

California State University, Stanislaus(CTU)

Phone: 209-667-3236 Email: ill@library.csustan.edu

CSUSTAN ILLIAD Trans. #: 116292



Journal Title: The Journal of experiential education.

Volume: 20

Issue: 3

Month/Year: 1997

Pages: 134-143 or 144?

Article Author:

Article Title: Women of Color in the Outdoors;
Culture and Meanings

Imprint: Denver, Colo. ; Association for Experien

Borrower: CSF

Lending String:

*CTU,CSH,CLO,CCH,IAZ,AZS,ORU,WYU,OKS,
NTE,IYU,TOL,COD,UPM,COS

Patron Roberts, Nina

OCLC ILL# 113967366



Call #: v.20;no.3:1997:DEC/accidentally
updated to shipped

Location : Periodicals Collection (Turlock)

ODYSSEY

Billing: Exempt

MaxCost: 35.00IFM

Ship Via: Mail

FAX: 415-338-6199

**THIS MATERIAL MAY BE
PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT LAW
(TITLE 17 U.S CODE)**

Transaction Date: 2/20/2014 9:10:35 AM

FEB 20 2014

RC

Resend Request

If you experienced a problem with the delivery of this
item, please contact us with the following information
WITHIN ONE WEEK.

Return this form via FAX.

- Pages were missing p. _____ to _____
- Edges were cut off p. _____ to _____
- Illegible copy - please resend p. _____ to _____
- Incorrect article sent
- Not received
- Other (please explain)

CSU Stanislaus Library -CTU
Interlibrary Loan Department 007
801 W. Monte Vista Ave.
Turlock, CA 95282

Fax: (209) 664-7081

LIBRARY MATERIALS

POSTMASTER: This parcel may be opened for postal inspection if
necessary.

FROM: CSU Stanislaus Library -CTU
Interlibrary Loan Department
One University Circle
Turlock, CA 95382

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

TO: CSU San Francisco State University
Library- DOCUMENT DELIVERY SERVICES
1630 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

Women of color in the outdoors: Culture and meanings

Nina S. Roberts & Karla A. Henderson

The outdoors has traditionally been considered a man's world. Although more women are becoming involved in outdoor experiential activities, we are only beginning to learn about the experiences of women of color. Scholars and practitioners in experiential education are being challenged to rethink the relationship among different races and cultures. In particular, the growing interest in gender and diversity in the outdoors has raised new questions.

Women of color make up 20% of the population of the U.S. Although racial populations differ in many respects (e.g., Caucasians, Blacks, Indians), many women of color share similarities in status and power, including lower earnings than most white women, over representation in low-status occupations, and the double jeopardy of race and gender (Gutierrez, 1990).

While we use people of color to denote various racial and ethnic groups, it is important to note that we approach this article with the knowledge and understanding that not all groups are alike. A critical component to any writing about minorities is that each distinct group can be characterized by differences in history, family structure, social and political developments, traditions, values, and other constructs. Throughout this paper, we do not assume that the rather generic label of "people of color" captures any precise essence of culture. "Twenty years of research

has moved the understanding of racial differences away from rather transparent biases toward a more complex understanding" (James, 1996, p. 127).

More specifically, we acknowledge that women from various ethnic groups do not share the same activity patterns and participation rates. Yet, women of color overall are under-represented in activities that take place in the outdoors, and we know little about their involvement or lack of involvement in experiential education circles.

Women of color overall are under-represented in activities that take place in the outdoors, and we know little about their involvement or lack of involvement in experiential education circles.

Researchers have begun to recognize the need to illuminate both the diversity and the historical-cultural specificity of women's experiences and gender

relations. Researchers and educators, however, must challenge the universalizing tendencies of white, middle-class Americans (hooks, 1989). Race is typically either omitted or repressed. The absence of reference to culture and ethnicity supports a social structure that results in invisibility and inequality for people of color. Just as feminists have been critical of the ideology of patriarchy for failing to acknowledge the contributions of women, scholars can also be critical of how people studying women have sometimes ignored racial and ethnic diversity. Recent trends in feminist theorizing about differences are grounded in realities of everyday experience among women; we are challenged to reconsider theories of categorizing the "universal woman" and replace them with theories of multiplicity (Mascia-

Nina S. Roberts, M.A. is the assistant director of The Student Conservation Association's Conservation Career Development Program, 1800 N. Kent Street, Suite 1260, Arlington, Virginia 22209 USA (703-524-2441; nsroberts@aol.com). The author is chair of the Publications Advisory Committee within the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) and

Women's Professional Group Representative to the AEE Board of Directors. Karla A. Henderson, Ph.D. is professor and chair of the Curriculum in Leisure Studies and Recreation Administration at the University of North Carolina, CB #3185 Evergreen, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3185 USA (919-962-1222; karla@email.unc.edu).

Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1989).

The purpose of this research project was, therefore, to examine meanings of the outdoors (including the natural environment and participation patterns) as expressed by women of color. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze two data sets collected from interviews with women of color in the U.S.

Background literature

Quantitative research provides evidence about the evolving participation patterns of women in the outdoors. The growing participation (e.g., Kelly, 1987) suggests the increasing value of the outdoors for women, but these data tell us little about the actual experience that women have in the outdoors. While statistics are helpful, they do not provide explanations. Consequently, qualitative literature offers greater insight about the positive effects of outdoor involvement for women (e.g., Cole, Erdman, & Rothblum, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1986; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Warren, 1996). Research data from the work of these scholars and others describe the social rewards, empowerment, health benefits, therapeutic outcomes, stress management, freedom, and sense of community that develops as a result of women spending time in the outdoors. Other areas that provide additional insight include constraints and culture.

Conducting research about women, culture, and constraints requires that we acknowledge the meaning of being female as a fluctuating, not a fixed state; being female has varied historically, contextually, and culturally (Henderson, 1994). Assuming that all women experience the outdoors in the same way is risky and would probably be inaccurate. Race, age, education, cultural background, and other characteristics motivate and constrain each woman's experience in a way that cannot be generalized to all other women. More specifically, variables such as traditions, values, religious practices, customs, diet, language, and the like, have a strong influence on the social support, attitudes, and experiences of women participating in outdoor adventure programs and wilderness activities (Roberts, 1995). Therefore, using ethnic background (e.g., identity relating to sense of belonging to a sub-cultural group of people), and the importance of culture (e.g., social heritage of a group of people) as a central focus in examining the experiences of women, along with an empowerment perspective, can provide greater insights into understanding deeper meanings about the outdoors for women.

Constraints

A large body of literature has developed around a greater understanding of constraints related to experiential learning via outdoor pursuits (e.g., Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Roberts & Drogin, 1993; Warren, 1985, 1996). A constraint is anything that inhibits people's ability to participate in activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of opportunities, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction. Constraints may have different impacts upon groups of women (Henderson, 1991b), yet we are only beginning to learn about the outdoor experiences and constraints of women of color.

Roberts (1996, 1995), Roberts and Drogin (1996, 1993), and Washington (1990) have been among the few researchers who have studied the involvement of women of color in the outdoors. Although based on a small number of in-depth interviews, the data obtained by Roberts and Drogin (1993) are illustrative of the need to investigate reasons for participation or non-participation by women of varied ethnic backgrounds. Based on these interviews, coupled with a review of literature from experiential education and sociology, these authors described how the reasons for lack of participation among African American women resulted from historical oppression and racism, stereotyping by race and gender, lack of role models, insufficient exposure to activity options, limited accessibility to outdoor areas, and oppressive economic conditions. In sociology research, Boyd (1990) found that women of color learn the rudiments of ethnic culture at home and become trapped in the double standards of social acceptance outside the home. Subsequently, Roberts and Drogin concluded that many black women see the outdoors as a "white thing," and have surmised that women of color have had to become essentially "bicultural" when they participate in the outdoors if they are to be accepted.

Henderson, Winn, and Roberts (1996) analyzed the involvement of women students in outdoor activities. Although an analysis based on race was not the focus of their study, they found that African American students in this study were involved less frequently in outdoor pursuits compared to women of white ancestry and other women of color. Several aspects of grounded theory about women in the outdoors emerged from this study that may also be equated with the involvement of women of color. For example, most young women wanted to believe that the outdoors was a gender neutral environment, although their involvements often reflected a contradiction in this consciousness between idealized attitudes and the realities of their situations. Many of the students acknowledged that the outdoors may be more of a male domain than a female domain in regard to how it is traditionally defined (i.e., rigorous,

tough, dangerous). The impact of changing women's roles, past socialization, and stereotypical gender expectations determined how contradictory choices about involvement in the outdoors were made.

