THE GENDERED "NATURE" OF THE URBAN OUTDOORS
Women Negotiating Fear of Violence

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Women who participate in outdoor recreational activities reap many physical and emotional benefits from their experiences. However, gender-related feelings of objectification, vulnerability, and fear in this space limit women's participation. In this study, the authors investigate how women pursue their enjoyment of urban outdoor recreation at South Mountain Park in Phoenix, Arizona, despite their perceptions and experiences related to fear of violence. Through surveys and interviews with women who recreate at South Mountain, the authors look at the ways the women cope with their fear using various strategies. This study reveals the gender-related conflicts that persist for participants, who grapple with their appreciation of uncompromised nature and their need to feel safe in this environment. Ultimately, they illustrate how an ongoing negotiation exists for the women as the authors balance choices and concerns related to their outdoor recreation and what aspects of surveillance and control they consider, reject, or accept.

Keywords: *gender; outdoors; fear; violence; urban; women*

Both the outdoors and recreational activities have been heralded as empowering for women. As Simone de Beauvoir (1952, 333) noted, "Let her swim, climb mountain peaks, pilot an airplane, battle against the elements, take risks, go out for adventure, and she will not feel before the world the timidity which I have referred to." Yet many factors have the potential to temper the benefits and rewards of outdoor recreation for women. For instance, feelings of vulnerability to sexual assault heighten women's fear of harassment and violence—what Ferraro (1995) called

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the "shadow of sexual assault." In this article, we examine how women's choices to recreate at an urban park in Phoenix, Arizona, were affected by a continuum of fears ranging from objectification to assault and rape. We further situate the women's feelings and choices within the larger context of social constructions of gender. Sport is an institution through which hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987) is maintained, and its significance lies in the fact that "masculinizing and feminizing practices associated with the body are at the heart of the social construction" of gender identity (Whitson 1990, 23). We consider women's recreation choices within this gender paradigm to examine implications related to the body, sport, and the outdoors.

Gender-related literature about both sport and the outdoors has pointed out that women's participation in both of these arenas has traditionally been discouraged. However, as more progressive attitudes and opportunities emerge for women, gender scholarship has begun to identify a more complex understanding of women's active recreation in the outdoors. This article contributes to this more complicated interpretation by exploring contradictions that women negotiate as they respond to fears of objectification, harassment, and violence while recreating.

While previous research has mainly concentrated on women's fear of violence in urban cities and rural wilderness areas, this research looks at women's outdoor recreation experiences at an urban wilderness park. South Mountain Park is unique in that it is an expansive mountain range surrounded by a distinctly metropolitan area. Its status as the largest urban outdoor park in the United States offers insight into how race, class, and gender affect the use of outdoor spaces. Our survey and subsequent interviews of women hikers, bikers, and trail runners at South Mountain investigate the ways in which both the urban outdoors and participation in sport/recreational activities affect women's assessments of vulnerability and fear of violence. Last, we explore how the women's negotiations affect the ways they consider, engage, or reject various forms of surveillance, social control, and technology at South Mountain Park.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE: WOMEN, RECREATION, AND OUTDOOR SPACE

Gender and Recreational Activity

Participation in athletics has historically been related to the socialization of masculine gender identity (Kramer 2001). Furthermore, sport has generally been an institution through which dominant social constructions of femininity and masculinity are funneled. It has been asserted that sport maintains "hegemonic masculinity"—the "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (Connell 1990, 83). As children, a powerful mechanism through which boys learn to perform masculinity is by using their bodies in skilled, forceful ways, while girls learn to circumscribe their movements and limit their strengths (Whitson 1994). Growing

up, girls may find that they are valued more for their sexually objectified bodies and discover that others assess them more for their appearance than for their athletic accomplishments, which can discourage them from asserting these abilities (Young 1980). "Acceptable" sports for women, or images of athletic women, too often emphasize (hetero)sexualized meanings of the female body (Shaw 1994; Whitson 1994). Yet as an institution, sport is increasingly a contested gender terrain that is fluid rather than static (Messner 2002). As such, it embodies various challenges to hegemonic masculinity and other fixed constructions of gender. This is illustrated by the argument that both the achievements and images of successful female athletes have layers of meaning that can be interpreted multiple ways (Heywood and Dworkin 2003).

