Incentives and disincentives of adolescent girls participation in outdoor activities and recommendations for practitioners

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INCENTIVES AND DISINCENTIVES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

By
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Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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in Resource Conservation

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Incentives and disincentives of adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities and recommendations for practitioners.

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In order to increase adolescent girls’ participation in and enjoyment of outdoor activities (OAs), with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of future advocates and stewards of our natural environment, outdoor activity practitioners and other interested parties must gain an understanding of adolescent girls and their perceptions of the outdoors and outdoor activities. Every girl has unique insight and perceptions related to their own as well as other girls’ participation in outdoor activities. In order to best serve adolescent girls through outdoor activity, research must seek answers to how families, schools, mentors, and outdoor activity practitioners can best encourage and facilitate outdoor activities for this population. Seeing the research gaps surrounding girls’ experiences and perceptions of outdoor activities (OAs), studies search for answers at the level of the adolescent girls themselves. Through 24 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, respondents reported or conveyed their perceptions of the following over-arching incentives to their own as well as their peers participation in OAs: 1) desires to appreciate nature’s aesthetics and outdoor learning opportunities; 2) participation in OAs with friends and peers as well as positive peer influences to participate in OAs; 3) physical health benefits; 4) mental health benefits along with desires for freedom, openness, or escape from societal constraints; and 5) unique experiences in the outdoors. On the other hand, respondents stated or expressed their perceptions related to the following over-arching disincentives to participate in OAs: 1) Physical discomfort or discomfort on the account of fear; 2) societal constraints or social influences such as lack of peer participation; and 3) time constraints or the strong desire for comfort and relaxation due to the influence of numerous responsibilities. Ultimately, this study finds that OA practitioners, educators, parents, and mentors need to listen to the unique voices of adolescent girls in order to implement effective OA programs positively influence adolescent girls’ perceptions of and participation in outdoor activities.
Acknowledgments

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Professor Linda Eagleheart was also instrumental in helping me with my survey and interview construction. Through her course on adolescent psychology and our several momentous discussions, I was able to establish a useful base for my literature review, research methods, and analysis.

Finally, I extend thanks to my friends and family for their support throughout the research process. Their patience and encouragement kept the fire burning in my quest to gain the knowledge I need to shape the lives of nature’s future stewards and conservationists.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Personal Goals

My experiences and knowledge of outdoor education and outdoor activities have fueled my passion to refine outdoor activity instruction in order for all participants to fully reap the benefits outdoor activities have to offer. Personal observations of girls’ participation, or lack thereof, have lead me to research the perceptions adolescent girls have of outdoor activities. An analysis and comparison of adolescent girls’ perceptions of outdoor activities will illuminate some causes of girls’ decreased participation throughout adolescence. Analysis of girls’ perceptions can also reveal possible solutions to the problematic decline in participation at the age of adolescence. A study of this kind may also offer methods for outdoor activity practitioners to encourage adolescent girls’ interest in nature, outdoor activities, and outdoor programs.

Aim of Research and Guiding Questions

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of high school girls’ perceptions of outdoor activities in Missoula, Montana, where outdoor recreation opportunities are bountiful. Via a case study approach, this study has examined what limits adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities and how outdoor activity practitioners may increase adolescent girls’ participation. The researcher designed guiding questions to allow girls to talk about their participation, or lack thereof, in outdoor activities; their perceptions of other girls’ rates of participation in OAs; and their thoughts as to how girls’ participation in OAs can be increased.
Throughout the research and analysis, three questions were at the forefront:

1. Why does adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities drop-off during adolescence?
2. How do adolescent girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities affect their participation in outdoor activities?
3. And how can outdoor activity practitioners increase adolescent girls’ participation and enjoyment of outdoor activities?

Defining Outdoor Activities

While outdoor activities encompass a plethora of different recreation and sport opportunities, specific activities were selected for this study according to these criteria:

1. The activities have been selected from the “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2008” list of outdoor activities. Not every activity from the foundation’s report, however, has been used. The Outdoor Foundation’s report lists the following outdoor activities: bicycling (any type), camping, backpacking, bird watching, climbing, fishing, canoeing, hiking, hunting, kayaking, multi-sport (adventure racing, triathlon – road/off-road), rafting, running/jogging, skateboarding, trail running, wildlife viewing, snow skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, boardsailing/windsurfing, sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, surfing, and wakeboarding.

2. The activities take place in an outdoor environment with limited man-made structures, objects or materials. These objects or materials are not entirely omitted if the majority of the landscape and content focus is made-up of the elements of the natural world such as plants, water and geological features. Allowances for some man-made items result in the inclusion of some mechanized travel such as bicycling or snowmobiling as long as the activities also have a focus on being amidst wild surroundings like native plant and animal life and hydrological and geological features.

3. The activities are undertaken in an environment “marked by easy simplicity and freedom from artificiality, affectation, or constraint” (from the definition of nature in Merriam-Webster 2005).

4. Some activities require mild to rigorous physical exertion while others, for comparison between “active” and “non-active” outdoor activities, require little or no
physical exertion (i.e. reading and sketching or painting).

The researcher has chosen to list only the most common activities or those most frequently undertaken in the study region. In addition, due to the researcher’s long-term goals of creating an outdoor program for girls in Missoula, Montana, and educating outdoor practitioners in the region, limits have been placed on the number of outdoor activities listed on survey and interview questions.

**Literature Gap**

A review of the literature related to adolescent girls’ experiences and perceptions of outdoor activities has revealed gaps suggesting the need for more research in the area. (A) Practitioners of outdoor activities do not pay enough attention to the existing literature on gender and its influence on how people experience outdoor activities. Furthermore, (B) the coverage of adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities is minimal compared to the coverage of adolescent boys’ experiences in the outdoors, and (C) studies of women in the outdoors offer comparisons to adolescent girls’ experiences in the outdoors, but issues specifically facing adolescent girls are not included in articles about women.

Despite a number of studies on the subject, practitioners of outdoor activities lack awareness of gender – the roles of femininity and masculinity – and how it influences individual wilderness experiences (Haluza-Delay 2003). Jackson and Henderson (1995) found that gender presented greater constraints to leisure than sex – the biological determinants of male and female.
Prior to the 1980s, studies of outdoor leisure activities failed to discriminate between the experiences of men and women (Culp 1998). Researchers must therefore expand the collection of studies on women, girls, and other gender differences in order to make outdoor activities more inclusive for all people.

The voices of young females have long been ignored in the realm of outdoor recreation, education, and leisure research. Analyses of four U.S. based recreation journals from 1985 to 2005 revealed that two times the amount of single-sex recreation and leisure studies focused on boys rather than girls (Bocarro et al 2008). Until the 1990s, the study of adolescent girls has been nearly ignored in the entirety of academia (Kearney 2009). In fact, recreation research had little to do with youth until the 1990s (Bocarro et al. 2008).

Similarities exist between experiences affecting women and those affecting younger females, but research literature must include the voices of adolescent girls to fill in gaps. Women and adolescent girls are two unique populations whose voices must be examined separately. “Because adolescent girls are no longer children and not yet full adults, they may perceive unique constraints and have a special set of needs in relation to outdoor programming” (Culp 1998:359).

Anja Whittington (2005:127-128) states:

...understanding the unique (wilderness) experiences of girls from different locations would add a complexity and richness to the data, and allow practitioners to understand the complex nature of each individual’s identity. It would also offer strategies for program implementation and planning that focus on the diverse and complex identity struggles experienced during adolescent development.

Haluza-Delay & Dyment (2003) suggest programs adopt gender-inclusive practices – those that include observations of both male and female experiences and needs – for outdoor
leaders. In addition, Haluza-Delay & Dyment (2003) suggest that researchers need to address the topic of gender-inclusivity in the outdoors so that practitioners can develop thorough, gender-inclusive practices for their programs. By listening to adolescent girls, gender-inclusive practices can be refined, offering the benefits of the outdoors to a greater number of people and more diverse populations.

**Problem Statement**

Based on the review of literature, several problems have come to the forefront to help frame the research for this study. Overall, problems are derived from a variety of social, physical, and emotional barriers.

Research has revealed several existing barriers to girls’ participation in physical activities. Such barriers may also inhibit girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Ransdell, Oakland and Taylor’s (2003:37) article cites many authors in summarizing some of the various barriers to adolescent girls’ physical activity:

- **Environmental barriers** to physical activity include the lack of required physical education in the schools, the failure of physical education or community recreation programs to offer programs in which girls are interested and to promote life-time physical activity, family and peer habits that do not support physical activity, the prevalence of modern technology such as televisions and computers, lack of access to workout facilities, unsuitable weather, and prohibitive cost (Browne1992; Heath et al 1994; Sherwood & Jeffery 2000; Tappe et al 1989).
- **Sociological barriers** include competing demands for attention (e.g. chores, homework, social opportunities); a lack of support for physical activity from friends, siblings, or parents; and the sometimes unpopular image of being a girl who enjoys physical activity and/or excels at sports (Sherwood & Jeffery 2000).
- **Psychological barriers** may include a lack of confidence in physical abilities, lack of comfort in a co-educational environment, and embarrassment about pubertal changes – which can lead to shyness while changing into workout clothing or participating in shorts.
Outdoor activities may exacerbate some of these barriers, especially the environmental barriers (e.g. bugs, lack of toilet facilities, or fear of wildlife). Investigating these possible barriers to girls’ participation in OAs may reveal existing and perceived disincentives to girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Family, school, and extracurricular activity commitments – types of sociological barriers - add an overwhelming amount of structure to a child’s life. The ever-increasing structure in children’s lives takes away from the benefits they could acquire through unstructured time outdoors. “The lives of children today are much more structured, supervised and scheduled with few opportunities to explore and interact with the natural outdoor environment” (White & Stoecklin 2008). As a result, children cannot benefit from outdoor activities and parents are unaware of the benefits that unstructured OAs provide.

With all of these barriers in place, children venture outdoors less, they become more overweight, and experience societal pressures that prevent them from experiencing nature in a productive manner (Lou 2005; Bocarro et al 2008; The Outdoor Foundation 2008). From 2006 to 2009 our country’s adolescents, ages 13-17, have experienced a 9% drop in outdoor activity participation rates (The Outdoor Foundation 2010). Of particular note is the observation that as adolescents age, they go outside less (Biddle 2009). The decreasing rates of participation in outdoor activities are alarming considering how children are missing out on the plethora of benefits offered through outdoor activities.