Culture

Within the research literature, the two primary explanations for difference in activity involvement, in the outdoors or anywhere, among people of color are marginality and ethnicity. "Marginality" emphasizes minority status as a crucial factor in explaining under-participation. Additionally, the under-representation of people of color in some groups results primarily from lack of access to desired facilities and limited economic resources, which in turn are a function of historical patterns of discrimination. "Ethnicity" suggests that regardless of socioeconomic standing, cultural processes are more important in explaining variations in leisure participation including outdoor participation patterns. Allison (1988) suggested that her research on differences between cultural groups favored the ethnicity theory. Carr and Williams (1993) were also in support of the ethnicity perspective and suggested that social structural variables can be used to explain behavior in outdoor activities and predict participation patterns of ethnic groups.

Floyd, Shiner, McGuire, and Noe (1994) found support for the marginality theory because similarities rather than differences in participation across racial groups occurred when controlling for subjective social class. These researchers found blacks had less involvement in outdoor activities such as camping and hiking than did whites, but this difference was less obvious when the analysis was controlled for class status. They also found that black women were different from white women in that, among the females who defined themselves as poor or working class, race appeared to remain significant as a determinant of activity preferences (e.g., whites preferred hiking and camping, blacks preferred sports and exercise-health activities). West (1989) and Hutchinson (1988), however, proposed that neither explanation is responsible for the participation differences, due largely to the variety of methods used and settings studied. Hutchinson (1988) concluded that black-white differences, if they exist, were not explained by the simple influence of either class or race, but by a more complex and not well understood interaction between these two factors.

To ascertain if racial and ethnic differences do exist, and subsequently what those differences mean, requires making research more inclusive and moving beyond the dominant cultural paradigm. Differences describe relationships among groups of people, but they do not explain them. As in a mosaic, a rich mix of complex and intriguing factors results in certain behaviors exhibited

by these groups. Differences make us unique and must be taken into account. For women of color, these factors may include identifiable social structures (e.g., occupational mobility, educational attainment, family structure, racial stereotyping) that create barriers, limit involvement, and constrain choices.

Methods

Allison (1988) called for a focus on the role, nature, and meanings of recreation activity within different cultural groups (i.e., social heritage of a group of people including institutions, customs, norms, conventions, values, skills, arts). Although the melting pot model has been the normative ideology that assumes ethnic minorities will eventually adopt the beliefs of the dominant culture, researchers are acknowledging the increase in ethnic, cultural, and lifestyle diversity influences within community life (Murphy & Dahl, 1991). Hutchinson (1988) acknowledged the need to examine which research methodologies will provide the best understandings of cultural groups, with the assumption that no one method may be completely adequate. Allison (1988) suggested that asking members of a specific cultural community what their perceptions are may be relevant through the use of interpretive frameworks; Likert scales often mask important issues that are the foundation of cross-cultural understandings.

The data for this project were analyzed largely from an ethnicity perspective that assumed cultural variations may exist in norms, values, behavior, and beliefs about the outdoors. An interpretive paradigm was the basis for this study. Interpretive views allow for using a qualitative research approach to look at social processes, lifestyles, and leisure patterns. "The interpretive paradigm allows us to view human behavior as a product of how people define their world and to see reality from others' eyes" (Henderson, 1991a, p. 10).

Symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical framework for analyzing the data. According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism assumes that human beings are conscious, feeling, thinking, and reflective subjects. Social psychology has shown how people associate meanings about what is happening around them and how they are interacting with others. Specifically, symbolic interactionism was used to explore the relationships that women of color had with the outdoors through analysis of their personal experiences.

Sample

Results were obtained through a secondary analysis of two data sources. Seven women of color at a southeastern university who participated in a focus

group about outdoor involvement were one source of data (Henderson et al., 1996). Five of the women were African American students and two were Asian American; the average age of these respondents was 21 years. The semi-structured questions asked included the following: Tell us a little about your involvement in the outdoors. When you were a child, did you participate in any type of organized outdoor experience such as attending camp? Describe that experience or why you might not have had that experience. What do other family members do in the outdoors? Are they active in the outdoors? How did other people influence your attitude toward involvement in the outdoors? What prevents you from enjoying the outdoors in all ways that you might like?

The second source of data was interviews with 17 women of color (ages 20-33) representing various racial and ethnic backgrounds from across the U.S. (Roberts, 1995). The semi-structured questions asked included: How do you think women of color may "value" outdoor activities differently than white women? What trends or future do you see regarding women of color within the outdoor movement? What is your perspective in understanding cultural and ethnic differences in outdoor participation patterns of women? What empowers women of color? Empowerment was defined as a sense of personal control, ability to enhance inner strength, establishing equity in the distribution of resources, believing that power is not a scarce commodity but rather an ability to work with others to change social institutions (Gutierrez, 1990). Finally, what makes an outdoor experience different based on cultural background?