Women's increasing involvement in a wide variety of sport and recreational activities and the complication of meanings about women's athletic bodies necessitates a more thorough attention to the implications such participation has for women. At the very least, being physically active allows women to be in their bodies in ways that can be qualitatively different from the traditional sexual and reproductive constructs of female physicality (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Martin 1992). In her discussion of "butchness," Crawley (2002) pointed out that cultural notions generally question the appropriateness of "ableness" for "female-bodied people," since the female body is often equated with being less competent. If gender is a performance or display (Bordo 1993; Butler 1990; Dyer 1992), Crawley found that performing or displaying ableness not only challenges the way others perceive her (in)capability but strengthens her own self-perception. Physical activity and sport may provide similar paths toward feelings of ableness, autonomy, and agency for women, even women who have been victimized by violence (Wesely, Allison, and Schneider 2000). Interpretations of gender identity must acknowledge the ways that women fluidly reconstruct or reexamine their gendered sense of self through engaging their bodies in physical activity. Bodybuilding, for instance, can reinforce feminine stereotypes through its preoccupation with the body's appearance, but it also may provide women with a new lens of strength and agency through which to view themselves (see Balsamo 1997; Bolin 1997; Hall 1996; Heywood 1998; Lowe 1998; Wesely 2001).

The Gendered Geography of Fear

This section addresses the ways that gendered constructions of public space, particularly the wilderness outdoors and urban-proximate areas, inform women's assessments of vulnerability and fear in these spaces, or their "geography of fear" (Valentine 1992). In general, women have not been taught to be comfortable in outdoor/public space but instead have learned the private, domestic realm is their domain (Bynum 1992; Duncan 1996; Rich 1986; Valentine 1992). Public harassment of women is thus "pertinent to feminist concerns with the reification of the public/private split" (Gardner 1995, 11) as it reinforces the gender order by challenging women's untroubled presence in this space. A woman in a public arena

may feel vulnerable to unpredictable invasions of her physical self ranging on a continuum from objectification on one end to violent crime on the other (Gardner 1995). These unpredictable invasions cumulatively contribute to women's geography of fear in public spaces, even though research indicates that violence against women in the private realm far exceeds that in the public sphere (Dobash and Dobash 1992; Hollander 2001). Although they may be aware of this reality, women still largely fear attack only in public places (Pain 1996) and question their assessments of a public space as safe, retrospectively seeing this as "stupid" (Koskela 1997).

Many scholars have addressed the uniquely therapeutic value of outdoor or wilderness recreation for women in terms of empowerment (see Cole, Erdman, and Rothblum 1994; Kohn 1991). Pohl, Borrie, and Patterson (2000) asserted that outdoor recreation for women can translate into changes in their gendered life experiences. They found that "participating in wilderness recreation may play a part in deconstructing gender roles and improving the status of women in society in general" (p. 428). Nonetheless, women face constraints in natural outdoor space related to the geography of fear. Madriz (1997) noted that imagery of "the woods" is a metaphor for unfamiliar places that are dangerous for women. "Good girls" know that they should be at home rather than in the woods; otherwise, they might deserve what they get. Messages like this are social control mechanisms that maintain women's geography of fear in the outdoors. "Countless women are probably denied the healing benefits of wilderness because of the fear of rape behind every bush, around every corner—a fear that every woman in this culture has been taught along with Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf. . . . The fact that the vast majority of sexual abuse, rape and battering occurs behind closed doors does little to introduce women to the healing powers of wilderness" (Powch 1994, 23). Borne of social constructions of gender identity rooted in the body, as well as lived experiences, these feelings of vulnerability and danger inform women's geography of fear in this space.

Women's outdoor recreation in a specifically urban setting, although not without positive aspects (Moore and Scott 1995; Moore, Scott, and Graefe 1998), can be constrained by an additional dimension related to gendered perceptions of urban life and crime. Indeed, feelings of fear related to rape and other types of sexual violence are especially prevalent for women who live in urban areas. One study (Gordon and Riger 1989) found that slightly more than 61 percent of women living in the 26 largest U.S. cities felt very or somewhat unsafe and, overall, determined that urban parks were the second most dangerous place in an urban area (following streets and alleys). In addition, feminist geographers Mehta and Bondi (1999, 75) noted that the college-age women they interviewed respond defensively to urban areas, which "conveys a sense of the spaces of streets and pubs as potentially hostile to women, at least at certain times of the day." News media contribute to gendered and racialized constructions of urban areas. For instance, selective news coverage of urban crime perpetuates Americans' disproportionate fears of African American men (Glassner 1999). The gendered geography of fear that informs women's

assessments about vulnerability and fear in public, outdoor space can thus be exacerbated by social constructions of urban areas.