The children of today are disconnected from the natural world. “Over the past few decades, the critical connection between children and nature has faded. This has had a serious
impact on the overall health and well-being of our children and country, our population and planet” (The Outdoor Foundation 2008:2). In the book, Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv (2005) has coined a term for children’s disconnection from nature. He calls it “nature-deficit disorder.” The title sums up Louv’s observation of how, in the last few decades, “the way children understand and experience nature has changed dramatically” (Louv 2005:1). Simply put, there is a divide between children and nature. Separation from nature also separates a child from the many social, educational, spiritual, and psychological benefits offered through the outdoors (Louv 2005).

Adolescent girls are less active in the outdoors than their male counterparts and less active outdoors than they were at younger ages. “Although pre-adolescent girls are often confident and active in outdoor environments, as they reach mid-teenage years, their participation in physical and outdoor activities frequently declines” (Pipher 1994 in Culp 1998:356). Generally speaking, compared to adolescent boys, adolescent girls are less active and place less value on being physically active (Browne 1992; Ransdell et al. 2003).

The culmination of these problems results in fewer girls who participate in OAs and their subsequent loss of opportunities to gain benefits from OAS. This research aims to listen to girls’ opinions as to how the social, physical, and emotional barriers prevent their participation in and enjoyment of outdoor activities. Even though this study is bounded by its case study approach, it remains useful to understand the interrelated constraints for OA participation – especially in a setting as ideal for OA as Missoula, Montana.
**Benefits of Connecting Children to Nature**

Research has shown there are many benefits for children who engage in nature activities. Children who participate in outdoor activities experience positive behavioral effects along with increases in positive health effects. In addition, future advocates for the environment are likely to be drawn from the population of youth who engage in nature activities.

Teachers and parents are likely to see positive turns in children’s performance and behaviors in school if children are given time to play in nature. “(Children) are more imaginative, creative, and cooperative when they have opportunities to play outdoors” (Burdette & Whitaker 2005 in Erickson 2008:2). In addition, nature activities decrease stress and increase focus and attention (Erickson 2008). Less stress and increased focus and attention will result in greater outcomes at school and at home.

Other benefits of exposure to nature include decreases in negative behaviors and states like aggression, anxiety, depression, and illness and increases in positive behaviors and states like affect, health, and cognitive capacity (Mayer et al 2009). In addition,

. . . five potential mediators of nature’s benefits have been proposed (see report from the Health Council of the Netherlands, 2004): recovery from stress and attention fatigue, encouragement to exercise, facilitating social contact, encouraging optimal development in children, and providing opportunities for personal development and a sense of purpose. (Mayer et al 2009)
On top of these positive effects, research has also shown that outdoor experiences can increase children’s connections to nature and this connection promotes children’s motivation to become advocates and stewards for the natural environment. Haluza-Delay’s (2001) article states, “…researchers have shown that significant life experiences in natural settings are important in developing positive perceptions and environmental action (Palmer 1992; Tanner 1980).” Other studies show a positive effect of wilderness trips providing an enhanced awareness of the relationships among self, others, and the natural world (Beringer 1990; Hanna 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989).

In addition, “There’s no way that we can help children to learn to love and preserve this planet if we don’t give them direct experiences with the miracles and blessings of nature” (Anita Olds 2001 in White & Stoecklin 2008:6). Positive experiences in nature are an effective way to develop a child’s love of nature and a desire to protect it for future generations (White & Stoecklin 2008). Overall, connecting children with the outdoors “ensures future generations of conservationists, healthier individuals, healthier communities and healthier businesses” (The Outdoor Foundation 2008).

Girls journeying through adolescence go through incredible changes, and their cognitive and social changes can have profound impacts on how they interact with other individuals. During adolescence, young people are drawn toward social action (White & Stoecklin 2008). Adolescents’ growing cognitive abilities increase their awareness of prosocial behavior1 (Feldman 2008). Along with a greater tendency to be more helpful, to be more caring about

1 Prosocial behavior, according to Feldman (2008:134), is defined as “helping behavior that benefits others.”
others and to act in a more prosocial manner than boys, girls tend to have a greater interest in relationships and community (Feldman 2008). Noted psychologist Carol Gilligan describes that during adolescence, girls’ moral behavior transitions from selfishness to responsibility - from what is best for oneself to what is best for others (Feldman 2008). With a positive relationship to nature through outdoor activity, capitalizing on adolescent girls’ growing desires to help others, girls may be inspired to help preserve natural environments (White & Stoecklin 2008).

Along with benefits of nature experiences to the general population, some outdoor activities can have particularly profound impacts on adolescent girls. “Recreation can be a means for girls to resist the societal messages, fear of body changes, and lack of perceived control in their lives” (Henderson & King 1998:11). Fittingly, the term “outdoors” suggest a freedom from confinement of space – like the confinement of gender roles from which girls seek freedom through outdoor activities (Newberry 2004).

Uniting girls with the outdoors and activity will only benefit adolescent girls if OA practitioners keep the unique experiences of adolescent girls in mind. The benefits found through outdoor activities come down to the importance of recognizing that the degree to which females can be empowered through OAs is not simply reliant upon the physical experience itself, but it is also determined by the social context into which her experiences are embedded (McDermott 2004). Overall, “What is universal... is the need for understanding from the adults who seek to provide (outdoor) programs and support to adolescent girls” (Hurtes 2002:119).
Girls’ Decreasing Participation in Outdoor Activities

The way children spend their free time has changed immensely in recent decades. Historically, children enjoyed the freedom to play by escaping to wild places from trees to brush, fields to streams (Pyle 2002). According to White (2004), 200 years ago, the nearby nature of fields and farms provided children with endless enjoyment throughout the day. Up until the 1970s, children spent most of their free time outdoors, amongst the urbanized nature of playgrounds, parks, sidewalks, parks, and vacant lots or even the remaining natural places – fields, forests, streams, and yards - in the suburbs (Pyle 2002, Louv 2005, White & Stoecklin 2008). With increased structure in their lives, children do not have the freedom to interact with the natural world as children once did. Bocarro et al. (2008) suggests researchers examine children’s time-use more thoroughly to reveal what is preventing children from experiencing the multiple benefits of spending their free time in nature.

Parents and educators are unaware of the childhood benefits of outdoor activity. Currently, schools, families, and organizations teach our youth to avoid direct experiences in nature (Louv 2005). The quest for technological knowledge discourages young people’s wasteful participation in nature activities (Louv 2005). Pressures of standardized testing and overly structured lives also detach children from their natural environments (Louv 2005).

A national survey conducted by The Outdoor Foundation has revealed several reasons for children’s decreasing time in nature. The “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2010” of The Outdoor Foundation (2010) cites a lack of interest as the primary reason why youth ages 13 to 17 do not participate in outdoor activities. Lack of interest is followed, in order, by too much schoolwork; a preference for TV and movies, computers, and video games; a preference
for spending time with friends; and an overall lack of time (The Outdoor Foundation 2010). A summary of the influences on youth’s lack of participation in outdoor activities can be found in Table 1.

Without nature in their lives, children face several risks to their health and well-being. “As the young spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings, their senses narrow, physiologically and psychologically, and this reduces the richness of human experience” (Louv 2005:3). Researchers have also found that the decreasing rate of young people’s outdoor activity has resulted in skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (The Outdoor Foundation 2008). Healthcare workers worry that the current trend in obesity rates may produce the first generation of youth since World War II to have a lower life-expectancy than their parents (Louv 2007). Furthermore, children who do not experience nature in the present will grow up to be adults who do not reap the benefits of nature in the future (The Outdoor Foundation 2008).

The “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2010” data on the life cycle of female participation in physical activities shows a decrease in girls’ outdoor activity participation rates beginning in adolescence (The Outdoor Foundation 2010). The report also recognized a decrease in outdoor activity participation rates of adolescent boys, but the decrease is greater for adolescent girls. The participation rates for girls dropped 16% between 2006 and 2007 while the participation rate for boys dropped only 7% (The Outdoor Foundation 2008). Figure 1 shows the rates of participation for boys and girls over a four-year period.
Not only are girls inactive outdoors, they are more inactive than boys in general. In addition, adolescent girls are less physically active than younger girls. In a study by Biddle et al. (2009), researchers found that, unlike their male counterparts, older girls participated less in physical activities than younger girls. The same study also reported that, while 10 to 16 percent of boys’ weekend time is spent in active pursuits, only five to seven percent of girls’ weekend time is spent in active pursuits (Biddle et al. 2009). In addition, girls’ physical activity rates decline as they enter adolescence. The facts are concerning considering the negative implications sedentary behaviors can have on girls’ health and well-being.
The physical inactivity of youth is a major health concern. Increases in childhood overweight are associated with many underlying factors including decreased levels of physical activity (Deckelbaum & Williams 2001:240). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, youth ages 6 to 17 are not satisfying the minimum recommended physical activity levels (The Outdoor Foundation 2008). Sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity contribute to obesity (Ward et al. 2006). “Copious studies show a reduced amount of leisure time experienced by American families, more time in front of the TV and the computer, and growing obesity among adults and children because of diet and sedentary lifestyles” (Louv 2005:32). In addition, “girls, at all ages, are less active than boys, and this difference is
particularly large during the adolescent years” (Ward et al. 2006:7). The inactivity of girls poses great threats to their health and well-being.

America’s obesity epidemic is at the forefront of concerns related to the physical inactivity of youth. Extreme weight gain is one of the most serious negative health issues facing the youth of the United States (Ward et al. 2006). The obesity rates of adolescents have tripled in the last two-and-a-half decades and there is no sign of the rates leveling off (Ward et al. 2006). The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, collected from 1999 to 2002, indicates that 16.1% of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years are overweight (Ward et al. 2006). Obesity in children often continues into adulthood and is associated with negative health factors including type II diabetes, sleep apnea, depression, and risk factors for eating disorders (Deckelbaum & Williams 2001).

A sedentary lifestyle may also contribute to energy imbalances (Ward et al 2006). A growing body of research shows that when children engage in activities in nature “they typically sustain moderately energetic activity levels over a longer period of time - the type of activity that is particularly important for health and fitness” (Erickson 2008:2). Without physical activity, which outdoor activities can facilitate, adolescent girls can become obese, suffer the consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle, and succumb to the ill effects of energy imbalances.

