

**Women's Experiences From Participating in
All Female Arctic Adventures**



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SUMMARY

Current understanding of the way in which females adventure and organise expeditions is widely unknown. This thesis explores the female concept of adventure with the intention to broaden the knowledge and awareness of women's experiences in the Arctic. It is centred around the experiences of contemporary female adventurers who have completed self organised expeditions in the Arctic in all female teams. It specifically questions why these women chose the Arctic for their expeditions and what their definition of adventure is. Furthermore this study explores why women choose to journey in single gender groups and any significant meanings that they may draw from their experiences. It investigates any relationships these women may form while on an expedition specifically their connection to nature, how they function as a female only group in leadership and decision and how they gain sponsorship, grants and deal with social media. The purpose of this study is to develop a current understanding of the way in which females' adventure unravelling any components of adventure expeditions that may hinder or add to their involvement in the outdoors.

This study was conducted within a feminist phenomenological framework which allowed a critical and reflective analysis of the women's experiences to transpire. In correlation with the values of feminist research this paper strives to challenge the gender inequality that is rife within the adventure community. In-depth interviews were held with six women, these informants were chosen for their commitment to adventure and for fitting the selection criteria of having completed a self organised all female expedition within the Arctic. Three of the women are well-known internationally for their competitive contribution to ski sport and the other three interviewees are well known locally. A much richer interpretation of these women was gathered by intertwining the worlds of both women with a media profile and those without. All of the women are privileged in the sense that they are from western world nations and have the opportunity to adventure, which represents a weakness within this study.

The findings of this research highlights that many of these women have a deep spiritual connection with the outdoors, which helps clear their minds and allows them to have moments of mindfulness. The second most common thread between these women's experiences was that the majority of the participants found that their voices were not heard in decision making within mixed gendered groups. Communication was much easier for them when in all female teams and they maintained a sense of egalitarianism in their leadership. Intuition was represented as one of the key contributing factor to their decision making. It was discovered that that the participants found it easier to gain sponsorship within an all-female team that had positive environmental objectives. However the

funding and support they gained was significantly less than men they knew. The participants in this study found that a sense of judgement and ego was less apparent in female only expeditions and it was more common for women to teach one another throughout the journey. This study adds helpful insight into the female concept of adventure however due to its broad nature it would be beneficial for further research to be conducted into the main themes presented in these results.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Arctic can be considered one of the most extreme places on earth to survive and adventure. It is vast, has wide open landscapes, harsh interchangeable weather conditions, and human predators. Many people consider it to be an adventure just to visit the north, but for some this is not enough. Today a number of young women today take on epic, time consuming ventures that allow them to access and explore these regions, pushing themselves to their limits. Despite more women venturing to the north, Arctic regions remain a gendered space. The amount of men who adventure in these regions vastly outnumber female explorers, possibly due to concepts suggesting stereotypical male traits are better suited to survive in harsh Arctic environments. While women have been recognized for exploring in Arctic regions throughout history, stigmas related to gender roles have impacted society's perception of what it means to travel in these regions.

It is customary to date the earliest female explorations to the 1850s (Morris & O' Connor, 1994, Lapierre, 2007). It was not that women did not have a desire to travel before that time, but that female explorations were far fewer and much less recognised. The Arctic and Northern Polar regions in particular have held a considerable amount of attraction for adventurers and explorers for several hundreds of years and today little uncharted territory remains. While the majority of the early explorations were completed by males, over time, being a woman was no longer considered a handicap when travelling and doing adventurous expeditions. In fact, it could be suggested that it eventually became somewhat of an advantage, especially today when the public are becoming more interested in hearing female points of view and reading their memoirs. The expressive writing that was employed by early female explorers caught people's attention and provided a different outlook on adventurous journeys, inspiring women today. Additionally, as the outdoor world recognizes that the adventure industry is a gendered space, there have become more opportunities for women to access outdoor recreation via scholarship funds and as part of their marketing, many outdoor companies have begun campaigning for more women to explore (Manzer, 2015). However, regardless of this progress a severe gender imbalance remains. This imbalance results in challenges for women as they seek to attain equal opportunities and acceptance in adventure pursuits.

Exploration in the Arctic has typically been male gendered. If you look towards the traditional adventurers of Svalbard, they were trappers, hunters, whalers and scientists. The voices of the women involved in these ventures were often lost and unknown (Urberg, 2007). Two women in particular, Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancraft, made a significant contribution to Arctic and Polar region adventure travel, however their names are not widely known. Bancraft was the first woman

to make it to the North Pole on foot and dogsled (1986) and the first woman to ski to the South Pole solo (1994). She and Arnesen have completed several expeditions in the Arctic 'together' and have collaborated with other groups of women to inspire their adventurous journeys also. Why have these women's undertakings gone largely unnoticed?

The attitude that women are unsuited to life in the polar regions has been deeply entrenched in its history. Although it is becoming more and more common for all-female teams and solo female expeditions in the area to be publically recognised today, little to no research has been gathered about why women choose to adventure there in the first place. This thesis endeavours to add to the existing body of research and address the void of knowledge in this domain through exploring the female perspective of adventure and why in particular women choose to complete journeys in all female teams.

Research Question:

My research aims to explore women's experiences from participating in all female Arctic adventures, focussing on the female perspective of adventure and the reasoning behind choosing to adventure in a single gender group.

Research focus:

The purpose of this enquiry is to examine and form a richer perspective on what 'Adventure' meant to the women interviewed and how they specifically carried it out. A female perspective on adventure expeditions will be represented in this research paper through the voices of six women who have completed expeditions in the Arctic in all female teams. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used as a method to obtain the data for this study.

The focus of this study was to create an understanding of why women chose to adventure in single gendered groups and how female-only teams would function in respect to creating goals and decision making. As this study progressed questions arose concerning the relationship women adventurers in the Arctic experience between themselves and nature and between themselves and the adventure industry as they navigate the media, scholarships and grants. I endeavoured to grasp some understanding of these women's experiences and unearth any opinions and beliefs that they may have developed.

It is important to have a theoretical framework that can unravel the complexities of these women's perspectives of adventure. Therefore this research has taken a feminist phenomenological approach with the intention of empowering these women's experiences and challenging gender power relationships. By exploring and recognising these women's perspectives, this study will gain a deeper interpretation of female adventure experiences in the Arctic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

Firstly, I would like to define what is meant by adventure throughout this study. Miles and Priest (1990, p 1) state that 'To adventure is to venture forth into the unknown, to undertake an activity that has an uncertain outcome for the adventurer and may be risky or dangerous.' Humphrey's (2012, para 3) broadens this idea by adding that 'Adventure is stretching yourself; mentally, physically or culturally. It is about doing what you do not normally do, pushing yourself hard and doing it to the best of your ability.' While I recognise that adventure for some can happen in any environment, the adventure I am specifically researching are expeditions in extreme/Arctic natural environments.

Previous Research

While the subject of adventure has existed as a scholarly concept for over fifty years, it has been discussed as early as 300 BCE (Cavert, n.d). Adventure is considered to be a daring or unusual experience with an uncertain outcome. Experience can be defined as to meet with, to feel, to suffer and to undergo (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007). Aristotle was one of the first philosophers to recognise the importance of experiencing things and surmised that knowledge was obtained through the senses (Cavert, n.d). For thousands of years humans have sought out sensory experiences that are different and unusual to that of what they are used to. For many this included explorations of foreign lands and also developed into challenging feats. More recently Mortlock has described adventure as a moral alternative to war (1984). He conjectured that it is a deep human need, when not challenged with one's survival, to create situations and experiences in which individuals can be trialed and tested. Mortlock reflected that adventure acts as a moral compass for many people and aids them to establish a sense of values and attitudes. Also when overcoming a risk or an obstacle individuals and groups feel a sense of euphoric achievement and rise in levels of self esteem.

While this was clearly not the sole purpose of many early explorations, Mortlock's theory on adventure has shaped an overwhelming number of outdoor adventure programs to date. His theory is orientated towards the masculine idea of adventure and research into this area from a feminine perspective is a relatively new field. The outdoors in general has been a highly gendered space and there are very few authors who address women's engagement in the outdoors and the issues that arise when they adventure.

Kirsti Pedersen (2003) is a leading author who focuses on gender and cultural conflicts within outdoor activities. In her doctoral dissertation she explores women's participation in outdoor activities and how, as a result of the evolution of humans from a hunting and gathering society, societal perceptions have been shaped to imply that women should stay closer to home in a domestic environment while men ventured further afield.

Denise Mitten (1985) has produced many works focussing largely on women's experiences in the outdoors. In a recent paper (2009), she teamed up with Sara Woodruff to present the idea that women's outdoor education programs in America have started to follow the values of the Norwegian term 'friluftsliv,' an important and complex theory, because women relate to this concept more than the conquering attitude that is present in hero's journey based programs.

Currently there are in-depth studies completed on the differences of learning styles between genders in the outdoors. Watson (2015) and Massa (2015) have both written about the positive effects of female only adventure and outdoor education practices, and there are several thesis papers written about the challenges women face while guiding. McDermott examines female-only canoeing experiences, delving into whether females prefer to complete expeditions in mixed or female-only groups. There are also numerous books and accounts on 'man's' need to adventure however there are very few articles that discuss adventure from a female perspective. Marstrander Askildsen and Lodal (2015) have explored the female incentive to adventure in the Polar regions. This has been the most up to date and relevant piece of research I have encountered. Their research concluded that women are motivated to complete expeditions in the polar-regions because of the meaningful experiences they encountered with the landscape, the relationships they built with themselves and other participants and finally how their routine affected their experience of time. They described the inner peace women felt while creating a routine and how exerting themselves physically in extreme environments with people they trusted impacted them on a significant level.

This paper seeks to further explore women's perspective on adventuring in the Arctic, the relationships they form there and whether adventuring in an all female team holds any importance.

To better understand the results of this study, several key terms and themes of literature must be reviewed. The following literature will create a foundation for the reader to gather a deeper understanding of the proposed research.

The Gendering of the Outdoors and Adventure

Traditionally, men have been associated with being free and able to cross borders while women on the other hand have been perceived as being passive and stagnant, unable to break free of the constraints thrust upon them (de Beauvoir, 2000). Women have belonged historically to the men of the family; To their fathers as maidens, to their husbands when married and to their sons when widowed (Lapierre, 2007). Pederson (2003) believes that the domestication of females is a result of evolving from a hunter and gatherer society where males were able to roam free. This idea is also reflected in Young's study where she determined that as children girls tend to play in small and enclosed imaginary lands where as boys extend themselves to outdoor spaces (1980). As adults, men are still free in this manner whereas women are presented with boundaries.

Malraux defined adventure as 'venturing further' and the term adventurer referred to accessing new frontiers (Lapierre, 2007). However females who explored new territory could not be called adventurers as this term was denied to the female sex because females should be housebound and simultaneously they could not be called adventuresses. The term adventuress is associated with intrigue, obtaining financial or social gain through unscrupulous means, ambitiousness and mercenary sex. While men were entitled to conquer the world, women were only deemed fit to conquer a man. Malraux (as cited in Lapierre, 2007, p 4) famously quipped that 'Men have adventures and women have lovers.' There was no term that distinguished women who travelled from courtesans and spies. In history books they were often recorded as being oddities or freaks of nature.

Living in a world determined by man

Women who travelled and adventured used to be considered as freaks who 'refused to respect conventional morality' (Lapierre, 2007, p 120). They were called freaks when they dressed like men and freaks when they survived where men succumbed (p 120). Women have generally been considered as ill-suited to outdoor adventurous activities and completing expeditions and journeys places them at unnecessary risk (Allin, 2000; Collins, 2000). Having the ability to cross an ice sheet alone or walk through a tropical rain forest without food or clothing was in the past an ability that

was strictly limited to males (Lapierre, 2007). Customarily it is believed that outdoor expeditions and adventures require qualities such as strength, toughness, physical competency, and a mastering of self in the face of adversity, which have traditionally been associated with the masculine identity and is not something that is commonly linked to the feminine identity (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Della-Longa, 2013; Little & Wilson, 2005).

Lapierre (2007) believes that the order of these things exists more in the mind and within societal constructs rather than in the fearless deeds women complete. De Beauvoir states that females are considered the 'other', 'an inessential correlate to man' and a mere object. 'Woman is thereby both culturally and socially denied by the subjectivity, autonomy, and creativity which are definitive of being human and which in patriarchal society are accorded the man' (as cited in Young, 1980, p 140). Fullagar and Hailstone (1996) suggest 'the masculine model of knowledge in the outdoors relies upon the suppression of the feminine' (p. 23), whereas the male experience is in fact 'universalised as human experience, promulgating a singular order of desire and sameness of identity against which women's difference is measured (p. 24). As a result many women have the patterned belief that they must manipulate their behaviours to match that of a male. Bäckström (2013) identified that female skaters were more eagerly accepted when they demonstrated masculine behaviours of aggression and toughness. Similarly Thorpe et al. (as cited in Watson, 2015 p 8) 'identify in their own experiences of physical activity, how redefining their existing behaviours enabled them to manage the masculine culture they were entering to ensure their position within the field was accepted.' Women in adventure sports 'should not have to 'act like one of the boys' in order to gain acceptance and recognition for their achievements. They must be able to learn and educate in ways that are empowering and meaningful for them.' (Watson, 2015, p 118). This research represents a large barrier that is generated from restrictive gendered practices and beliefs which continue to marginalise women in the outdoors

Many outdoor women still continue to be viewed as subordinate to men by outdoor practitioners and adventure enthusiasts. Most adventuring women do not want to identify or associate themselves with traditional masculine characteristics but are forced to in order to become accepted within the outdoor adventure community (Watson, 2015). To render this issue of gendered space in nature and adventure genders will require a paradigm shift and a critical analysis of the behaviours of both men and women in the outdoors. For this process to occur men and women must both be willing to initiate this change (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998).

Constrictive Female Movement

Women tend to move through this world differently to men. ‘The constraints and dangers, the perceptions of others and the complex emotions women journey with are not the same and for many women, the inner landscape is as important as the outer’(Morris & Connor, 1994, p 1). Female adventurers are as aware of the political, historical and cultural climates of the areas that they adventure in as male adventurers are. They may even possess the same physical and tactical as their male counterparts. However women cannot adventure without being aware of her body and the limitations her sex may often present (Morris & Connor, 1994). As Young explains ‘a woman lives her body as a thing, she remains rooted in an immanence, is inhibited, and retains a distance from her body as transcending movement and from engagement in the world’s possibilities’ (Young, 1980, p 150).

Young explicitly points out that females in present day patriarchal societies undergo a persistent contradiction within their subjectivity and their existence as a passive bodily object (1980). She states that “we often experience our bodies as a fragile encumbrance, rather than the media for the enactment of our aims. We feel as though we must have our attention directed upon our bodies to make sure they are doing what we wish them to do, rather than paying attention to what we want to do through our bodies” (1980, p 146/7). Female bodies are seen often as objects (including sexual objects) or projects which need to be constantly improved, sculpted and protected instead of the body being perceived as a medium which an individual can utilise to complete their goals. Young notes that for many women tension occurs ‘between transcendence (being for itself) and immanence (being in itself), between subjectivity and being a mere object’ (1980,p 144). This can be clearly detected through the way some women move.

