterosexual sexual relationship with another climber who becomes her climbing partner. She had previously decided that she wanted to “achieve harder” in her climbing and says that she had been “on a mission to be more like a guy. Because I could see that they would achieve” (Kiewa, 2001, p. 7). Once in the relationship, Elizabeth is unable to maintain her drive because she wants to be pushed in her climbing, but she climbs at a higher level than her partner. She is uncomfortably aware of the situation in which she wants to be attractive to her partner, which requires appearing more feminine, even tentative and needing help, in contrast to her disposition at the climbing crag the previous year “when...I would deliberately try not to look attractive...I was not concerned with how I looked. I was there to climb” (Kiewa, 2001, p. 8). She remembers her autonomy and the positive response from men who knew that she was a strong, focused climber with whom they could climb as friends. It pleased her that she had not needed a lot of help. She explains that now that she climbs with her lover, she dresses for his attention, which she enjoys, but is aware that he would not

find her so attractive if she did not need him in some way. “I think that a feeling of being feminine and attractive comes with being vulnerable,” she says. “I don’t know. But I don’t feel independent any more. I’m not independent of him” (Kiewa, 2001, p. 8).

Elizabeth’s lived experience offers greater contextual insight into the question of why women cannot always sustain the drive, autonomy and ‘hard, physical’ achievement they desire when involved in the heterogendered dynamic of physical relations (see also Andrews, 1984). Interestingly, Charlie Cooper hones her climbing to the peak of her physical potential with a man with whom she is not involved romantically; she climbs in a more relaxed state and finds herself putting on her “little girl voice” with a man who is her lover. The embodiment of physicality inscribes independence and re-inscribes dependence in contradictory subjectivities through the exercise of *multiply mediated* social relations. When women become aware of the lived, bodily look and feel of normative femininity, especially when it feels subtly coercive, they must actively resist it, not on an emotional or mental level, that is, with more attention to relationships or intelligence, but with physical strength, skills and prowess (Andrews, 1984). These cannot be separated as a “physical self” as opposed to “body image,” one dominant masculine and one compliant feminine. Corporeality as a constant dynamic of inversion ensures that the physical self marks the subjective, perceptual self just as the inner being marks the body’s outer surfaces. Shaping and reshaping occurs within multiple relations continually and not in any necessarily teleological logic.

This project set out to consider how women are challenged on the grounds of gender deviance and how they experience such “risks” to their femininity. This section has provided some illustration that it is not a uniformly psychological or personal experience. When strong women are seduced by relations of heteronormativity it reinscribes in them the vulnerable and dependent feminine embodiment. Much as they might rage about it like Mandy, laugh at it like Charlie or fret about it like Elizabeth, it can effect a helplessness, even silence, which is psychologically and physically debilitating. Valerie Berg found that she felt ‘worn down’ by constant verbal ‘put downs’ about being male; by the end of the course, she says she “was a bit of a wreck”

(I0397E:1998). In that case, the physical gestures of interference, such as rushing to lift heavy loads for the women, by the male student affected her students as well. Similar to Jo's and Claire's experiences as students, Valerie's women students became "more and more withdrawn" (I0397E:2022). A woman who is called "a machine" by students due to her flawless physical prowess can become exhausted, withdrawn and isolated by such experiences; she knows that her appearance is attractive and typically feminine and yet is troubled by being told that she is like a man. Another woman who feels attractive to her male lover finds that her physical achievement and psychological independence are impeded when they climb together (Kiewa, 2001). A third woman who is an Ironman competitor finds herself agitated about appearing too strong to her women students while at the same time admitting to a desire to outperform them and also to prove herself to the men students (Morch, 1997). These are complex situations.

### **Becoming Women in a Physical Relation to Men**

The task, therefore, for a corporeal practice is to find means of reinscribing femininities and physicalities which challenge heteronormativity from within the power relations of compulsory heterosexuality. The Australian survey compares women's reported sense of physical attractiveness and their physical competence to determine which gives a high level of body satisfaction. The results find that "strength and competence provided, for most of these women, a source of tremendous satisfaction" (Kiewa, 1997, p. 126) and that "although they certainly feel dissatisfied when they consider their lack of fit to the 'ideal body,' they...are usually highly delighted with the ability of their bodies to perform" (Kiewa, 1997, p. 127). The researcher concludes that as outdoor pursuits are all-consuming, the women change their focus from themselves to "the activity at hand," after the suggestion by one of her respondents. "This last comment provides," she writes, "the key to the difference between these women and many other women: a change in focus" (Kiewa, 1997, p. 127). She argues that these women are less concerned with appearance once they become absorbed in their recreational activity.

I read in her report another useful possibility. The women's "change in focus" is perhaps not from individual to activity, from self to selfless purpose, but could more likely be from gendered subjectivity to physicality, from debility to ability, from liking (or not) their bodies to knowing what their bodies can do. In a timely return to the theoretical impasse of the superwoman in the 'women in the outdoors' literature, Kiewa (1997) seems to be probing how physically competent women are distinct from 'ordinary women' without the moral judgement that they perpetuate a 'superwoman problem.' Their more satisfying "focus," I believe, is now their own changed corporeality.

The reflections of one participant in this study offer particular insight into the heterogendered constitution of changed corporeality. I have proposed previously that a corporeal moment makes visible a woman's physicality as her mode of becoming a subject. But there are social forces involved; she is not just participating in a personal experience. Siobhan describes tramping in a club group of mainly older boys and men when she was aged 16. She gives a glimpse into the lived experience of the "change of focus" in a social context.

I must have stuck out like a sore thumb, because there were no other women on those big trips...nothing negative. I felt I was accepted by them. And- and I've never really felt that my gender was an issue for them. They- I think if I hadn't been able to keep up with them and do the things we were going to do, it would have been...I was strong enough to do it, I was capable enough to do it and so I did it and it wasn't an issue. If I hadn't been properly up to doing it then maybe- maybe I would have been lumped into a box with women, girls or whatever.

Females. (Siobhan, CC0327J:184-209)

Siobhan was not 'made' aware in this group that she was a woman. Gender relations for her were in a sense *overwritten* or reinscribed by the practices of physical relations, such as the "big trips" and "epics." As long as she was strong enough to do the hard, physical trips, Siobhan was not treated as a girl in 'a man's country.' Nor was she an 'acceptable' version of a boy, a "cute," little tomboy (Caudwell, 1999) tagging along. She knows that she was "strong enough to do it," referring to, for example, 14 days up

the Landsborough, a remote watershed river valley in the West Coast of the South Island carrying her own gear at age 16. These experiences contributed to a sense of subjectivity which is tough, stropy, 'comfortable and capable,' as much as is her physicality, and in which she feels at the level of her body that "my gender was [not] an issue."

In Allin's (2000) study, one woman outdoor leader does not feel the discrimination felt by other women at the same outdoor centre. She says,

not many of them have been to the Himalayas or climbed anything, which did put me at a slight advantage I suppose...I would never have gone and worked in a situation like that without having gone away and achieved what I had done in that year, and I think it did give me confidence. (Allin, 2000, p. 62)

Valerie Berg, similarly, had solo kayaked around the Alaskan coast; Miriam Eales had spent months cycling across the huge Australian outback; Elaine Ross had walked the Southern Alps. Each carried their own heavy loads and came away with a lived knowledge of what her body could do..

Allin (2000, p. 62) concludes that the "the actual physical demands of outdoor pursuits employment at the highest level combined with the 'macho' image also served to deter women from applying for certain positions" and the absence of women in turn enforces cultural meanings that the high-risk outdoors is a 'masculine domain.' And yet the literature for 'women in the outdoors' recommends that strong women outdoor leaders demystify their competency, reveal their vulnerabilities and diminish their position as 'expert' when with other women (e.g., Warren, 1985; Mitten, 1992a). As a strategy, this seems sure to position 'natural' femininity as already scripted in shared vulnerability (Marcus, 1992).