Negotiations and Strategies

Women's assessments of vulnerability and fear are incorporated into the choices they make about their everyday lives. Indeed, research suggests that women adopt various strategies to help them negotiate and cope with these perceptions of vulnerability. As Hollander (2001, 105) found, "Women report constantly monitoring their environment for signs of danger, hesitating to venture outside alone or even in the company of other women, asking men for protection, modifying their clothes . . . and restricting their activities. . . . These strategies are simply part of daily life as a woman." If women do engage in outdoor recreation, these events may be less enjoyable because of the anxiety related to perceived vulnerability as well as the extra time, energy, and money needed to plan ahead for an activity intended to be leisurely (Whyte and Shaw 1994). Bialeschki and Hicks (1999) found that the outdoorswomen they interviewed identified strategies to reduce perceived risk while recreating, and these included planning ahead, telling others where they are going, changing locations and times of recreation activities, and exercising with companions or a dog. All of these strategies function as social controls that keep women, quite literally, in place. As Koskela (1997, 313) pointed out, feelings of vulnerability circumscribe participation in outdoor areas, so that "social experiences turn out to have spatial consequences." Although some choose to fly in the face of these fears, the gnawing perceptions of vulnerability never fully disappear. "Unfortunately, many women do live like victims, constrained within the walls of their invisible prisons" (Madriz 1997, 93).

We assert that women actively negotiate gender meanings in an ongoing way and that they may work hard (and may intermittently succeed or fail) to cope with and/or resist the meanings more traditionally and stereotypically assigned to them. Examining these issues in an urban outdoor recreation setting brings unique gender considerations to light and adds to existing literature about the gendered geography of fear. Indeed, this article foregrounds the conflicting and fluid aspects of women's experiences as they face fears of objectification, harassment, and violence while also attempting to enjoy recreation in the urban outdoors. Ultimately, this study investigates the complex nature of gender constructions for women who recreate at South Mountain as they negotiate their experiences and the meanings they derive from them.

METHOD

Located on more than 16,000 acres of rugged desert mountain terrain set in the middle of a metropolitan area, South Mountain Park has a substantial network of trails and picnic areas. To conduct the first phase of the research, we distributed

surveys at the park on four occasions between March and May of 2000. We ensured wide outreach by distributing the survey on two weekend days and two weekdays at different times of the day, at two popular park trailheads. The survey took respondents about 10 minutes to complete and was offered to every woman who visited the trailhead. A small number of women chose not to complete the survey, while many were enthusiastic and interested in our project. A total of 128 women completed a revised version of the survey, originally pretested with 15 respondents. Survey questions related to demographic information, recreation activities, recreating companions, safety concerns, and experiences with harassing and violent behaviors by other people. Survey variables were operationalized using single-item measures based on multiple measures of affect. For instance, to measure levels of fear and vulnerability, we asked women how comfortable, concerned, afraid, in control, and safe from others they felt when exercising outdoors. We also posed open-ended questions on the survey where women could write more detailed comments about their specific fears, whether they changed any of their routines in response, and if they felt the park management could do anything to allay their concerns. To examine differences in respondents' perceptions of control, comfort, safety, concern, and fear both alone and with others, *t*-tests were conducted.

We also conducted eight in-depth interviews with willing survey respondents. These respondents were contacted using the phone number or e-mail address they wrote on their surveys. Those who did not leave contact information on the survey were excluded, which limited our study. There may be a variety of reasons why more than half of the women did not leave personal contact information, including the very feelings of vulnerability that we were examining! Approximately 48 percent of the original sample had valid contact information from which we were able to sample for the interviews. We used these interviews to add depth and richness to the survey findings rather than to generalize about a population.

Questions posed to the respondents during interviews were open ended. They explored participants' experience recreating outdoors, reasons for pursuing/liking recreation outdoors, concerns about safety and harassment, coping responses, and suggestions for park management. These types of discussion issues were closely related to the study's theoretic framework. Participants were invited to talk freely and encouraged to expand on their responses. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and the interview length ranged from 20 minutes to one hour. Analysis of interview data was ongoing in order to identify emergent themes (Miles and Huberman 1994). Themes emerged concerning the respondents' reasons for recreating outdoors and gendered issues of perceived vulnerability, strategic measures taken to cope with these feelings of fear, and ongoing negotiations of behavior and identity. Following Reinharz's (1992) suggestions for feminist research, our goals were to document the lives and activities of women, explore the experiences of women from their own point of view, and understand their behavior and actions as part of a larger social context.

To this end, we utilized the survey and interview results for different but complementary purposes. The survey findings address more straightforward aspects of

women's experiences while recreating at South Mountain and the strategies for coping with perceived vulnerability and fear. The in-depth interviews are designed to address the women's ongoing negotiations about their choices in a manner beyond the scope of the surveys.