Young (1980) completed studies in female embodiment and the conclusions she has drawn do not relate to all women. However, many women may relate to her findings. In her observations she discovered that women frequently believe that a task that is relatively simple to accomplish is out of their capability before they even attempt it. Females tend to be self conscious and cautious of their bodies which often leads them to not reach their full physical capacities. ‘Feminine bodily existence is an inhibited intentionality, which simultaneously reaches toward a projected end with an "I can" and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed "I cannot"' (Young, 1980, p146). Generally females underestimate and underuse their bodies potential strength and capacity to which skills and co-ordination are available to it. Warren and Loeffler (as cited in Watson, 2015 p 9) discovered in their study about females gaining technical skill development in adventure sports, ‘that women consistently underestimate their potential to achieve in this domain and when success occurred, they received less recognition compared to their male counterparts’.

Gender Appropriate Sports and Media

Females face a great deal of prejudice in the adventure sports and media world. Frequently their participation is only socially accepted when women are involved in 'feminine' or 'sex appropriate' sports (Anderson, 1996, p 15). McNeil's et al., (2012) studies determined that women are currently underrepresented in the outdoor media world. Only professional female athletes were presented in a capable manner and fit to be in the outdoors. Most everyday women are represented through outdoor magazines and advertisements as consumers rather than adventurers and/or conquerors of the outdoors. Instead of pictures conveying them as individuals who enter the outdoors regularly with the skills to survive away from domestic environments, women were only in wilderness pictures with men leading the way or portrayed singularly in a place that had modern comforts or represented a base camp. This societal perception that women are more domesticated than men permeates into female thinking and can taint professional sports women's sense of self identity. Little and Wilson determined that as a result of this, women are less likely to identify with being an 'adventurer', despite being involved in activities that were deemed to be classified as adventurous, or had elements of adventure in them (as cited in Watson, 2015, p 22).

According to Curry (as cited in McNeil etl, 2012) sports act as a means of social control that upholds the existing gender order. 'While the outdoor recreation market boasts its own community and social norms, it still intertwines with larger cultural ideals and symbols, such as ideas about 'appropriate' gender behaviors and appearances' (McNeil etl, 2012 p 41). Humberstone (2000a, p VII) also states that 'the media portray mainly men involved in risk-taking adventurous activities in the outdoors and generally represents them as 'heroes'. When women do engage in these activities, sometimes with fatal consequences, they are depicted not as heroines, but behaving inappropriately and selfishly.' Watson notes that this not only indicates that women who participate in sports deemed as un- feminine (including outdoor, high risk adventure sports and expeditions) receive little recognition for their experiences and achievements but this simultaneously limits the perception that women have of their place and ability in sport and the outdoors (2015, p 22).

De Beauvoir (2000) maintains that the disparity between men and women has been created by cultural factors, and it will take a paradigm shift to make the slightest changes to this. However over the last 100 years women's perceptions about themselves have changed and they have gained the courage to disobey, recognise their own desires and instincts, and to follow their passions. De Beauvoir (2000) emphasizes that the body alone does not define the woman, but that she must make it her own, to experience reality. In this manner it lives out its embodied situation in the world that

forms itself and defines the woman you want to be. Contemporary women generally have more opportunity if they come from a Westernised, privileged background and have the ability to choose and construct their own projects. By taking this ownership of their lives they are able to shape themselves as the women they want to be (Moi, 1998).

Female Attitude to Adventure

Female explorers and travellers have historically been seen to encompass a more relaxed and less conquering attitude than their male counterparts (Lapierre, 2007). Instead of wielding their sense of religion and civilisation upon others, women have been reported to engage and admire foreign histories and landscapes. Women, instead of focussing merely on reaching new physical frontiers focus on reaching new spiritual frontiers. They commonly embark on more of an inward journey than outer conquest. This contrasts significantly with the connotations behind the term adventurer, as it is generally suggests a great passion for reaching new frontiers and dallying with risk.

Mitten and Woodriff (2009) have also discovered that women in contemporary times often do not connect with the values of male adventure programming or with the masculine concepts of adventure expeditions. They conclude that female attitude towards adventure and nature involves more of a spiritual connection, unity and sense of harmony. In one of the author's unpublished reviews of women travelers in the 1800s and early 1900s, both from North America and Western Europe, it was found that 'women found nature to be healing, were prone to find a sense of place, and felt spiritually connected to the land. Their intent was not to conquer nature; they wanted to be in nature. They came to know that they felt good because they were in nature.' (Mitten & Woodriff, 2009, p 5). This clearly reflects the concept of 'coming home to nature' which is embedded in the definition of Friluftsliv.

While female trips are not devoid of risk, they have developed to have a sense of the Friluftsliv culture embedded within them. Most women do not gravitate towards adventure in the heroic and conquering sense but rather are seeking out spiritual nourishment and growth. Often times adventure provides more of an inward journey even though it incorporates many physical challenges. The authors also found that the women from their studies tended to engage in a 'respectful and mutual relationship with nature, receiving what nature offers, and seeing nature as part of one's daily life (Mitten & Woodriff, 2009,p 5).

The Concept of Friluftsliv

Friluftsliv is a complex socio- cultural phenomenon that can most literally be translated to ‘free air life or free living under the open sky’ (Pederson as cited in Henderson etl, 2016, p 288). Gelter (2000) defines friluftsliv as ‘a philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom in nature and spiritual connectedness with the landscape’ (p78). Pedersen (2016 as cited in Henderson etl, p 290) synopsisizes that Friluftsliv in a contemporary sense has become a dynamic dualistic cultural political concept. It encompasses complex relations and practices ranging from daily walking in green areas, sustainable awareness and an ascetic experience of nature to skill oriented and technology based journeys into remote uncultivated environments. She further notes that the concept of Friluftsliv extends from the most mundane and routine activities in the outdoors to an intense and possibly spiritual bond with nature that enhances a sense of self identity and purpose. Quintessentially the common denominator between these activities is that they are all non motorised and non competitive ways of journeying across the natural landscape.

Gelter argues that ‘friluftsliv can provide a biological, social, aesthetic, spiritual and philosophical experience of closeness to a place, the landscape, and the more-than-human world; an experience most urban people today lack’ (2009, p 6). Faarlund (2012) believes that friluftsliv as a theory has the unique capability to challenge ‘the patterns of thought, values, and lifestyles imposed by modernity’ (2007, p. 56). Gelter also concludes that this concept is more than just a nature experience. It can in fact be a powerful journey of learning, not only about a place but also all the creatures and flora in that area and how both the human and natural world collide and intermix. Gelter notes that ‘friluftsliv is a link between natural history and philosophy, linking the knowledge of yourself and your surroundings into an understanding of the world’ (Gelter, 2000, p 9).

Friluftsliv can also be a mode of escapism for many people who utilise nature experiences as a break from their fast paced contemporary, urbanised life (Gelter, 2009). Gelter research suggests that slow experiences in nature can provide participants with more energy as their experiences allow them to detox and destress the mind. Kaplan and Kaplan (as cited in Gelter, 2009, p 28) deliberate that ‘nature’s power as a generator for mental energy and well-being is empirically and theoretically well documented’. Gelter believes that for many this is an integral component of modern day friluftsliv.

Spirituality in Nature

Wilderness or nature settings and experiences hold the possibility of connecting with the greater forces of the universe and with those around us (Ferguson, 2003). However spirituality does not just have to indicate connecting with the divine especially in a religious manner. Spirituality and spiritual experiences are conveyed as individual process that relates to finding purpose and peace

within one's life, a time for reflection and connection. Research that has been completed over the last decade has confirmed that a relationship between wilderness experiences and spirituality exist and that a majority of wilderness visitors recognise that wilderness experiences benefit their spiritual being (Heintzman, 2003).

Forming an awareness or appreciation of the vast and dramatic beauty of one's surrounding is often involved in spiritual experiences (Heintzman, 2003). Wuthnow and Greeley both found in their separate studies that many individuals indicated that their contact with the beauty of nature led to either a spiritual or deeply moving experience (as cited in Davis, 2004). Kaplan & Talbot note that by being inspired with feelings of awe and wonder in the wilderness that, "one's intimate contact with this environment leads to thoughts about spiritual meanings and eternal processes" (as cited in Davis, 2004, p 7). Individuals can afterwards feel more connected to their own thoughts and feelings and more at ease with themselves. Martin's participants also claimed that their relationship with nature was an emotional one which included feelings of inner peace and tranquility (2004).

The outdoors can simultaneously request surrender and bequeath infinite possibilities upon a human. The outdoors can educate people on how to live and deal with anxiety and fear. From dealing with these emotions of fear and anxiety can occasionally come a sense of trust in God and belief in a greater being (Comins, 2006). However for those who do not believe in the divine their trust can be in themselves or the environment they are in. Kaplan and Talbot agree that 'wilderness experiences lead to more trust and less need for control' (as cited in Davis, 2004, p3). They can also acquire this sense of trust not only in themselves but also in the universe (Comins, 2006). Trust evokes relaxation and harmony within one's life (Davis, 2004). Overall both the natural setting and adventure component seem to play a key role in generating any form of transpersonal experiences. Seeking transpersonal experiences can be a major reason for people to visit the outdoors (Davis, 1998).

While many people claim to experience nature as a place of spiritual significance, Morgan (as cited in Heintzman, 2003) argues that this relationship is mythological. Martin indicated in his study that very few participants saw nature as being sacred or having any form of spiritual meaning (2004). Tracey (1995) also suggests that most westerners have lost touch with their spirituality and leave it to the indigenous cultures to uphold these values. Our culture perceives spirituality and nature as a completely separate thing. Tracey goes so far as to state that "Despite its political and social achievements, humanism has left us culturally impoverished and spiritually bankrupt" (1995, p. 185). Heintzman argues that more recent research has exposed that a real link between wilderness experiences and spirituality does exist, however it is individually determined as to the depth of this

relationship (Heintzman, 2004). However, spiritual transcendence is not the only way to forge a deep connection with nature as for some merely being outside provides respite and peace.

Biophilia / Relationship With Nature

Biophilia is the biological inclination to affiliate with nature. It reflects the richness of the human reliance on nature for physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual sustenance and security. It can also be the need and inclination to seek out positive nature experiences (Davis, 2004). Josselson (as cited in Martin, 2004, p6) believes that 'human well-being is fundamentally linked to the wellbeing of the Earth.' This is suggestive of there being a deeper interdependency and bond between humans and nature. Jung (cited in Tracey, 1995) conjectures that the earth seemingly can exert a power over the mind and there is a direct link between the deep unconscious and the world of nature. This relationship is based around oneness or duality with nature. Martin dictates that it is critical to recognise that humans fall into different categories based on their depth of relationship with nature (2004).

Critics of 'biophilia' suggest that humans can in fact adapt to any environment and believe that humankind has embraced technophilia. Humans have developed a reliance on technology and only love the environment when it suits their purposes (Stairs, n.d). Remarkably however, the growing distance between people and nature has gone hand in hand with more positive attitudes towards wilderness (Rudzitis & Johansen, 1991; Thacker, 1983). Bonnett suggests it is of dire importance for humankind to better understand their connection, interdependence and relationship with nature for a sustainable future (2003).

Habitual Actions

Walker believes that individuals feel a greater sense of interconnectedness to a place and community when they manage to balance themselves within the natural world by harmonising their bodies with the natural rhythms of that environment (as cited in Beard & Wilson, 2013). On many outdoor journeys people enhance these natural rhythms with habitual actions. Habitual actions can easiest be explained as an embodied experience; for example any skills that might be unfamiliar to begin with upon an adventure, eventually become embodied actions that are no longer premeditated. They become habitual through a learning process that involves a dynamic interplay between an individual and the world they live in (Askildsen & Løndal, 2016). Askildsen and Løndal found that when the women in their study were underway on an expedition, their lives became

merely a world of ice and snow (2016). The habitual bodily experiences that occurred on these expeditions enabled the women to feel like they were a part of nature in contrast to their overactive minds and everyday experiences in civilisation. This was a huge motivating factor for them to seek out adventurous expeditions in the first place. Hough declares that as people engage in habituelle movement so do their thoughts, which allows individuals to solve problems, ponder new possibilities and become 'unstuck' from their personal dilemmas to forge a new way of thinking and doing things (2009).

Why Some Women Prefer All Female Teams

Mitten (1985) found that women tend to favour all female trips as the adventure style is very different to that of a co-ed / mixed gender or all male group. Yerkes and Miranda (as cited in Mitten & Waldruff, 2009, p 3) found that 'in addition to women feeling that they would have better opportunities to learn and practice skills, they also went on women's outdoor trips to feel empowered, to relax, to have fun, to gain a sense of renewal, to network, and to find spiritual healing in nature.

In McDermott's studies of female only canoe expeditions, women spoke of a sense of empowerment, freedom, and equality they felt when completing expeditions in all female teams. This was 'specifically related to the division of labour, as they all believed they more likely would have taken a 'back seat' with men present' (McDermott, 2004, p 290). Pedersen also argues that younger women tend to rely more on a male presence while in nature, but it has become clear that when the male presence is removed, young women show exceptional competence in learning and exhibiting hard, technical skills (2003).

McDermott (2004) also found that women hated the fact that they felt less capable when in mixed groups and felt the need to dumb down their skill level. Young believes that typically speaking the female body underestimates and under-uses its real capacity, in respect to both the potential strength of its physical size and the skills and coordination that are available to it (1980). In her studies Young observed that the main differences between men and women, in the performance of tasks that required coordinated strength not brute muscular strength, was the way in which each sex approached the task with their bodies. 'Women often do not perceive themselves as capable of lifting and carrying heavy things, pushing and shoving with significant force, pulling, squeezing, grasping, or twisting with force' (Young, 1980, p 144). When women attempt such tasks, they frequently failed to summon the full potential of their muscular coordination, position, poise and bearing.

Conclusion

In summary apart from the work of Askildsen and Londal (2015), the experiences of women completing adventure expeditions remains largely unknown. While Askildsen and Londal have explored the female incentive to adventure in polar regions, there is still a further need to explore, in an adventure context, why women choose to do this in an all female team and how this affects their leadership, decision making and planning. There is a large body of works that examine the human/nature relationship and spirituality in nature; however current literature lacks insight into the relationship that women form with nature and the world around them during their expeditions and whether this affects their objectives when adventuring. Mitten and Woodruff suggest that women relate to the values of Friluftsliv in adventure programs more so than traditional masculine concepts of adventure, which poses the question of whether this transfers to female adventure expeditions as well as programs.

De Beviore's (2000) and Young's (1980) work highlights the inhibition of bodily movement that some women experience as a result of a societal conditioning and the gendering of the outdoors. This literature provides a solid framework for this study but it will be interesting to discover how those challenges of moving through a world largely determined by man will affect women adventuring today. How does being a female adventuring in the extreme conditions of the Arctic affect societal perceptions of this and the ability to gain sponsorships and grants?

There are currently many shortcomings in the literature available and Watson believes that 'there remains a call for further work to be conducted to enhance and expand current understanding about the experiences of women in the outdoors' (2015, p 24). This enquiry intends to minimise the gap by exploring women's perspectives and experiences of all female adventure expeditions in the Arctic. This study will adopt the theoretical framework of feminist phenomenology as a means of providing a space for these women to share their own lived experiences including any positive and negative characteristics. This research aims to shed light into the experiences of female adventurers and to assist as a foundation for the development, facilitation and application of outdoor adventure practices that do justice to the needs of women adventurers.

CHAPTER 3: MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Adventure is a term that has masculine qualities associated with it and there is a great lack of research into this area from a female standpoint. The main objective of this study is to form a

deeper understanding of the female perspective of adventure and in particular why these women chose to adventure in an all female team. Other significant questions that evolved from this topic are:

What was the specific appeal of the Arctic?