As I argued in Chapter 6, strong women best demystify their own physical competency by stepping back when it is time for other women to practise prowess, forge their own physical strength and toughness, learn how to inscribe their own bodies with skill 'from the inside out/side in/side out.' Corporeality is a practice that must be 'done' to be accomplished (Crossley, 1993). Strong women must reach out to other women not on the grounds of shared gender identity, but on the grounds of physicality.

In this study, the women have taken up practices within the discursive parameters of physical relations, on multiple levels, to rework or remodel their conscious practices of gender. They illustrate ways in which they concentrate on ‘re-skilling’ (McCaughey, 1997) their bodies. They illustrate ways in which they actively put off male attention to their bodies through combative dispositions. They illustrate ways in which to carry their own ‘weight.’ These are not manoeuvres in which they try to “catch up” to or even outperform men. They are means through which they appropriate modes of protecting autonomy and prowess within relations of the physical.

The first, most deliberate strategy is to practise, perfect and teach physical *skills* well. Elaine Ross tells me that she increasingly works on her “motor skills.” This is also her most important goal when working with fourth and sixth form Outdoor Education groups. She is passionate about it, because it has been her own goal for years; she knows what she has learned. She says,

I think it’s become increasingly a physical challenge in that, um, I’ve become more interested in...a physical- um, not physically demanding but, um, motor skills, kayaking, climbing- (Elaine, CC0301R:377-82)

She focuses on physical precision and physical efficacy through practice. Elaine echoes Andrews’ (1984) argument that it is not enough for women to build muscular strength, but they must develop psychological strength at the same time. One cannot be developed without the other; in contrast to the outdoor experiential education literature, self-discovery is not about enhanced psychological well-being. Self-control is not an interior discipline (Kiewa, 1994), but a physical practice. Psychological *skills* are about learning, practising and living a control of what her body/embodiment can do. Elaine says,

I used to get quite frustrated being- I- I felt- I think it was being female. I felt weak and I felt that guys could do things better than- than me. They were stronger. They were always faster. But as I’ve got older I’ve realized that being fast and strong is just one aspect and the other aspect is being able to have the perseverance and endurance to learn- learn motor skills and, um, continue- um, continue learning. And so it’s more a mind- yeah, it’s a mind-body thing. Lots of guys might have a

good body, but it's the mind controlling the body that's important. And, yeah- As I've got older I keep- that message keeps getting reinfer-reaffirmed. It IS still a bit frustrating being a female sometimes and not being as strong...[Do you work on developing your body?] Um. No, I work on being healthy and fit. Um. And I work on motor skills, because, um, in particular, I did a lot of telemark skiing last year and that's fairly much about mind-body control. And I really enjoy it. I've started to learn that, yeah, you can control what you are doing...You can work on it and if you persevere, you can be just as good...It's a message I'd like to pass on to people. (Elaine, CC0303R:513-58)

Siobhan O'Brien is concerned with doing an activity in "good form:" she says, "the confidence thing comes in here too—I want to feel as though I did it well, that my body is able to cope with that" (CC0302J:46-49). To build a body that is able to cope, a woman must know what her body can do and control what she cannot do, rather than rely on it to thrash her way through obstacles. This is not a compensatory strategy, but an active exercise of agency.

A second strategy for some of these women is in specifically combating 'acceptable' feminine behaviour and body shape, even while recognizing that they might have and dislike a 'typically feminine' shape and size. Similar to the Australian outdoors women who report that they dislike "the flabby bits" (Kiewa, 1997, p. 127), many of the competent women professionals in this study are unhappy with their bodies. They dislike varicose veins, a big bottom, a "podgy" tummy, gaining weight easily and "bulges in the wrong place." Feeling thin or lean, muscular and toned are important preparation for ensuring physical competence to Siobhan, Rosa, Charlie, Jo, Miriam, Margaret, Jane and Mandy. A feminine body, to Mandy, is typically pear-shaped, with fat on the hips and legs. Playing sport daily and at elite competitive levels from a young age shaped her body so that it is a very athletic shape. Even so, Mandy explains, "I was never what I would call 'thin,' but I was always toned. And now I'm kind of- like- flabby and I- I just can't stand it!!...I'm always really aware of it" (CC0317V:826-34). Later she adds, "being thin wouldn't be enough. It would have to- Yeah, you know, thin and flabby is just as bad as fatness" (CC0318V:774-78). Few

diet, though. Miriam Eales, who once lost five stone and gave up alcohol for health reasons, has decided that her more typically-shaped “feminine body” is empowering for her:

’Cause, um, having those physical reserves, um, the fat around the bum and the stomach and wherever else it’s stored. I- I know I have stamina in the outdoors and I can sustain a long arduous trip or parts of a trip. And, you know, without running out of steam, I can keep going. Um. And so that’s very empowering. It gives me confidence. I know I’ve done it before, I know I can have confidence in myself to do that.

(Miriam, CC0337L:84-92)

New confidence also means that Mamie Webb has vowed not to say “anything rude” about her body any more (CC0303I:34). She recalls that earlier in her life “there was quite a lot about it [her body] that I didn’t know. You know, I didn’t know I could run” (CC0303I:59-60). Now that she knows what her body can do, she wants to be more respectful of it.

Other women fight compliant femininity by being verbally combative, taking pride in being “loud and raucous” or “stroppy” and foul-mouthed in public. Or they use male humour in outdoor situations; a participant in Allin’s (2000, p. 62) study says that women will join in the “male piss-taking.” Siobhan O’Brien knows that her disposition is a reaction to the rigid imposition of gender behaviours in her family, but she also actively shapes her heterosexual interactions:

I certainly had relationships, but they weren’t problematic ones and if anyone did anything or ever said anything that I felt was out of line, I would let them know very quickly. Yeah. I have felt- certainly used to feel as a young woman that, um, men avoided me partly because I was stroppy. And I- Maybe they did. I never really tested it or asked anyone, but I think possibly they did. I mean I often thought that because I was so up front with the way I feel about situations that they would almost not even strike up conversation with me sort of thing because they’d be scared of being ripped into!! I suppose it’s sounding a bit more aggressive than I really am. (Siobhan, CC0312J:117-29)

Siobhan is able to project to the exterior an aggression that she feels is not her 'real' self, but which is politically exercised to deflect inappropriate male attention.

A third strategy that stands out in the responses of these women could be conceived of as 'carrying their own weight.' Women like Ianissi, Claire, Margaret, Jo and Elaine are quite confident about taking heavy loads and "getting up there," despite having asthma, injuries or fears to contend with. They are not intimidated by the strength-requiring skills and activities of their outdoor expeditions and teaching.

Miriam indicates how it translates into a sense of subjectivity for her:

I'm a great one for carrying a big heavy pack and I'll ALWAYS carry half. Like Daniel- Even though he's a lot bigger and stronger than me, I always carry my share of these things. I'm not into this wimpish, um- 'He's a man so he can do it.' And, um, I've always carried- pulled my own weight as it were. And I've felt, um, that that's been important to me. Now whether, in years to come my back is going to, you know, sort of pay for that, I don't know. I mean, yeah, I've been on a number of trips where, particularly couples, the female hasn't carried a full load, the male has carried his stuff and a half. And that's fine, I can accept that, that's not an issue. But for me I would carry my half.