Demographics of the Women in the Study

The demographics of our sample provide an overall picture of who recreates on the trails of South Mountain. Based on our survey, the majority of women who actively recreate at South Mountain are white and college educated. At 82.5 percent, Caucasian women composed the majority of our sample, while 12.7 percent were Latina, 3.2 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.6 percent were African American. Of the respondents, 52 percent were college educated, and 42.5 percent had postgraduate education. We compared our sample to a larger survey of South Mountain Park visitors, which included those using the park for less active forms of recreation, such as picnicking or sightseeing. Lesniak (2003) found that men and women visited the park in nearly equal numbers. Park users were predominantly white (69.2 percent) and Hispanic (18.9 percent). African Americans made up 3.7 percent; Asians, 2.9 percent; American Indians, 2.1 percent; and "other," 3.2 percent. The average education level was between two and three years of college. While our sample matched up relatively close on education level, we surveyed fewer women of color.

We found more variation with age and marital status. Our sample included those ages 18 to 63, with the largest age group being those who were 28 to 37 years old. A question on marital status revealed that 43.2 percent were married, 36.7 percent were single, 12 percent were divorced, and 7.2 percent cohabitated. The survey also posed questions concerning the activity women engaged in at South Mountain Park. While 81.3 percent were visiting the park to hike or walk, 14.1 percent were trail running and 4.7 percent were mountain biking.

Seven of the eight interviewees were white. Mona, age 28, was Hispanic. Of the white women, Gabrielle was also 28 years old, Lisa and Katie were both 37, Jody was 38, Betty was 57, Amy was 58, and Bonnie was 59 years of age. All names are pseudonyms.

We compared the participants in our sample to the demographics of people who reside in the areas surrounding South Mountain Park. The 2000 data from this census tract (see http://www2.census.gov/census_2000) report that 46.6 percent of the residents are white, 44.8 percent are Hispanic or Latino/Latina, 4.4 percent are African American, 1.5 percent are American Indian, 0.8 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.9 percent are biracial or another race. The median family income for census respondents in this area was $40,882 a year. Almost 34 percent had less than a high school education. Only 12.5 percent had a college degree or higher.

Clearly, the population of women in our sample varies considerably from the race and class status of the people actually living near the park. While there are new, more expensive housing developments being built around the mountain, most of

the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods are working class and people of color. Yet these are not the groups who primarily utilize South Mountain for hiking, biking, and trail running.

Literature about leisure/recreation choices and preferences based on race and class lends understanding to the overrepresentation of white, college-educated women in our South Mountain sample of active, daytime recreationists. Two arguments in particular have persisted for decades: The marginality hypothesis and the ethnicity hypothesis (Floyd and Gramann 1993). The marginality hypothesis suggests that historical discrimination has led to the limited resources of some minority groups, which curtails their involvement in outdoor recreation. The ethnicity hypothesis asserts that the underrepresentation of minority groups in outdoor recreational activities is rooted in cultural differences related to socialization, norms, and values (Edwards 1981; Washburne 1978; West 1989). More recent literature reinforces the validity of each of these arguments while adding to these approaches. For instance, Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, and Noe (1996) examined class within racial categories and found that leisure preferences of Blacks who were in higher income and education groups were significantly different from those Blacks in lower income and education categories. Shinew et al. also noted that women in higher socioeconomic groups have more out-of-home, diverse, active leisure activities while women in lower economic classes engage in leisure that is home centered, less diverse, and more likely to involve family members and other relatives. These theories provide possible insight into why our sample was mainly well-educated white women.

In addition, Lesniak's (2003) survey of South Mountain Park visitors found that South Mountain Park was predominantly utilized by the Hispanic population for activities that we did not include in our study. He found that while the primary activity reported among park visitors was trail hiking (44.3 percent), picnicking/socializing (11.3 percent) and sightseeing (7.9 percent) ranked second and third. Approximately 44 percent of Hispanic visitors responded that picnicking and socializing was their primary activity at the park. Hispanic respondents rated "to get exercise" lower than any other category regarding their reasons for visiting the park.

In contrast, our study examined only women who used the park for a specific kind of recreation—physical activity. How did women visiting the park for other purposes (particularly women of color) feel about safety, comfort, and vulnerability? While it is beyond the scope of this particular research to fully address these issues, we see these as important questions for future study and consideration.

FINDINGS

In this section, we discuss themes addressing women's enjoyment of the outdoors, objectification, vulnerability, and fear at South Mountain Park; strategies for coping with these perceptions; and aspects of negotiation and contradiction amid the strategies and choices. We noted that certain themes and patterns were

inconsistent within the women's own narratives. In other words, they exercised an ongoing negotiation of both their joy in the outdoors and their sense of vulnerability and fear that sometimes manifested in seemingly contradictory ways.