Were there any significant relationships that were formed, particularly in reference to nature and does this affect their adventures?

How did the decision making/ leadership function within an all female team?

As females how did they acquire sponsorship/ grants and deal with Social Media?

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodologies are the most suitable means of researching any complex human experience (Gunn, 2006). As this research is directed towards examining the complexities of the female adventure experience, qualitative methods were employed to explore this area in the most adequate manner. My research study falls under the empirical paradigm which is based on real life experiences and observations.

This study has adopted a feminist phenomenological approach to research. This is an interdisciplinary method which explores the lived experiences of women. This methodology has been utilised to depict the experiences of women, making it possible for their voices to be heard through knowledge, and simultaneously challenge patriarchal structures within society and research (Fisher, 2010). To better understand the approach I will first examine phenomenology.

Phenomenology is based around the concept that everyone personally experiences the world (Gunn, 2006). 'It is the study of lived or existential meanings and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness' (Van Manen, as cited in Watson, 2015, p35). Experience is something that is in the here and now, something that we perceive in the moment and has a meaningful impact on us. It often involves more meanings than what is directly presented to us. It is an embodied phenomena, with movement, thought, emotions and reflection. This theory is directed at interpreting experiences as they are experienced from the individual's point of view who is having the experience.

Van Manen (1990) believes that human beings are inseparable in relation to the world. He states that humans have a solid awareness of their surroundings which is characterised through the landscape, places, people and other phenomena that are integrated into each individual's world.

When our interactions with these things becomes more holistic with emotions attached to it, our lived experiences become more meaningful. Merleau-Ponty (2002), emphasised that the body is the primary source of knowledge of the world. He states that the body and that which it perceives cannot be disentangled from each other. The way in which one perceives the world alters the way in which one engages with it and forms relationships with it. Merleau-Ponty further notes that the experience of space, body, social relationships and time are particularly important aspects of lived experiences because the body and consciousness are intertwined. Preconceived perceptions are deeply imbedded in our consciousness and the way we view things and experience them.

Merleau-Ponty (2002) states that humans experience the world in terms of the "I can" – that is, oriented towards certain projects based on our capacity and habituality. Young (1980) however conjectures that in general women tend to move in a more tentative, protective and reactive way and that this inhibited intentionality is embedded in their consciousness. She argues that women experience the world as an 'I cannot' rather than an 'I can'. Women can become physically inhibited, confined, positioned and objectified when they learn to live out their existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to them (Young, 1980). 'As lived bodies we are not open and unambiguous transcendences which move out to master a world that belongs to us, a world constituted by our own intentions and projections' (Young, 1980, 152). De Beauvoir denotes that cultural conditioning is the underlying factor that women are defined by their bodies and a woman must make it her own if she is to experience reality (as cited in Young, 1980).

Femininity and being classified as female 'creates a set of structures and conditions which delimit the typical situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves' (Young, p 140). Disprose (1994) expresses that injustice against women begins in the ways that social discourses and practices place women's embodied existence as improper and secondary to men. While some women manage to escape and transcend this typical reality of being a woman, there still exist a type of bodily behaviour which is stereotypical to feminine existence. It can be seen in the way a woman moves their body and holds it in a protective manner for example, both of these comportments display that something is inhibiting it. These body behaviours and movement reflects the particular modalities of the structures and conditions of the body's existence in the world and affects the mean of the human lived experience (Young, 1980). This theory is particularly relevant to my research as each of the women involved in the study have engaged in their own bodily experience and it is integral to unearth their own individual perceptions and discover any societal conditioning that may have been present throughout their experiences. It is critical to recognise however that phenomenology is not

meant to prove something but rather reflectively ask and portray what makes up the nature of a lived experience (Van Manen, 1997).

This research was completed from a feminist standpoint as the 'goals of feminist research are set to be consciousness raising' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I want women's lives and experiences to become more visible in literature. A feminist perspective does not seek to romanticise or idealise these women, but rather to develop insights that allow us to appreciate their struggles, understand their limitations and see their joys and their pains as similar to ours (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). A feminist framework not only enables women to study other women in a manner that allows them to be considerate of their values and perspectives but encourages researchers to achieve emancipatory goals through the research process (see Clarke & Humberstone, 1997). In other words the data and knowledge being produced in a bid to meet a binary of outcomes, is meant to provide a voice to women's experiences and aid the process of remedying the challenges they face. 'Feminist research is crucial to the development of knowledge about the experiences of different women and how women experience the social, physical, economic, political and emotional aspects of their lives...to inform policy and practice and thus improve the lives of women' (Scruton, 1994, p.13).

The intention of feminist phenomenological research is to empower women and challenge gender power relationships 'This means that research is not conducted solely for the sake of research, but rather the findings are used to suggest changes towards greater gender equality.' (Watson, 2015, p 37). It is integral to identify and address the challenges and stereotypes that women face in the outdoors, so that they can be improved. Simultaneously it is integral to draw out the positives from their experiences and recognise them, creating a richer perspective of women's adventure experiences.

It should be noted to fully do feminist framework justice, one must consider the scope of their lens and the depth of their critical stance. Watson states that a problem faced when utilising the feminist framework is that researchers generate meanings and practice within existing patriarchal structures (2015). She believes that it is essential to position new knowledge within alternative paradigms when being critical of the meanings and performance of gender, otherwise women will continuously be perceived as subordinate to men.

PERSONAL INTEREST AND BIAS

Throughout my personal history of work within this field I have experienced first-hand, as a female, gender discrimination and bias. I have worked for almost ten years as an instructor, outdoor therapist and expedition leader. In 2015 I worked for six months in Svalbard as an expedition leader and guide. Svalbard is an archipelago situated in the high Arctic. The main city, Longyearbyen, is considered to be the most northern town in the world. The community has a high turnover of inhabitants due to the extreme living conditions faced there. It is a very young city with many outdoor enthusiasts. This was a very challenging work environment for me on a personal front, as being an Australian female and a guide did not sit well with all clients and some employees. My previous experiences in more hostile and challenging environments were worthy of consideration and rendered as worthless as they were obtained outside of Svalbard. I perceived the guiding community to be egocentric and did not relate to the alpha like attitude that I experienced there. This was my first experience in the High Arctic and I fell in love with the landscape and the spirit it seemed to conjure. I became interested in other women's experiences in this environment and how they related to nature on the island. This inspired me to consider framing my thesis around women and the Arctic.

Outside of my work, I have been involved in several female-only expeditions and projects. I know that my background as an outdoor instructor and expedition leader colours my perceptions on the topic. This however adds both strength and weakness to my research. I believe that my positionality within the Svalbard community is beneficial as there was no difficulty in finding subjects to interview, through my many connections in the Arctic outdoor community and world-wide. Furthermore my experience and background in the outdoor expedition world has provided me with a solid foundation of the terminology used and technicalities faced within this community. It has allowed me to delve deeper into the subjects' experiences and supported me to ask more direct questions in relation to the phenomena they described.

My values, beliefs, experiences and impressions of the outdoors from a female perspective has allowed me to connect with this research on a deeper level. I have been able to truly resonate with the women's experiences and examine their perspectives from both the stance of an adventurer and practitioner. However I am aware that as a result of my work history and experiences, my bias is also potentially a shortcoming. I understand perhaps why I choose to adventure, and who I prefer to adventure with. I am also intimately aware of myself and the role I assume around others and of the influence I might have over this research project and its participants. My understanding and awareness of this is an important self-discovery that I have balanced throughout this master thesis. Dowling (2006) firmly believes that 'reflexivity is vital to the process of feminist research as the researcher identifies with the women she is researching and must therefore be constantly aware of how her values, beliefs and perceptions are influencing the research process' (p. 14). I have

attempted to maintain objectivity without letting my own history affect the research. This was achieved by not doctoring the questions I asked to lead to specific answers that I wanted and by validating the women's answers throughout the interview process. Their comments were not molded to suit the overarching theme of my research and I explicitly presented all of the voices even if their thoughts did not match my expectations. Various participants consistently had the same results, proving a common theme that I had not dictated.

Freedman & Stuhr (2003) write that that truth and understanding reality is no longer based on epistemology, but rather about our ontological understanding about reality and subjectivity. Therefore I cannot truly separate myself from my own lived experiences and my personal bias towards this topic. I also will not be able to create a realistic overview of why all women adventure, but rather a rich picture of these women in this particular context do so.

CHAPTER 5: METHOD

As a method this study utilised in-depth interviews 'because they encourage subjectivity and intensive dialogue between equals, which are intrinsic features of feminist analysis of gender experience' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Feminists are concerned with experiences that often lay hidden and in-depth interviews are a way of giving a voice to those women who are marginalised in society. In contemporary society women have greater opportunity to create their own projects and be the woman that they want to be. While more and more women are entering the realm of expeditioning in the Arctic and are becoming more publically recognised, they are still however represented less than men.

It is only through case studies of lived experiences one can truly understand what it means to be a woman in any given context. I personally am interested in understanding the diversity of these women's realities and have attempted to articulate their motivations to adventure in an all-female team. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) explains how interviewing is a way feminist researchers have attempted to access women's hidden knowledge; interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women (Corwin, 2006 p. 19).

VALIDITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project complies with the ethical requirements set by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Ethical clearance was obtained through the NSD by filing a formal application which was then reviewed by the board. Permission and consent to proceed with this chosen course of research was received on April 13th, 2016. This document is attached in the appendix.

Several women, within the adventure community that fit the selection criteria, were contacted verbally and through email to identify whether they were interested in participating in this study. The candidates that agreed to contribute were then sent an information letter about the study which they signed, agreeing to participate. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time until the data was analysed. They also had the right to decline an answer to any of the questions, however none of the interviewees chose this option.

Loveridge (2010), suggests that the conservation of confidentiality is imperative when conducting any ethical research. Therefore all of the participants in this study were designated a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity within this body of work. My supervisor was the only other person to have access to any of the participants identifiable information. This information will remain anonymous throughout the process. Any partially identifiable data that was collected, for example current job and nationality, was gathered with the participants permission. This information was presented within this study in a broad manner to protect the anonymity of the participant. The intention of this data is to help determine any further parallels between the participants, any influences that may have affected them and finally to generate a broader understanding and appreciation of the interviewee's experience.

As a female outdoors woman and researcher, I was both an "insider" and an "outsider." I am a part of the outdoor world, but I am also a researcher with a research agenda. Throughout this process I maintained an awareness of my position as an interviewer and perceived the interview process as a co-creation of meaning. Pink describes reality as something that 'is subjective and is known only as it is experienced by individuals. By focusing on how ethnographic knowledge about how individuals experience reality is produced, through the inter-subjectivity between researchers and their research contexts, we may arrive at a closer understanding of the worlds that other people live in' (2001, p 20). Understanding experiences, culture and reality is limited to bias as it is interpreted through every individual's eyes differently as everyone has been constructed differently and been subject to diverse conditioning. By repeating participants' answers back to them, I was able to more accurately reflect their thoughts, emotions and perceptions. If I had misinterpreted anything they had communicated to me, they were able to correct me. This provided an authenticity to my

research that I would have been otherwise unable to achieve. To add further validity to this study, it was essential to allow every respondent, who completed an interview, to review and modify their transcripts. This complies with framework of feminist research where participants are permitted to re-examine anything they have said and make correlating adjustments (Morris, et al, 1998).

Enhancing the transparency of this study is essential in proving its validity. Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe this can be achieved through meticulously describing the manner in which the data was collected and analysed. Taking these steps and documenting my data will act as my audit trail which 'enables the researcher to walk other people through their work' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p 146) and improve the trustworthiness of the paper. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that if the aim of the inquiry is to make meaning of, to reflect a given situation then the human intellect alone has the innate flexibility and adaptability to carry out this process with integrity. With the thought of benefiting research in mind, I have carried this research out in an honest and integral manner to validate each participant's true experiences.

COMPLETION OF INTERVIEW

Interviews were conducted in a comfortable setting in which participants could relax. Three were completed in a local coffee shop and four were conducted via Skype. Interviews were recorded audibly by phone so there were no distractions while it was being completed and lasted for an average of one hour. Interviewees were informed beforehand that they would remain anonymous and that this interview would be conducted in a relaxed and semi-structured manner. Semi-structured interviews '...are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 330). In an attempt to have a free flowing dialogue, participants were sent an interview guide in advance and were encouraged to tell stories as a way of answering some of the questions on the list. I thought this would make the atmosphere feel less clinical, and the participants could express their thoughts and experiences in a more comfortable manner. When something of particular interest became apparent, I probed deeper and questioned the interviewee further to expose a more significant and meaningful answer. Often the stories they presented were very insightful and reflective but did not entirely match the interview schedule. Being flexible with the conversation and ideas that were presented by the women enabled me to collect a richer set of data.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The participants were asked a wide range of questions that were loosely based on the main questions of this research and encouraged to answer with examples and stories. They were queried about their upbringing, their occupation and their previous expeditions. The women were prompted to divulge situations that involved moments of decision making to better ascertain how the leadership within the all female team played out and any roles each individual may have taken on. They were also encouraged to speak about why they went on expeditions, their goals and outcomes for trips and what adventure meant to them. Finally they were questioned about how they attained grants, sponsorships and dealt with social media. The full questionnaire can be accessed in the appendix attached at the end of the document, however it must be noted that as these were semi-structured interviews, the dialogue stretched to a much deeper dimension than what is presented through these questions. Many questions were spontaneous in relation to the examples that the participants brought up.

TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

All interviews were transcribed on the same day as they were conducted. Transcriptions were recorded verbatim, however some segments were disregarded as they had no relevance to the project. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasise preserving the meaning of the original statements, this concept was followed when condensing sentences or rewording some sentences that did not make sense in English. Morris et al., (1998) states that it is customary when utilising a feminist approach to research to allow participants the right to access and review any personal information and data collected during the research. To ensure that there was no misunderstandings or drastic changes to the material collected, participants were allowed to peruse and give their approval of their individual interview transcripts.

The material was analysed qualitatively by searching for substance in the material and content that was gathered and then attempting to create understanding by condensing and categorising the content. This method falls under the category of 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' (IPA) which is consistently utilised as one of the more appropriate approaches to interpreting data from feminist phenomenological studies (Watson, 2015). IPA is based on discovering certain phrases and descriptions that are distinctive and attention grabbing within the data and seeks out any meaning and experiences that draw attention. Transcriptions of the interviews were read multiple times in conjunction with each other to draw out any prominent themes and any conflicting views. This then revealed to me the emergence of patterns and similarities between the women's experiences. I was

able to ascertain master themes that became representative of the whole group. An empirical, theoretical based perspective was developed by further analysing the data.

IPA methodology demands that the researcher critically analyse their own preconceived notions, perceptions and assumptions of the subject (Larkin et al., 2006). As a component of this process, the researcher attempts to withhold their beliefs and theories and view the data from the perspective of the participants. Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) suggest that it is humanly impossible “for qualitative researchers to be totally objective”, however they do recognise that is essential for researchers to ‘be aware of and minimise the impact that they may have on the research’ (p. 3). These interviews have been influenced by my subjective interpretations however I have endeavoured to put my own pre-conceived assumptions aside and halt them from hindering the data. Johnson, (1997) posits that researchers can achieve this and further validity by including examples that did not represent my expected results. The data has been presented in its most natural form, including statements that were not typical of my theories.