Data analysis

A total of 24 self-identified women of color (i.e., the two data sources used) were interviewed for this analysis that included fourteen African American, six Asian American, two Hispanic, and two Native American women. Data analysis used primarily constant comparison techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These techniques provided a systematic way to record, code, and analyze data. Constant comparison involved the procedure of reading all transcripts to develop a broad understanding of the content. The data were coded independently by both researchers to reflect themes regarding meanings about outdoor involvement. The re-coding of sub-themes reflected specific content. The coded transcripts were re-read to ascertain that the categories fit the data and vice versa. Finally, background literature was related to the data to

better understand the emerging themes and to develop a grounded theory approach to deriving conclusions.

Corroboration between the researchers helped determine high credibility and dependability. Examples are indicated throughout the interpretation of the results to indicate how the researchers arrived at their conclusions based on the words of the interviewees. Transferability was examined through the post hoc literature reviews to show how these results compared to other studies. Considering ethnicity and culture as our guiding framework, interpretations showed how these

women's experiences led them to make particular outdoor choices due to a variety of factors; many of these factors have not been previously considered (or tested) in other studies of women outdoors.

We did not compare across ethnic groups, nor engage in cross-cultural analysis. Consequently, we provided information about the race of the respondents that may be useful and interesting to the reader, while recognizing all women of color are not the same because clear cultural differences exist between, and among, the groups included in this study. The focus of this project was not to compare racial identity, but rather uncover additional information about the experiences of women of color in the outdoors that might help understand more about outdoor experiences for a greater variety of people in general.

Results and discussion

When the data were analyzed, two prevailing themes emerged. These themes related to social support, and discomfort and fear as related to the outdoors. Involvement by our sample of women of color in experiential outdoor activities revolved around their interpretation of these two dimensions.

Social Support

Social support included ways that women of color did or did not receive encouragement to participate in experiential outdoor activities. One of the issues related to participation in activities with others. Family and peers were the most often mentioned. Several of the women interviewed indicated that they thought "women of color appreciate a more social approach to communing with nature." The combination of lack of early experiences in the outdoors and feeling a lack of skills might contribute to the need for social support in the outdoors. Additionally, based on responses from these women in the study, the postulate for this relates to personal issues of fear, lack of self-confidence, or

What makes an outdoor experience different based on cultural background?

may simply be manifest in cultural preference. The social approach is evident in the sub-themes of family, peers, role models, isolation, and cultural implications.

Family

Overall, the women of color interviewed either did not mention their families or suggested that the family had only limited influence on participation in outdoor activities. One woman said, "Black women don't get any push or motivational forces in this direction [toward the outdoors]; influences from parents while growing up are not typically in this direction." Several of the young black women made statements like these: "My family didn't do a lot of outdoor stuff. I mean we did the picnic thing" and "We'd always go on picnics and stuff like that, but I'm not outdoors a lot." Several African American women also described how fishing was an important activity of their families, but as individuals they were not currently involved or interested. Similarly, an Asian American woman who is currently active in the outdoors said, "My family was not all interested in the outdoors so I got involved through school."

Peers

Peers seemed to have more influence than families on whether a woman of color chose outdoor activities. One Asian American woman said:

I think the people you're around makes a difference of whether or not you're going to be active in outdoor experiences or not. I mean, my boyfriend drags me. Now we go regularly but my other friends, they're like the hotel, preppy girls. I mean, they have to stay in hotels, they scream when they think of bugs and snakes, whatever. I do too, I'm not saying I don't, but I don't yell that loud.

The need to find others with similar interests, regardless of race or gender, seemed to be a problem for some women. An African American woman said, "If I'm with someone that wants to go out and he's an outside person, I mean, that's probably a time that we could bond so I'd kind of be a more outside person."

Empowerment from other women of color was also evident in this statement by an African American woman:

One thing that empowers us is learning from our sisters who have done certain activities before. There's a different type of encouragement from someone of the same ethnic background who has done outdoor programs before; this is what could possibly get other women of color interested in participating.

Role Models

Role models were both a benefit and a detriment to outdoor involvement. One woman stated, "For some black women there needs to be someone else there to do it 'first' so then there will be another black person there who paved the way." An Asian American woman indicated that her energy in the outdoors comes from the idea that "other women of color might be inspired by my participation."

From a negative perspective, however, the absence of role models with similar ethnic backgrounds elicited a message to women of color, in particular that the stereotype of outdoor activities as a white privilege remains true. One African American woman indicated, "White women are very dominant in leadership roles and white males still outnumber the participants. Adventure-based programs are also appealing to the middle-classes and yuppies." Another African American woman felt that young people need to see people of color leading groups if they are to become involved.