That goes for finances as well. Daniel and I have separate finances and that's very much coming from me...it's very important to ME that we have separate finances and we have an agreement as to anything we share. And that is important to my independence. (Miriam, CC0331L:124-44, 165-71)

Miriam's personal commitment to carrying her own 'share' extends to her financial share of the load in her marriage. A woman who carries her own heavy loads cannot have their value expropriated from her. These three strategic practices insert the women who pursue them into the physical in its discursive network which then connects to other discourses such as the private, domestic exercise of power. Such strategies show ways in which these women exercise power through the reinscription of the physical relation first, in the outdoors, after which the forging of a new sense of social subjectivity follows. Training 'the physical' is itself the site of social mastery as

much as awareness of one's body (Crossley, 1996) and the two effect competence, a sense of self-competence, control and power.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that strong women will only develop control of their physical agency in the outdoors once they turn from characterizing themselves as subjects of gender toward the corporeality in which they become subjects in physical relations. For this to happen, they must be able to reinscribe physical experience in a new culture of physicality which does not limit girls and women for deficient bodies, but builds up these very bodies with muscular force and skilled precision. Strong women who 'know' what their bodies can 'do' allow the contours and textures of strength to inscribe the effects of depth. They reposition their bodies and subjectivities from 'the outside in and the inside out,' through competence and confidence, through mastery and safety, in a social relation which challenges the heteronormativity of physically powerful bodies.

## Conclusion Reinscribing Corporeal Femininities

Fear of the superwoman figure produces and subjects the women working in the outdoors whose very embodiment and physicality make it possible. Highly skilled women in the outdoors report anxiety that they want to look strong and that indeed they must be able to call on physical strength when necessary for instruction, safety, rescues and emergencies. They do not, however, want to be too capable or overly “muscle” and risk intimidating their students. They are already defined as disruptive by the ‘women in the outdoors’ literature for embodying an excessive strength and comfortable capability which undermine the possibilities which they represent for ‘ordinary’ women to increase their self-confidence.

The influential, yet insubstantial, criticism of strong women, linked with a series of other concerns in the literature from prior gender role socialization for girls to women’s spiritual ‘needs’ for a quest but not conquest, never quite explores the specific problem that strong women pose; it serves to obscure the conditions of its own production. The project of this study has been to delve more deeply into the disparate references throughout the literature and into a critical social theory of the body and feminist research on embodiment to identify the elements which make the demise of the superwoman spectre and the disavowal of her physicality seem “safe” for ‘women in the outdoors.’

The tension embodied by strong women positions them within a discernible set of physical relations reaching beyond the gender identity in which they are judged as inadequate. The discourse of the strong woman constructs and holds these women in a struggle over their physicality and the psychic desire it inscribes for a hard, physical experience. Such a physical prowess is seen as internalizing the culture of male physical dominance and superwomen are rejected for wanting to become like men. Although they have resisted prior socialization into a passive form of femininity, they are accused of being passively coopted by and into the male model of mastery and willingness to risk the body.

Strong women are also held in a contradictory position within relations of compulsory heteronormativity. While their physical competence allows them to relate

to men in the outdoors as ‘equals’ in ability to share heavy loads, lead an expedition or teach skills, they often encounter resistance and hostility from male students and coercive tactics from male colleagues. Moreover, they are held responsible for making conditions “unsafe” for the men in mixed groups when their unreliable emotions and bodily irregularities prevent them becoming ‘hard’ women and men feel that they must pay attention to their protection.

Whereas the feminist literature attributes men’s models of competitive risk-taking to making outdoor experiences “unsafe” for women, it is more likely that the particular antagonism shown strong women makes women feel unsafe with men in the outdoors. Although almost all the women with whom I spoke agree that violence against women is not a social problem in the outdoors in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is a central concern in the literature for women’s psychological safety. The lived experiences of women in this study illustrate what they do identify as an ‘emotional violence,’ habituated in ridicule, anger, bullying, shaming and sexual harassment.

Women in outdoor leadership are often motivated by a desire to teach the skills for self-sufficient outdoor travel to others and to facilitate experiences of bodily efficacy to students after their own visceral pleasure in being physically active, feeling strong and powerful, accomplishing “epic” goals and feeling at one with the environment. Although they may dismiss their own level of strength, downplay their muscularity and be persuaded to prove themselves just to demonstrate their prowess, they are often aware that they are stronger than some of the men in their student groups or peer cohorts. They worry that they are ‘too strong.’

The literature focuses on exclusively psychological approaches to offering solutions to women. The most effective analytical framework for exploring how it happens that such worries may inhibit a woman’s experiences of physical skill or that fear of being humiliated might stop a woman from attempting new risks or public skill demonstration is a view of corporeality which explores how subjectively meaningful concerns shape an exterior physical body and physical identity. Corporeality is a process which involves more than the constitution of internal personal concerns about one’s body, but shows that their source is the social inscription of disciplines and practices on the surfaces of that body. A woman’s concerns about being too “musclely”

to be normal for her students, then, are never just personal insecurity or lack of a sense of self-competence, but marked and directed by her social experience of her physicality. Her sense of appropriate gendered self-presentation does not necessarily 'match' or represent her experience of her own physical body. Staunch, muscley women may have felt "useless" or "disappointing" as girls, but they have found a way to reinscribe this mode of ineffective and inhibited femininity. Bodies are able to produce selves, but on multiple levels and in impermanent measures. Corporeal femininities might be embedded within the power relations of heterosexuality, as Halberstam (1998) argues, but this does not mean that corporeality is determined by them unconsciously. There are potent 'physical moments' in which women may become conscious of their own participation in shaping and reinventing a lived process of corporeality.

Instead of recommending that outdoor experiences impel 'women in the outdoors' into the exploration of their own bodily strength and physical "self-possession," the literature alternately suggests that women de-emphasize and avoid intensive physical strength in challenge activities or de-emphasize gender in favour of moral reasons for why such activities enhance well-being. Both remove women's corporeality from the potential of women's empowerment; as the 'two-sided coin,' physical agency is translated into either psychological or physiological benefits. Both overlook their mutual inscription of women's articulated desires for strong bodies and love of the hard, physical, sensual pleasures of the pursuit of power internal to the corporeal pursuit of power.

## Appendix A Methods of Investigation

The empirical study reported here involved a number of methods of soliciting information from women working in the outdoors. It began with a written pilot survey which was distributed to interested women at a national conference of outdoor leaders in September 1993. The purpose of the written survey was to invite women's responses to certain feminist issues which had not been discussed to date in the 'women in the outdoors' literature. I drew up the survey questions based on my familiarity with the literature, exploratory master's level research which I had conducted in Canada and my own involvement as a professional outdoor leader for the previous decade in Canada, the United States and Aotearoa New Zealand. The five open-ended questions asked about respondents' experiences in the outdoors of bodily pleasure, feelings of fear, feelings of being at risk, experiences of being coerced into challenging activities, sexual harassment or assault and connections felt between physical competence and social risks for women. I was a member of the association hosting the conference and was presenting a workshop on "gender issues" and was therefore potentially known to respondents. Thirteen women responded and ten of these women indicated an interest in continuing with the in-depth research project.

The ensuing field investigation pursued issues which the respondents to the pilot survey had raised as significant experiences. There was a strong response to the topics of pleasurable sensuality, coercion by men and links between being competent and being a woman. There was less engagement with or illustration of topics of fear, being at risk to others and experiences of sexual harassment; some women did report experience of each or of one of these, but there were few discrepancies or ambiguous comments leading me to further questions. The results of this survey were analysed and reported to the Association for Experiential Education Annual Conference in September 1996 (Bell, 1996a).

By that time more literature was emerging highlighting women's experiences of physicality in sport as well as the outdoors (e.g., Birrell & Cole, 1994; Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994b; Gilroy, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Humberstone, 1995; Kiewa, 1995, 1996; Loeffler, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; McDermott, 1996; Markula, 1995;

Warren, 1996c; Yerkes & Miranda, 1985). It very much redirected my own thinking away from themes of fear, assault, seduction and physical risk for women in the outdoors. It is not that these themes were not prominent in some of the new literature (e.g., Loeffler, 1995a, 1996b). I caught a glimpse, however, in new narrative accounts (in Cole, Erdman & Rothblum, 1994b, in particular) of something which I felt immediately was more powerful in *constituting* women's self-described physicalities, while yet *producing* the contradictions which I was encountering repeatedly in the interpretations of these accounts. This literature formed a second source of data for the analytical interpretation.