Enjoyment of the Outdoors

For many of the women interviewed, positive and frequent experiences in the outdoors early in life helped shape their continued desire to pursue this type of recreation later on. Betty was introduced to the outdoors at a young age:

> Ever since I can remember . . . I grew up in Michigan and we used to go to my grandparents' place. It was near lakes and woods. I always have liked to be outside. I feel differently outdoors than indoors. It feels better to be outdoors. I do water aerobics at a gym now, but mostly I do hiking at South Mountain and in the Superstitions. I go rollerblading around the lake—and anywhere there are birds. I like to go birding. I also walk by the canals.

Other interviewees described similar experiences. Amy "grew up outside" and as a child, went camping and to the ocean frequently with her family; Katie "played outside all the time"; and as a child, Mona always wanted to be outdoors.

According to interview respondents, this childhood love of the outdoors continued into adulthood. The respondents used words such as "freeing," "peaceful," and "spiritual" to describe their workouts in outdoor parks like South Mountain. Amy said, "Outside, I'm very much at peace. I'm thankful of the beauty around me, and it reminds me of a more spiritual, powerful place. I look at the beauty and think of how it all got here." Katie liked the physical activity and mental release of recreating outdoors, describing it as therapeutic and a stress reliever. These feelings were in stark contrast to the women's views about exercising indoors, especially in a gym or health club. For instance, Mona stated, "I don't like to exercise indoors; I get bored. I like to see something different, smell something different. I like fresh air, scenery, movement. The air is stagnant in gyms—it feels claustrophobic."

Another reason that the women valued their outdoor workouts related to the absence of self-consciousness, a feeling they had difficulty avoiding in a gym. Recreating outdoors, the women felt they were finding time for themselves—time during which they were not facing the demands or judgments of others. Lisa noted, "At the gym, I'm conscious of people watching me. What are they thinking about me? Outdoors, it's kind of my time. Time to destress." Feelings of self-consciousness while exercising indoors were often directly related to body awareness. Mona commented, "The gym is a place people go to get dates. You have to be in shape to go there! I feel people are judgmental about what your body looks like at the gym." The women noted that outdoors, they did not experience this type of pressure or scrutiny. Overall, then, the women felt more comfortable and fulfilled when they exercised in a natural outdoor setting, sometimes in ways that could not be articulated. Jody, a trail runner and mountain biker, said, "I just like the feeling of the

TABLE 1: How Respondents Felt When Recreating Alone and When Recreating with Others

	Recreating Alone			*Recreating with Others*		
	M[a]	SD	n	M	SD	n
In control[b]	3.82	0.99	117	4.39	0.94	114
Comfortable[b]	3.79	1.22	117	4.74	0.60	117
Safe from others[b]	3.47	1.06	116	4.42	0.89	113
Concerned[b]	3.12	1.18	119	2.24	1.22	113
Afraid[b]	2.45	1.13	119	1.92	1.09	111

a. Measured on a scale wherein 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*.
b. Significant differences exist between recreating alone and recreating with others ($p < .001$).

outdoors. I do go to the gym to lift weights and do the treadmill. I prefer outside though—just the feeling you get."

Objectification, Vulnerability, and Fear in the Outdoors

Although they reveled in their outdoor experiences, the women also expressed concerns related to how, when, and where they recreated. We asked survey respondents to report how in control, comfortable, safe from others, concerned, and afraid they felt when they recreated alone and how this contrasted and compared with times they recreated with others. Of the 128 women surveyed, between 111 and 119 responded to the questions regarding recreating alone and with others. This variation in responses is a result of missing cases. Our *t*-tests found significant differences in the mean scores (see Table 1).

Women felt significantly less in control, comfortable, and safe from others when recreating alone. They also reported feeling more concerned and afraid. The standard deviation for feeling comfortable when recreating alone was double that of recreating with others. This is due to the pronounced negative skew; 111 of the 117 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable when recreating with others. With the exception of feeling comfortable, the standard deviation for all categories was relatively similar. In addition, we asked respondents to answer questions concerning harassment and assault while recreating outdoors, both in general and at South Mountain. About 40 percent of women had experienced harassing behaviors while recreating outdoors, and 2.4 percent reported being physically assaulted. At South Mountain, 10 percent of women had experienced harassing behaviors, with no reports of physical assault at this location.

About 20 percent of respondents said there were trails or areas at South Mountain where they felt unsafe. As one woman wrote, "I feel more unsafe on the less traveled trails—fear of being raped, murdered, and left where no one will find me." Yet women also remarked that they enjoyed the solitude of recreating in less populated areas. One respondent wrote on her survey, "The best part about hiking is the

quiet sound of nature." Several women commented on the conflict they felt between feeling safer with more people around while losing some sense of solitude or quiet. Betty explained, "I'm not as concerned when there [are] so many people there . . . but then sometimes you wish there weren't so many!" Another woman remarked on her survey, "The highly populated trails make me feel safer, but I also don't like biking where there are too many people. It ruins part of the experience." The women grappled with their desire for solitude in nature and their feelings of vulnerability in isolated areas.

