IRB Synopsis of Proposal:

Heterosexual and Lesbian Women Experiences in Wilderness Recreation

1. Potential subjects will be gathered using snowball sampling. I will recruit future subjects from among the women I interview. That is to say, I will ask subjects if any of their women acquaintances, who participate in wilderness recreation activities, would be willing to be a part of this study. I will then contact any women I am referred to, explain this study to them, and ask if they would like to participate. Potential subjects will all be female, various ages and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, women will be asked about their sexual orientation. To be included in the sample, a woman must currently participate in wilderness recreation.
2. Access to the sample of interviewees for this project will be obtained through my own (Jamie McNiel) participation in wilderness recreation. An email will be sent out to women I know who either participate in wilderness recreation, or who know women who engage in these activities. This email will solicit help for this project in referring me to women with whom this study would be applicable. I will put e-mail addresses in a “blind copy” so that no one will know the names of those who I have contacted. Thus, through convenience and snowball sampling, I will recruit women to participate in an in-depth interview for this study. Before each interview, I will ask participants to read and sign a consent form (see attached).
3. Data will be collected using qualitative in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews will be conducted with women who agreed to participate (see attached interview guide). Few studies have undertaken qualitative inquiry into heterosexual and lesbian women’s experiences in wilderness recreation. Through in-depth interviews, this paper delves into the role of gendered ideologies that may reinforce the marginalized status of lesbian women within the wilderness recreation community. To that extent, this paper explores the following research questions: Do lesbians and heterosexual women have different experiences associated with their wilderness recreation?; and Are there differences among women wilderness recreation users in how they define, approach, and choose which activities to participate in?
4. Potential risks include psychological harm from describing/re-living past events and interactions that may have been negative or damaging.
5. In order to minimize harm, I included the Waterloo Counseling Center as a resource on the consent form. Steps are being taken to reduce the effect of psychological risk through question placement, wording, phrasing, interview setting (i.e. conducting interviews in a situation as indicated comfortable by the participant), providing them with a description of the study itself, and informing them of how their data will be used. Participants are given a consent form prior to the in-depth interview (see attached). Confidentiality of participants is of high priority, and will be maintained by minimizing who has access to identifying data, storing it in a locked filing cabinet in my (Jamie McNiel) office (Derrick 215), assigning participants a number for analysis purposes, and informing them that their confidentiality will be maintained.
6. While studies tend to focus on these aspects of gender role socialization and women's wilderness recreation participation, I would like to extend current knowledge of women’s wilderness recreation participation, by exploring a less-examined demographic disparity within the wilderness recreation women’s community: sexual orientation.
7. There are no compensation/benefits provided to participants.
8. With regard to the psychological risks, the only way to obtain the motivations, feelings, and experiences of members is through interviews; and therefore, I do feel that the potential risks are not great enough to warrant the potential loss of insightful data if not performed.
9. There are no specific sites/agencies used.
10. This paper relates to my program of study- Sociology. Moreover, this research stems from Environmental Sociology, the main focus for my degree. The supervising faculty member is Dr. Patti Giuffre in the department of Sociology.
11. Dr. Giuffre has approved this research. You may e-mail her if you need evidence of her approval.
12. This study has not been approved by another IRB.
13. Myself (Jamie McNiel) and Dr. Patti Giuffre (Associate professor of sociology, pg07@txstate.edu).