PARTICIPANTS SELECTED FOR INTERVIEW PROCESS

As I was interested in forming a modern female perspective of adventure, I thought it was relevant to interview young contemporary female adventurers. I reached out to well-known women who are considered professionals in the adventure (sport) industry, and also to local inhabitants on Svalbard who have completed trips in a more anonymous manner. I felt that by intertwining the worlds of both women with a media profile and those without, this research would provide a much richer interpretation. In total six women were interviewed. Interviewees were also selected from numerous countries including two women from Norway, one from Australia, two women from The United States and one woman from England. This was to avoid representing just one cultural perspective. However it is important to note that a weakness to this study is the fact that it does only represent women from Western World nations who are privileged in the sense that they have access to these opportunities and the freedom and ability to chase them.

I will be unable to draw conclusions on a large scale about women’s motivations but merely be able to express the perceptions and values of these particular women. Participants were selected for their expedition experiences in the high Arctic, this included places such as Svalbard, Greenland and Northern Alaska. Each interviewee must have completed at least one self-organised expedition in the Arctic and done so in an all-female team. As I endeavoured to discover why women chose to

adventure with other women, this was particularly important and added more depth to the female perspective on adventure.

The Women

Each of the women within this study have been assigned pseudonyms. A brief description of the women can be found below to give the reader a better sense of who they are as individuals. Each of the women have completed self organised journeys in the Arctic in all female teams. All of the women grew up in lower to middle classed, socio- economic backgrounds. Three of the women, Jesse, Amanda and Rachel, have managed to gain sponsorship and monetary means for some, not all of their expeditions. To maintain sponsorship they must upkeep a certain standard of notoriety in the media world and to gain any grants they had to apply and compete against others for the funds. Sarah, Louise and Steph fund their own personal expeditions and occasionally guide trips as their profession. It is vital to mention that all of the participants are very privileged in the sense that they have the time and opportunities to adventure in this manner and that they have had contact with someone who has inspired them to live life a little differently. While they are self made adventurers from lower middle class upbringings, who have created and forged their own circumstances in the adventure realm, they all come from Westernised nations, where they have had the opportunity to make this their profession and their hobby. Once again it is important to note that I am not able to form any conclusions about all women, however just create a deeper perspective of what it means to adventure in the eye's of these particular women.

Jesse- Is a professional skier who grew up in Victoria, Australia. Jesse was inspired to adventure by her mother, who loved skiing and snow sports. Every week her mother would ensure her daughters were able to make it into the mountains to play and train. Now Jesse competes at many of the world championships and currently resides in the Swiss Alps. She has been a part of many female only adventure projects but her biggest expedition to date was when she sailed to Greenland to ski several untouched mountains there. Jesse is paid to represent brands and is also currently filming several documentaries. In the past she has developed a female support network within the skiing industry which is focussed on mentoring and training young girls who are interested in competitive and personal skiing.

Sarah- Was inspired to adventure by the strong women in her family particularly her grandma who recently celebrated her 90th birthday by going rafting. Sarah has been leading outdoor wilderness expeditions as an outdoor guide for over ten years all around the world including northern Alaska. She worked specifically with females, leading trips for a non profit organisation in the Arctic and

has drawn upon some of these experiences in this study. She professionally leads rafting, hiking, kayaking and mountaineering journeys. Sarah is a trained psychologist and currently works in an alternative outdoor school. In her spare time she completes her own personal adventures, travelling worldwide to any opportunity she can find, including an all girls ski trip she embarked on across Svalbard.

Louise- Grew up in mainland Norway and has always participated in sports competitively but it was not until she went to University that she met some inspiring gentleman who she cycled the length of Norway with. Currently she lives on Svalbard and works with the community centre. She runs programs that are aimed at 'getting people into nature'. She volunteers her time with women, running programs and trips that help them gain the necessary skills to be able to function in the outdoors by themselves. In the past she has skied across Greenland and skied Svalbard North to South and East to West. Most of these trips were female only teams and all of them were self organised. Louise loves mountaineering and has climbed several of the seven summits including Aconcagua, Denali, Kilimanjaro and Elbrus. On her weekends and holidays she completes many mini adventures around Svalbard. Currently she is focussing on her immediate environment as she recently gave birth to her first child.

Steph- Was encouraged by her father to develop a deep relationship with nature, as a child he taught her many of the skills she needed to survive outside and complete her own adventures. She has lived on Svalbard for almost 20 years and works in the tourism industry. She has completed many personal missions across Svalbard and has skied and explored almost every area of the Svalbard including hiking and skiing across several islands in the archipelago such as Prince Karl's Fjordland and Bear Island. Several of these trips were female only teams and they were all self organised. She is currently writing a hiking and skiing guide book for Svalbard. Steph has spent time running a trapper station alone with another female friend for six months and has encountered many emergency situations. She loves nature and spends most of time outdoors surrounded by other inspiring individuals.

Amanda- Is a competitive skier and professional photographer. She grew up in the mountains in Montana and spent her youth exploring the outdoors and skiing. Her father was her main inspiration and had her in his backpack while he skied when she was only six months old. She was surrounded by many mentors in her youth who were twenty to thirty years older than her. Amanda is a professional adventurer and is sponsored to complete extreme trips in many different disciplines. To maintain her sponsorships she must ensure her media profile is strong. Amanda has completed many first ski descents of mountains around the world including in Greenland, has cycled the length of Norway and completed mountaineering expeditions in Eastern Europe and Alaska. She works

with an environmental organisation that brings scientists together to fight climate change. She is incredibly passionate about environmental protection. Currently she is taking a much needed break from extreme expeditions and the competitive skiing world to start her own coffee shop.

Rachel- Is a professional skier and competitive sailor. She grew up in the United Kingdom but moved to the Alps as a self proclaimed ski bum when she was seventeen. There was no one person in particular who inspired Rachel, however she describes her entrance to the adventure world as self propelling and an escape from reality. Rachel trained to be a ski instructor and moved to Colorado where she started competing internationally. She works on many side projects including environmental awareness campaigns and with female empowerment groups that coach women to specifically achieve their ski goals. She is an avid climber and has completed many ski trips and self organised expeditions. She has skied in Greenland several times, climbing large peaks and also Svalbard and Northern Alaska. Everyday in winter she skis in the mountains around her home, finding new trails and routes.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Several patterns emerged while analysing the interviews which have been categorised into eight themes. These nine themes refer to a study of ‘women’s experiences from participating in all female Arctic adventures as a (sociocultural) phenomenon’: Why the Arctic, Women’s Definition of Adventure, The Female Nature Relationship and Spirituality, Decision Making and Communication, Intuition in Decision Making, Leadership, Teaching Amongst Other Women, Proving Yourself and Bodily Risk and Sponsorships/Grants and Social media. Throughout this section the women’s experiences will be interwoven with critical researcher analysis and relevant literature, to provide a greater understanding and perspective of what it means to adventure for these particular women in this time and space.

Why the Arctic

There were several reasons the women chose to adventure in the arctic but the most common thread between them was that is considered as (in Amanda’s words) ‘the last place on Earth that is still truly wild.’ Sarah explained that she was ‘obsessed with the Arctic because I think it’s the remoteness and the wildness of it. Just that it is such a difficult place to be, to adventure and to exist in.’ Steph depicted it as ‘being hard and soft, all life in the high arctic struggles to survive against all odds,’. She further described the violence of the landscape with no trees and how amongst this

harsh environment you could find small delicate flowers popping up out of the rocky perma-frosted ground. These vast contrasts gave her pure joy and appreciation of the uniqueness of Svalbard. Louise expressed that the Arctic was ‘a very special place that drew in the adventurous spirit, a place you could feel little and vulnerable and then simultaneously big and strong.’ Both Amanda, Jesse and Rachel needed to complete their expeditions in this region as a way of promoting themselves, because ski movies have been made almost everywhere else. Rachel stated that ‘Greenland in particular was almost untouched in the world of adventure movies and this was the attraction to the area.’ All three of the women needed to adventure in unexplored terrain, to push their limits in remote areas and uncontrolled nature. This would bring something new to the market. Jesse expressed that ‘I was so excited because I already had a passion for the Arctic. I was like this is my dream trip because I am obsessed with the Arctic. I know a lot about climate change and polar bears and have always wanted to go to Greenland, and I love skiing so it was like a win win.’

Women’s definition of adventure

The women in this study most commonly defined adventure as being the unknown. Jesse believes that ‘Adventure is an overused term but to me it is when things start going wrong. It’s sort of like the unplanned....When you are faced with the unknown, the unexpected and surprises you have to problem solve and deal with things, that’s an adventure.’ Amanda reported that ‘there are different levels of unknown. Like there is unknown to me, then there is unknown to most people, then there's totally unknown to people first person ever to be there...When there are all these levels of unknown you get these adrenaline butterflies. That causes you to experience an ultimate adventure.’ Jesse, Sarah, Louise and Rachel all explicitly expressed that adventure did not need to involve any bodily risk but it had to involve some sort of unknown risk. The unknown could be found in a number of elements, for example a route that is unknown, unstable weather conditions, something that has never been done before or the unexpected surprises that you have to problem solve and deal with along the way.

Every woman specifically indicated that adventures could take place in your home environment and could be what Humphreys describes as a micro-adventure, something that is small and achievable for the everyday person with a busy lifestyle (2012).

You can have the unknown in all the places that you adventure, including in and around home. Starting off something that is unknown, you have a goal or an objective but it is everything else that is unknown about it in between because it’s not been done before or you don't know because of the

weather conditions or the conditions of the day. That's the part of it that I find exciting. If the outcome is known, then I am normally not that interested in it. (Rachel)

Louise similarly noted that *'Adventure is for me definitely doing things that I haven't done before but I guess after having moved to Svalbard...I think you can have a lot of small adventures just around where you live. Five years ago an adventure would be going from one coast to the other and I had these A to B goals and now they are more like the small adventures just to experience and know more about what you have around you.'*

As many of the women were competitive sports women, they stated that this affected their need for challenge on a journey. When planning big adventure expeditions several of the women stated that it was more inspiring to them, to be entering into a place that was relatively unknown to most people or no one had ever done what they were planning before. For some this enhanced their media profile and for others it gave them a greater sense of satisfaction and exploration. The women expressed a need to know and investigate the areas around them. Adventure for Jesse and Amanda was about creating something new.

Many of the women stated that adventure for them originally had to comprise of A to B goals but as time went by this became much less important than the journey they experienced along the way. Louise in particular noted that for her it was originally more inspiring knowing that there was a purpose to her adventure, going in a line and completing something like from A to B. *'But now it just makes me feel alive to do little adventures outside with my daughter.'* Jesse also spoke about not having a specific outcome to a trip *'Adventure for me has a goal but doesn't necessarily have a very specific planned goal. It is more like having a very loose idea of what you are doing. In a sense adventure has an unplannedness to it. It's not knowing what's going to happen next in some ways, that's a real adventure. There are planned trips and there are adventures you know.'* Steph also did not need a specific outcome or A- B goal, for her *'adventure is more of a spiritual experience for me, where I feel connected to something greater than myself. It is about being in nature in general. I don't have to achieve any big goals, I don't have to be the strongest in the group, but I don't want to be the weakest.'*

The women also conclusively agreed that adventure did not mean being the biggest or the strongest, conquering something like a goal or a mountain, it was about being in tune with yourself and your capabilities. Sarah said that *'I do not feel the need to conquer something, there are often other challenges to overcome, generally of an inner nature.'* Steph described it as the feeling that everything in her body was working, physically and mentally, she noted *'Adventure- means to be disconnected, but again very connected with myself. Feeling that everything in me works, my legs,*

my body works physically, my head is working. I feel strong.’ This thought can be supported by the literature of Nansen (2003) and Arnold (1979) who also speak of the satisfying feeling you acquire from your muscles and brain working together to overcome obstacles. They both mentioned that the experience of challenge, excitement and power connects pleasurable sensations to existential meaning through bodily movement. Participants in this study noted that they experienced a sense of such power and pleasure when they master the physical toil during the adventure expedition. Louise, Sarah and Steph loved feeling their bodies work. Louise said ‘working my body hard makes me feel alive and that I am capable of anything! I like to do training in the snow all the time to feel strong.’ When the women in this study came to understand the capabilities of their bodies, and felt comfortable with the harsh demands that the Arctic environment was putting on them, they experienced what De Bevoire and Young (1980) describe as an ‘I can’ moment instead of ‘I can’t’.

Several women discussed adventure as a challenging yet grounding spiritual experience. It was important to them to feel disconnected from their usual world, yet connected to themselves and the people they adventured with. Adventure for each of the participants was meditative and involved just as many slow adventure moments as peak experiences. This description in many ways reflects the key concepts of friluftsliv. Detoxing and quieting the mind was a key motivation for the women in this study to seek out nature based adventure experiences. All of the participants readily acknowledged that nature was a biological need for them and that generally their adventure experiences regenerated their energy . This also demonstrates certain elements of biophilia. and in relation to this study the participants fall into the biophilia category.

In summary the participants viewed adventure as a journey with unknown elements. It was not about being the strongest or the bravest or conquering something, quite often it was more important to embark on an inward journey of spiritual nature. Sometimes this would be achieved by feeling their bodies and muscles work, or being more intune with themselves. This is supported by Lapierre’s literature that suggests women are more intent of reaching new spiritual frontiers than just mere physical frontiers and tend to undertake inward journeys rather than outer conquests (2007). These women’s perceptions can be seen to encompass very little of the traditional male gendered traits of adventure. Jones (2012) describes the male concept of adventure where ‘success tends to be measured in terms of ‘conquering’ the mountain, overcoming nature and challenges or the hardness of the climb or river through physical strength and determination. All of which are traditionally conceived as male gender traits’ (p. 13).

Female Nature Relationship/Spirituality

All of the women in this study conclusively agree that being in nature on adventure expeditions provides them with a deep sense of relaxation and meditation even if it is a challenging experience. They also concluded that they had a huge respect for nature and their experiences within it were generally spiritual. Steph noted that ‘The arctic nature is so powerful and ever changing so it deserves respect. I feel empowered just being allowed to enter its place.’ Louise aptly expressed that ‘nature brings something to you that you don’t necessarily get everywhere else, it brings you into the present moment, the right here and right now.’ Nature for these women provided them with a space and time to reflect and connect more with their internal processes. Their meditative moments in the wilderness provided them with a sense of mindfulness which in turn reduces stress for many individuals. This data is supported by the literature of Coburn (2009) and Comins (2006). Being in the outdoors tends to focus human’s attention on the present rather than past or future (Coburn, 2009). Comins (2006) expresses that everyone has their own individual story and taking time out to reflect and plan ways of improving our ongoing stories ‘we lessen the grip of the past and future on our minds and create a space where we can be aware of spirit’ (Comins, 2006, p7).

Amanda suggested that nature helps guide you, internally as a spiritual process and externally in your decision making and route finding. She revealed that one of the greatest things about adventuring in nature for her was that

*‘you have to be listening, looking and paying attention to the signs because so many times we are so here, in our heads, in our thoughts, in our words, in our brains that we miss the silent things around us. I feel like it’s about being in nature and really being able to listen to nature. You really have to close your mouth, open your eyes and open your ears and really open your senses to feel and see and absorb what is going on around you. I definitely believe that nature will tell you what’s going on in different ways if you open yourself to seeing it and hearing it and it’s **not** a verbal thing.’*
(Amanda)

This insert represents a deep relationship with nature, one that is intuitive. Amanda speaks of reawakening our ears to listen to nature, as it gives a voice to the land. Being in nature for this woman certainly gave her a safe space to reflect properly on life away from distractions, but it also can provide people with advice on decision making and help individuals to become more in tune with themselves. Sarah said ‘Being in nature is such a release for me, it’s meditative if you can find the right time and space for it.’ Sarah also divulged that she had an intuitive connection with nature and for her it definitely tended to feel like a more spiritual journey when she was with all-female groups. Sarah believes that

'this was because I have always felt my freest amongst women and never seem to be bogged down by keeping up appearances or judgement. This freedom allows me more space to connect with myself. On all female trips I can be very intune with myself and it's when I am most in-touch with myself... I think it allows for me to have the full experience of whatever adventure that I am doing and so that's why all female trips are more spiritual to me because I don't have this noise in my head saying that you have to prove yourself, you have to be strong, you have to do this or you have to be that.'