**Gender Research**

Society maintains a set of gender standards and rules that limit girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Sex role theory states that we are all conditioned into “gendered beings” who enact “a general role definitive of one’s own sex” (Newberry 2004:38). Conditioning
occurs through societal rewards for conforming and punishments for not conforming to society’s standard male and female roles (Newberry 2004). A feminist view of this social construction points out that it is not our biology “but the way that social systems give meaning to biology that is oppressive to women” (Newberry 2004:38). And in the patriarchal society of the United States, females cannot escape the repercussions of being feminine; every action a girl or woman takes signifies her opposition or conformity to society’s feminine norms (Newberry 2004). A girl’s choice to participate in outdoor activities can show her resistance to societal norms that state the male is the standard outdoorsperson.

Society’s rules and standards can influence how a female sees her own competence in activities like those in the outdoors. McDermott (2004:295) explains that “women view their personal competence through a filter composed of society’s perceptions and responses which, in turn, influence their self-perceptions of their competence.” If society perceives that females are not competent in the outdoors, women and girls may perceive themselves as incompetent outdoorswomen. Many societies frame a woman’s or girl’s perception of self through a filter which has successfully naturalized technical and physical competencies, like those necessary to participate in some outdoor activities, as strictly masculine (McDermott 2004). These societal filters must be eliminated in patriarchal societies like the United States so women can benefit from the opportunities resulting from absolute equality.

Gender’s rules and standards can influence a girl’s actions and decisions. A girl may feel inclined or even forced to perform her role as a female or girl. She may also desire alternate performances to society’s standards. The theory of performativity illustrates how “gender is created by the very process of learning or doing/performing gender” (Newberry 2004:39).
These gender performances are dynamic, and there are multiple ways of performing gender (Newberry 2004). Many people, in fact, find alternate performances of gender are more positively experienced than standard performances (Newberry 2004). In other words, some girls may find that being an outdoorswoman is a more positive way to perform girl than a society’s standard girl role of acting meek, weak, or subservient to males. She may, in fact find that as a girl in the outdoors, she can explore her freedom from the everyday pressures of acting like a girl – maintaining a clean appearance and being polite and quiet (Newberry 2004).

In the outdoors, women are relieved of the regular societal and cultural expectations and rules which stem primarily from media exposure. Cultural constructs will always remain, but women can separate themselves from society’s constraints at least momentarily in the wilderness (Newberry 2004). Women, upon taking an expedition into the wilderness with other females, find themselves resisting society’s standards of femininity in the outdoors. They resist both the rules of femininity that prevail over women in the outdoors as well as those standards that exist in their everyday lives at work, school, and their home.

Women who do find themselves in an alternate performance of playing female by participating in outdoor activities may be thought of as more masculine by some members of society. Yet, it is paternalistic as well as patronizing to think that women are weak or that they somehow lose their feminine character by being strong outdoors. Therefore, many women can find joy in resisting the diminishing societal perceptions, standards, and rules through participation in physically demanding outdoor activities (Newberry 2004).

Femininity is often associated with weakness, and many women who do not want to be considered weak drop the feminine performance in to gain the competencies of strength in the
outdoors (Newberry 2004). Women can use their outdoor experiences to feel relief from their everyday feminine pressures by hauling heavy gear, chopping wood, navigating rough terrain, and many other physically, technically, and mentally demanding activities. In addition, outdoor experiences may provide women with a greater sense of strength in their everyday lives. Plus, their freeing experiences can help establish a societal perception that an outdoorswoman is stronger than society’s standard female and, thus, more capable to hold positions of power within that society (Newberry 2004). Upon further examination, individuals must see that masculinized camping chores such as chopping wood, hauling gear, and starting the fire have nothing to do with inherent masculinity. The chores in and of themselves do not claim that they can only be done by one biological gender. They are simply chores that any person could accomplish despite gender.

Strict gender role dualisms limit both men and women to rigid and restrictive guidelines of how to act or behave (Newberry 2004). They provide a set of tracks from which very few people can successfully navigate without being ridiculed, shunned, or worse. According to Newberry (2004:45), society must dismantle gender role dualisms so that a person can “paint their toe-nails, be strong and rugged, gather flowers, cry, command, and/or be sweaty and dirty without sanction.” One of Newberry’s (2004:47) interviewees described why she chose to take on a more masculine persona in order to resist the limiting feminine codes:

I can see now how I desired the privilege that I did not have, by virtue of the body that I was born with, and I found a way to experience that privilege in the outdoors. So I constructed myself as an outdoorswoman; a socially sanctioned and extremely contradictory way for me to be physical and dirty.
In addition to limiting girls’ participation in certain outdoor activities, society’s gender role norms and the standards of media femininity can dictate how girls act around boys in the outdoors and can also dictate how they experience the outdoors even when males are not present. Many women can identify with a performance pressure that is involved in a mixed-gender setting (McDermott 2004). Of course, pressure inhibits one’s own enjoyment and, therefore, women seek to relieve themselves from this pressure. McDermott (2004:284) explains how this has been seen in co-ed PE classes where “girls are less active; boys actively harass and ridicule the girls; their behavior is more polarized; and boys take over and girls become more subservient.” McDermott (2004) interviewed a participant from an all-female canoe trip and found the environment prevented her from having to feel as though she had to keep up with the boys, and she did not have to risk being patronized or resented by men who may perceive her as weaker because she is a woman. Girls may also experience the same sense of freedom from patronization if they participate in outdoor activities without the presence of boys.

Not only can girls experience OAs differently without the presence of boys, they can experience OAs differently, more positively, if outdoor instruction takes into account the unique needs of adolescent girls. Girls experience nature differently than boys and, therefore, need outdoor instruction which takes into account the specific societal pressures placed on females and their unique outdoor experiences (Baker-Graham 1999). Many outdoor education programs have been modeled after a long line of outdoor adventure education which has traditionally been a male domain (Lugg 2003; Neill 1997). When girls were finally provided formal outdoor educational opportunities beginning in the 1960s, they were simply absorbed
into these courses designed for boys (Lugg 2003). Prior to that point in time, only a few outdoor education programs were open to girls and even then the programs focused mainly on boys (Lugg 2003). To this day, some of the current models of outdoor nature programming have built-in barriers to girls’ participation and engagement due to the focus on boys (Lugg 2003). Therefore, outdoor nature programs, which tout their enjoyable, educational opportunities, may have inherent barriers which negatively affect the girls’ knowledge acquisition and satisfaction with the program and activities.

The standard male outdoor trip is often thought of as a quest in which the participant is called to adventure, leaves the safety of home, encounters dangers, and survives as a strong, empowered being with stories to share with his cohorts back home (McDermott 2004). A girl or woman, on the other hand, may or may not seek the same experience while she is in the woods. She may desire solace, oneness with the environment, and the simple appreciation of nature’s beauty. These desires may not be fulfilled within the standard male model of an outdoor adventure or quest. Of course, every individual, whether male, female, or transgendered, may desire objectives fulfilled through the standard mode of outdoor adventure, or they may desire objectives that are oftentimes considered feminine or not the standard goal of outdoor activities. Yet, as society currently stands, the opportunities for everyone to experience their unique, individual pursuits and objectives are limited by gender constraints and standards of the outdoors as primarily a male domain.

*Girls’ Adolescence*

(Girls) are having more trouble now than they had thirty years ago... and more trouble than even ten years ago.... Adolescence has always been hard, but it’s harder now
because of cultural changes in the last decade. The protected place in space and time
that we once called childhood has grown shorter. There is an African saying, ‘It takes a
village to raise a child.’ Most girls no longer have a village. (Pipher 1994:28)

Girls face a numerous changes during adolescence that affect their overall well-being.
In addition to bodily changes, adolescents go through a myriad of cognitive and social changes.
Girls become aware of social boundaries placed upon them because of their gender. An
adolescent girl’s experiences are affected by the physical changes of puberty as well as her
growing awareness of her role as a female in society (Kimmel & Rudolph 1997). Changes
occurring during puberty also affect a girl’s self-esteem and self-image. A girl’s well-being is
determined by all the changes of her body, self-esteem, self-image, and her social
understanding.

Adolescence is the most rapid period of physical growth since birth and the individual’s
toddler years (Feldman 2008). Adolescents’ bones grow more dense and strong, usually
correlating to an increase in physical activity (Feldman 2008). The physical changes of puberty
can cause adolescents to fret about their bodies and how they appear to others (Feldman
the outcome of adolescent girls’ weight gain, saying:

The greater proportion of fat in girls produces two outcomes. First, it makes it more
difficult for girls to compete athletically with boys because of natural strength
differences. (Prior to adolescence there is little difference in strength between boys
and girls.) Second, it may contribute to girls’ susceptibility to societal messages
regarding slimness. Even girls of normal weight may consider themselves fat and begin
to diet unnecessarily (Sanborn & Jankowski 1994; Cafri et al. 2005; Muris et al. 2005).

Sexual maturation occurs earlier for girls than boys, as well, and carries with it distinct
implications for girls who mature at different ages. Sexual maturation and its timing can have
great psychological implications that can last a lifetime (Feldman 2008). The onset of puberty can leave girls dissatisfied with their new body changes while a girl’s first period may allow her to feel better about herself as she realizes she is becoming more of an adult (Feldman 2008). Girls may begin puberty as early as 7 years old and as old as 16 years of age (Feldman 2008). The age differences of pubertal onset can have great implications on a girl’s psyche. Early maturation can make a girl feel uncomfortable with her body which can attract ridicule from her less mature classmates (Feldman 2008). On the other hand, an early-maturing girl may have a better self-concept as she can be sought after by boys (Feldman 2008). Late-maturing girls are more often overlooked on the dating scene with a potential negative effect on their self-concept (Feldman 2008). Yet, later-maturing girls are more satisfied with their physical appearance and end up with fewer emotional problems than early-maturing girls (Feldman 2008).

As adolescents journey through their physical changes, their social development complicates social interactions. Social development for adolescents means significant changes in their relationships with their family and peers. As girls and boys move from family-based activities to peer-based activities, one of the most visible changes is the growing reliance adolescents have on their friends (Feldman 2008). The amount of time a girl spends with her friends and family changes drastically during adolescence. Of all the activities and responsibilities adolescents have, interacting with peers consumes adolescents’ time more than anything else (Feldman 2008). And as far as interacting with people – peers or adults – adolescents spend twice as much time with their peers than they do any adults in their lives (Feldman 2008). Adolescent girls experience the change of time spent with their family
differently from their male counterparts. As they develop socially, girls spend less time with their families and more time with their friends while boys spend less time with their families and more time with themselves (Feldman 2008).

