



# Research Connections

A periodic research update in the fields of  
outdoor adventure programming, leadership  
training, camping education, and outdoor  
experiential therapy.



## Women and adventure education: Reconstructing leisure constraints and adventure experiences to negotiate continuing participation

**Article Summary:** This research examined the responses of women with adventure experience to obstacles with potential to either limit or prohibit further participation in adventure recreation. The researchers used in-depth questions and diaries to obtain responses on the meanings that women give to adventure experiences and how those meanings relate to the current adventure behavior. The 42 women surveyed ranged from ages 30 to 86 and participated in activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, sailing, skiing, flying, and cycling. Four categories of obstacles, or constraints, were identified in the study: a) *Socio-cultural* (gender role expectations, women's opportunities, outdoor adventure knowledge and experiences), b) the *Family and Other Commitments* (responsibilities to the home, to their partner, children, work, etc.), c) *Self* (self-doubt, guilt, fear, perceptions of adventure), and d) *Technical* (gear, structure of adventure, hard skills, etc.). Four salient techniques used by women to cope and manage adventure participation became evident through examination: a) *Prioritize*, adventure is an important part of life and space will be made for it; b) *Compromise*, adjust existing activities (shorter trips with kids, etc.) adoption of alternate activities (expedition planning over participation); c) *Creative Adventure*, creating a broader perspective on adventure to include a variety of activities and locales; and d) *Anticipate*, perception of current inability to participate as a temporary state. These techniques are used in one of two pathways for participation in adventure: reinforcing traditional adventure recreation, or restructuring leisure for adventure benefits. If the obstacles encountered are perceived as weak, then women reinforce; if the constraints are major, then women restructure.

**Article Citation:** Little, D. E. (2002). Women and adventure education: Reconstructing leisure constraints and adventure experiences to negotiate continuing participation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(2), 157-177.

**Implications for Practice:** This research is valuable to the field of outdoor recreation programming with some of the findings relating to college outdoor programs. This is particularly true with regard to the type of activities offered so that women can begin to overcome two of the listed obstacles revealed in the study: *Technical* and *Self*. Though outdoor programs do occasionally offer "women's only" trips, this data implies outdoor programs should offer such programming with a shorter time commitment and a more broad variety of technical skills to better serve female participants. *Written by David Calvin, Leisure Programs Coordinator at Indiana University and the Executive Director of the Wilderness Education Association.*

**For more information:** Dr. Donna E. Little is a Lecturer in the School of Leisure Studies, Griffith University, Australia. She can be reached at 61-07-3875 5676; E-mail: [D.Little@mailbox.gu.edu.au](mailto:D.Little@mailbox.gu.edu.au)

## Adventure Education and Resilience: The Double-Edged Sword

**Article Summary:** An individual's ability to mentally adapt to negative life events is termed "psychological resiliency." In the face of stressful events, the perceived existence of a social support group can have a positive effect on the individual's resiliency. Prior to this study, no efforts have been made to determine factors that enhance resiliency in youth. Assumptions had been made suggesting that adventure programs had the elements needed to improve resiliency. Accordingly, this study attempted to evaluate the levels of resiliency of 41 subjects (22 males and 19 females with ages ranging from 18-24) participating in a 22-day Outward Bound program. Aside from the 41 participants, there were 14 involved in the program initially that did not complete it due to medical and personal reasons. The activities were oriented to both the group and the individual to allow for the evaluation of both the individual's resiliency level and the degree of social support. Resiliency and perceived group support were measured prior to beginning the program. Post-test results indicated that all 41 participants displayed a higher level of resiliency than reported at the beginning of the experiment (no gender differences were present in regards to resiliency levels). In addition, the results suggested that those who scored high in resiliency levels also had the highest perceived level of social support. The 14 participants unable to complete the program demonstrated low scores on the initial resiliency scale.

**Citation:** Neill, J. T., & Dias, K. L. (2001). Adventure education and resilience: The double-edged sword. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 1, 35-42.

**Implications for practice:** For participants to better experience social support, the facilitator must be able to manage: a) individuals who are posing conflict, and/or b) difficult situations. During processing phases the facilitator can identify these threats to social support and educate the participants about what can be done to eliminate the difficulties. This will provide an opportunity to challenge and build the morale of the entire group. For such events to take place, the facilitator must be specifically and intentionally trained to deal with such circumstances. All in all, more must be demanded from both group and facilitator. *Written by Michael Curry, Program Director, Loucon Training & Retreat Center, Leitchfield, Kentucky.*

**For more information:** James T. Neill is currently in transition and can be reached at Possum Hollow, 43 Bay Rd, Mogareeka NSW 2550, Australia

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Also available through the Institute for Outdoor Leadership and Education is the continually expanding **Adventure Research Cache (ARC)**. The ARC is a web resource comprised of studies related to adventure recreation and education programs and topics. The ARC database may be accessed at the following web address: <http://www.blhper.indiana.edu/iole/>

**Please send comments and suggestions , or to be placed on the electronic mailing list, or to have your name removed, please send a request to:** Will Hobbs or Sara Buckley, Research Connections Coordinators, (812) 855-3528, [resconx@indiana.edu](mailto:resconx@indiana.edu).

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