There was something mystical about the connection Sarah could achieve when on all-female trips. For example, when she was on 'Polar Bear watch' (guard duty taken by every member of the team to ensure safety of the camp while the rest of the group sleeps), she reported that she was having deep conversations with the moon and nothing about that felt bizarre. For her 'these conversations felt incredibly instinctive and connected me on a deeper level to the universe. In some respects I felt like I was harmonising my inner world with my outer world.' Several of the women spoke about the moon in a manner that illustrated it as a guardian or goddess they spoke with for guidance. Louise noted that 'in the dark season and the shoulder season, the moon acts like an angel in the sky, guiding me and shining light towards a better pathway'. Steph also chose to ski under the moonlight stating that 'skiing under the light of the moon brings me to a state of zen, especially with the silence of the Arctic.'

This connection between women, their cycles and the moon is ancient and can be traced back to cave drawings that are over 24 000 years old (The Eternal Female, 2009). Even in the Catholic Church, an anti-paganism community, Mother Mary is depicted by sitting on the moon (The Eternal Female, 2009). The experiences of some of the women in this study show that this mysterious connection to the moon and universe still exists today and influences their spirituality. Spirit guides as well as an archetype are primordial symbols of the collective unconscious. Davis suggests that the "natural environment can remove the veils, disclosing the archetypal underpinning of the soul" (Davis, 2004, p 8). Wilderness experiences can lead to significant attitude changes and the development of new behaviours (Davis, 2004). This is a form of transcendence into a goal of the ideal type of person humans may want to be. By speaking with the moon, these women harmonised their inner world with their outer. It was another way of processing their internal conflicts and discovering what actions to take to be the person they wanted to be. Davis notes that once individuals become relaxed they are more open to spiritual experiences. The spiritual experience may include intense emotions and feelings that are connected to nature (2004). These experiences of new behaviours and different feelings are classified as transcendental (Davis, 2004). For Sarah in particular, her experience included feeling a more intimate connection with the outdoors and a transformation into a stronger more grounded woman.

Rachel stated that ‘I think in some way the outdoors for me has always been my spirituality. I guess that’s where I feel the most at ease, the most comfortable, so going out and doing something, an adventure for example, is something that is meditation for me.’ The participants of this study expressed that although they had not real religious beliefs they found nature as a source of religion and spiritual awakening. Steph stated ‘Nature is my temple, it is where I feel most aware and connected. I feel very spiritual. That could be a god or whatever, I feel closer to something bigger than myself. And I can express that in any group when we are together like this.’ Davis, (1998, p 2) states that ‘many people have recognised transpersonal experiences in natural settings and found qualities of peace, joy, love, support, inspiration and communion with the natural world that are exemplars of the spiritual quest.’ This is not to say that a spiritual communion happens for everyone who enters nature, however it is particularly representative of the participants in this study

The women reported that their adventures in nature were a process of clarity of oneself and life. There are many people who believe that nature permeates inherent intrinsic values (Bonnett, 2003). Rachel noted that ‘I always return from my adventure expeditions feeling refreshed and empowered. My trips have helped me put perspective back into my life.’ The pace of these adventures, were something that was continuously mentioned, living life at a pace where it slows to a point that you can appreciate and be aware of the small things. Rachel adequately put it as ‘you are unplugged and you are out there, aware of what’s going on in the smallest ways. Instead of just moving through life... I guess it’s the pace, the pace just slows down to a point where you appreciate the small things.’

Many of the women mentioned being unplugged and distanced from any unsolvable problems was a huge reason they sought out adventure which also represents a sense of escapism through nature. Another theme that emerged was the meditative qualities of being in a simplistic daily routine; waking up, boiling water, having breakfast, breaking camp, skiing, boiling water etc.

An adventure to me is feeling like everything in my body is working; feeling disconnected to the rest of the world, but connected to myself and the people I am with. Having a horizon in time the longer it is the better. The repeatable things, the basic stuff that you do every day. You wake up early in the morning, out of the sleeping bag, you start the primus, you boil water you do everything you have to do and it’s like a simple routine. To me it’s very meditative. I have a lot of the time to be with my own thoughts. (Steph)

The constant repetition allowed the ladies to have time with their own thoughts and the longer the trip, the better it was for them mind, body and soul. These habitual actions became an embodied experience, something that was aiding them to reflect on the world. Any skills that were unfamiliar

to begin with eventually became embodied reactions, which becomes a dynamic interplay between the body and the world (Askildsen & Løndal, 2016). Hough suggests that as people 'engage in movement, so too do our thoughts, allowing us to work out problems, ponder possible solutions, get "unstuck" from life's dilemmas, and come up with new ways of doing things' (2009). Encountering embodied experiences in nature allows people to detox their minds and have respite from over activity (Mitten, 2009). In this contemporary era many people experience a technology overload. This constant distraction results in a real struggle that people face to achieve any real connection to self or place. These women specifically mentioned how in touch they felt with their inner consciousness and spirit while adventuring outdoors. Sarah for example noted that 'I am more in tune with myself!' Their encounters with the wilderness allowed them to be free from the obligations and pressures that were associated with the civilised world (Koole, 2001).

Meditative moments were recorded to occur even on the most fast paced adventures. Amanda discussed that even when the trip was competitive or based around enhancing her media profile, she would still encounter spiritual moments amongst the madness. For example she described the peacefulness of skinning up a glacier at four in the morning watching the sunrise and being overwhelmed by the beauty and majesty of the surroundings. 'Skiing the line is maybe more of the adventure component but there is something meditative about the slow walk up, as the sun begins to rise and light the valleys, this is when you get more of those reflective and spiritual moments.' This created a space for her to reflect and appreciate. She and many of the other participants achieved a sense of mindfulness on the trips where they could focus on the present moment and accept without judgement any thoughts or feelings that their bodies were trying to process.

'Many of life's awesome moments are liminal situations in which death is never far. Awe is different from fear as we are attracted to awesome things rather than repelled by them' (Comins, 2006, p4). The unpredictable and untameable element of nature creates awe as we have no power or control over these elements. So humans can attempt to tap into their power, but ultimately nature demands reverence. When 'the grandeur and fragility of our world, the immediacy of life and death are all around,' Comins believes that 'one feels more alive with adrenaline because beauty, danger, and risk are commanding and pervasive' (2006,p 4).

Jesse described her experiences as 'feeling euphoric like I was part of a dreamscape.' Rachel described that 'if you are sitting out in the middle of the ocean it's the vastness of it. You are such a small part of that world or space. And you are such a small part of that picture or space. In some way it's a form of meditation, and it pays to being in the moment instead of thinking of 20 different things.' Steph and Sarah both illustrated the feeling of being such a small piece of such a huge puzzle and being mesmerised by the vastness of the landscapes around them. Steph noted 'The

Arctic landscape makes me feel little and big at the same time.’ Sarah spoke more about the interconnectedness she felt to the world around her like she was a baby spider weaving in a massive web. Heintzman (2007) suggests that when you feel insignificant in the majesty of nature, that the awe generated by this can lead to thanksgiving. This realisation of our own insignificance brings on a desire for connection with something more powerful than us. Tracey also contends ‘The actual person is made to be dwarfed yet the soul leaps out of its human encasement and ecstatically unites with the greater world’ (1995, p. 26). Experiencing the notion of being physically small and powerless can create a ‘reality check’ on our position in the world. Engaging with the wilderness often evokes feelings of awe which can lead to thoughts about spiritual meanings and eternal processes (Kaplan & Kaplan, as cited in Koole, 2001, p4). For the women in this study it was not just a spiritual process but encounters with wilderness and nature satisfied a deeply rooted psychological need. Many of the women reported connecting with nature on a spiritual and emotional level. Their experiences were meditative of quality and reconnected them to their unique individuality which was a truly grounding process for them.

In respect to the human nature relationship, the women in this study can be depicted as being deeply bonded to nature in a reciprocal union of spiritually. Sarah stated that ‘The place that I am in is not a place that I want to conquer at all. It’s a partnership, I feel like I have a really loving relationship to that place and the landscape.’ She described her relationship to nature as having such a greater appreciation and loving respect for it, which was embodied in an innate connection to it. Amanda reported that every group member in her all-female team had powerful experiences in the Arctic nature. She delineated that ‘as a result of such a meaningful nature experience, each of the team members went home wanting to protect it and were not entirely sure how to go about doing so.’ She also spoke about the fact that ‘Being out in nature really makes you start to respect it, enjoy it and love it.’ Many of the other women also confirmed the great respect they had for nature. Jesse believed that nature was a leveller and an educator. ‘When the weather changed or you experienced challenging conditions,’ she stated that ‘no one was going to make it easier for you, you had to simply learn how to work with nature and not against.’ She firmly believed that humans were a part of nature and the natural environment helped connect individuals with their true identity and place within this wide world. Coburn claims that ‘Wilderness is an experience that never fails to put me in my place, not as a master of the natural world but merely a player, a small piece of the cosmic puzzle’ (Coburn ,2009,Para 4). By understanding their individual connection, relationship and dependency on nature, these women were able to determine their place within their spatial surroundings and were not without symbolic reference.

The results from this study confirm that these particular women had a deeply spiritual and intimate relationship with nature. My findings are supported by the literature of Bonnet (2003) and Davis

(1998). Bonnet (2003) states that ‘Those who are aesthetic and spiritual are likely to lead to a greatly enhanced sense of nature’s worth through its capacity to satisfy, or at least contribute to meeting this broader and deeper spectrum of human need’ (Bonnett, 2003, p 631). In other words by having a spiritual kinship with nature and finding intrinsic value and appreciation in nature, this can enhance an individual’s desire to protect what they value. Davis believes there can be a deeply bonded and reciprocal communion between humans and nature (1998). He notes that there are two types of human nature relationships – either people recognise the link between them on a spiritual or purely interdependent level or they view nature as dangerous and something that needs to be controlled. People also value nature merely as a useful resource that needs to be conserved for future generations (Davis, 1998). They therefore protect it for their own need.

This is representative of some of the participants responses in regards to their connection to nature. While they felt that they had a deep and caring relationship with it, Rachel and Amanda also mentioned that they wanted to protect it so that snow existed in the future to ski on. They could not imagine life without skiing and the ability to be able to escape to wilderness areas. This is considered to be a utilitarian form of Biophilia where nature is valued in economic terms or of how it assists human welfare. Interestingly Steph and Louise who are both Norwegians living on Svalbard, were more of the mindset of being one hundred percent a part of nature and they mentioned watching the cycles of the climate and seasons changing very closely and how that has affected them, their bodies and their actions.

The struggle that most of the participant's faced however was how could they put those newfound values into action once they had returned from the adventure. This is a common reality that many people encounter when they make intimate connections in the outdoors; continuing and maintaining environmentally friendly behaviours upon one's return can be overwhelming and difficult (Griffiths & Preston, N.d). The emotional and spiritual connection to nature these participants maintain can take a back seat when the everyday events of their lives become time consuming.

Mike Brown (2012) theorizes that there is a ‘mistaken belief’ that changes in environmentally behaviour in outdoor contexts can transfer to other situations. One way several of the women are helping to blur the fringe between the binary that see the separation from wilderness/nature to everyday living is by doing more trips in their nearby surroundings with people from the local community. Louise, Jesse and Rachel have created groups for other women in which to encourage them to get into the local nature. Place philosophy is based on comfortable non risky environments that give people the ability to form attachments with it, have a sense of belonging and home to the ideal point that they wish to take care and be guardians of that place. Brian Nettleton (as cited in Wattachow & Brown, 2011, p 82) uses the ‘nature as a friend’ metaphor to encourage attachment,

moving from 'acquaintance to intimate friendship'. This equates to seeing nature as having interpersonal human qualities (trust, interaction, knowing and reciprocity). This sense of 'intimate friendship' however could be inhibited by the adventure perspective which is based on fear and uncertainty (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

As the women were completing expeditions in extreme places facing physical challenges and hardship, this does not exactly meet the ideology of the place model. There is credence though for using the outdoors as a tool for political and environmental activism. By creating stories of their reflective experiences, the women can not only make sense of the lived experiences they had but also are able to reach out to a larger audience, bringing their learning and developed environmental values to light. Sinclair reflects that 'stories bring nature into culture and ascribe meaning to places, species and processes, which would otherwise remain silent to the ear' (2001, p 22). These videos and blogs can in effect cause a paradigm shift amongst a wider outdoor community. 'Such a change in attitudes could promote the holistic conservation of nature rather than the preservation of only those parts of the environment that have utilitarian values placed upon them by humans.' (Lanlonde & Jackson, 2002, p 2).

Decision Making and Communication

I don't have to be the decision maker but I want to be heard. I want my knowledge to be acknowledged. (Steph)

The women who participated in this study stated that one of the reasons they enjoyed all-female expeditions was that communication was easier. They felt that their voices were heard and it was easier to express and divulge their emotions. Sarah eloquently proclaimed that 'when I am in female groups and am having high emotions I articulate them more'. She further went on to explain that for some reason all-female teams felt safer for her and not in a physical sense but more of an emotional. She stated that 'I feel more comfortable, I don't worry about being judged, I feel like it's more empowering for me to be with an all-female group.' Rachel agreed that amongst female only groups she found that 'there just is more open communication and empathy. There is more support for being able to say what you want to say and not to have to pretend something. Pretending to be so cool and hard-arse because if I say anything I am just going to never live it down. There just doesn't seem to be that kind of energy when you go.' She mentioned that 'I just think all-female groups tend to have better communication and they tend to be more fun.' Rachel stated that even though women can be competitive, there seemed to be less ego involved on the trips which made it less intense. In her opinion women get less attached to a specific outcome. She said that on the all-

female trips she had completed, 'the groups tended to stay more positive and the day to day communication played a much bigger role.... this was more beneficial because you always had a stronger sense of how everyone is doing as a group and in the group.'

Sarah and Louise both noted that when it came to decision making with women that it was more often a conversation as opposed to the backing down and agreeing to what the more dominant people in the group thought. Sarah then went on to state that 'not all men that I have been on trips with were not willing to engage with me in a conversation or include me in decision making but I personally found that I tend to just agree with men instead of voicing my own concerns.' This ended up resulting in her feeling frustrated because it was easier for her to back down and to just do what they wanted.

The participants in this study noted that this was not always the case, there were certain men that they had adventured with in the past, who they could speak up with and have their thoughts heard. Louise concluded that 'the atmosphere really depends on the people in every group that you are going with.' Steph stated that 'People's behaviour differs greatly between communities, nationalities, family, and friends. The biggest difference lies often between their education and view of the environment, whether their perspective is 'man against nature' or people being a part of nature.' Steph also noted that 'I think many times the atmosphere is set by the group. What is allowed, how you can express your feelings, how you talk about nature and if that becomes a natural thing to do, if everyone does it. Everyone then can connect more to the surroundings.'