Adolescents’ separation from their family is part of their mission to gain independence and their own self-identity. The quest for autonomy is one of the primary goals of adolescence, leading girls to seek independence from their parents (Feldman 2008). As girls begin reducing their dependence on their parents, they discover more balanced interactions with their parents. In fact, adolescents, in the end, find out their parents no longer have all the power in their parent-child relationship (Feldman 2008).

As adolescents notice their new interest in their friends and waning interest in their families, they also discover there are different rules and consequences to go along with their new social groups. School-based interactions funnel kids from their homogenous peer groups of middle and elementary school to broader, more diverse peer populations of their larger high schools (Feldman 2008). Peer groups also change in terms of gender interactions.

During adolescence, boys and girls begin to see each other differently. As adolescents enter puberty, the usual gender-homogenous peer groups of childhood are replaced by mixed gender peer groups (Feldman 2008). Girls will still spend most of their time with girls, but they will gain interest in boys’ personalities and their sexuality (Feldman 2008). The shift in mixed-gender peer interactions changes the way a girl sees school, extracurricular activities, and perhaps how they see outdoor activities and the opportunities to socialize within those outdoor activities.
As boys and girls come together in their new, larger, more diverse peer groups, they influence each other’s behaviors in new ways. They can drive their peers to behave positively or negatively. Members of a peer group gain information on how to behave from other members of the group (Feldman 2008). Observers of a peer group also expect certain behaviors from that group. Belonging to a peer group can also influence a girl’s attitude and how she views herself (Feldman 2008). Studies have also found that peers can compensate for negative factors in their peers’ lives. For example, a study has found that peers, through positive support, can mitigate family difficulties (Feldman 2008). The opposite can also be said: a positive home life can help an adolescent who is having difficulties interacting with peers (Feldman 2008).

Status – or social rank – is also given to members of a peer group. During adolescence, their intense focus on peers can lead a girl to seek or accept a status within their peer group. Characteristics like intelligence, beauty, and popularity, can typically lead a girl to higher status within her peer group (Feldman 2008). On the other hand, negative attributes, or less valued attributes, can give girl a lower status within her peer group. Higher status gives a girl more authority and influence within a peer group while lower status relegates a girl to a follower position with little or no authority or influence within her peer group (Feldman 2008).

During adolescence, the mixing of peer groups gives girls a great chance to practice social interactions. Through interactions with their peer groups, girls can compare and evaluate their peers’ opinions, how others look, and how their peers perform certain tasks (Feldman 2008). Adolescence is an opportune age for individuals to try on new identities, roles, and behavior (Feldman 2008). Within a peer group, girls can reference their peers, comparing
themselves to peers they are similar to (Feldman 2008). For example, girls may compare themselves to outdoorsy girls within their peer group and use the comparison as a reference to decide whether or not they consider themselves outdoorsy.

Within peer groups, girls find their friends. Adolescents’ transition from childhood friendships based on sharing common interests to friendships based on psychological factors like sharing their feelings with each other and trusting each other (Feldman 2008). With their new-found cognitive abilities, girls begin sharing feelings and interests with each other – helping each other shed light on their unique experiences of adolescence (Feldman 2008). Girls may also form cliques within their peer groups. Cliques give adolescents a peer group with which they have a high degree of similarity (Feldman 2008). Girls within a clique are likely to be of a similar race, similar social class, and behavioral characteristics (Feldman 2008).

Within peer groups, adolescents may find themselves as members of a crowd – members of a peer group who share common characteristics but do not necessarily interact with every member of the crowd (Feldman 2008). Jocks, school-girls, Goths, or druggies are common labels of crowds. Membership to a crowd carries with it a set of behavioral guidelines, standards for appearance, and a certain social status. For example, membership to the well-dressed jock crowd can carry higher status than membership with the dark, makeup-laden Goth crowd. The crowd of outdoorsy girls or outdoorsy students may carry with it a certain status, influencing girls to seek membership to the crowd or not. A girl’s peer group, the crowd, or her clique can have a significant impact on her participation in outdoor activities.

Society places rules upon girls and boys, determining how they respond to the changes they go through in adolescence. John Money, who coined the term “gender roles” for the first
time in writing in 1955, defines the term as, “All those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively…” (Money 1973:397). Society, politics, history, education, and individual characteristics all create gender role stereotypes (Kimmel & Rudolph 1997). Gender roles and their stereotypes serve to bind boys and girls, men and women, to societal rules that determine their actions as well as status. In patriarchal societies such as our own, gender role stereotyping assigns superior status to masculine characteristics and inferior status to feminine characteristics (Newberry 2004; Lugg 2003; Baker-Graham 1999).

Perhaps due to gender role’s stereotypes and inherent constraints, girls experience adolescence differently from boys. Research suggests that adolescent girls, compared to their male counterparts during this volatile age, experience:

- greater stress;
- more concerns about interpersonal issues (and adolescence is a time of volatile interpersonal connections);
- a greater likelihood to be anxious about body image issues (and adolescence is a time of great bodily changes);
- and a greater likelihood to ruminate about their concerns (Feldman 2008).

Girls face the struggles of adolescence and puberty with an extreme focus on their body image. Three studies from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) call attention to the 1) gender gap in self-esteem which increases with age and 2) declining self-esteem which more strongly affects adolescent girls than it does adolescent boys (Kimmel & Rudolph 1997). For example, for girls, puberty and its associated increase in weight is coupled with increased dissatisfaction with their weight, and the opposite is true for boys (Kimmel & Rudolph 1997). And given that adolescents tend to view and define themselves according to
their physical characteristics (Feldman 2008), a girl’s self-image and identity can suffer greatly during puberty.

Body weight is only one factor contributing to the lower self-esteem of adolescent girls. “Perhaps nowhere else does the confluence of sociocultural factors, family dynamics, gender roles, schooling, the media, market, and politics manifest itself more complexly than in the teenage girl’s image of her body” (Kimmel & Rudolph 1997:55). It is also known that “low self-esteem correlates with low life satisfaction, loneliness, anxiety, resentment, irritability, and depression” (Henderson & King 1998:3).

Along with biological changes occurring during girls’ adolescence, girls’ lives change immensely:

They become less whole and androgynous. They often metamorphose as quieter, less likely to express opinions, more careful with what they say and do, self-critical, worriers, and focused on being people-pleasers. They often lose their resiliency and optimism and become less curious and inclined to take risks. They frequently lose their assertive, energetic, and tomboyish personalities and become more deferential, self-critical, and depressed. Further, they often are less likely to play sports or plan to be President. They hide their intelligence. Once girls lose this authentic self, it may not reemerge for years. (Henderson and King 1998:3)

Given the differing levels of stress and anxiousness between the genders as well as the differing biological changes and their resultant influences on girls’ body image, social interactions, and self-esteem, one can conclude that boys and girls experience outdoor activities, or any activities, differently. Differences such as these advocate for outdoor activity opportunities which take into account the specific societal pressures placed on females and their unique outdoor experiences (Baker-Graham 1999).
Girls’ Identity Formation

Adolescent girls’ identity plays a part in all they think, say or do. Adolescence is a time of great change in a girls’ life and a period of time in which girls are trying to make sense of who they are (Rice & Dolgin 2008, Heilman 1998). Society has an influence on what girls think of themselves. Gendered notions of what a girl should do or how they should act profoundly affect an adolescent’s sense of who they are and who they become (Rice & Dolgin 2008, Heilman 1998). Socioeconomic status identity, body image identity, and the effects of the mass media on girls’ identities are discussed in the following paragraphs. Identity also has implications on a girl’s perceptions of outdoor activities.

The struggles for identity can be challenging for any adolescent (Heilman 1998). Erikson defines identity as “the accrued confidence (in) the inner sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (Erikson 1950:235). “Identity refers to an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions as well as to a sociopolitical stance” (Marcia 1980). It includes “an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history” (Marcia 1980). Basically, identity is both an individual and a social process (Rice & Dolgin 2008).

“Erikson considered adolescence to be the best life stage for identity formation because adolescents are not constrained by the expectations and commitments of the adult world” (Heilman 1998:3-4). In other words, adolescents are in a prime position to try on new hats without the usual repercussions adults face when they find themselves in the midst of large life transitions. Adolescence is a time for trying new things. It is a period of transition in approach to cognitive tasks, moral issues and psychosocial concerns (Marcia 1980).
The changing of an individual’s identity is a process – the organizations of self-identity change gradually (Marcia 1980). The structure of identity changes with one’s age and experience, as well (Marcia 1980). Throughout one’s life, identity formation, at the bare minimum, requires a commitment to a sexual orientation, an ideological stance, and a vocational direction (Rice & Dolgin 2008, Marcia 1980). Decisions such as whom to date, having intercourse, taking drugs, whether or not to go to college, in addition to participating in outdoor activities, while seemingly trivial as individual decisions at the time, all have identity-forming implications (Marcia 1980). Postmodern theories of identity reject the concept of a stable self (Heilman 1998). Identity is fluid and ever-changing (Rice & Dolgin 2008, Heilman 1998, Marcia 1980). In fact, if the end of adolescence depended on the formation of one’s identity, then, for some, adolescence would never end (Marcia 1980).

The better developed one’s identity, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarities to others (Marcia 1980). Self-aware individuals are also more cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses (Marcia 1980). A less developed identity results in an individual’s confusion regarding their own distinctiveness from others and a need to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves (Marcia 1980). Throughout an individual’s life, they may face many identity crises. A well-developed identity allows an individual to evaluate oneself so they can grow stronger through each identity crisis (Marcia 1980). Without a firm identity formation process, individuals “can let previously incorporated, parentally based values determine one’s actions; one can permit oneself to be pushed one way or the other by external pressures; or one can become mired in indecision” (Marcia 1980:161).
Adolescent girls seek more than just a definition of self throughout their quest for self-identity. “Identity’s most immediate heir is intimacy, the predominant issue of young adulthood” (Marcia 1980:160). In order to achieve intimacy, one must have the strength to make oneself vulnerable (Marcia 1980). The strength to make one’s self vulnerable is found through the internal assurance of a firm identity (Marcia 1980). During adolescence, an individual for the first time can have the physical development, cognitive skills and social expectations which enable the youth to synthesize their childhood identification into a viable adult identity (Marcia 1980).