I was then drawn back to the comments of the women in the pilot survey and to their experiences of embodiment as sensual, physically painful and pleasurable at the same time, satisfying and contributing to confidence in the face of extreme conditions, exhaustion and so on, but also anger at the demands of coercive relations which were denied when women were told "not to be 'so strong.'" A pilot interview schedule was drafted and tested on an interested participant in July 1996. Her thoughts and reflections were invaluable to the process of developing more complex areas of investigation. The study was designed and reviewed for ethical concerns by two institutional committees; approval was obtained in September 1996.

At this time, I was also coordinating the establishment of a national database which sought to list women working in the outdoors. Letters with registration forms were mailed to groups, organizations and businesses and extras were included to facilitate a snowball technique of reaching women through informal networks. The registrants were asked to indicate their willingness to join future research studies. A random number was picked and the interested registrants were processed in multiples of this number. If close friends from my own professional work were selected, their names were set aside. The resultant 50 women were then contacted about participating in the second phase of the project. Of these, ten women were available for a field visit, had the time required for the extended tasks of participation and were spread widely across the country. In all, five women continued from the initial pilot group and ten women joined the study.

I had hoped to work with a diverse group of women. I found that ten women were pakeha New Zealanders, three were Maori or of Maori descent or had married a Maori man and had part-Maori children, one was part-Pacific Islander and two had part-Pacific Island children, one was of Chinese New Zealand descent; of the ten who were pakeha, one was not born in New Zealand. Five women were mothers, ten had no children and one woman was a grandmother. Four women were lesbian and in relationships; one woman was bisexual, but said that she identified as heterosexual at the time we met; ten women self-identified as heterosexual in orientation. Five women were married; two had been previously married and divorced and had either remarried or repartnered. Four women were married to outdoor leaders and five women in de facto relationships lived with outdoor leaders. Seven women mentioned enough about their families for me to infer that they had grown up comfortably middle-class; one woman said, “oh yes, we listened to the National Programme!” and another grew up on land spanning three farms. A number of the women attended single-sex private schools and gained university degrees. Three women were studying for or had studied for undergraduate degrees through extra-mural courses while working. The 15 women ranged in age from 28 to 52, they had from three and a half seasons of outdoor leadership experience to over 20 years of school group or peer group leading and instructing experience and, interestingly, of the group, four women said they planned to leave the career of outdoor leadership. The “group” did not actually form a research cohort and participants did not meet each other as part of this study.

The field investigation comprised the third source of data for the project. I used three methods of gathering information from participants: interviews at their own home or workplace, life history narratives and written memories. These three methods were detailed to participants in advance, along with a copy of the interview schedule.

The interview schedule started with general questions about personal meanings of experiences, work and their bodies in the outdoors and then moved to a life history narrative. Following these, the interviews moved to professional training and employment and finally to experiences in three theoretically-framed areas of interest. They were: first, gendered leadership, second, physicality and embodiment and, third, empowerment as physical potential and as related to femininity as well as female

embodiment. I defined these theoretically-based areas for the participants, but also asked for their sense of meaning for the terms. The interviews each followed the formal, structured format, but the questions were open to interpretation and discussion as needed. The interviews were held in mid-1997 and each took from one and a half hours to four and a half hours to complete. They were tape recorded and I also took field notes. Later the audio-tapes were transcribed by women not involved in the outdoors. I had also requested a photograph from each participant of herself in the outdoors; these I copied and returned.

The participants narrated a life history to me within the interview format. These varied in detail and length. The interview transcript was returned to each participant for checking for accuracy and those who wished opted then to remove personal names and details. In the event of changes, I made these on my copies and returned the original documents to the women for personal use. At this stage I asked the women to write three different memories of their experiences on given topics. I selected the topics from salient images or phrases used by women in the interviews; they appeared most significant to me if they were congruent with themes of the new literature and the earlier pilot survey. The participants were given ten “trigger” topics such as “traipsing around after guys” or “as strong and powerful as I can be.” They were asked to write about events or experiences in their lives, but to write of themselves in the third person. The purpose of memory work (Haug, 1987; Kosonen, 1993) is to reflect on significant times or events, but with some distance, so as to be able to draw on the social context of the events. Although memory work projects are often collective, the time and geographical constraints of this project meant that I did not pursue a group project involving group readings of the memories to build a collective analysis. Participants sent their memory writing to me by mail, although not all women completed this third task. I received the final set of memories in mid-1999. These were also transcribed.

I did not use the interview, life and memory data as the basis to a naturalistic analysis of *these women's* lived experiences, but rather as ways to explore an interpretive theoretical framework in a narrative-based analytical method (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). I wanted to build on the qualitative research process of investigation, as described above, with a more socially critical

approach to studying specific practices and lived ‘moments.’ I was sufficiently influenced by arguments in the sociology of the body literature and my own dis-ease with recommendations for further research in the ‘women in sport’ literature (e.g., Hall, 1996; McDermott, 1996, 2000) to shift my approach to the goals of the interpretative process. I was strongly directed by the women’s own responses, as is evident in the substantive discussion of the project. Yet, I also felt that there was a significant need in the literature of outdoor experiential education itself, and in feminist critical analyses of it, for a much more comprehensive analytical framework for interpretive critique. Much of the feminist ‘critique’ is bogged down in prescription for ‘women’ and a rejection of everything masculine (e.g., Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996).

And so I refocused on two goals in the analysis of the data: the first was to work with the implications of a corporeal feminism to bring women’s (outdoor) body practices to the centre of our theorizing about social subjectivities. The second goal was to connect the development of a better understanding of corporeality and the ‘strong woman’ subject position in the outdoors to a consciously historical, theoretically coherent location in social thought through the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1994b) in philosophy and Nick Crossley (1995) in sociology. The ‘women in the outdoors’ literature is in need of a more transparent connection to its critical social frameworks, their theory and their history. These two goals became more important than producing another set of ‘personal experiences’ of what it means to be a ‘woman in the outdoors’ and so I did not pursue the memory analysis as initially envisioned, that is, as an entry into “identity-work” (see McCormack, 1995; Sironen, 1994).

The data were coded for both content analysis and constant comparison techniques, nevertheless, in a sorting mechanism and to elicit contextual themes (Patton, 1990). As the importance of finding “emergent” themes diminished, I began cross-coding according to the two major preoccupations which seemed to “emerge” from the review of literature and which began to serve as pointers to the types of experiences in which the social, physical and psychic were *intercorporeally* implicated. In the end, the data collected in all of these field methods provided critical means for the interpretation of the physical and its productive relations through various discourses in the outdoors.

## Notes

### A Note on Style

The dissertation follows the Vancouver Style as required by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Manual (third edition). When references are cited in the text, the *source* of the point or argument made is given with the date of publication immediately following quoted material. Examples *illustrating* the point or argument made in the preceding sentence are noted by “e.g.,” before the author’s name. Exceptions to the point made are noted by “cf.,” before the author’s name.

Additionally, in the text, direct quotations from published works (single words or sentences) are placed within hash marks: “ ” whereas when terms are used which have a double or provisional meaning or a specific theoretical context, they are placed within single hash marks: ‘ ’ to alert the reader to this case. Spelling is derived from The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary.

1. *Outdoor leader* is used quite broadly here. Some participants in the empirical study see themselves as outdoor instructors who pass on specialist skills and occasionally facilitate group learning, while others prefer to see themselves as facilitators, who sometimes instruct technical skills and occasionally lead their groups in the outdoors. Some are Physical Education teachers in schools responsible for Outdoor Education and others are freelance outdoor instructors and outdoor leaders hired by schools for short periods. Some women are programme directors and managers of outdoor programmes. Others work for commercial outdoor expedition companies. Still others are self-employed and see their professional practice as supplementary to running their own small business. Many women are or have been involved in more than one of these roles in their careers. I use the term *outdoor leader* to embrace all of these variations. Outdoor leadership requires the specialist knowledge and skills which technical skill instruction entails, in order that groups be led safely, but encompasses a wider range of professional understanding and commitment to the value of practical experience in the outdoors as a learning environment.