Some of the time, women's concerns emerged out of particular events they had experienced while recreating in the outdoors. Such experiences play a major role in influencing the "attitudes of women towards sexual assault and in initiating female fear" (Gordon and Riger 1989). For instance, Mona described her former practice of jogging alone at night. During one of these excursions, she encountered a young man who grabbed her breast and then ran away. After this experience, she felt much more concerned about when and where she exercised outdoors, fearing a similar type of assault.

These incidents were bothersome and sometimes threatening to the women. Often, they violated or tainted the women's recreation experience by making them aware that, as women, they were being perceived as sexual objects. Katie said, "I'll occasionally get a catcall or second glance. I'd like to be able to hike without feeling like someone is looking right through my clothes." Gabrielle described the gendered nature of her fear and uneasiness in the outdoors: "When it's like two girls walking around on the trail, we're suspicious of a lot of guys. When a guy walks by, sometimes we just hope they don't turn around and look at you or whatever . . . maybe he just doesn't look quite right or whatever. I doubt any guys worry about that or hope some guy they pass doesn't turn around!"

The women's experiences of sexual objectification while recreating at South Mountain are directly related to Valentine's (1989) discussion of the "geography of fear." Women's comfort levels within public, outdoor space decrease as they continue to associate this space with male violence and violation. These associations are reinforced by the unpredictable invasions they experience, like the catcalls or "second glances" Katie described. "This inability of women to choose with whom they interact and communicate profoundly affects their sense of security in public" (Valentine 1989, 386). Like Katie, other women described incidents in which they were made conscious about the ways their bodies are sexually objectified. Lisa felt annoyed that men on mountain bikes stopped and flirted with her while she ran on the trail. Another man made her feel so uncomfortable by his constant presence as she exercised at South Mountain that she ultimately stopped visiting this particular park.

Coping with Vulnerability and Fear: Strategies and Negotiations

The women coped with these feelings of vulnerability and fear on different levels. Most frequently, they engaged basic strategies related to companionship

choices. On the day they were surveyed at South Mountain, about 12 percent were recreating with a dog, 36 percent with one other woman, 24 percent with one man, and 23 percent with a group. Only about 16 percent were recreating alone. In fact, only a minority of the women felt comfortable recreating alone in general and at South Mountain. Several women, however, mentioned that recreating with their dog(s) helps alleviate their fear. One woman wrote on her survey, "My dog keeps me safe. She'd hurt anybody who'd try anything." The open-ended survey responses also indicated that women took precautions to avoid isolated or secluded areas or trails with a lot of brush and did not recreate at dusk or at night. The most common item carried for safety or self-defense was a cell phone, although one mountain biker said she carried mace with her.

Interview results addressed the more complex negotiations the women engaged while making choices to alter their routines so as to minimize feelings of vulnerability and fear while they recreated. Just as specific events caused the women to feel vulnerable or unsafe, particular instances also compelled them to change their usual behavior. For instance, after finding that one man would seem to just "show up" at the same times she visited South Mountain, Lisa became increasingly uncomfortable. The man talked to her constantly and followed her on her hikes. As mentioned above, she ultimately stopped recreating at South Mountain for an extended period of time because of the unwanted attention: "I did stop going to South Mountain this past year. There's this one guy who likes me there, and he would follow me and talk to me every time. I went purposely at a different time, but he still showed up. I haven't gone back [to South Mountain] since that time. I didn't want him to get the wrong idea." Lisa clearly felt compelled to assume responsibility for the "idea" at which the persistent man might arrive; since she was the one who has the potential to be victimized, she accommodated her lifestyle. Betty had a similar story:

> Last year, I was hiking on an off-trail . . . with a friend. As we were hiking, we heard male voices and saw a tent and saw some smoke. A little later we stopped to soak our feet in a creek bed and heard a shotgun sound real close. Then we heard hysterical laughter and a lot of obscenities. We quickly got moving and changed directions. We switched trails and went back another way. That's why I don't hike alone anymore. I like to go with someone else. . . . I'd like to get up on Sunday morning and just go out hiking by myself, but I don't.

Amy changed her choice of hike location because of how she feels urban life encroaches on her safety on the mountain. She described, "I used to hike on the other side of the mountain. Now, there's too many young men in cars, driving around, doing drug deals. It's safer here, more people and less traffic." Amy's comment reflects the intersection between the natural environs of the park and the urban area that surrounds it, reinforcing Gordon and Riger's (1989) assertion that feelings of fear related to rape and other types of sexual violence are especially prevalent for women who live in urban areas. These feelings are affected by the notion that urban parks are dangerous and factors such as darkness and young men loitering and

"hanging out" (Gordon and Riger 1989). Most of the women associated nature with peacefulness and beauty, while comments about the city or "the streets" invoked images of ugliness and violence.