Isolation

Several women were concerned about being the "only person of color participating" and the uneasiness this perceived isolation created. One African American woman said, "When there are few other people of color participating in an activity—there's an isolation factor." Another woman shared, "I do not see many and often cannot get other African American women my age to hike with me. I do not see many, and often any other, African American women on the shortest and easiest hikes." An Asian American woman suggested that, "This [being the only person of color] prevents me from going back to participate in the same or similar clubs and events. This discourages me from getting more involved."

Isolation also emanated from the idea that "Advertising and marketing still do not use black women in photographs or commercials." While more corporations and outdoor retailers have begun to improve this previous exclusion, what typically occurs is we see one photograph representing one person of color among numerous other models who are European Americans. An Asian American woman said, "Ad campaigns don't seem to portray any minorities in the backcountry."

Being the only woman of color in a group can result in a number of feelings that most people who have never been a "minority" have not felt. An African American woman stated, "When I am in the minority in a group of mostly white people, I never lose that sense of always being on the margins. . . . When I walk into a setting the first time, I notice who's there. . . I'm not even conscious about it, but it's always present."

Another woman said, "I am always the only person of color. I always feel strangely 'non-black' when I go on hikes." One of the Asian American women interviewed mentioned, "It's hard sometimes not having sisters of color with you. When I'm with them, there is a sharing and understanding of issues I deal with as a woman of color."

Sociocultural Connotations

Related to social support issues were sociocultural connotations that might be gleaned from this analysis. Although people of color may share certain common perceptions of the outdoors with white people, cultural heritage may contribute to interest, or lack of interest, in outdoor activities. On the basis of data from the interviews, some women suggested the outdoors might be a place to be avoided. For example, one African American woman noted, "I think the wilderness is uncultured land, the wild, the bugs and snakes, different stuff like that." Another African American woman felt that the outdoors for her and her friends was more of a "novelty" because it really was not part of their culture and experience.

On one hand, the outdoors was seen as the "playground for white people" but on the other hand, some of the women of color indicated a different perception of the meanings of the outdoors than they perceived that white people held. When asked what makes an outdoor experience different based on cultural background, spirituality was a prevalent response. Many women of color in the study felt spirituality was stronger based on their customs and value systems. For example, an Asian American woman suggested that she "imagine[d] some cultures consider the outdoors to be sport, others find it to be spiritual." A Hispanic woman echoed this idea by saying, "For women of color, I would guess there is a stronger spiritual attachment and for white women there is more of a physical need." A Native American woman in the study also agreed that a sense of spirituality is evident in the involvement of women like her who enjoy the outdoors. An Asian American woman added that "my own culture values group connection and responsibility versus individual separation and independence." In general, there was a discernable perception of differences in the way women of color saw issues of social support in the outdoors compared to white women. Similarly, as related to gender, other research has also suggested that women, white or women of color, perceived the outdoors different than white men (e.g., Floyd et al., 1994; Klobus-Edwards, 1981).

Discomfort and Fear

Discomfort and fear in the outdoors were obvious difficulties that the women of color noted in several ways. For purposes of this discussion, we will describe them as personal and social discomforts and fears. Some of these discomforts and fears are not different from what many women and men might say about the outdoors, but some of the fears were clearly based on cultural experiences.

Personal

The personal concerns related to issues surrounding appearance, skill levels, and previous exposure (or lack thereof) to the outdoors. Regarding appearance, one African American woman expressed:

I think it's [involvement in the outdoors] kind of racial. Not in a bad way. In the summer it's hot in the sun and I have to take sun block, because it [the sun] makes me five shades darker than I already am. And then there's my hair if it gets wet—I've got to go through all kinds of changes to get it back the way I want it to be. I've got to take a shower and wash my hair to get all the bugs out. It's tedious and a lot of work. I just don't see the appeal [of the outdoors].

Because some of the women of color had never been exposed to the outdoors through their families or friends, they felt they lacked the skills to participate. Without the skills, some felt that the outdoors was inhospitable to them. One African American woman remarked that "women of color have never, or rarely, been in a setting where they've been introduced to many of the outdoor activities traditionally participated in by white men or women." Another African American woman said, ". . . When I go out into the woods, all's I'm going to do the whole time is complain that I'm getting dirty. I wish I could be more natural but I just never did that stuff."