2. The term *outdoor experiential education* refers to a professional body of specialized skills, knowledge, philosophy, practice, qualifications and scholarship. Much experiential education is not conducted outdoors, but emphasizes alternatives to the traditional classroom (Kolb, 1984; Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995). I use the term outdoor experiential education to indicate experiential education which is based outdoors or in geographically remote, distinct, uninhabited, wilderness areas (see Nash, 1982, for a discussion of changing constructions of wilderness).

Outdoor experiential education has many subcategories which are distinguished through their objectives, techniques and practitioner training. These include: adventure education, which uses physical challenges and high-risk situations outdoors to develop group cohesion (Miles & Priest, 1990); outdoor leadership, which uses outdoor activities to teach individual and group skills towards greater self-knowledge and self-reliance in the outdoors or the wilderness for participants (Cockrell, 1990; Ewert, 1989); therapeutic applications, which involve psychological goals and often psychotherapeutic methods for counseling participants through metaphorical experiences in the outdoors (Schoel et al., 1988); and small group facilitation, which aims to develop a group's consciousness of its own processes through a wilderness activity or trip (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). There is some debate in the professional literature about the philosophical difference between experiential education and experiential learning, however, the distinction is not relevant to this research.

It should be made clear that not all outdoor education, which tends to be school-based, curriculum-oriented and nature-focused, is experiential education. The centrality of lived experience as the source of knowledge, immersion as the main method of delivery for the learning objectives and the primary role of students in the process defines the learning as experiential (see Dewey, 1938; Joplin, 1981). The term *outdoor experiential education* will be used throughout this dissertation to embrace all facets of small group experience which use outdoor pursuits, adventure-based challenges and wilderness expeditions as the media for learning and personal growth. The journal for this professional field of practice is the *Journal of Experiential Education* and the professional association is the Association for Experiential Education. Both these vehicles incorporate *outdoor* experiential education.

3. I use the term '*women in the outdoors*' throughout the dissertation to signify writing that attributes commonality to any women-centred group undertaking outdoor activity. It assumes that all-women groups participating in the 'male model' may not necessarily be women-centred and may not be as vigilant as are 'women in the outdoors' at preserving the uniqueness which women are thought to share. The study serves to examine the context in which this phrase has gathered its currency.

4. "Tramper" is a New Zealand term for bushwalker, backpacker or hiker.

5. A careful reading of Miranda and Yerkes' (1982, p. 84) three "hunches" reveals that the 'women in the outdoors' research has only taken up the third hypothesis, that women seek "activities not generally ascribed to women" and "retreat" to nature for experiences which are "protective and nurturing as well as challenging." Commonly Miranda and Yerkes' (1982) general argument is summarized as "how women can 'escape' gender-imposed expectations by reuniting with and learning from nature" (Davidson, 1994, p. 12). In fact, the first two hypotheses do point to a more radical social critique of adventure education, but it is not recognized as such by the predominantly psychological discourses on gender.

6. The data chunks are verbatim comments from the field data and are reproduced as spoken, including hesitations, unfinished words or sentences and repetitions. If a word is unintelligible in the audiotape, then the word is represented by xxx. Comments and questions within square brackets [ ] are those of the interviewer. A code is entered

beside every data chunk to give its location in the transcripts of field data; the numbers refer to line numbers. These include responses to the written survey (Q02), interviews (I03), life histories (L04) memory narratives (M05) and constant comparison data analysis (CC). The names of participants are pseudonyms. The methods of investigation are detailed in Appendix A.

7. The terms *corporeality* and *corporeal* are used in this project to signal a constituent process of identity in which cultural meanings of embodied experience actively contribute to subjectivity, which in turn creates the body it “lives” as the subject of experience. Embodiment exists only when the social and subjective effects are embedded within each other. Corporeality is not a synonym for physical embodiment or the material body.

The term refers to the way in which embodiment is practised by specific ‘selves’ in their own felt, sensory, perceptual interactions, thus constituting ways that the ‘outer’ form represents ‘inner’ subjectivity ‘on the surface.’ I also use the terms “body practices,” “lived, socialized body,” and “practical investments of embodiment” to indicate the ongoing dynamic of social action and subjective interpretation. A corporeal marker exists as a surface indicator of an intentionally acquired meaning. A corporeal marker or corporeal experience may be culturally shaped while being felt and lived as personal and intentional. Therefore, it does not embody one universal meaning and may hold conflicting and changeable meanings depending on context.

8. The use of the term “strengths” reflects the significant influence of Jean Baker Miller on feminist psychology by asserting a new psychology for women in which the “traditional” qualities through which women are subordinated would be redefined as the “strengths” of the new woman (Eisenstein, 1984).

9. The two dominant gender categories are presumed with little attention to race, ethnicity, class or sexuality until the mid-1990s; the limitations of the cultural feminist arguments account for this a priori privileging of gender over other relations of power.

10. Unfortunately, as a result, the qualitative studies of early feminist research often conclude by, and are also still cited for, generalizing the homogeneous needs of women (or women’s programmes) in the outdoors (e.g., Arnold, 1994 citing Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987a; Mitten, 1992 citing Hardin, 1979; Nolan & Priest, 1993 citing Humberstone & Lynch, 1991). The purpose of qualitative methodology involving interviews or ethnographic observation is to contextualize a selected phenomenon with deep description and local meanings which, by their nature, are not generalizable to a research population. It seems that there is a conflict not only with “local” research aiming to reveal that women are a unified group in ‘the outdoors,’ but also between research goals and the feminist political project which assumes that this is the case before the research is undertaken. Other problems in the literature, however, include citing *any* writing on ‘women in the outdoors,’ not necessarily empirical research, as identifying women’s unique needs (e.g., Arnold, 1994 citing Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Bialeschki, 1992 citing Beale, 1988; Kiewa, 1994 citing Mitten, 1985; Nolan & Priest, 1993 citing Henderson, 1992, Mitten, 1985 and Warren, 1990/1985). Exploratory analyses are also inaccurately cited as “studies” as if they present research findings (e.g., Hornibrook et al., 1997 citing Warren, 1985).

11. Henderson and Bialeschki (1987a) state that their qualitative study of 22 women specifically builds on Miranda and Yerkes' (1982) hypotheses that women seek all-women groups for "permission" to engage in activities not generally allowed women and want outdoor experiences to counter the otherwise limited opportunities for self-expression in their lives. In their own large-scale survey of 267 women participating in 20 different all-women outdoor programmes in the United States, Yerkes and Miranda (1985, p. 95) conclude that "the women in this study indicated that the need [for all-women experiences] is very 'real' and that they are participating in recreation programs that offer to meet it."
12. This conclusion is based on explanations of cultural and radical feminisms and how they differ in Alcoff (1988) and Eisenstein (1984).
13. A *portage* is a small track across the land between lakes navigated on a canoe trip. The word comes from the French for "carry," such that a portage requires carrying all equipment, from canoes to canvas packs, from one body of water to the next. Two packs taken on top of one another is termed "double packing."
14. A "solo" is an activity of solitary meditation, sometimes undertaken with a fast for a number of days, as a purification ritual or spiritual experience, but more generally used as a three-day educational activity for individual self-reflection during an outdoor course (Angell, 1994; Henley, 1989; Schoel et al., 1988).
15. The author uses the phrase "control as mastery over the environment" (Kiewa, 1994, p. 39), which I have paraphrased as mastery activities. An example of what I perceive as a mastery activity in the sense in which she uses her phrase would be climbing a peak or reaching a ridge, saddle or hut when participants must exert as much pressure on themselves to "beat" the weather, the clock, an injury or the deterioration of some other condition for their involvement. Mastery over the environment is commonly expressed as conquering the obstacle rather than conquering the psyche in order to meet the challenge posed by the obstacle. This author proposes a model for women's adventure experience emphasizing "self-control." Again, the liberation of self through external mastery is being displaced by liberation of self through internal mastery. This theme reappears throughout the feminist literature.
16. I am working here with Foster's (1999) distinction between those feminist theorists who emphasise sexual difference as structured through language and subjectivity and those feminists who emphasise cultural difference as constructed through social processes and practices. She sees these two groups as coming predominantly from the humanities (philosophy) and the social sciences (sociology) respectively, however, few writings in the 'women in the outdoors' literature specify a theoretical or disciplinary origin. I want to point to how "a turn to gender" or cultural difference might allow feminists in the outdoors to move beyond sexed essentialism as their analytical framework. I call their perspective "cultural feminism," although I acknowledge the ambiguity of these terms.
17. A "ropes course" is an obstacle course constructed of cargo ropes and cable, usually built in tree tops or strung from poles, with rope ladders leading to various

“elements” (Schoel et al., 1988). Students are individually secured in safety harnesses and negotiate challenges requiring balance, skill and steady nerves; often relying on group support for motivation.