It is also during adolescence when growing cognitive abilities lead adolescents toward social action (White & Stoecklin 2008). Girls often become more helpful and more caring about others and they begin to behave in a more prosocial manner (Feldman 2008). Adolescent girls’ newfound physical capabilities along with their tendency toward social action and interest in caring for others can combine through outdoor activities. As these newfound forces combine, girls may develop a love of nature and a desire to protect it for future generations (White & Stoecklin 2008). Of course, girls’ participation in outdoor activities does not guarantee that environmental activism will become a part of their identity. Yet, studies have shown that outdoor experiences can increase a child’s motivation to become stewards for the natural environment (The Outdoor Foundation 2008). During adolescence, if a child allows herself to be vulnerable in the awe-inspiring surroundings of nature, she may find intimacy with others, with activities, or with nature. Through her experiences, she may find the inspiration to forge positive aspects of her identity.
Erikson recognizes that the struggles for identity are distinct for boys and girls (Heilman 1998). In fact, Erikson and Freud believe that girls are psychologically different from men due to female physiology (Heilman 1998). Yet, more recent research supports the fact that it is society, not biology, which determines the actions and behaviors of a person (Newberry 2004). Gender also has an influence on the structure of our society’s personal institutions including the family and schools (Heilman 1998). Therefore, our schools and families are conditioned to influence girls’ identity according to certain societal rules.

Girls’ struggles with identity can prevent them from enjoying or positively perceiving their place in outdoor activities. Through their experiences at home and school and beyond, girls struggle with issues of power and identity (Heilman 1998). Girls feel the need to have an identity in a highly demanding environment (Heilman 1998). Having an identity provides a girl with a set of rules for how she deals with the world and how transactions will take place (Heilman 1998). Armed with these rules, girls have the tools to navigate through their environment. Without these rules, girls may not know how to act in certain settings (Heilman 1998). For example, given that the outdoors is often considered a male domain, some girls may feel unequipped to participate in outdoor activities while others feel very comfortable in the outdoors.

In addition, girls’ quests for social status and relationships influence her perceptions of outdoor activities as well as her participation in OAs. Each girl must compete for status in social and economic realms as well as deciphering the meanings of their relationships (Heilman 1998). One unavoidable experience of adolescent identity formation is the struggle of social positioning through the social hierarchy (Heilman 1998). Girls place great importance in
relationships when determining their own identity (Heilman 1998). One can then assume, if girls are unable to get ahead in the social hierarchy and if great importance is placed in relationships, most girls struggle with their identity as it is linked to their relationships.

Girls’ preoccupation with relationships is often added to their obsession over their socioeconomic status (Heilman 1998). The stress of negotiating status labeling, through which a girl associates herself, and the importance of her socioeconomic standing, has become a standard part of the adolescent experience (Heilman 1998). Girls must not only negotiate their current status among peers, they must also confront their future work identity and future economic status (Heilman 1998). Girls from a lower socioeconomic status may find that socially constructed barriers prevent them from participating in outdoor activities.

Parents and family members also influence girls’ self-definition as well as their perceptions. Dreams of today’s high schoolers are often affected by their family members (Heilman 1998). “The family’s diminished effectiveness in transmitting values is theorized to be the result of the decreases in the amount of ‘quality time’ parents are able to spend with children, accompanied by the increasing strength that forces outside of the family have in socializing children” (Heilman 1998:9). Unfortunately, the increasing need for parents to work more during these rough economic times has resulted in less time spent between parent and child (Heilman 1998). Self-definition is a product of the significant people in children’s lives (Heilman 1998). When identity construction is undertaken with people within an individual’s life, the individual is able to negotiate which aspects to change or maintain about their identity through interactions with those significant people (Heilman 1998).
On the other hand, when identity construction is undertaken via the media, there is no negotiation (Heilman 1998). When parents are less involved, children may turn to the media to learn which identity they should form for themselves (Heilman 1998). “Identity must be created rather than received to be authentic, healthy, and potentially transformative” (Heilman 1998:10). If girls’ identity formation is primarily undertaken via the media, their resultant, perhaps malformed, identity can have a detrimental effect on their perceptions of how they fit-in to society, relationships, as well as their place in the outdoors.

Other social realms, like schools, often still influenced and regulated by media, can affect a girl’s identity formation. At school, girls can begin understanding, deconstructing, and reconstructing their emerging identities (Heilman 1998). Schools should give girls an adequate environment for fostering a healthy identity. Unfortunately, schools fail to broach longstanding deficiencies in gender studies. Curriculum often ignores the historical experiences of woman (Heilman 1998). As a result, boys and girls are unable to critically evaluate gender issues in typical school subject areas (Heilman 1998). In addition, many schools do not teach students how to navigate media, particularly, how students are impacted by advertising and how it affects the individual and society (Heilman 1998). Ignoring media’s impacts results in students’ naiveté regarding media’s negative impacts on identity formation. School clubs, cheerleading and other institutional structures influence a girl’s quest to develop confident identities (Heilman 1998). Research has shown that girls fall behind in school when they lose their sense of themselves as powerful human beings at a time when one would hope their feelings of power should be expanding (Heilman 1998).
Media, and all of the social realms it touches, constantly send girls negative messages about how they should define their self-identity, leaving a girl helpless in her quest to form a positive self-identity. Jean Kilbourne (1995) explains how media may possibly be one of the most powerful educational sources in society. Given their inexperience and novice stage of value, role, and identity formation, adolescents may not be equipped to navigate or interpret media’s messages and can easily become the prime targets of advertisements (Kilbourne 1995). And through society’s connections to mass communication, media has the ability to affect adolescents in a way that erodes individuals’ values and standards (Kilbourne 1995).

With its power, media has the ability to shape a girl’s perceptions as well as how she defines herself. Media’s messages often define a girl or a woman as a commodity, and therefore feed girls’ negative body images (Heilman 1998). When the media is a girl’s mode for identity formation, she is unable to negotiate the negative impacts on her body image and self-worth. Media encourages girls to be passive among men and competitive among women (Heilman 1998). In the media, girls see and hear messages that tell them that beauty is a commodity that women must fight over in order to become more powerful (Heilman 1998). Media also tells girls that they need to buy certain products so they can successfully compete against their peers (Heilman 1998).

Messages such as these may prevent girls from forming necessary, positive relationships with other girls (Heilman 1998). Feeling less powerful, girls may be more vulnerable to the negative messages from the mass media (Heilman 1998). Research by the American Association of University Women (1991) found that “looking good” wins out over “having ability” as the most significant determinant of self-worth for schoolgirls.
Plus, females are often portrayed as only having access to power through men who are stronger (Heilman 1998). These messages prevent girls from forming equitable relationships, based on mutual respect, with boys (Heilman 1998). As previously mentioned, relationships are a primary focus of adolescent identity formation. Therefore, one can conclude that media, through destruction of equitable relationships with men, negatively affects a girl’s identity formation.

In addition to media’s pressures of consumerism, girls feel pressure to spend time and energy maintaining the image of an ideal woman (Heilman 1998). Some girls spend a lot of time primping and social networking to appear like the ideal woman. When girls spend all their time and energy trying to appear like the ideal woman, they are left with less time and energy to develop other aspects of their identity (Heilman 1998). Girls who spend a lot of time on the superficial aspects of the self, such as hair and makeup, may not have the time to explore the benefits of outdoor activity. Not only that, outdoor activities may prevent girls from looking like the ideal woman. As a result, girls who place great importance on the ideal image may not participate in the outdoor activities that prevent them from maintaining their image.

During adolescence, girls attempt to develop an identity they can own as well as an identity they can take into every setting, including the outdoors, and every encounter of their lives. Young women must learn which acts they must perform in which settings (Heilman 1998). They must act out proper roles as economic beings, persons in relationships, members of groups, or even as commodities (Heilman 1998). Girls may not be equipped with the necessary script to act out a proper role in the outdoors. Through interactions with their family and schools, girls have been equipped to perform in certain ways. The media infiltrates a girls’
Identity formation is a constant process, ever-changing, and experiences often arise that force or persuade a girl to change their identity for better or worse. Some girls may accept the identity enacted upon them by the media and society, while others may find identity and power through rejection of these same identities (Heilman 1998). Other girls may adopt a negative identity to reject the social norms or to act against society’s constraints (Rice & Dolgin 2008). A girl in the outdoors can “paint their toe-nails, be strong and rugged, gather flowers, cry, command, and/or be sweaty and dirty without sanction” (Newberry 2004:45).

Of course, changing one’s identity is not a simple task. Changing one’s identity can lead to great discomfort yet remaining with one’s unsatisfactory identity is uncomfortable, as well (Heilman 1998). A girl may decide which level of discomfort is more tolerable before determining whether or not they will carry out a change in their identity (Heilman 1998). Girls may find that participating in outdoor activities is too far of a stretch for their identity, creating too much social and personal discomfort.

Girls’ physical activity rates as well as outdoor activity rates, are affected by time, support, and self-image. A study of adolescent girls at-risk for sedentary lifestyles and obesity has found that the three most significant predictors for an adolescent girl’s change in physical activity are: time constraints; support for physical activity from parents, peers, and teachers; and varying aspects of self-image (Neumark-Sztainer et al. 2003). Research has also found that
a girl’s self-image has an impact on whether or not she participates in exercise (Garcia et al. 1995). Girls who have incorporated exercise into their self-schemas are likely to include exercise-related attributes into their definitions of their identity, and exercise is a key to their overall self-image (Neumark-Sztainer et al. 2003). A girl who describes herself as an active participant in OAs may incorporate OA-related attributes into her self-identity. A girl with a low self-image with regards to physical or outdoor activity may not feel confident enough to participate in such activities. According to Robbins et al. (2003), self-consciousness regarding physical activity has been found to be a major barrier to physical activity.