Social

Perhaps more ubiquitous, but less easy to describe, was the discomfort and fear in the outdoors associated with cultural connotations, stereotypes, perceived stigma, and the potential for racial discrimination. The perceptions of the outdoors being a place for white and middle-class males resulted in women of color not feeling the outdoors was welcoming or an empowering environment for women of color.

One African American woman explained that perhaps women of color were not interested in the outdoors because "black women do not look to adventure in their lives." Additionally, another woman suggested black women have many of the same stresses as white women but "black women, however, may not see the

outdoors as a viable outlet. Black women use different methods of releasing stress and enjoying themselves." Further research is needed to learn about such methods.

Acknowledging the importance of not generalizing to all ethnic groups, the following three women provide additional supporting statements about how different experiences are perceived: First, an African American woman stated that cultural background does not make an outdoor experience different but "it's how it is interpreted by the individual." Second, one of the Asian American women said that when she is in the outdoors, she overlooks ethnicity and the ethnicity of those around her. Third, another African American woman in the study added, "There is a propensity . . . of wanting to be with other people of color; not being around others of similar cultures is an uncomfortable feeling for some people, especially in an unfamiliar environment like the outdoors."

Stereotypes and perceived stigma about the outdoors also seemed to create discomfort and elements of fear. For example, one woman thought the myth that African Americans were regarded as "jungle bunnies" weighed heavily on decisions of some women of color to limit their participation in outdoor opportunities. A Hispanic woman also suggested that, "There is a myth that women of color do not appreciate the outdoors. Well, it [outdoor opportunities] was taken away as we were forced to move to the cities, etc." Another woman voiced, "You don't see a lot of people [of color] hiking or mountain climbing; you get to the point where there's this stigma, that's not what you do. I think there's a stigma on the things that African Americans do."

Fears of discrimination and discomfort were also evident in some of the women's comments. For instance, a Hispanic woman suggested that discrimination occurs because of the stereotypes about women of color in the outdoors. Furthermore, an Asian American woman indicated that race issues were different depending on her companions. She noted, "When I'm with women of color, I know I don't have to necessarily justify what I'm feeling, why I'm feeling it, or wonder whether I'm going to be attacked for what I say." And, an African American woman said, "I am always afraid the others [whites] will make some racist remark." On the other hand, another African American woman interviewed said she felt some amount of intra-racial discrimination because she chooses to participate in outdoor activities. That is, she did not think other women of color understood why she chose to go to the outdoors for experiential learning or recreation.

Conclusions and implications

On the basis of this analysis, several conclusions confirming a grounded theory approach were drawn. Since most of the studies done about race and ethnicity and outdoor activities do not address gender as a variable, little comparative literature is available. Additionally, it is important to note that women of color in other countries may have differing perspectives and experiences than the U.S. women interviewed for this study. The results of this analysis, however, do provide some insights that may provide a foundation for future research.

First, ethnicity was a factor that women of color could articulate when they discussed their involvement or lack of involvement in the outdoors. For

some women of color, ethnicity was a bigger factor than for others. Issues for these women of color related primarily to perceived barriers to participation reflective of cultural traditions, limited opportunities, and cultural perceptions of who is or should be in the outdoors. For example, responses elicited by several women of color in this study are actually sentiments uniquely expressed by many black women. In a special article featured in *African World* (1995), authors Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, and Ward explained the politics of skin color and hair among Black women. "Too often in the black community, lighter-skinned women have been considered more desirable. Subsequently, the lighter-skinned woman has felt misunderstood by darker blacks who have failed to understand the pain and conflict associated with what is a biological occurrence" (p. 35). Additionally, since an individual's self-esteem and socialization is shaped by how others in society respond to them, it is no secret that appearance and attractiveness affords certain tangible benefits to both women and men. According to Okazawa-Rey et al. (1995), there exists a finer distinction and a culture-specific ideal called "beauty" in the black community that is generally based on a specific combination of hair, skin color, facial features, body size, and shape. Therefore, while white women might "fuss" with their hair, black women choose certain hairstyles and are concerned about the appearance of their hair to first, enhance beauty, and second, to help them approximate the image that they believe might increase their chances for access and progress in various institutions of our society (p. 39). This supports the precept that although there may be common issues and perceptions among all women, factors affecting participation among women of color in the outdoors are, in fact, dif-

It is important to note that women of color in other countries may have differing perspectives and experiences than the U.S. women interviewed for this study.

ferent from white women.