18. ‘Femininity’ is understood to account for a plurality of experience which is more accurately referred to as *femininities*. Femininities are socially constructed identities, achieved through ritualised and normative social practices and relations linking women’s experience to an inherent truth in female bodies (Bartky, 1990; Connell, 1987). Femininity which is compliant with hegemonic masculinity has been theorized by sociologists as ‘emphasized femininity’ (Connell, 1987; Lenskyj, 1994). Feminist philosophers have used the term ‘normative femininity’ to convey the aspect of consensual participation in particular practices. It intends to confront the notion that taking on the cultural ideal of feminine embodiment as central to women’s identity is mere compliance (e.g., Bartky, 1990; Schutte, 1997). Other forms of femininity are called ‘embodied femininities,’ some rejecting institutionalized heterosexuality and others involving “joyous experimentation with new ‘styles of the flesh’” (Bartky, 1990, p. 82). They are based on marginalized and oppositional discourses which involve practices of resistance. Exemplars most often mentioned outside feminist sport sociology are women body builders.

‘Masculinity’ is also understood to encompass more than one version of the practical accomplishment of the gendered identity of being a man in the historical moment and in the context of gender relations in which men live. Therefore it is more useful to refer to *masculinities* as a way of allowing for differences among men in the ways in which they choose to represent themselves at any one time. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ refers to the norms of an ideal (an always unreachable, it is argued, but nevertheless powerful) cultural form of embodiment, behaviour and attitude for men, that comes to represent all men, through their (but also women’s) active consent. The hegemony of the large, lean, muscular physique and active use of the masculine body when moving through space, combines with a homosociality and privileging of the attributes of rationality, objectivity and judgement, especially in the institutional structures of the state, workplace, church, family and so on, to dominate social relations in Western society (Connell, 1995). This type of masculinity has also been called ‘physical masculinity’ (Connell, 1987) and ‘heroic masculinity’ (Halberstam, 1998). Other masculinities within accounts of masculine social expression include ‘complicit masculinity,’ ‘marginalised masculinity’ and ‘subordinated masculinity’ (Connell, 1995). Each of these sets of social relations is constructed through their relations with each other as much as their relation to ‘woman’ and various forms of lived and representational femininities (Connell, 1987). Later chapters contest the implicit link between masculinities, men’s experience and male bodies, a move essential to the arguments of this project.

19. A critique of the inadequacy of the role model argument for women outdoors rests on problems in social role theory around what is normative and ‘normal’ and voluntarist accounts which ignore social forces, along with behaviourist assumptions of imitation leading to the perfectibility of character (detailed in Bell, 1993a; see Connell, 1987).

20. Yerkes and Miranda (1985, p. 49) did not give a definition to their survey respondents for the term “imposed gender roles,” but find that it is interpreted by respondents as “getting equal time to practise and an equal amount of attention and feedback from leaders,” implicating disciplinary practices in the practical arena which clearly served to regulate women’s physical skill attainment. Men were the gatekeepers for physical and technical ability even for women in sites of resistance to ‘traditional’ gender roles.
21. This issue is not as simple as I have presented it here and I return to it in later chapters. One might conclude that the femininity at risk is psychological and comprises the essential feminine nature or character of a woman; but if this inner structure is psychosexually determinant and immutable, then it is not clear how it could be at risk through outdoor activities or the gendered make-up of an expedition group. I have chosen to see the femininity at stake in Warren’s (1985) argument as a socially constructed cultural form which is emphasized or ‘lost’ in social practices. This view also has its problems if it is assumed that women alone are responsible for its loss.
21. In referring to this literature, I use the term *poststructuralist* quite narrowly, as it is Foucauldian formulations of power, and the discourses, disciplines and technologies which effect bodies as subjects and objects of power (Foucault, 1980), which are generally applied by feminist poststructuralist theorizing in the outdoors literature.
22. The descriptive empirical studies are Bell (1996b), Loeffler (1995b), Morch (1997). See also commentaries such as Johnson (1990). Miranda and Yerkes’ (1987) quantitative study also elicited responses from young, educated North American women; ethnicity was not surveyed in the demographic data.
23. While this is not a new argument in feminist theory (Barrett, 1992), it is new to feminist theorizing in the outdoors.
24. Hall (1996) recommends that Haug’s (1987) memory work as collective social analysis and critique, even done individually, is the best method for feminists studying the lived experience of women’s physicalities. She does not explain a method for the “concrete, material analyses” she encourages. She also urges more phenomenological studies of “subjective experiences and meanings” (Hall, 1996, p. 64-65).
25. Butler (1990) is criticized for her use of the example of gay male drag culture as an example of gender performances which do not copy an original, but parody femininity, which exaggerates and exposes the constructedness of femininity in women by the excessiveness built into the fantasy model. Jeffreys (1994) argues that the “fantasy” serves gay and straight masculinity by reobjectifying femininity, and trapping women in its excesses, and thus restabilizing relations of male dominance within which femininity is fabricated and policed. Male drag cannot thus function to subvert gender. However, Halberstam (1998) argues that not all performances can be seen as scripted, compulsory parody; she gives an example of stone butch lesbian women with female bodies who enact a masculine corporeality, but subvert their “performance” in a sexual practice, with women, which refuses sexual pleasure for themselves. Halberstam (1998, p. 126) observes that “her performance [of female masculinity] is embedded within a non-

performance” of the excesses of (heterosexual) masculinity as sexual dominance. As Halberstam (1998) argues, when lived as confusing experiences, these are not easy to explain as socially subversive “performativity” without more detail about how bodies and subjectivities constitute each other.

26. The source of these two terms is interviews with the participants in the study. What I call ‘body talk’ comes from Marnie Webb’s observations of women’s talk together on her all-women’s yacht charters and the term ‘defining moment’ is used by Siobhan O’Brien in describing her epiphany experience in Physical Education one day.

27. It is difficult to discuss the way a moment or event holds subjective significance for an individual and how this is apparent to another, but I kept in mind the following account of biography: “the rationality of a previous experience which is still felt as rational but intellectualized as irrational is...a feature of all reasoning selves” (Erben, 1993, p. 20), which is perhaps closest to defining how such moments are *felt* as significant. One woman, for instance, prefaced a key aspect of her story by saying, “Like- This is going to sound awful, but” before telling me of her father’s derogatory comments about her body. When the raw grip of certain moments reappears in new social/life contexts, this “creates the biographical trajectory,” or meaningful life history, as opposed to a linear chronology (Erben, 1993, p. 21; see also Connell, 1987, pp. 220-221). The corporeal effect of Jo’s father’s comments, as discussed further below, reveals in this case the inscription of such “rationality” on the lived body.

28. Although my perspective is one in which I see identity as ‘taken up’ through the available processes of ‘becoming’ a girl, woman, tomboy, outdoor leader and so on, that is, of consciously/corporeally achieving a subject position (e.g., Jones, 1993), I use the phrase ‘being a girl’ here to express the perspective of participants.