**Girls’ Participation in Masculine Activities**

Adolescents’ actions are resultant of society’s prescribed roles. Girls are expected to act according to their role as girl which involves a certain routine and appropriate conduct associated with being a girl. These role definitions also influence the attitudes that adolescence hold toward others who either behave according to their expected role or diverge from those expectations (Feldman 2008). Given that “natural outdoor environments are still often viewed as male domain” (Culp 1998:356), adolescent boys and girls may feel that girls do not belong in nature and that girls should not participate in outdoor activities. Gender role boundaries such as these can limit both boys and girls to rigid and restrictive guidelines about how they should act or behave (Newberry 2004). Men, women, boys, and girls may feel that they should not encourage girls to participate in activities like camping or skiing, while girls may feel that they are not supposed to participate in outdoor activities.
Society sees sports as a male domain, and comparisons can be drawn between girls’ and society’s perceptions of sports to their perceptions of outdoor activities. According Alley and Hicks (2005), female participation in competitive sports violates females’ traditional sex roles and movement patterns. Participation in sports tends to masculinize females due to this contradiction with the standard female role (Alley & Hicks 2005). In addition, “Stereotypic beliefs about females sharply contrast with the traits associated with successful athletes” (Alley & Hicks 2005:274). Similarly, stereotypic beliefs about females can also sharply contrast with traits associated with an outdoorsperson. Through socialization, individuals learn which sports are considered masculine, neutral, or feminine. Stereotypes can have an impact on how girls and boys perceive participation in such activities throughout their lives. Gender-based stereotypes influence sports participation and, for that matter, participation in other activities including pursuits in the outdoors.

Girls who participate in stereotypically masculine sports or stereotypically masculine outdoor activities, may feel a sense of role conflict. Girls may feel or be seen as more masculine if they participate in stereotypically masculine activities. Girls may not want to be seen as masculine because it will prevent them from fitting-in socially and conforming to appropriate social behavior (Freyberg 2009). Girls may not be willing to participate in certain sports that are thought to be more masculine due to the inappropriateness associated with girls behaving in a masculine manner, contrary to their role as a female. In addition, given that femininity may become more important to girls around the onset of puberty, and the idea that sports participation may be more acceptable for females before puberty, the issue of sports
being masculine, or outdoor activities being masculine, is of particular concern to girls during adolescence (Alley & Hicks 2005).

Girls who are particularly concerned with conforming to the role of girl can also be referred to as sex-typed individuals. Sex-typed girls can be defined as highly feminine and non-athletic, while sex-typed boys are macho and highly athletic. Sex-typed subjects in the Alley and Hicks (2005) study were found to be more concerned with gender-appropriateness than youth who did not fall into a sex-typed category. Sex-typing may also influence girls’ participation in outdoor activities, as well. Girls’ participation in masculine versus feminine sports, according to Alley and Hicks (2005), may have significant effects on the social interactions of adolescents. Girls who participate in masculine activities may be treated differently than girls in feminine activities. If a girl does not mind being labeled masculine she will feel free to participate in masculine activities, and if she does not want to be labeled masculine she will not pursue masculine activities (Alley & Hicks 2005).

The Social Construction of Interest

Given that outdoor activities are often seen as male domain and likewise sports are seen as male domain, research can benefit from an understanding of how barriers to girls’ participation in sport may compare to barriers to girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Cooky (2009) studied the various barriers to girls’ participation in sport. Limiting factors included a lack of transportation, lack of funds, lack of organization, or lack of facilities. Moreover, gender roles, which often confine girls to their home or limit their activity outside of the home, can keep girls from participating in sports. Additionally, societal ideologies associate
athleticism with masculinity. Finally, our society holds many sociocultural assumptions that girls naturally lack interest in sport (Sabo et al. 2004). Knowing that adolescents have claimed lack of interest as their primary reason for not participating in outdoor activities (The Outdoor Foundation 2010), comparing a study of how girls’ interest in sport is socially constructed can give insight into how girls’ interest in OAs is socially constructed.

Interest is socially constructed by the social processes in which girls’ lives and perceptions are embedded (Cooky 2009). Social constructions, such as interest, come to be through structure, culture, and agency. Social actors, such as adolescent girls, coaches, or OA practitioners, through their free-will can conform to or resist social constructions like interest. Structures that influence social constructions do not exist without culture nor do they exist without personal agency and vice versa. Therefore, a culture, such as a peer group of adolescents, or an individual, such as an OA practitioner, can alter social constructions like interest if they choose. In other words, if a group of girls or OA practitioners decides they want to change the way girls perceive OAs, they may be able to alter the social construction of girls’ interest in outdoor activities.

Outdoor activity practitioners, as well as teachers, parents, and peers can all influence an adolescent girl’s idea of what she should be interested in. For example, Cooky (2009) interviewed a coach who claimed that adolescent girls become interested in boys and, therefore, become lost causes when it comes to getting them to play sports. This coach’s views are both a result of social constructs and contributors to those social constructions which limit girls’ interest and participation in sports. Girls’ interest can also be affected if an individual, (i.e. a teacher or a parent) says “girls aren’t interested in outdoor activities.” Imagine what would
happen if a teacher, parent, or peer said, “girls are interested in the outdoors.” Girls may hear this statement and feel they should or can be interested in OAs. They could become interested, and their participation in outdoor activities may increase because of their growing interest.

Teachers, coaches, parents, and OA practitioners are in positions to support Title IX which states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Yasser & Schiller 1997). The results of Title IX have changed women’s sports and have led people to believe that women now have ample opportunity to participate in sports. Yet, gender gaps still exist in university sports, wages, sexual harassment, underrepresentation in management, and overrepresentation in entry-level employment (Cooky 2009). While Title IX focuses on sports and other educational programs, the idea of women’s supposed equality raises questions as to how apparent equal rights are not equal and how this inequality may pervade other fields, like female participation in outdoor activities.

Increasing girls’ interest and participation in sports as well as OAs will permeate our nation’s culture and perhaps grander world views. Girls’ participation in sports or OAs will challenge conventional gender ideologies that associate femininity with weakness, frailty, submissiveness and passivity (Cooky 2009). A female athlete, hunter, or mountain biker as a cultural icon can impact girls’ participation in sport and OAs through positive role modeling.

Role modeling is one way in which cultural and individual agency can alter the social constructions which limit girls’ interest and participation in certain activities. Children learn through observing behaviors and by imitating patterns – a process known as modeling (Rice &
Dolgin 2008). If a girl observes a successful woman athlete or outdoorswoman, she may imitate that woman. If a young girl hears people degrading a female athlete or outdoorswoman, the impressionable youngster may degrade the female athlete, as well, and she may begin to think that female athletes or outdoorswomen are not acceptable forms of athletes, outdoorswomen, or females.

Girls need more than the increased opportunities that Title IX promises and more than increased opportunities that schools, homes, and OA programs can provide. In the United States, it is believed that expanding opportunities for girls to participate in activities will result in an increase in girls’ participation in those activities (Cooky 2009). This is not necessarily true. Offering more activities is a start, but our society must alter its sexist ideologies so that more girls feel it is acceptable for them to participate in certain activities. For example, girls are participating in sport at a greater rate than ever before. Yet, many others do not participate due to limited opportunities, structural barriers, as well as gender ideologies. The same barriers are plaguing girls’ participation in outdoor activities. To increase girls’ participation, one must consider more than inclusion. Facilitators of OAs must distinguish how women and girls are included in the structures of outdoor activities. How do facilitators and systems of outdoor activity support females? Are they supported structurally, emotionally, or socially? Researchers must explore the answers to these questions to determine the best means of increasing girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Sport is one arena where symbolic boundaries have also been drawn to limit girls’ participation. “Sport, as a bodily performance, is one of the few remaining social institutions in our society where the ostensibly natural differences between men and women are reproduced”
There also remains a contested but powerful center of sport that is constructed by and for men, just as society places OAs in the masculine realm. This center is a “result of sport’s historical foundation to teach boys and men hegemonic masculinity during a time when their lives were becoming increasingly ‘feminized’ – an outcome of the dramatic changes in work, family and leisure during the twentieth century” (Cooky 2009:260).

As a result, sport in our society is rooted in the “performance model.” This model is based on “dedication, hard work, competition, desire to win at any cost, intensity, and an aggressive pursuit of athletic superiority as demonstrated through winning” (Cooky 2009:276). When girls do not live up to this model’s standards, some coaches, parents, etc. may interpret their behavior or attitude as a lack of interest in sport. It is quite possible that these girls may simply be disinterested in the tenets which make up the performance model. In the same way, girls’ interest in OAs may not align with society’s masculine-based standards of interest in outdoor activities.

Cooky (2009) found that girls indeed showed interest in sport. They did not, however, show the same interest based on the hegemonic definition coinciding with the performance model. When asked why they were interested in sports, girls cited reasons corresponding to a participation model of sport. This model is based on participation for play, enjoyment, connections to others, and competing with someone rather than against someone (Cooky 2009). Girls in Cooky’s (2009) study participated in sport because their friends or parents encouraged them to do so. They had fun while participating because they could hang out with their friends, meet new friends, and they liked that they could get away from the boredom of their home life. In addition, they enjoyed celebrating individual achievements rather than the
team’s overall success. For example, if one of their teammates had been struggling to make a goal and finally makes one, the girls would see that as a greater achievement than beating the other team.

The girls in Cooky’s (2009) study co-constructed their own definition of interest in sport in which winning and competition were deemphasized and participation and fun were emphasized. This is in direct contrast to the standard hegemony overshadowing sport in our society. Masculine hegemony also overshadows the field of outdoor activities. One may guess that girls may be interested in OAs for reasons in opposition to this hegemony. Co-construction of interest by girls, along with supportive coaches, parents, outdoor educators, mentors and the like, can change the structure through which others’ perceptions of interest in sport and outdoor activity are based. The structures that limit girls’ participation in stereotypic masculine pursuits can be altered by the girls and the people with whom they interact. People, however, should be aware that co-construction of girls’ disinterest in sport and outdoor activities by coaches, mentor, outdoor practitioners, peers and the like can serve to support the current hegemony which has been limiting girls’ participation and enjoyment in sport and outdoor activities.

Parental Modeling and Encouragement

Youth participation in OAs may be a direct result of their observations of their parents. Studies of parental influence on youth physical activity may reveal themes similar to those related to parental influence on adolescents’ participation in outdoor activities. The time youth spend outdoors is decreasing as is their time participating in physical activities (Bocarro et al
Parents are in a unique position to model an active, outdoor lifestyle for their adolescent children who may feel overwhelmed by disincentives to participate in outdoor activities. Despite popular belief, the majority of parent-adolescent relationships are more positive than negative (Feldman 2008). In fact, Feldman (2008) reports most adolescents have a deep love and respect for their parents. And given most adolescents have more in common with their family than with their peers (Feldman 2008) or other adults, an adolescent girl may be more likely pay attention to their parents’ modeling. Parents can also be a good source of positive reinforcement - providing their children with thoughtful and inspiring motivation day-in and day-out. Social learning theories illuminate how parents can influence their children’s participation in activities.