Louise and Steph, who reside on Svalbard both mentioned that they had experienced some difficulty in explaining the depth of the risk to some of the women they were on an all-female trip with who were from the mainland. As they were not aware of the inherent risk to the same degree, their aims and goals did not correspond with each other and it became a struggle when it came to decision making. The mainlanders viewed these ski ventures as the trip of a life time and wanted to gain more from it than what was at this time possible. For Louise her struggle came from enforcing Polar Bear duty, something the mainlanders had become complacent with. Steph alternatively struggled with one participant not feeling up to the risk and the rest of the group pushing to do the section of glacier anyway. Both interviewees described the decision-making as maintaining very open communication, yet they had to, in both cases, take a hierarchical position and override some of the mainlanders desired outcomes. The women did state however that all of the emotions involved in this process were dealt with in a very good way and eventually the entire group realised that this was the best decision.

Jesse also mentioned that she had experienced some very 'bitchy' scenarios with women. The word 'bitchy' was used here by the participant to describe irritable and malicious behaviour and comments. She described some of the ski trips she had embarked on, that had turned sour because the girls seemed to be competing with each other rather than supporting each other. 'It was always a competition between looks, status and skills and when something did not go someone's way you really knew about it'. However Jesse concluded that 'if you have the right mind-set and you are good at communicating; working and adventuring with other girls can be so incredible'.

In opposition to the above examples, several of the women held the belief that females tend to have the same ideas and values around safety, timelines and open communication so decision making is easier. Sarah explained that 'We have a lot of the same ideas and values around safety, and our timelines match.' Rachel describes decision making on her all-female expeditions by positing that there was 'always this open communication all the time. And not necessarily a set outcome.' She further went on to explain that adventuring with women in her experience had generally had very flexible outcomes. 'There would be a goal and we would always be like this is what we intend to do, but who knows what will happen along the way.' Rachel believed that most of the time when she was adventuring in a mixed group that there always tended to be more women than men. She felt that in those cases the men could not always relate to each other in the way that she had experienced in her all-female groups. She generalised that the men she had been on trips with had not been as comfortable with confronting things and consequently issues would be unresolved, leaving many of the team members feeling uncomfortable. She hypothesised that therefore as a team, without the democratic open ended conversations, the mixed group gravitated towards this male-oriented structure and schedule. Sarah mentioned that her trips to the Arctic in these all-female teams had been incredibly easy and relaxed on an emotional front 'because everything was out in the open, and every voice was heard.' In addition she commented that 'when I am in social situations with guys, I find that I step back when it comes to taking or making any major decisions.'

Some of the women, Rachel, Jesse, Amanda, Louise and Steph stated that the more experience they gained on expeditions helped them to speak up no matter what the situation was. However they still did experience the feeling of intimidation and that their voices were always being heard. Steph related that 'You have to choose your adventure partners wisely because no matter the amount of experience you have, your thoughts may not be valued with certain people.' Karpowitz and Mendleberg (2014) suggest that there is a default in socialisation that results in women being "the silent sex". In their book they concluded that when women find themselves in a minority which is almost always the case in public arenas, women are more likely to be reduced to silence and participate less in conversations. Gilligan (1982) also speaks of the concept that men's experience

stands for all of human experience, deliberating that this eclipses the lives of women and shut out women's voices" (p. xiii).

Karpowitz and Mendleberg (2014) discovered that men speak 70 percent of the time in mixed gender groups which is significantly detrimental to decision making. Chemaly (2015) suggests that women are rarely viewed as among the most powerful, influential or relevant speakers. In fact Karpowitz and Mendleberg discovered that women's attempts to introduce topics or to shift topics are frequently ignored and their speech is routinely interrupted (Chemaly, 2015). This clearly can be very frustrating for females who experience this and they learn to live with having their voices drowned out.

This question of why women speak less than men do in deliberate bodies presents a puzzle as it cannot be a lack of sophistication because in this modern day women have more education than men (Felts, 2015). When I probed my participants further, none could come to a highly definitive answer as to why they felt like they lost their voices in certain mixed groups. Several of the women responded that they did not want to be seen as the 'weak girl' who made the group turn around. Sarah reported that in mixed group situations where she was uncomfortable with the risk she did not say anything because subconsciously there was a part of herself not wanting to be the woman who says we have to turn back. 'Being that woman would have implied some sort of weakness.' Jesse commented that 'There are certain groups that you go out with that just treat you like an idiot if you start talking and saying that you are not ok with this.' Rachel also spoke about 'I feel like I am looked down upon if I question things and I can't be bothered with that anymore.'

Several of the women stated that in situations where they were no longer comfortable with the decision making, they chose to go down by themselves in an attempt to avoid further conflict and have to deal with what they thought was poor judgement. Rachel mentioned 'if I am going back country skiing or out with a mixed group and I don't feel ok with something, I would be more likely to call it and say I will see you back at the cabin or tomorrow or something rather than have a discussion about whether I should go on or not. I would just pull out. I just make my own decision.' Jesse also said that 'I have gotten to the point where in a scenario with a mixed group I would tell them exactly what I think and if I was really worried to do anything I would probably find somewhere safe to ski down. And be like you guys do what you need to do but I am bailing.' Louise also noted that she would take more responsibility for herself and what she felt in mixed groups. If she didn't agree with what was happening she would do her own trip instead.

Amanda stated that many women she had adventured with felt uncomfortable voicing their concerns while on mixed group expeditions. However in opposition to the other participants she

stated that she thought ‘this was more an experience based issue rather than something specific to being male or female.’ Her perception was that ‘it was noticed more because females typically have less experience, so they end up in that role of questioning things.’ Amanda’s immediate reaction to women voicing concerns was one of exasperation, it frustrated her to have to deal with them ‘not understanding the full picture’ in her eyes. In response she would reply ‘that is nice that you are concerned but here is why this isn't a valid concern in this specific scenario’. Amanda described these women’s concerns as invalid and not worth acknowledging, especially in a group of more experienced people. Perhaps Amanda’s behaviour is a result and of social conditioning as her reaction to under experienced women directly reflects the pattern of how men had responded to her when she expressed her opinion in another scenario she later described.

When I was in Norway on this trip, I had a clash with one of my male partners. I noticed this section of ice that I was concerned about and he didn't think it was a concern at all. I turned around and he kept going. I felt like that concern was something any good partner would be concerned about and acknowledge. But maybe people tend to manage it in different ways. For me it was big thing to say there is a hazard, we both acknowledge that this is a hazard, this is how I am choosing to manage it and this is how you are choosing to manage it. But the fact that he didn't acknowledge it as a hazard bothered me. He was very rationally going through his head. He said ‘you expressed that it was ok for us to be going on, so you can't be mad at me for going on’. I said ‘I am not mad but I feel that our decision making is not on the same page.’ It was more of a feeling for me that something was not right with the ice but for him it was more fact based. (Amanda)

This insert describes two things, firstly a power play and secondly introduces the concept of intuition in decision making. This woman indirectly stated that her ‘opinion was not validated’ yet she also condemned other under-experienced women for voicing their concerns. There is a growing body of research that confirms that women are just as likely as men to show sexism towards other women (Christaskis, 2012), especially in moments of mentorship. What makes this interesting is that her response to other ‘under experienced’ women, happened in a mixed group environment. When Amanda completed her trip to Greenland in an all-female team, she noted that ‘we openly discussed all issues. While the women were of similar experience levels on the Greenland trip, there were some serious differences in their strengths and skills, yet we were able to maintain an open communication at all times that satisfied all parties.’ This indicates that these particular women practice a more egalitarian approach to decision making in all-female groups, than mixed groups which seem to constitute some level of gender bias. Amanda’s reaction reflects a behaviour pattern of greater society. Subtler and more ingrained cognitive biases are deeply rooted in our evolutionary and cultural past. These biases are present still today in the outdoor world. ‘Getting rid of them will require an honest reckoning with the inalienable fact that humans are primed to make implicit errors

in perception and even good people who actively eschew bias may nonetheless harbour subtle yet damaging stereotypes of which they are unaware' (Christaskis, 2012, para 2).

It becomes increasingly difficult when women are conditioned to react to other women in this sexist respect. Experience levels definitely add to the equation of power within a decision making circle and 'being experienced' is a tangible description as it can mean many different things to many different people. However all of the women selected for this interview process have had many years of theoretical and practical outdoor experience. They would be considered amongst the most elite in the outdoor adventure world. Their experiences in recognizing hazards and decision making should trump gender inequality. Instead they find themselves being patronised and disadvantaged in mixed gender groups. Each of them has experienced situations where their thoughts were not validated and several of them felt the need to avoid conflict in mixed groups rather than openly express their feelings. Chamely (2015) indicates that it is a challenge for young women to be heard or even responded to in many male dominated fields if they do not strengthen their voices. This kind of response from men and from women who have been socially conditioned to respond in this manner creates a vicious cycle of silencing.

It can be seen as what Mitten and Woodruff describe as a 'one up- one down' dynamic where one person is superior while the other is inferior (2009, p 26). This in many ways mimics greater society, and participants on trips may either be knowingly or unknowingly relinquishing their power to other people. This can prevent the growth of a good learning environment within the group. Knowledge is not shared, skills or qualities are perceived as competitive elements instead of contributing factors to risk management in hazardous situations and decision-making discussions that could be turned into teachable moments tend to be disregarded. If a culture was created that enabled group members to help and support each other, 'participants are freer to internalise their own experiences based on their personal goals, needs, and desires while creating a culture of on-going regard, community, and cooperation with other group members and the environment' (Mitten & Woodruff, 2009, p 26).

Outdoor pursuers should also attempt to take a more egalitarian approach to decision making this may enable the silent voices to be heard. Due to societal conditioning and gender stereotypes women can be likened to being the introverted sex in discussions. Just because you can speak loudly about something, or seem to have a large amount of knowledge on a topic, this does not entitle a person to have dominance over a decision (Ly, 2016). Quieter voices may have wiser words, and many introverted men may possibly share the same frustration as women in not having their voices heard or knowledge acknowledged.

Intuition in Decision Making

In response to being asked about decision making, the concept of intuition playing a major role in this has been presented through many of the participants interviews. Psychologists define intuition as an individual's capacity for direct knowledge, and for immediate insight without observation or reason (Watters, n.d, p 1). Amanda proclaimed that in her opinion females followed their instincts more in decision making and their 'gut feelings' were what urged them to them to speak up. She believed that men make decisions on a more factual basis, whereas women intuitively feel it first and then look around themselves for something to prove it. She gave the example about her Norwegian cycling trip which was presented in the section above.

Gulligan, (1989 p. 22) theories support Amanda's statements, he noted that "Men create meaning through a mechanism or extension outside of their bodies and women create meaning from within their bodies: external/internal, tangible/intangible". This directly correlated with some of the other interviewees' statements. Several of the women mentioned intuition or a gut feeling as having affected their decision making. They intuitively knew when something did not feel right. Jesse described it as something that took over her body, stating that she would sometimes have a stomach ache to begin with which would continue into a headache. As the situation continued, she realised that this was not sickness but rather intuition and foresight telling her something was wrong. In one of her examples she was 'hanging out with some guys in Chamonix, and the lift systems were closed. We were pushing through the backcountry to make this peak but something felt off. I started getting a headache on the way up and the closer we got to this narly section, the worse it was. It turned into a full blown stomach ache and migraine.' This inspired her to listen to her thoughts about the snow conditions and possible avalanche danger that were triggering her to feel uncomfortable. 'The snow had heated up, and things were melting fast, we had started too late and I instinctively knew it, I just had to listen to it.' It was only after acknowledging her instincts that her symptoms would be relieved. Sarah said her 'Most of my decisions are made based on some of my gut instincts, I am better able to access this on trips with women because when I am with men, these sometimes seem to get drowned out.'

Listening to inner intuition was a key component of some of their most critical decisions when in an all-female group. When Sarah had expressed her discomfort with something in a female only group, explaining it away as a gut feeling, it was heard with respect and valued as highly as a person visibly seeing a potential risk. Louise also mentioned 'I encourage the ladies in my women's group to speak up about their gut feelings, because quite often they might be picking up on something that I am not seeing. Feeling is just as important as seeing.' Jesse stated that 'feelings are much harder to explain to men and you have to have some facts before mentioning them. But with women they get

it and we speak about it and why it has been caused.’ Steph also noted that her intuition was stronger when in the outdoors as ‘everything felt connected,’ her body told her when something was up. ‘In Svalbard sometimes we call it the ‘Bear Panic’, when you know something isn’t right and quite often in the morning you will see bear prints that pass very closely to where you were sleeping!’

There is very little evidence to support intuition as playing a role in outdoor leadership, however it is widely spoken about and recognised as something that is present in decision making. Watter’s (n.d) has written several papers illustrating his interactions with his own intuition while rafting, although comes to no conclusive evidence that it truly influences him. It would be beneficial to gather further research into this topic especially as to its presence in the outdoors.

Leadership

In relation to leadership, the women in this study unanimously concluded that in most cases of their all-female expeditions, this was a shared role and responsibility. Steph said that sometimes, only in times of crisis, after much open communication and deliberation, did one woman make the final decision about something.

My friend and I were from Spitsbergen so we had more knowledge of the area but there were no official leaders of the group. But it came to a point where we needed to make a decision. We had one girl in the group who got very scared. We were in a crevasse area and had some huge crevasses we needed to cross. It was about ten metres, we were roped up of course. We had a ten metre snow bridge to cross, and it was a little sketchy. She didn't tell us how scared she was. A few days earlier she had started to miss her children. I told her to be here, please be here. Next week she could argue with them, but now she needed to be present. We had hot weather, and fog and we could hear avalanches coming down. The snow was slushy and we started to go through the snow bridges. She totally freaked out. She started to cry with me, telling me she would never see her children again. She was so afraid of dying, she was really full of fear and emotions. It was horrible and I felt so bad for her. She said she wanted to helicopter and I said no helicopter ride, I am going to be in Spitsbergen for a couple of years. I will only call a helicopter for when it is a real emergency. We discussed with the other and that decision was hard. We all saw that we needed to turn around and go down. There were two options going back three days, going day and night or calling the Nordstern. I had a radio and contact with the ship's captain. It was the much better option. We would have to go out on the ice to them and be picked up 12 hours later, much more safe. The other one was too difficult to do and we had a scared person with us. But finding a diplomatic solution was hard, two people wanted to do it, and two people didn't and the fifth person

couldn't take a side. I said that I have the radio, the contact with the captain and I had organised the trip here. We had not said who was going to be the leader but I told them that this is what we are going to do and that was hard. I took control. (Steph)

Amanda stated on her all female trips that 'every team member was involved in decision making and there was no sense of hierarchy between participants because we were all equals on this journey.' Jesse noted that 'all the girls and I lead together. There were some things that some of us were better at, so we gravitated towards those jobs or tasks to be able to aid the entire group better. We had ultimate trust in each other to get the job done. It was refreshing to all be a part of something greater!'

Rachel related that on her expedition there also was a very open sense of communication and no real hierarchy of leadership except when it came to skills. For example *'If there was any decision making to do with the boat or the sailing then it was deferred to me. Another woman took charge of photography and knew when certain shots would not look good. However if it came to anything else, like skiing which we were all skilled at, we were considered equals so every voice needed to be heard. If people had different opinions we would just split normally into two groups of what people wanted to do before coming back onto the boat so that it suited everybody.'*

Sarah noted that 'on the ski trip across Svalbard, all the women just got in and did their bit. There was no real discussion of who was doing what, it was just done as a community. If people were having a tough day, then we would help them and they would help us when we needed it. We were not following anyone, we were just moving as a mass.' Louise noted that they all shared responsibilities on her trips however she thought she worried more than the other women did about safety. This made her feel like 'I had to enforce more polar bear safety and strictness'.