These concerns are often filtered through the pervasive lens of race and class. On the surveys and in the interviews, women expressed fears of homeless people, minority gangs, and young people drinking, and they engaged strategies to avoid these groups. One wrote, "I'd like to have rangers walking through to make sure gangs aren't around." Women are often socialized to be cautious of strangers, even though women are more likely to be victimized by someone they know (Belknap 2001; Stanko 1990). Most of our survey population and interviewees were middle-class white women, a population most taught to fear the above-mentioned categories of "strangers." In addition, a few women made efforts to avoid the transient or homeless men who sometimes sleep or hang out in the park. One woman said, "I don't like the Loop 2 Firepit. I've seen transients hanging around there." Since these groups are already targeted, harassed, and removed from parks, the women's related fears and coping strategies actually perpetuate the negative constructions of oppressed groups while doing little to improve the safety of women at South Mountain.

The "Nature" of the Outdoor Experience: Complexities and Contradictions

Perhaps most disturbing about the women's experiences at South Mountain is the fact that regardless of the ongoing negotiations, strategies, and choices, eliminating the threat of violence is unlikely. Unfortunately, this is the case for all women: Even if they dress conservatively, carry a cell phone, do not make eye contact, and do not go out at night, they still cannot remove the absolute possibility of potential victimization. By self-policing, women create a restricted world that further limits opportunities. The implication for the women at South Mountain is that they must recreate in a state of hypervigilance, feeling as though they are the only ones responsible for their safety while simultaneously being deprived of the holistic benefits of their outdoor recreation experience. In an effort to assuage the fears that they continue to have despite their coping strategies, they articulated a need to have more protection while struggling with the fact that this means that their bodies and outdoor, public experiences will be under surveillance by others. In a sense, they seek to escape one form of social control (assault/rape/harassment) by exchanging it for another (surveillance and limited mobility). As Madriz (1997) suggested, fear of crime propels many women into following gendered rules of behavior. If this code is not followed, women may be blamed for their own victimization because they are supposed to know better.

The women mentioned several services they felt park management could provide, such as emergency phones or call boxes at trailheads, better lighting in the parking lots, clearly marked trails, and more park staff walking the trails. Mona suggested a few well-lit trails and blue-light emergency phones, noting, "I would

come out much more if I knew a trail was lit." One woman wrote, "As far as safety, there are no lights in that main parking lot. So you have to make sure you're done before 6 P.M. in the winter. I don't like having to walk down to my car when it's dark. Most people don't realize they'll be caught in the dark, especially in the winter. They could also use an emergency phone at that place." Another noted on her survey, "I wouldn't mind the occasional presence of managers on trails, or at trailheads—I've never seen patrols on trails in over 10 years." Lisa also suggested that park management increase the presence of park rangers: "There used to be park rangers up and down all the time on the fire road. I see a lot of things not right here. That's one reason why I won't bring my four month old son." Katie concurred with this idea: "It would be great to have a show of rangers or people that patrol the areas. Safety in numbers is the best thing. In Flagstaff, there are guys on horses and bikes patrolling the area. If we had an occasional patrol drive-by, you know you're being watched, and it would make people feel more secure. A little show of force, even if it's one vehicle." Recall Katie's earlier comment about her dislike of the "catcalls and whistles" and feeling like men are "looking right through her clothes" while hiking. Herein lies the contradiction women must grapple with when weighing feelings of vulnerability and the joy they derive from activities such as outdoor recreation: The discomfort of having men look at their bodies while hiking yet preferring to rely on rangers to patrol the trails. Ultimately, both of these are forms of surveillance that can compromise the solitude and unselfconsciousness the women have described as deriving from the outdoors. Nonetheless, they considered the compromise for what it still allowed them.

Indeed, many women felt conflicted about what could be done about their fears. When asked if there was anything park management could do to make her feel more comfortable or safe, one woman responded, "I don't really know because you'd have to change the nature of the outdoors to do so. I mean, we go out there to leave phones and stuff like that behind." In addition to surveillance, women also grappled over being bound to technology during their recreation at South Mountain. For some, technology clearly compromised the pristine or pure nature experience. Also, devices such as cell phones may offer little protection to women users at South Mountain, since there are areas of the mountain range that receive no cell phone service. Relying on patrols or technology is not a foolproof strategy, and in some ways, it makes women more dependent on a larger system of social control and surveillance. The women here thus continued to struggle with the limited possibilities of protection—all problematic in that they challenged the nature of the women's outdoor experiences while increasing their dependency on others, thus preserving gendered constructions of fear of violence and vulnerability.