Second, because outdoor and adventure-based activities are unfamiliar for many women of color, without others from the same culture to share the experience, participation in traditional outdoor activities was not necessarily perceived or considered as desirable. Involvement in the outdoors was often manifested in other women of color "leading the way." To develop motivations and interests required an exposure, visibility, and sense of safety (e.g., physical and emotional) that were not always evident for the women of color involved in this study. These results were similar to what Roberts and Drogin (1993) concluded regarding how the outdoors appears to be a "white thing."

Third, few women of color who had been involved in outdoor adventure activities experienced overt discrimination in this environment even though the perception of discrimination existed. Once women of color made the choice to spend time in the outdoors, it appeared that they seemed to enjoy the experience and control their fears and apprehensions if they had the appropriate skills and opportunities. Encouraging women of color into the outdoors and sampling experiential activities seemed to be the greatest challenge. Data from this study, similar to what Roberts and Drogin (1993) found, suggested lifestyle issues such as physical attributes, fear of the unknown, perceptions of the outdoors/wilderness as an unfriendly environment, and lack of skills had implications for perceptions of subtle discrimination that resulted in non-involvement.

Although this study did not address racial differences, it begins to set a framework for asking further questions about the outdoor experiences of women of color. Although race and ethnicity alone were probably not the sole influences of outdoor involvement, and may not be sufficient to interpret differences, these variables provide a significant degree of strength for explaining differences. More research focus should be placed on examining the impact of racial differences and the cultural influences that varied among ethnic groups, and not just white women juxtaposed to women of color. Other variables may play an important role in the relation to choices made about the outdoors that can be discerned from scrutinizing white versus non-white differences. On the basis of a number of factors, differences in perceptions of and involvement in the outdoors varied because of ethnic background and cultural traditions; however, other mitigating factors unaccounted for, such as class and geographic location, would provide us with additional valuable information (Roberts, 1996).

Although these data were analyzed from an ethnicity framework, marginality may also be important for some women who are outside the middle-class and

perhaps marginalized in other ways. Further, if middle-class women of color feel a lack of support and discomfort in the outdoors, then it is likely that lower class women experience these constraints to an even greater degree. The inclusion of socioeconomic variables, as Floyd et al. (1994) suggested, is important in identifying elements that enable choices or create barriers to participation in outdoor experiences. Future research in this area should therefore consider these variables as paramount to the findings.

For social change and empowerment to occur, people who are providing adventure and experiential activities in the outdoors must have directions to consider. These implications are easier to describe than to implement, yet this research suggested several possibilities.

Support systems are necessary to encourage women of color to become involved. These support systems might be in the form of role models, clubs, and social groups. Participants can learn from any strong leader regardless of ethnic background, yet more leaders who are women of color are needed. Seeing women of color in the outdoors directly, as well as more prominently in marketing approaches, may be one of the best ways to make the outdoors appear as a hospitable environment to women of color.

Addressing discomfort and fear is not easy. These fears are often hidden below the surface and difficult to acknowledge by women of color, let alone understood by either men or women of European ancestry. Social change may best occur person by person rather than in a global manner. Understanding the issues that women of color address may be helpful, however, as a first step toward changing or mitigating those fears about traditional involvement in the outdoors.

Regarding the notion of "limited accessibility," it is important to note that lack of access in the past is no guide for future action. Women of color have begun to take the time to learn new outdoor activities. For women of diverse ethnic backgrounds to become interested and engaged in outdoor adventures, it is important for them to encourage their sisters (e.g., women who share similar cultural conventions and social issues) to achieve in this area as well. Reminders about safety, trying new activities, and about exploring the benefits of the outdoors may increase involvement of women of color in the outdoors. That is, once there is an understanding that what may be perceived as "inappropriate activity" or an "unwelcome environment" is really an opportunity, women of color may find themselves surrounded by resources they need to feel comfortable and learn new skills. With such encouragement, decisions can be made to explore the outdoor environment and reduce inauspicious feelings of oppression and powerlessness.

Last, researchers may acknowledge that all women are oppressed (Henderson, 1994), but these data suggest that as professionals we also need to admit that some women continue to be more oppressed than others regarding involvement in outdoor experiential activities. Women of color, as an aggregate, seem to be disproportionately under-represented in experiential education. Again, it is critical to recognize, however, that women from different ethnic communities are diverse within themselves. Each group representing diverse cultures may have different experiences, values, needs, and goals related to outdoor participation. We must recognize and validate the contribution of diverse cultures to experiential education, and determine how program content and delivery could be transformed. We will need to continue moving forward to create solutions that not only acknowledge, but interpret and use our knowledge of diversity to enhance the quality of outdoor programming for all women and girls.