All opinions and knowledge from group members was welcomed to aid these decisions and it was expected of each of the team members to speak up. The group dynamics described by the women was that each member was equal and was encouraged to take derisive action in motivating the team to start something like putting up tents, dinner, and route planning. This is consistent with Mitten and Woodruff's studies where they concluded that 'the feminine approach to leadership tends to be inclusive and shared. In a sense, many people, if not everyone, perform leadership functions at some time' (2009, p 26). This foundation of shared and inclusive leadership tended to begin when the women were organising and planning the trips in the first place. When they described their planning processes, it seemed they all had a role or a function that played to their strength. Instead of competing with each other, they complemented each other. This built up a foundation of respect and trust. Trust was something that was highly valued in every team that adventured together. In

between trip meetings they would have to fulfil their duty to the best of their abilities and would discuss openly about any struggles they encountered. This created an underlying sense of open communication and shared responsibility which later influenced their adventure expeditions greatly by positively reinforcing that everyone was equal and as valued as the other.

The participants in this study also utilised phrases like 'leading with' rather than leading over, constituting that there was no intended hierarchy of leadership within their all-female trips. Mitten and Woodruff (2009) believe these words are related to leadership within a friluftsliv framework where one is not above the other. Being valued as individual important components of the team was something that empowered the women in this study. They felt they had a place rather than they were just following along. Friluftsliv as a concept promotes the lack of hierarchy between humans and especially between humans and nature and it can be seen through these women's responses they also had no real hierarchy in their leadership.

Teaching Amongst Women

Several of the women stated in response to why they chose female only teams, that they have worked with women-only mentorship programs and love female only trips. The reason for this is that women teach each other and inspire each other to be able to achieve things, and have less qualms about skill sets and skill levels. This was reported as being a strength of female only adventure expeditions. This is not to say that males do not inspire or teach women either, however the women in this study specifically stated that women empower other women. Jesse noticed *'how well girls responded to female role models. It's not always the case, I have seen so many male coaches inspire girls. Also vice versa so many female coaches inspiring guys. It doesn't matter who it is. However there is a really interesting connection between women. Women learn differently and as a female athlete skier I can really understand that it's scary doing things, your body breaks a lot easier than guys sometimes. For the same outcome as a man, you have to train really hard, it's just a different mentality.'*

Jesse further noted that 'females know how their minds and bodies work, and how best to use them to their advantage, just as males know their own bodies best.'

In each of the participants' disciplines, they wanted to encourage and motivate other women to be able to adventure and gain the same skill level as they had. Steph said that 'It was important for us to impart the freedom our skills give to us, to other women as a means of empowerment'. For Louise and Steph, the women from Svalbard, this meant in Louise's words 'teaching other ladies

the safe handling of weapons so that they could be independent and be free to walk wherever they wanted. Not depending on men to help women through was a very important component of adventure for these participants.’

‘While there were many mixed groups that function incredibly well, many women have the tendency to fall back and let men do the work. In all-female groups however, every individual has to participate and help each other to reach the common goals. Many of the ladies in these female only groups will teach each other, helping each other to develop techniques and complete things in a better and faster manner.’ (Louise)

For Jesse and Rachel who are a part of an all women’s training program for young girls, they also want to empower women to have the same opportunities they have had. Jesse declared that ‘Skiing has not been misogynistic, but very male orientated and male dominated. And I think that one thing I have learnt is that women inspire women. Women learn differently and women need to be taught differently sometimes. That is something that I can help the younger generation with!’ Rachel was appreciative about being in such a group where she felt fulfilment of being involved with strong independent up and coming women.

Many of the participants noted that they felt inspired by females who had different skills than they did. Steph described it as ‘feeling the competitive urge to be as good as them and want to learn.’ She revealed that she felt motivated by other women who did not share her fears. She explained that ‘they are always willing to help you and being a little bit afraid is a good thing because you develop. After a short while you know that you can handle anything.’ Sarah expressed that ‘even when the rest of the women in the group are incredibly hard-core I have just always had really good experiences with women in the outdoors who want to get other women into nature also. They do things to help you feel comfortable.’

Sarah noted that when she was asked to join a ski trip on Svalbard, she was quite hesitant. She did not know how to ski and thought that perhaps this adventure was out of her reach but when she found out that it was an all women’s trip, it completely altered her perspective. She said ‘the fact that I did not know how to ski was not even a question any more, it was now a matter of women who like to be outdoors’. Sarah stated that she did not want to make stereotypes about men or women, but ‘I just felt safer being myself around women.’ She expressed that in her experience she found that ‘they (women) are more accepting of the people and the skill sets they are with.’ This confidence and sense of emotional safety can be best described by Stevens (1999, p 25) who believes that “in a group of all women, ego is replaced with encouragement and support, which

builds confidence and the desire to strive to do one's best.” In relation to this Sarah’s ski trip across Svalbard she expressed the positives she discovered about being in an all-female team:

‘The largest part of it was being completely free of any worries or concerns, free of any judgement and any need to prove myself. There was this sense that there is no one here to do it for you... you know how to do it, you are just going to do it yourself. Whereas sometimes I think when there are men around, if I can't do it, well that dude over there can do it even if he has never been in the woods before. I automatically associate masculinity with being stronger or more capable than me.’

When encouraged to delve deeper, she could not understand where this thinking came from as she had lived with incredibly strong female figures in her life. Sarah postulated that ‘perhaps it is society and social stigmas around gender that have influenced me to doubt my own abilities. On an all girls trips, my senses around my own abilities and skills become super heightened and I do not second guess myself.’

A number of the women concluded that sometimes when men were around they dumbed themselves down. Louise spoke about the need for all female trips to help ladies avoid doing this. She stated ‘It is a huge problem, there is this innate underlying thought that women are not capable of surviving on their own up here. It is important to help women realise they can and they don’t need to dumb themselves down to support that notion.’ Sarah revealed ‘*there is just something better for me to be doing it with a bunch of women for sure. The women on the Svalbard trip I was with just got up in the morning and did it. I think when I am with guys there is a sort of coddling that happens. I think that I dumb myself down to support males egos. I become a little more helpless which is not who I am at all.*’

Steph explained that even with things that she knew she was absolutely capable of doing, her brain told her 'oh you don't know how to do that' when the reality was that she definitely knew how to do these things. This reflects Young’s studies where she notes that women frequently approach physical tasks with timidity and uncertainty and do not trust their bodies to carry them through to complete the desired outcome. As a product of a patriarchal society that inhibits females in general, women often feel inhibited in their own bodies. Girls may be taught that being feminine means limiting their strengths and constraining their bodies (McNeil, 2012). They are taught to feel like the weaker sex, one that is judged by man’s abilities. This often creates a feeling of frustration and awkwardness as women struggle between not wanting to appear weak but also not wanting to appear too strong (Young, 1980). While Young’s observations may not relate to every woman, this behavioural pattern emerged in almost every interview. These confident women in the outdoors have experienced self-doubt about their own skills and abilities. Newbury (1999, p 5) reason that

“[...] women view their personal competence through a filter composed of society's perceptions and responses which in turn influence their self- perceptions of their own competence.”

Amanda who adventures mostly with men said that she struggled with finding women that she trusted. She remarked that ‘I think women don't hold themselves to the same standards as men because they don't have to. I have a hard time finding women who have a high level of knowledge, education and experience.’ Amanda deduced that ‘as there were less women adventuring the requirements were lower and if a guy wanted to be on the same trip he would potentially have to have more education and experience’. She said ‘I believe there are women who really do excel, but most of these women are guides’. While Amanda indicated that she wanted to inspire women to go into the outdoors and adventure, she firmly declared that as a woman ‘you have to hold yourself to the same standards as everyone else, which for the most part in our society means men.’

Amanda's thoughts are interesting because they reveal that in the outdoors, technical skills and physical competence are naturalised with masculinity and this is a concept that not only men should be questioning, but women also. Amanda's thoughts indicate that women are still being seen as what De Beauvoir describes as the ‘other’ (as cited in Young, 1980), as the inessential correlate to man. Women were judged according to man's abilities competences and experiences. In mixed gender spaces, the potential for creating an atmosphere geared towards thinking that women lack more of these skills in comparison to men, is higher than in an all-women context (McDermott, 2004).

Proving Yourself and Bodily Risk

Another of reason many of the participants chose to adventure in an all-female group was that the need to prove yourself and your skills was less present. Many of the women noted that while they might be competitive women, ego and judgement rarely existed in the female only trips they completed. Rachel said that ‘I just think they (women) tend to have better communication and they tend to be more fun. I mean there's a lot less ego because females can still be competitive too but it just seems that it's less intense normally. It just seems that women get less attached to the outcome.’ Sarah stated that ‘For some reason it just feels safer for me and I don't mean that in a physical sense, I mean it in an emotional. I feel more comfortable, I don't worry about being judged, I feel like it's more empowering for me to be with an all female group. I just find that there is less ego on all girls trips.’

Most women in most scenarios in the outdoors feel like they have to prove themselves. In mixed groups, I feel like I have to prove that I can keep up, I have to carry as much gear. I have taken these courses, here is me demonstrating my knowledge. I wish that it wasn't that way but it is. Men have to prove themselves as well, but I don't know if it's as often or to the same degree. (Amanda)

This insert clearly expresses the need women feel to prove their mastery of outdoor skills and that this is a highly regarded concept. Instead of concentrating on the mastery of self-development and each individual's unique capabilities, mastery is seen through the lens of “technical imperialism in which the subject stands ‘on’ and thus above the earth, rather than being ‘of’ the world” (Fullgar & Hailstone, 1996, p. 24). This creates a sense of hierarchy where one is encouraged to dominate over another in the natural world to be deemed successful (Watson, 2015). As abilities and success continue to be generally associated with dominant constructions of men and masculinity in the outdoors, men are therefore typically suggested as being more competent and more suited to outdoor life and activities than women (Cosgriff, Little, & Wilson, 2009; Little, 2002).

The participants in this study revealed that while completing activities with other women can be quite empowering, it is generally men who push them stretch their boundaries. Jesse vocalised that ‘I have had a lot of girls who have taught me how to climb and I feel like it’s just a different style of relationship. It’s because girls teach you and sometimes you go out with guys and they just do it and expect you to do it too.’ She further states that this can be a great thing too, sometimes you need to be pushed past your limits and boundaries in the outdoors and adventuring with men is great for aiding that process. Steph however noted that she feels pushed by both women and men equally and likes to ‘ally myself with people who will stretch my limits!’ Amanda said ‘I have been around guys and I do think that guys take more risk. Sometimes they push me to take more risk. I think that it might be that some of the guys I ski with, have more experience than me so they feel more comfortable taking the risks.’ Rachel said that as a child ‘it was really the boys around her that pushed her when she was learning how to ski’. Louise explained that it was different when you were adventuring with men, ‘you really have to take your own place amongst them and if you want to learn something you have to ask. They won’t necessarily teach you. You have to be a bit tougher because you often reach harder goals that you just wouldn’t have with women.’

This theme was characterised within this study that the women all conclusively believe that men push them to reach further limits. In relation to her latest trip to Greenland in an all female team Amanda quipped-

We were working more as a group with decision making and trying to manage risk and mitigate risks. We talked a lot about being really remote and not being able to take chances. If this line has

even a little avalanche danger, we couldn't take that risk because we were so far away from help. We could not risk a life threatening injury. We were trying to make decisions and make our margin of safety big enough that even if we were to have an incident it would be small enough so we could manage it, in the remote location we were in. If there were men present on this trip however I think we would have been skiing more exposed technical lines, pushing ourselves physically more, spending more time out skiing and being more tired; which you know fatigue contributes to safety potentially. But at the same time that is why you do a trip like that, to ski as many lines as you can, and to push your limits. It is a very fine line, we kept it more conservative than it would have been with guys there.

Louise referenced her biking trip across Norway where she travelled with two men, saying that she forced herself to keep up with them and take the same risks as them as she it was helping her grow. Jesse described females as being 'more conservative in risky situations and if men were present in some of the all-female trips, they would have stretched their boundaries more.' This was not something that was described as a good or bad thing but merely that she thought 'perhaps men were less risk averse and more willingly to throw their bodies on the line.' The women felt more protective of their bodies which directly reflects Young's theories. Young (1980) states that women sometimes lack confidence in their abilities and have a fear of getting hurt which results in them acting in a manner to always protect the body. She theorised that historically as a sex, women have endured objectification and live with the threat of invasion of body space. Therefore it seems to be ingrained in women's consciousness, especially in the case of these participants, to safeguard their bodies.

Sponsorship, Grants and Social Media

There seems to be many discrepancies between genders within the competitive outdoor world. While most companies are more than willing to sponsor and support females to add variety and 'flavour' to their athletes, they are still not being paid a tenth of what a male earns from the same thing. Amanda and Jesse, who deal with sponsors on a daily basis, both reported that they believe that in this day and age it is easier for females to obtain sponsorship as there are not many women out there doing these extreme expeditions. However companies are still not willing to give them the same level of support as they do to their sponsored male athletes. Amanda illustrated her struggle 'I was barely able to gain enough support to pay for my plane ticket (estimated around 2000 USD) for a mountain biking adventure in Norway. However the two males I went with received ten times the amount of funding I did, it was no big thing for one of the guys to raise 15- 20000 USD'. She did say that there were other elements that funding has to do with than just gender, for example 'personalities and ability to produce solid content'. As a sponsored athlete however Amanda is

expected to carry out a certain amount of adventure expeditions and keep her name in the media. This becomes increasingly difficult when she has to front the money for most of her trips.

The other women who compete competitively stated that the prize money awarded for different feats was also much less than male athletes. Rachel mentioned that 'I became sick of competing. Most women find it difficult because the prize money is different and in relation to sponsorships women are never represented in the movies made.' Jesse said she now makes her own documentaries to fund her trips and lifestyle as competing does not adequately fund her.

None of the interviewees emphasised that completing their expeditions in the Arctic was too difficult or confrontational in the eyes of contemporary society. They believed that they were role models for other women who wanted to engage in outdoor adventure expeditions, that they could be both feminine and outdoorsy. Rachel mentioned that the *'Feedback we had from our film and facebook page – from all ages- were that people were very inspired by it. I think for a lot of us that was interesting and surprising. I guess because people feel like they wouldn't step out to do something like that. It was too much out of their safety zone. It is nice to be a female role model, because there are so much more opportunities these days and it's important to inspire strong independent women who uphold being a girl.'* Jesse state that 'I wanted to inspire everyday girls that they can do these things, no matter what background they came from, with some training it is achievable.' Sarah also emphasised the importance of reaching the younger generation and inspiring them 'to challenge themselves, but maintain their femininity while doing it. Embrace being a beautiful girl and being strong at the same time. It is a gift!'

The high profile women involved in this study (Jesse, Amanda and Rachel) discussed that when applying for grants it was more desirable to have environmental research as one of their main incentives. To be considered for a grant the women needed to plan and execute an expedition that explored unknown territory and raised environmental awareness.