CONCLUSIONS

While the benefits women derive from physical recreation in the outdoors are many, women experience a number of constraints that limit their ability to achieve

these rewards. Gender constructions, particularly the socialization of an idealized "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1990) and its associations with men's naturalized participation in sport (Bryson 1994; Whitson 1990), have traditionally discouraged women from this realm. In outdoor recreation, one major obstacle for women revolves around the gendered construction of space, or, as Valentine (1992) discussed, the "geography of fear." This is compounded by the associations of wilderness and danger and the social belief that the outdoors is a place where women certainly do not belong, at least not without the protection of men (Madriz 1997; Stanko 1990; Vance 1993). Despite all of these barriers and warnings, women continue to seek joy, peace, and physical challenge through recreation in the outdoors.

In this study, we discuss the experiences of women recreating at an urban outdoor park. The women derived positive benefits from exercising outdoors, but they also felt vulnerable and exposed to violence. At times, fears of violence were related to stereotypical race and class images involving homeless people and young men of color perceived to be gang members. Other fears were grounded in gendered constructions of space and, sometimes, the occurrence of harassing or violent behaviors during recreation experiences. The feelings of objectification, vulnerability, and fear that they endured in combination with their enjoyment of South Mountain led to ongoing coping negotiations. Although the women changed behaviors to feel safe, they also struggled with what they were or were not willing to sacrifice to visit the park. Since there was no way for them to feel as though their vulnerability to violence was completely eliminated, they grappled with competing desires and needs related to their outdoor experiences.

An undercurrent of the women's responses suggests that it is not nature itself (or the isolation from urban places and populated areas) that is feared but violent human encroachment and harm against humans or other living things. The surveillance and control inherent in the watchful eye of patrols or the invisible cord of the cellular phone are simply other sides of the same coin. The women grappled with their choices in part because they were exchanging one form of surveillance and control for another. Protective surveillance (through patrols, phones, call boxes) is only so different from dangerous surveillance (such as the objectification of women on the trail) in that all are tied to a larger picture of social control that reaches increasingly far into wild and natural spaces. Not only does this affect the "nature" of women's outdoor experiences, but it also perpetuates a particular type of consumption of areas like South Mountain Park. Insisting on electric street lights, telephone call boxes, and lighted trails means the use of yet more natural resources to feel safe in nature. As humans, we then contribute to the infiltration of modern technology into nature, further use of resources such as electricity, and the need for ongoing surveillance to protect us from ourselves.

Although the women in this study negotiate conflicts and contradictions related to their gendered geography of fear in the urban outdoors, do any of these struggles allow them to create new meanings for themselves? Or do they reify traditionally feminine concepts of danger, safety, and fear? We contribute to existing literature by arguing that these polarized interpretations of women's outdoor urban

recreation at South Mountain Park do not adequately represent their experiences. Gender meanings are in an ongoing state of flux and transformation as these women make decisions and enact them. For the women in this study, their recreation at South Mountain was one, at times, of conflicting interpretations and motivations. Concessions were made to accommodate gender-related fears. Challenges were made to these same fears; the action of using the park may be an act of "claiming" this space, and as Koskela (1997, 307) noted, "using space can be a way of demystifying it." The women's strategies often pointed to a larger, potentially powerful statement about their refusal to give up hiking, biking, and running at South Mountain altogether.

There are good possibilities for increasing women's enjoyment and comfort in outdoor parks and perhaps decreasing the strategies engaged to cope with fear of violence. At the end of our research, we held a meeting with a South Mountain Park official to make suggestions based on our report. We first discussed the more traditional and contradictory options for increasing safety—call boxes, street lights, ranger patrols—while outlining the negative feelings some women had toward these encroachments on a pristine nature experience. We urged the park to consider more women rangers walking the trails. In addition, we asked that South Mountain Park consider sponsoring all-women nature hikes and trail runs or encouraging local groups (e.g., the Sierra Club, YMCA) to organize these types of endeavors on South Mountain trails. These programs could provide an introduction to the trail systems and familiarize women with access/entry points, ranger stations, and general safety information. They might offer opportunities for outreach to populations of women who currently do not use the park. It would also be a good chance to introduce girls to the outdoors. Women in the local communities could meet each other and possibly form their own running, birding, hiking, or biking groups.

The suggestions offered here must also grow in step with broader societal changes. Acknowledging the conflicts of outdoor experiences enriches our understanding of larger contexts of gender constructions and power and how they emerge in the lives of women who engage in outdoor recreation. Nature is similarly compromised by these structures of power in the name of human safety and protection. We must continue to challenge the constructions of gender, space, and sport to preserve the integrity of nature and women's enjoyment of these spaces.

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