*Bandura’s social learning theory.*

Based on Bandura’s observational learning theory, children learn many of their actions and behaviors from observing their parents (Culver 2009; Bandura 1977).

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Bandura 1977:22)

If we are to increase the activity of adolescents, and, as research supports, modeling of physical activity (PA), particularly by parents and significant others, increases adolescents’ PA, we should provide adolescents with effective models.
Also known as observational learning theory (Boeree 1998), Bandura’s theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context and considers that people learn from one another, including observational learning, imitation, and modeling (Ormond 1999). There are four steps involved in the modeling process (Ormond 1999; Bandura 1977):

1. The adolescent must be paying attention to the modeling. If the model does not demand attention whether it is because they are not dramatic or colorful, the adolescent will not pay attention. If the model is similar to the adolescent, they have the same skin color or similar personalities, the adolescent is more likely to pay attention. Plus, the adolescent is more likely to pay attention if the model is attractive, prestigious, or appears to be particularly skilled.

2. The adolescent must be able to retain or remember what they were observing. The modeling must be retained through mental imagery or verbal descriptions. This retention allows the adolescent to bring it up again later so they can reproduce it.

3. The adolescent must be able to reproduce that which they have observed and retained. Yet, the only way to reproduce the behavior would be to practice it (i.e. one can watch ice skating all day long, pay attention, retain what has been seen, yet not be able to reproduce the actions).

4. The adolescent must be motivated to reproduce the behavior. Both negative and positive motivations exist to either motivate the adolescent to imitate the behavior or not. Positive motivation includes past reinforcement, promised reinforcements and vicarious reinforcements. Vicarious reinforcements can be those seen given to a model for performing a behavior. Negative motivations include past punishment, promised punishment (threats) or vicarious punishment.

**Parental influence.**

Many researchers have suggested that parents play a critical role in adolescents’ physical activity levels. “The majority of these studies have found a positive relationship between parental encouragement to be physically active and adolescents’ time spent engaging
in physical activity…” (Bauer et al. 2008:2). In addition, parental concern for fitness as well as their modeling of PA is associated with greater levels of PA among adolescents (Bauer et al. 2008). Parents may also have a similar influence on adolescent girls’ participation in physically active outdoor endeavors.

Research suggests, for the most part, parents influence their children’s PA levels. Ferreira et al.’s (2007) study of the research literature on the subject has found that fathers may be more important role models of PA than mothers in childhood, regardless of gender. In addition, the study revealed that a mother’s modeling of PA is more often related to their daughters’ activity levels than their sons’. Another study found that children with mothers who do not exercise regularly are more likely to be less physically active than children with an active mother (Culver 2009). This study also said the same for an active father’s influence on a child’s PA. Several other studies have come to the same conclusion (Culver 2009).

Parental ethnicity along with parental activity levels are related to their children’s physical activity levels. Madsen et al. (2009) found parent modeling positively influences PA in youth of European descent. According to a study of youth of European descent, parents’ activity levels influence their children’s activity while the impact of fathers’ modeling increases over time (Madsen et al. 2009). In this particular study, girls who perceived that their parents exercised three times a week or more were, on average, approximately 50% more active than girls who perceived their parents as sedentary (Madsen et al. 2009). Culver (2009) supports these findings stating parental role modeling will increase their child’s PA. Culver’s (2009) research suggests that children who have two active parents are more likely to be active when
compared to children with sedentary parents. Other studies have found that girls participate less in sports when they have inactive mothers (Culver 2009).

Along with modeling, girls’ PA may be influenced by their participation in activities with their parents. As children age, they participate in physical activities less with their parents, decreasing, according to Madsen et al.’s (2009) study, from 70% at ages 9 and 10 to 32% at ages 16 and 17. Parents should take advantage of their children’s early years, exercising with them often while they are still interested in exercising with their parents. Madsen et al. (2009:282) explains,

It is unrealistic to expect that girls will wish to exercise with their parents as they establish their independence and spend more time with peers. Thus, there may be a critical window for exercising with parents earlier, while parents’ habitual activity remains an important target for intervention throughout adolescence.

Girls’ perceptions of their parents’ activity levels also play a part in the girls’ PA. Madsen et al.’s (2009:281) research raises the issue of perceptions versus reality finding, “girls’ activity levels were more strongly influenced by girls’ perception of parental activity than by parent-reported activity.” Bauer et al.’s (2008:6) research supports this statement by revealing that “adolescent perceptions of parental attributes may be a stronger determinant of adolescents’ behaviors than parental reports of their own attitudes and behaviors.” Of course, girls may not sufficiently or accurately assess their parents’ activity and this may cause problems in studies of girls’ perceptions of parents’ PA. In addition, parents may or may not be physically active during the work or school day and, therefore, their children cannot accurately determine the PA level of their parents.
Encouragement.

Along with parental modeling, parental encouragement can play a large part in whether an adolescent girl is active outdoors or not. Bauer et al. (2008) found that physical activity-specific encouragement and support may be a crucial influence on children’s PA. Ferreira et al.’s (2007) literature review reveals that many studies have shown parental support to be either positively correlated or not correlated to their child’s PA level. Therefore, it is hard to conclusively say whether or not a parent’s encouragement influences their child’s physical activity rate. Yet, this same literature review claims that the overall findings of the multiple studies “lend some support to the view that parents may need to be more than just active role models if their child is to lead a physically active lifestyle”(Ferreira et al. 2007:103). Bauer et al.’s (2008) study found that encouragement to increase PA is especially influential in adolescents if the encouragement is coming from a parent of the same sex. Madsen et al. (2009:283) said: “It is not what parents say, but what children observe their parents doing that matters.” But Bauer et al. (2008) said, “parents should actively encourage their children to be physically active, and not assume that parental attitudes about their own fitness, or modeling of fitness, affects the adolescent.”

Change in public policy and health incentives.

Girls’ perceptions of parental OA may have an effect on girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Studies that have found correlations between perceived parental PA and their children’s PA which “may provide potent incentive for parents to exercise, because health care providers can illustrate the link between a child’s perception of his or her parents’ activity and
the child’s own health and well-being” (Madsen et al. 2009:282). This is an interesting point seeing as most public health interventions to date have targeted at increasing the PA of youth rather than increasing the PA of their parents (Madsen et al. 2009).

Communities need venues to educate parents about the impacts of positive parental modeling. “Public health messages should also inform parents that modeling of physical activity or concern for fitness may not be enough to motivate their child, and physical activity-specific encouragement may be necessary” (Bauer et al. 2008:7). According to Bauer et al. (2008), there may be more factors, such as providing logistical support to engage in PA with their child that may influence PA through adolescence. Research must seek to find these influential factors so that parents, teachers and other influences can learn how to positively influence adolescents’ PA and outdoor activity. Further research is needed to determine how families can further support PA among older adolescent girls (Bauer et al. 2008), and, on a related note, how families can further support outdoor activity among the same population.

In adolescents, determinants of PA are support from significant others, mother’s educational levels, family income, and low neighborhood crime incidence (Ferreira et al. 2007). In order to thwart the negative effects of the decreasing rates of adolescents’ physical activity educators, parents and health professionals must call on Bandura’s observational learning theory to find out how best to model and encourage youth to be physically active. Once theories have been explored and improvements have been made at home, in neighborhoods and in schools to improve adolescents’ PA rates, OA practitioners can take these lessons into the realm of outdoor activity facilitation or the process can work in reverse. When youth are
able to enjoy physical activity in the outdoors, not only will they reap the benefits of physical fitness, they will also reap the benefits of nature.

**Peer Influence**

Other than parents, friends may be the biggest influence on an adolescent girls’ participation in physical or outdoor activities. According to Ferreira et al.’s (2007) study, general support for PA from an adolescent’s significant other is positively associated with PA rates. Madsen et al. (2009) also concluded that the influence of friends is an important contributor to girls’ activity. According to The Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 report, 44% of girls ages 13-17 who participate in OAs have been influenced to do so by their friends.

Social interactions are central to an adolescent girl’s experience (Freyberg 2009). During adolescence, girls’ relationships are perceived as more intimate than in previous developmental stages. It is during this age when adolescents become aware of the idea of reciprocity of friendship (Feldman 2008). In other words, adolescents like people who like them. Therefore, if an adolescent girl perceives that a friend is demonstrating a deepening degree of intimacy, the girl will reciprocate that intimacy (Feldman 2008). Certain behaviors and activities can provide opportunities to increase the intimacy of adolescent girls’ relationships in positive ways. Outdoor activities which encourage physical activity, self-reflection, meditation, and other opportunities to increase one’s health and well-being can provide an ideal environment for reciprocating positive friendships.

Social interactions have been found to consume much of an adolescent girl’s time, but girls associate more meaning with activities that advance their lives beyond the social arena.
Research suggests that social interactions are the most time-consuming and enjoyable activities of an adolescent girl’s day (Freyberg 2009). Yet, adolescent girls in Freyberg’s (2009) study expressed the fact that social interactions are not the most meaningful of their daily activities. In fact, girls in his study associated more meaning with activities involving achievement. One must keep in mind, however, that this study was conducted in private schools where teachers and parents may have influenced the adolescent girl subjects’ ideas of what is important or not. Girls in Freyberg’s (2009) study expressed their concern that, unlike achievement activities, social activities and relaxation activities do not advance them toward their goals of future success.

While the girls in Freyberg’s (2009) study understood the importance of achievement activities and how such activities advanced them toward their goals, they still are more concerned with affiliation than achievement activities. The study suggests that a girl may choose to participate in social interactions to advance her affiliation with a certain group rather than do her homework which is an achievement activity (Freyberg 2009). The choice of friendship over achievement reflects the significance of social behavior in the daily experience of adolescents.

Adolescent girls think it is important to behave in a socially correct manner. In fact, adolescent girls show a greater degree of conformity than do adolescent boys (Rice & Dolgin 2008). If an adolescent girl senses an imbalance in a friend’s behavior or attitude, she will either break off the friendship and seek another friend or keep the friend and modify her own attitude or behavior (Rice & Dolgin 2008). For example, if a girl sees that her interest in nature is not shared by a friend, she will end that friendship and seek a friend who shares her interest
in nature, or she will modify her behavior so that they conform to her friend’s. This type of conformity is influenced by an unspoken understanding that friends will stick together and behave in certain ways (Rice & Dolgin 2008).