29. The purpose of life history as sociology (Connell, 1987, 1992, 1995; Erben, 1993; Middleton, 1987, 1993) is its ability to link agency and structure through the intersections of biography and history. This is the classic approach to sociology by Mills (1959) and still addresses issues of the mutual and contradictory constitution of the subjective and social. As Connell (1987, p. 221) observes, “however much detail is known about a given life, personal life becomes unintelligible if the structural bases of practice are not kept in view.” When Connell (1987, p. 222-223) goes on to discuss “personal life [as] a path through a field of practices which are following a range of collective logics, and are responding to a range of structural conditions which routinely intersect and often contradict each other,” he leaves room for considering “the structural bases of practice” as discursive, in that they produce but subject their effects at the same time. That is, life histories reveal more than passive responses to structural relations, but also “creative [strategies devised as] means of dealing with, resisting and resolving the contradictions” (Middleton, 1987, p. 170) experienced. My intent here is to provide insights from within “socially theorized life history” (Connell, 1992, p. 739) into embodied experience as social practice.

30. Marnie Webb did not grow up in Aotearoa New Zealand, but moved here as a young adult. She participated in the written pilot survey (see Appendix A) and indicated a strong interest in the research questions at that time and later when

registering for the database of professional women in the outdoors. She undertook to be interviewed as a pilot participant to offer me direction for clarifying or extending questions for future interviews. She then joined the study.

31. "Bach" is a New Zealand term for small cottage on the water.

32. Siobhan O'Brien developed a feminist consciousness in the process of questioning the Catholic Church's expectations of her mother. Hinepare Maraiti's narrative shows her consciousness of being a Maori woman as shaped within the context of Maori culture and patriarchal family relations.

33. See Abromowitz (1990) for extensive coverage of writings and expedition journals by women dating from the early 1900s; see also Bialeschki (1992), Lynch (1986), Miranda (1987), Miranda and Yerkes (1996), Roberts and Bialeschki (1995), Smith (1989) and Yerkes and Miranda (1985) for empirical and anecdotal historical accounts.

34. See Roberts (1998) for bibliography of research; see also Blum (1980), Dann and Lynch (1989), da Silva (1992), Galland (1980), LaBastille (1980) and Niemi and Weiser (1987) for narrative accounts.

35. I use the term *women in outdoor leadership* to refer to women practising outdoor leadership and *women's outdoor leadership* to refer to the specific practices discussed as leadership for all-women groups. It is assumed in the cultural feminist literature that only women would lead women-only groups. *Outdoor leadership for women and girls* refers to recommendations for men and women leading groups with women or girls as this literature tends to be less exclusive than the "women's leadership" approaches.

36. Only 7% of the "experts" surveyed in this study are women. It was concluded that the women's response rate to the survey equalled men's and so, since women were under represented in the field of outdoor leadership preparation which is "heavily dominated by males" (Priest, 1987, p. 46), gender was not a factor influencing the results of the study.

37. The Amazon accusation is not widely discussed in the literature, but is raised by McClintock (1996a) and its lived effects identified by Loeffler (1995a).

38. I have omitted "the midwife teacher" (Warren, 1993) from this list because, although clearly gendered, it is not specifically a prescription for women in outdoor leadership. It espouses the need to guard for a safe environment for students' risk-taking and relationships, but the midwife's role is more of facilitator than role model and so such safe space is unrelated to the threat of strong women to students' physical and psychological strength.

39. The widely shared disappointment in the hollowness of domestic, heterosexual femininity in American culture is identified by Friedan (1963) as the "problem that has no name." Increasingly frustrated women hardly dared to ask "is this all?" This same "trap" surrounds women in outdoor leadership who are told that they must accept the feminine-strengths-as-assets approach to outdoor pursuits to emphasize female

attributes, but not strength or speed, and must avoid proving their physical prowess as “superwomen.” Friedan’s solution is education for women and I propose the development of physical strength and corporeal change for women.

40. The gender order, according to Connell (1987), is a set of social relations, supported and shaped in social practice which is constrained through identifiable patterns. It is the “pattern of constraint” (Connell, 1987, p. 97) on practice, itself producing a pattern of practice, which affords a view of structures and substructures interrelating in the interests of greater social systems. He identifies three interrelating substructures within relations of gender: labour (or work), cathexis (or emotional attachment and connection) and power (or authority). In outdoor physical activity, the constraints of gender are visible as they operate on the social practices of physicality. It would appear that the constraints of the physical are also acting on social practices of gender (such as silence/passivity) in Morch’s (1997) anecdote. Indeed, each of these substructures act to structure physical relations organising bodies.

The constraints of labour, as gendered physical ability, come into play through the differential physical performance of skills and tasks required on a wilderness expedition. The constraints of cathexis, as gendered feelings of connection, come into play when the ‘hard, physical’ is a restricted sensual experience. The constraints of power, as gendered access to physical efficacy, come into play when proof of prowess gives coercive authority. Morch’s (1997) research does not account for how the social *practices* employed by women outdoor leaders (or women or men students outdoors), such as taking heavy loads across a portage trail, respond to the social *situation* of the coed wilderness trip within structural *constraints*. She claims that gender, class and race are confluent in the situation, but does not illustrate how she sees these in effect. I think her confusion arises when she misinterprets gender as the only set of constraints in the situation. The women are, after all, taking the heavy packs and a canoe; the social practices of the situation also constitute and are constrained by physicality.

The social relations of the physical are perhaps more visible as the obstacle to *transforming* the situation; the women do not confront the men with their inadequate provision of strength, but (appear to) accept the hegemonic authority which means that at the next portages the heaviest packs are again left for them and continue to struggle with the loads. But nor do the women relish their chance to develop their physiological capacity to carry the loads. It would not matter if the women refused to take the most debilitating loads until they had more strength or they took only those heaviest loads and assigned the lightest to the men, the transformation of the situation requires defining it as a physical situation. Transforming the situation into a new object of practice is the key to the possibility of, and historicity of, social change. Morch is frustrated at her inability *as a woman* to empower the other women to assert any change to the situation; the problem lies in her inability to see her own physicality as operating as a structure alongside her gender as a trained outdoor leader.

41. Connell (1983, p. 26) observes, for example, that “the correct development of masculinity in their sons...involves [parents] teaching them to be active, to be tough, to control their emotions, and to be good at football.”

42. And in the 'women in the outdoors' literature, "rape culture" is articulated through definitions of *women's* "different acculturation than men," thus securing its roots in the preparation of girls for mothering, childcare and the sexual division of labour.
43. The same social history of sport which has traced the association of muscularity with Christian morality (Crawford, 1987; Phillips, 1996) has not been applied to outdoor experiential education, partly due to the very denial of the productive physicality of experience.
44. An early historical narrative of Kurt Hahn's time at Gordonstoun recounts of the boys' daily athletics regime in which they practised to improve their previous personal level of achievement that "it was not unusual for a timid and sensitive boy with an undeveloped physique to emerge from the chrysalis of his underconfidence a competent athlete" (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 49). The developing physique was, for each student, "a base for his self-esteem" (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 55).
45. In fact, it was common practice at the Cobham Outward Bound School (New Zealand) at that time to have a female instructor take an all-male watch (the term for a group of 14 students) in order to curb the tendency among young men in a group to turn a personal growth experience into a solely physical experience. (As the interviews illustrate, many women instructors manage to dissuade men such as this from such competitive impulses, not by modelling an expertise in the complementary 'soft skills' of interpersonal interaction, but rather by outperforming them and redirecting the heteronormative physical relations in which they engage.)
46. This analysis is framed using Jefferson's (1998) insights and the final formulation is developed from Connell's (1983, p. 27) essay "Men's Bodies," in which he argues that "what it means to be masculine is, quite literally, to embody force, to embody competence."
47. The misrepresentation of "corporeality" seems to stem from attempts to overcome the mind/body dualism by combining the two in a "monist" unity adopted from Spinoza (Gatens, 1988; Grosz, 1987, 1994b). It is used cursorily by Longhurst and Johnston (1998) and problematically by Davies (2000). Grosz's (1994b) conceptualization of corporeality as inversion emphasizes the way in which the shaping of the self is accomplished through the shaping of the body's surface into a socially presented body. The social body changes how the self is lived in what are thought to be the *inner* aspects of self, such as efforts at self-control, but which are in fact lived physically. The social body reveals 'the physical' as constituted by exterior processes as much as interior.
48. Kurt Hahn evidently understood the cultural mediation of class and gender through physical activity, belying any inherent, universal quality; when he explained that he had departed from his own philosophy to establish Gordonstoun as a boys' school, because "the British, he had realized, were not ready for coeducation in 1934" (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p. 154).