'That was something that we really wanted to say- you can still go and have adventure but you don't have to be using helicopters and snowmobiles and trashing the environment. And going into Greenland of all places, it doesn't make any sense to be using helicopters and snowmobiles. It seems like these days if you pay enough money you can do anything and people want quick adventure where they don't think about the cost on the environment. Take Everest for example and the trash that is left behind.' (Rachel)

Amanda specifically spoke about 'as role models and heroes in the adventure world we have a responsibility to uphold when it came to publishing anything to do with our expeditions. It seems

selfish to just publish photos that portray us as just pushing ourselves to our limits and conquering something, without any corresponding empowering or environmental message.’

John Hemmings, a member of Britain’s Royal Geographical Society, believes that while the prospect of pushing new limits, reaching new heights and boundaries is still appealing to some young people, that age-old image of a frostbitten action hero is giving way to more environmentally conscious people, environmental research or solid charitable exploration (as cited in “The Unexplored World”, 2016). Organisations are more interested in proposals that attempt to advance science, support local people or protect the environment rather than just merely pitting oneself against the forces of nature.

Some of the women stated that being a part of an all-female team was no longer something special and unique, so organisations expected women to have more to their adventure proposal than just female empowerment. While Rachel noted that *‘we didn't want to play a card that this is an all female gig. That is kind of old thing to do to try and get more sponsorship. Many men look down upon it, like we are just doing it to get more sponsors. In a lot of conversations we had together we debated whether we should be pushing the all female thing or not as it was a bit of a catch 22 because so many girls are trying to do it.’* Jesse also stated that *‘I think people are still excited about having female content and having a strong female presence but I don't think it's all about all-female teams anymore. It's a trending thing. People are interested in the female dynamic but I don't think it needs to be all female anymore.’* She also reflected that *‘before 2010/2011 I don't even know if you could say that there was one all female ski film. People were interested in it, it was a really hot topic but now just about the female voice anymore.’* Amanda however disagreed and debated that *‘in the media world, people who give sponsorships are mostly interested in being a woman or females caring for the environment. The media loves all female stuff because they don't get a lot with females in general.’*

In the media world however being a part of an all-female team still captured a lot of attention so this enabled the women to gain more sponsorship. The women stated that the media does not want to discuss climate change or environmental issues in general. Amanda had been told *‘statistically speaking stories about climate change acquire less hits, views and reads than stories about other things.’* She digressed that *‘people just do not want to hear about it, so the reality of the media world is that editors are forced to be faithful to what the general public and audience wants.’* This is something these women struggled with as they were bound by their grants to produce an environmentally conscious film, however the media did not want it to be completely climate change orientated. This made it incredibly difficult to satisfy both patrons and made the women aware of judgement for their environmental beliefs and values within the sporting world. Amanda said that *‘I*

think when we were making the film I think everyone is a little shy or reluctant in the same sense because they don't want people to judge them and I don't want people to judge me for making such a climate driven message film.' Jesses also remarked that 'there were definitely certain people that I did not want to watch this, because I was scared of their reactions.' They revealed that they were apprehensive of how the public would take to an environmental film and this affected their journey and reflective process negatively. Rachel however was not bothered by the production of her film apart from it taking away from her presence while she was on the expedition,

The outdoors and nature is usually an equaliser for humans where individuals can disregard their societal roles and structural attributes (Turner, 1974). Nature provides an ungoverned space, usually safe from judgement, this means that people are no longer a son or a daughter, a provider or a caregiver for example. Combining both nature and media in this unique space complicates that simplistic relationship. Beliefs and values are normally shared within a small, safe non-judgemental group within the outdoors, however when you are attempting to portray a message from an experience to a wider community who were not a part of that particular journey and story, you can run into serious criticism. This makes it a demanding and troublesome task to create something that will not fall upon deaf ears or take away from the journey itself.

Rachel noted that occasionally filming things would require extra thought and took away from the ease and joy of the trip. While it helped their team dramatically to gain sponsorship, there was a lot of preparation involved. She stated *'with the photos and films I wasn't really into it, I would be like hmm that looks like fun to ski I just want to go do that while you guys do this other stuff. It was also a consideration of what would look good and what she could film from an artist's point of view. The other girls were used to that, I wasn't really, I just wanted to ski. There were more specific routes for some film and photos. There was that detail in it which might not be the same for other expeditions that doesn't involving filming.'*

Amanda mentioned how frustrated she had been with social media and its role in the outdoors. 'I am irritated with social media and the ability of people to portray themselves however they want to be portrayed, which is kind of the beauty of social media and like a blessing and a curse'. She is expected to upkeep a high profile on instagram and other media accounts yet this takes away from her feeling of mindfulness and being in the present while on trips because she constantly has to think of what angles will look good and how to get the perfect shot. 'Media is turning nature into a very moment based economy where it is the moments that define the experience not the journey.'

If a moment or a particular shot is the goal you will never be able to experience deeper connections because you are not present in the journey. Amanda stated that 'Instagram is all big epic moments

based and there is an element of fakeness to it.’ She noted that most people are seeking recognition and fame through social media. ‘If you are constantly chasing that epic shot, what does that do to your perspective of nature?’ It becomes an affordance and a commodity to be used and exploited, not something to have a relationship with. However there are positives and negatives to this as social media also does a fantastic job of promoting and motivating women getting into the outdoors. Louise noted that ‘through instagram and facebook groups, I manage to advertise and motivate more women to get outside and get connected to other women around them.’ Social media definitely helped promote her women’s group. Sarah also believed that ‘I can affect young girls images of themselves and what a strong beautiful woman should be through instagram. I try to maintain a down to earth but sassy profile, showing girls that they can be beautiful outside without so many selfies and focus on their body image.’

The biggest channels that are destroying the connection to nature itself is not traditional media anymore but ourselves, as is it consumer generated content, it is the people. This topic is a double edged sword as without these aesthetically pleasing and attention grabbing pictures, some people would not be as interested in entering the natural environment, therefore would never truly gain any kind of relationship with it which might motivate them to protect it. Young impressionable women would not also have the ability to see other women living life differently to the mainstream.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Throughout history and the literature in this field adventure in the Arctic has posed as a highly gendered space. There is a need for more female voices and stories to be heard. This study has addressed this inconsistency in work by exploring the female concept of adventure and why women choose to adventure in all female teams in the arctic. More specifically it has examined how leadership and decision making functions in an all female setting. Finally this work has investigated the relationship women adventurers in the Arctic experience between themselves and nature and between themselves and the adventure industry as they navigate the media, scholarships and grants.

This thesis has implemented the framework of feminist phenomenology which endeavours to find individual meaning and distinctive experiences with the intention of not making sweeping generalisations (Garko, 1999). The findings of this thesis presents many complex and subjective meanings and experiences of the participants. However throughout the data analysis process, there appeared to be several common themes between the women. I have attempted to represent the individual voices of the women where possible without lumping them into one homogeneous group. Their stories and perspectives should not be generalised but be used as a tool to help encourage

practitioners and adventurers alike to reflect on their own philosophy and practice (Watson, 2015). Utilising the theory of feminist phenomenological framework has been difficult at times however it has forced me to reevaluate my own practice and this study as a whole has provided me with immensely valuable insight into the challenges I have faced and why they occur.

Some of the results in this study were expected and accordant with this research however other ideas have highlighted new insight and perspectives. In this chapter I will review the main findings, and in accordance with the values of feminist research, will offer thoughts on future recommendations of research and how the perspectives raised in this study can possibly influence current practice and philosophy.

Adventure was most commonly described as a journey with unknown elements. The participants enjoyed challenge but for many of the women it was about an inward journey rather than an outer conquest. Most of the interviewees were not interested in being viewed as the strongest or the fastest but enjoyed the thrill of feeling their bodies work. As a whole they were less attached to specific goals such as journeying from A to B and enjoyed the flexibility of an outcome. The Arctic was chosen as the realm to adventure in because it is perceived to be the last wild place on Earth and is something challenging in itself.

The current research provides a collective perspective on female specific issues that are faced in the outdoors while adventuring. One theme that consistently materialised in every interview was that women found communication amongst their own sex easier. Each participant noted that they lost their voices when in mixed gender groups and they were less willing to speak up in the decision making. This was a huge contributing factor as to why the women chose to adventure in all female teams. This data depicts that women do not feel empowered enough to object to group decisions in a male dominated environment. A positive implication of this study is that it provides a deeper comprehension of why it is hard to speak up in male dominated work environments especially in gendered spaces. This may be an important point to raise and bring awareness to in outdoor instructor training. How gender differences and gender equality is approached in outdoor based work environments? How do we overcome gender in outdoors? Is it possible to transcend it? Bringing to attention these questions can contribute to developing current outdoor practice and philosophy and ultimately moving towards becoming a more egalitarian society.

A positive element the participants discussed as being a part of female only trips was that women taught other women and most were more accepting of lesser skill sets. Most of the women have experienced 'I can' moments in all female teams and are able to transcend the inhibitions of being female. Gender seems to be less apparent and does not hold such a strong context in a single sex

group, as women did not have to compare themselves to a different standard. By placing gender perceptions upon another individual can limit their ability to perform to the best of their capabilities in the outdoors (Watson, 2015). The participants felt that a sense of judgement was less apparent in female only situations so they were able to perform better. An all female expedition was empowering for the interviewees as they were encouraged to take an equal role in decision making and leadership. This finding adds to the already existing body of knowledge in relation to female only outdoor programs and can provide perspective from an adventure expedition context.

The search for meaningful experiences, to be at one with nature and in tune with oneself is a key component to these women seeking out adventurous activities. The interviewees all noted a very intimate connection with nature, something that was reflective and engaging. The findings revealed that the human nature relationship that developed for these women included a deep sense of spirituality in the outdoors; they likened the routines/habitual actions they experienced on the expeditions to a sense of meditation and mindfulness. All of the women felt when adventuring that they were connected to something greater than themselves and this in turn made them want to protect the nature they were in. It is vital for humankind to understand the depth of any human/nature relationship in order to engage more environmentally conscious and ethical behaviours. By participating in all female trips, some of the women in this research have felt that it was easier to understand their relationship with nature and connect with spiritual experiences. This suggests that these particular kind of trips have the potential to act as a temporary community that offers a safer environment for them to express, understand and reaffirm a deeper spiritual covenant with nature.

This study highlights that women found it easier to gain sponsorship within an all-female team, they did however gain less funding from these sponsors than men they knew. This shows that there is still a long journey ahead in regards to making the outdoors a gender neutral space. One compelling point presented by some of the women was that they had even better chances of obtaining grants when in a female only group that additionally encompassed environmental and sustainable objectives. The idea of conquering nature is in many respects outdated, especially in the light of environmental crisis faced by humankind over the last few decades. In this context, the idea of adventure itself has also been re-signified for a more sustainable relationship with nature, rather than the traditional approach of domination. All-female trips that have been conducted with environmental objectives have immense potential for raising awareness of the benefits of a good relationship with nature. Utilising channels of social media, movies and adventurous platforms can easily spread the message of environmentally conscious practices that rethink human domination of nature. Simultaneously, giving grants to environmental adventure projects is a very healthy change for future adventurers and may invite more people to take on the feminine concept of adventure rather than the traditional masculine traits of adventure.

Future Recommendations of Research

This study has endeavoured to diminish the gap and enrich the current literature that exists on this subject while simultaneously contributing invaluable accounts and perspectives of female adventurers. Within all research there are limitations and this project has been particularly broad with heavy time constraints. To gain a more extensive perspective, it would be especially beneficial to create a larger body of work with a greater number of participants from a more diverse range of cultures and nationalities including women from developing nations. It would also be increasingly valuable to dedicate more time to the collection of data, so that the individual themes in this study could be explored on a deeper level.

Recommendations for further research include exploring how women gain funding and scholarships on a broader scale, it would also be interesting to gather what the industry standard is and what their perspective is. Another important body of work to be researched would be to discover ways in which the outdoors could become a more gender neutral space and how to implement this change. It would be compelling to examine the lifespan of female adventurers and what specifically stops them from pursuing and completing adventures. Is it family, a lack of funding, or access to teams, societal pressures or jobs? Alternatively a comparative study between contemporary women today versus some of the earlier female explorers/ adventurers would help determine any major developments that have been made in this field. Finally as intuition played a large role in some of the women's decision making it would be wise to create further studies into this subject as it is a relatively under researched concept. The ramifications of intuition being an accepted form of risk analysis could dramatically change outdoor training and improve body/ environment awareness.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

This will be completed in an in-depth interview style, with semi structured questions, allowing for a free flowing conversation and the ability to ask more questions if something interesting comes up. Participants will be encouraged to reply to questions with examples of their own experiences.

What kind of expeditions have you participated in?

In relation to your past experiences what was it that inspired you to start doing these expeditions?

Have you been motivated by specific people who have gone on adventures, heroic female or male adventurers, movie's, travel logs, novels or figures in your life?

Where does your desire to adventure come from?

Who was your biggest hero when you were growing up?

Who do you see yourself as before and after the adventure?

When do you feel the strongest in your adventure process?

Where do you like to adventure?

What kind of adventure do you like to go on?

Who do you like to adventure with?

What does adventure mean to you?

Why did you specifically choose to do this adventure in the Arctic?

How do you do your planning when preparing for an expedition?

How is the organisation process completed?

How did you prepare yourself and others who were participating?

What were your roles within the group if you had any?

Can you give me a specific example of how decision making is handled on the trip?

Can you give me an example of a critical situation you encountered, what happened, what kinds of feelings were provoked and how did the group and yourself deal with this?

Can you please describe some of the risks you perceived on this trip and how this was handled within the group. (situations of crisis)

Can you please reflect on the relationships within your trip, to yourself, to nature if any, and to your team?

Could you please reflect on your groups attitude to adventure, did everyone have the same objectives in mind?

What were the goals in mind and were there any goals outside of reaching particular destinations?

How do other people respond to 'female only expeditions' in lectures, in media, in different contexts?

What were your motivations to complete an expedition, what drives you to adventure?

Why did you choose to adventure in an all female team?

Would you be interested in doing further female only trips?

What do you think the biggest differences are between adventuring in an all female team and mixed gender group?

CONSENT FORM

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Bridget Kruger on 96659230. Or Kirsti Pederson Gurholt on +4723262497
The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

(Signed by participant, date)

Request for participation in research project

"Female Adventurers in the Arctic"

Background and Purpose

This project is part of a Master Thesis, through the Norges Idrettshogskole in Oslo and the University of Marburg in Germany. I am completing my Masters of Transcultural European Outdoor Studies. This thesis is intended to discover the motivations behind women adventuring in the Arctic and why they specifically choose to do so in all female teams. It seeks to explore the connections that are created while adventuring, to land, self and team and the values that are held while in a female team. This study will also seek to understand the female concept of adventure and what values, attitudes and behaviours are exhibited while adventuring.

All women who volunteer to participate in the study, have been chosen for their own commitment to adventuring in the Arctic.

What does participation in the project imply?

Participation in this study requires some data collection from the researcher. This will happen through a range of in-depth interviews through skype and in person. All interviews will be audio recorded. Questions will concern the individuals own adventures as a female and their motivation for doing so. What does it mean to them to adventure, why did they choose to adventure in an all female team and what are their connections to people and place like while on the trip. Some notes will be taken manually.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. The researcher and the university supervisor will be the only people with access to personal data. All data will be stored on a private computer with encrypted passwords in a locked cupboard. Participants are allowed to request to review what data is being used if they are not ok with it.

This project is scheduled for completion by May 30 2016. Any personal data and recordings that are not being used in the final project will be destroyed at this point. All personal data will be made anonymous at the completion of the project. The final date for anonymisation is August 31, 2016.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made destroyed.

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