References

- Allison, M.T. (1988). Breaking boundaries: Future directions in cross-cultural research. *Leisure Sciences*, 10, 247-259.
- Bialeschki, M.D., & Henderson, K.A. (1993). Expanding outdoor opportunities for women. *Parks & Recreation*, 28(8), 36-40.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactions: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Boyd, J.A. (1990). Ethnic and cultural diversity: Keys to power. *Women and Therapy*, 9, 151-167.
- Carr, D.S., & Williams, D.R. (1993). Understanding the role of ethnicity in outdoor recreation experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25(1), 22-38.
- Cole, E., Erdman, E., & Rothblum, E.D. (1994). Introduction. In E. Cole, E. Erdman, & E.D. Rothblum (Eds.), *Wilderness therapy for women: The power of adventure*, (pp. 1-8). New York, NY: Haworth Press.
- Floyd, M.F., Shinew, K.J., McGuire, F.A., & Noe, F.P. (1994). Race, class, and leisure activity preferences: Marginality and ethnicity revisited. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(2), 158-173.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.
- Gutierrez, L.M. (1990, March). Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. *Social Work*, pp. 149-153.
- Henderson, K.A. (1991a). *Dimensions of choice: A qualitative approach to recreation, parks and leisure research*. State College, PA: Venture.
- Henderson, K.A. (1991b). The contributions of feminism to an understanding of leisure constraints. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 23(4), 363-377.
- Henderson, K.A. (1994). Perspectives on analyzing gender, women, and leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(2), 119-137.
- Henderson, K.A. & Bialeschki, M.D. (1986). Outdoor experiential education (for women only). *AEE International Conference Proceedings*, pp. 35-41. Moodus, CT: Association for Experiential Education.
- Henderson, K.A., Winn, S., & Roberts, N.S. (1996, Summer). Kind of in the middle: The meanings of the outdoors for women students. In McAvoy, L.H., Stringer, L.A., Bialeschki, M.D. & Young, A.B. (Eds.), *Coalition for Education in the Outdoors Third Research Symposium Proceedings*, (pp. 94-106). Cortland, NY: Coalition for Education in the Outdoors.
- hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Hutchinson, R. (1988). A critique of race, ethnicity, and social class in recent leisure-recreation research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 20(1), 10-30.
- James, K. (1996). Making change: Recognizing culture. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 19(3), 127-133.
- Kelly, J.R. (1987). *Recreation trends*. Champaign, IL: Management Learning Laboratories, Ltd.
- Klobus-Edwards, P. (1981). Race, residence, and leisure style: Some policy implications. *Leisure Sciences*, 4(2), 95-112.
- Mascia-Lees, F.E., Sharpe, P., & Cohen, C.B. (1989). The postmodernist turn in anthropology: Cautions from a feminist perspective. *Signs*, 15(1), 7-33.
- Miranda, W., & Yerkes, R. (1982). The need for research in outdoor education programs for women. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 53(4), 82-85.
- Murphy, J.F., & Dahl, R.F. (1991). The right to leisure expression. *Parks & Recreation*, 26(9), 106-109.
- Okazawa-Rey, M., Robinson, T., & Ward, J.V. (1995, November). Black women and the politics of skin color and hair. *African World*, pp. 34-40.
- Roberts, N.S. (1995, May). *Women of color in outdoor recreation: The role of culture and ethnicity*. Paper presented to the International Conference on Women and Leisure. Athens, GA.
- Roberts, N.S. (1996). Women of color in experiential education: Crossing cultural boundaries. In K. Warren (Ed.), *Women's Voices in Experiential Education*, (pp. 226-240). Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.
- Roberts, N.S. & Drogin, E.B. (1993). The outdoor recreation experience: Factors affecting the participation of African American women. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 16(1), 14-18.
- Roberts, N.S. & Drogin, E.B. (1996, October). *Attitudes and experiences of women of color in the outdoors*. Paper presented at the National Recreation and Park Association Congress. Kansas City, MO.
- Warren, K. (1985). Women's outdoor adventures: Myth and reality. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 8(2), 10-14.
- Warren, K. (Ed.). (1996). *Women's voices in experiential education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Washington, S. J. (1990, October). *The relationship of the sensation seeking scale and risk-taking behavior of college women*. Paper presented to the National Recreation and Park Association, Leisure Research Symposium. Phoenix, AZ.
- West, P.C. (1989). Urban region parks and Black minorities: Subculture, marginality, and interracial relations in park use in the Detroit metropolitan area. *Leisure Sciences*, 11(1), 11-28.