49. Messner's (1990, p. 211) study of male athletes in combative sports identifies their expectations of "respect" from each other as "that form of emotionally distant connection with others that is so important to masculine identity." Whereas Jefferson (1998) does an intricate examination of the discursive function of 'hardness' for masculinity, he assumes but does not quite articulate this one facet of masculine "mental toughness," that is, an assurance of *distance*.

50. The term "hard women" is used in specific contrast to the pervasive attitude in American climbing circles through the 1970s and 1980s that male rock climbers were "hardmen" and women were "babymakers" (Roberts, 1992, p. 146). Another source comments about French women climbers that, "after the decades of the 'hard men,' media attention in the '80s and '90s has been captivated by what the French call 'les nanasdures'—the tough girls" (Douglas & Beaumont, 1995, p. 13).

51. Interestingly, this article appears to be the source for the earliest arguments in the outdoor experiential education literature that girls are socialized into different roles to boys and are therefore at a disadvantage in the outdoors. (It is cited by both researchers who continue to pursue these arguments.) However, they have overlooked Andrews' (1984) compelling thesis that "the advent of hard women" in the outdoors means that women are becoming more skilled at rewriting the culturally imposed beliefs that their bodies will inevitably fail. She asks if women have the "psychological strength" to reverse their "socialization," whereas subsequent authors (e.g., Warren, 1985) argue that women's psychological/feminine strength lies in their preference for alternative activity models in the outdoors. Confidence, Andrews (1984) actually argues, is a culturally inscribed trait learned in experience, not based on inner worthiness or compensation for female embodiedness.

52. The psyche is conceived of here, in Grosz's (1987, 1994b) terms, as an interior representation of the self's lived experience of subjectivity. The appearance of being 'hard,' even when not necessarily as strong as the strongest man or pursuing hegemonic strength (Jefferson, 1998), involves the projection onto the exterior bodily surface of this interior desire as a representation of self.

53. Haug's (1987) collective biography is one of the first empirical investigations of women's reflections on their relationship with their own bodies and provides a model for this approach.

54. There is a noticeable starting point in the careers of all of the women in the study, because positions for women teaching in the outdoors at schools and in outdoor centres only became available in the late 1970s and early 1980s in New Zealand. The most experienced women in this study began instructing about 1977 in voluntary training situations with Mountain Safety Council, the Auckland Alpine Club or assisting trained teachers on camps for the school at which they taught.

55. The article announcing the arrival of "hard women climbers" (Andrews, 1984, p. 22) is accompanied by photographs of women climbing, but the first page photograph is of the wholly-muscled physique and pumped-up veins of a climber in her harness at the base of the rock, exposed by a bikini top and shorts. The caption details her training

“diet of fruit.” Such a representation of bodily appearance, *and* the links to her prowess (the grade of the “crux pitch” which she climbs in the subsequent photograph), among ‘women in the outdoors’ is extremely unusual. It is perhaps for this reason that the subtitle, “The Advent of Hard Women Rock Climbers,” is omitted in the citation of the article by Warren (1985) who ignores the references to women’s strength training or ‘hard’ physicality in her discussion of the “myths” inhibiting women in outdoor adventure.

56. The notion that resistance is not complete allows for women to experience “the paradox of resistance” (Gotfrit, 1991) in which they consciously embrace aspects of the hegemonic for pleasure; thus women are able to resist and collude in hegemonic practices simultaneously. I think many women do this in the outdoors.

57. I use this phrase in reference to *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*, the title of the widely used climber’s manual published in Seattle, USA, by The Mountaineers.

58. Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 106) proposes not only that the “body is the potentiality of a certain world” in that the action of the body’s movement, gestures and skills elicits reactions in the world which construct reality, but also that action stimulates “a kind of ‘potential movement,’ rather than an actual one” (p. 109), such that embodiment encompasses “a certain power of action...in the realm of the potential” (p. 109). Thus strong women’s movements construct for them the reality in which women are then able to enact strong, physical movements. They feel this phenomenologically and objectively in the social world once they become the object for the perception of another (p. 106).

59. It is a curious inclusion, especially since she does not resolve or overcome her reaction by the use of her own physical competence or outdoor (or even self-defence) skills. She offers no analysis of the incident. Subsequent authors citing this paper do not mention the incident either. It shows, I think, how deeply ingrained is the acceptance that the female *body* is violable and that this defines the socialized identity of being a heterosexually defined woman of whatever sexual orientation.

60. It is difficult when analysing experiences outdoors because there are other influences present; for example, perhaps the sensuous “soar” of her spirit felt by Morch (1997, p. 12) is part of the way she characterises the freedom of the outdoors as compared to the cage of the city (p. 84). Alternately, “the hot sun beating down on my bare back” (p. 12) may feel more powerful to her, as I argue later, not because she is in the wilderness, but because she has shed her feminine underwear. In addition to the discovery of a multi-faceted pleasure in being in the outdoors, I also read this narrative (“after a *hard* day paddling and portaging”) as expressing the enticement of the sensuous use of skill and force (Connell, 1983, 1987; Whitson, 1990, 1994).

61. This is an important point to make for this as a sociological project as the use of phenomenology by itself is criticized for being too individualistic and subjective (Turner, 1996).

62. "Paddling" propels a canoe forward, by a solo paddler or more using a single-bladed paddle.

63. This newness is often falsely associated with a realness or dormant nature reasserting itself. It does allow some insight into why the women outdoor leaders in this study make a distinction between the experiences they have of pleasure which are "personal" or more available on "recreational trips" and the lack of those in professional or instructing situations (see below).

64. I am not including those women who maintain and enjoy 'feeling feminine' or 'being tidy' as part of their ontological sense of self.

65. "Bouldering" is scrambling around without protection on low rocks; rock climbing is usually done with climbing ropes on single or "multi-pitch" routes at a climbing site.

66. Halberstam (1998), for example, constantly makes space available for the consideration of the different experiences of transsexuals, transgenders and female-born people mistaken for men.

67. The distinction is between "knowing that," for instance, 'knowing that I did it,' which justifies claims to truth and "knowing how," for example, 'knowing how to do it,' which is skilled and often experiential knowledge (Alcoff, 1997, p. 17).

68. Kiewa's (2001) empirical inquiry into a small group of men and women's climbing relationships finds that one man prefers to climb with men because they would respond to his personal style of teasing, taunting, challenging and goading them to climb harder and better. He calls it "friendly competition" and in the course of pushing and shoving, he wants to be "pushed" back (Kiewa, 2001, p. 7).

69. A media analysis by Roberts (1992) of the U.S.-based *Climbing* magazine provides an historical survey of textual evidence for this claim; the narratives of "hard men" who (hetero)sexualize their women climbing companions, refer to women climbers as "baby makers" and domesticate their waiting wives seem to construct performances of this mode of masculinity. I think it is possible that "hard women" could certainly participate in hypermasculinity, although not all physically capable women want to; I do not envision modes of masculinities as taken up only by men.

70. This article uses U.S. Government statistics in the "Report of the Surgeon General on Physical Activity and Health-Women" to claim that "nearly 50% of all girls do not reach recommended weekly activity levels" (Bialeschki, 1999, p. 38).

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