Both affiliation with a group and our society’s stereotypes influence a girls’ behavior. Stereotypes suggest that girls must behave socially in certain ways and, therefore, girls may behave as stereotypes suggest they should. Social learning view suggests that people develop prejudices and stereotypes about members of various groups in the same way they learn other attitudes, beliefs and values (Feldman 2008). Girls learn social stereotypes about how they should or should not behave. Through direct reinforcement and through observation of the reinforcement given to others, girls, as well as boys learn about members of other groups (Feldman 2008). Boys and girls both learn that there are certain ways in which girls are expected to behave. For example, stereotypical standards may convince individuals that girls are not supposed to go hunting or skiing.

At the start of adolescence, children begin to develop an understanding of who they are as individuals and how they fit into society (Feldman 2008). If stereotypes like girls are not supposed to go hunting and skiing have been taught prior to this time, girls may feel that they do not belong in those activities and that, in order to fit-in socially, they should not participate in those activities.

Along the lines of affiliation, social identity theory states that “adolescents use group membership as a source of pride and self-worth” (Feldman 2008:400). In other words, girls seeking to fit into a certain group through proper social behavior do so in order to feel the pride and self-worth associated with belonging to that group. If a girl is a minority in a group then
she may not feel that sense of belonging that is so important to her in adolescence (Feldman 2008). For example, if a girl enjoys hunting and her friends do not, both she and the members of her group of friends may feel she does not fit-in. Without fitting-in, her sense of belonging to that group is diminished and so, too, is her source of pride and self-worth.
Chapter 3 – METHODOLOGY

The following three guiding questions were used to determine the methodology for this study:

1. Why does adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities drop-off during adolescence?
2. How do adolescent girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities affect their participation in outdoor activities?
3. And how can outdoor activity practitioners increase adolescent girls’ participation and enjoyment of outdoor activities?

In order to gain insight into adolescent girls’ lives and how their lives interact with cultural and social structures and forces that influence their participation and perceptions of outdoor activities, the researcher has chosen a grounded theory approach to explore specific motivations and interests of adolescent girls in Missoula, Montana. A grounded theory approach that allows data to emerge without preconditions brings forth “complex knowledge directly from people with certain attributes or life experiences – knowledge about their experience and the contexts influencing their relations to others, behavioral choices, and attitudes” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006).

The qualitative approach for this research is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews of adolescent girls at Big Sky High School in Missoula, Montana. The selection of this single location thus offers a case study that will represent findings bounded by its specific place and time, but also offer relevant comparison to similar locations where girls are experiencing similar events and pressures. The case study is an effective format for this investigation of current issues in a non-manipulated context, using multiple interviews of multiple girls to
generate comparisons and patterns (Yin 1994 in Culp 1998). A qualitative approach, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews will allow for emerging research results, meaningful interaction between the researcher and the subjects and related phenomena, as well as analysis of transcribed interviews to generate grounded theory (Culp 1998). Qualitative studies have provided insight into the realm of leisure studies, particularly of women’s place in leisure. “Although more is being learned about women and leisure, the nature and quality of experiences remains best captured with qualitative data” (Henderson et al. 2007:603).

In-depth interviewing is also an appropriate approach to researching adolescent girls’ perceptions of outdoor activities. The process of interviewing serves as a way to hear the perceptions of young women whose voices have been stifled throughout history. Each girl’s voice is heard as the owner and authority of their own experience and provides the details necessary to reveal their perceptions. Interviews also allow for scrutiny of the context through which adolescent girls’ perceptions of outdoor activities are formed.

Pohl (1998:41) writes,

In-depth interviewing is a method of data collection that looks at the ways in which individual lives interact with cultural structures and social forces. It is an appropriate research method when the stories of individuals can help us explore cultures, new topics, new solutions, or social, political, and economic changes.

**Respondent Selection**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews of respondents were conducted from January 21, 2010 to February 19, 2010. Through consent forms, basic information about the study was provided to all respondents regarding the established procedures. Written parental consent
(Appendix D), subject consent for those 18 years old or older (Appendix E), and minor assent for participants under 18 years of age (Appendix F) were obtained prior to the interviews. Interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face between respondents and the interviewer. The interviews were audio recorded. Prior to the interview process, all materials required by The University of Montana’s Institutional Review Board were submitted before the board for review.

Respondents were selected through networking with a local high school administrator and teachers within the school. Thirty teachers at the local high school were given a letter (Appendix B) from the researcher to ask for permission to speak to the girls in their classes. The researcher was allowed to speak to the female students in three math classes, four science classes, and seven English classes. The researcher gave the girls in these classes a verbal overview of the study (Appendix C), asking the girls to kindly consider participating in the study as an interview respondent. Each girl in the class was then given the necessary consent forms – subject consent forms for all girls and parental consent forms for girls under 18 years of age – as well as a copy of the preliminary survey. A total of 170 survey and consent form packets were handed out. Girls were instructed to complete the survey and consent forms at home and, within two weeks, return the forms and survey to a sealed, confidential envelope kept by their teachers.

The survey (Appendix A) asked for participants’ levels of participation in specified outdoor activities. Respondents were selected to be interviewed based on their relative rate of overall self-reported participation in outdoor activities. Thirty-four girls returned the packets and surveys to their teachers. Of these 34, five responded “no” to the question asking whether
they would be willing to participate in an interview. The survey allowed the researcher to select girls from a variety of backgrounds and participation levels in varying activities. Girls were selected with an aim to seek out variation and to provide a means of triangulating between the themes which arose amongst the different interviews (Yin 2003).

Once all the surveys and consent forms were collected, the researcher scored the surveys according to respondents’ indications of “never”, “1 to 5 times”, or “more than 5 times” participating in nine specified outdoor activities or categories of outdoor activities. An indication that she has “never” participated in an outdoor activity received a score of zero. An indication of “1 to 5 times” received a score of two points, and a response of “more than 5 times” received a score of three points. For the yes or no questions, each response of “yes” received a score of one. And for question #5 on the survey (Appendix A), asking girls to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not outdoorsy and 10 being very outdoorsy, respondents received points corresponding to the number they rated themselves. For example, if a girl rated herself as an “8” on the scale, she received a score of eight. All scores were added together for the total with which the researcher categorized girls into the three scoring ranges – high-, mid-, and low-scoring. Possible scores could range from 1 to 41.

After comparisons of the 34 survey scores and elimination of the surveys whose respondents indicated “no” to participating in the interview process, twenty-five girls were selected for interviewing. Survey respondents’ scores were compared to each other to determine a gradient from low- to middle- to high-scoring respondents. Low-scoring respondents were those who indicated the least amount of participation in the least amount of outdoor activities while the high-scoring respondents were those indicating the highest amount
of participation in the highest amount of activities. The middle-scoring respondents scored between the lowest- and highest-scoring respondents. The survey scores for each respondent chosen for the interview process are presented in Table 2.

![Table 2. Study respondents’ survey scores in order from highest score to lowest score. Highest scores are seen in pink, mid-range scores are seen in blue, and the lowest scores are seen in orange. The age of each respondent is visible in the bottom column.](image)

Seeing as there was an overwhelmingly larger response from girls scoring in the high range, only nine of the fourteen high-scoring respondents were randomly selected for the interview process. Every girl who scored within the low- and medium-scoring ranges on the survey, and who indicated “yes” they were willing to participate in an interview, was selected to participate in the interview process. Seven respondents were selected from the lowest-scoring survey respondents, eight from the middle, and nine from the highest-scoring survey respondents. The first interviewee was a pre-test, and the respondent’s responses were not included in the results or data analysis. The pre-test interview respondent was also a high-scorer. The researcher offered the respondents incentives in the form of healthy snacks to participate in the interviews.

Respondents’ ages ranged from 14 to 18 years. Respondents were not required to reveal their ethnicity or socioeconomic status - both factors which could influence an individual’s experience or perception of outdoor activities (Culp 1998). Because of the
limitations of time, money, and available students to be selected for interviews, the only initial
categorization of girls was their relative participation level in OAs reported in the survey to
attempt to draw from a spectrum of more active to less active girls.

\textit{Data Collection Procedures}

Participants were questioned according to a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix G). Questions for the interview guide were derived from the research questions of what adolescent girls think about outdoor activities; why girls’ participation in OAs decreases at adolescence; and how OA practitioners can increase their participation in OAs. The semi-structured interview guide allowed the respondents to explore topics that were most relevant to the interviewees (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). The semi-structuring of the interview guide also permitted alterations to the interview questions as the interview proceeded and also as the moderator progressed through interviews with different respondents. The interview guide changed slightly as respondents presented new-found themes that required additional investigation.

At the time of the interviews, I was 30 years of age, a licensed high school educator, with experience in 9th through 12th grade classrooms as a high school life sciences teacher as well as a substitute teacher for all grades and subjects. I was also an outdoor activity instructor and guide for middle and high school-aged girls and boys for four summers. In addition, I coached high school girls’ basketball in Missoula, Montana, for four seasons. My experiences as a teacher, outdoor instructor, and coach gave me the knowledge and tools needed to easily
build rapport with the respondents. The interviews were all conducted in the high school counselors’ conference room at the high school.

Each interview session began with the interviewer describing the purpose of the study. Respondents were told that the researcher was interested in examining their thoughts and beliefs regarding girls’ participation in outdoor activities. The interview began with a question about what the respondent likes to do in her free time. This question functioned to break the ice as well as determine if the girl chooses to participate in outdoor activities in her free time. Questions two, three, and four sought the respondents’ thoughts on their own participation in outdoor activities. Through this line of questioning, the interviewer wanted to know what girls do outdoors and also if the girl identified herself as an outdoorsy person. Questions five and six attempted to determine what sort of parental modeling of OAs was taking place in each girl’s family. Questions seven, eight, and nine all revolved around the idea of peer modeling and social influence. Do the girls know friends and other girls who participate in outdoor activities? Do they participate in OAs with their peers? The next two questions, 10 and 11, sought to determine whether girls’ time spent participating in OAs has changed over time and why. Question 11 was meant to figure how girls may feel social pressures to decrease their time spent participating in OAs. Through question 12 the researcher wanted to know what girls would do outdoors if there were no limitations on her participation. The probes were meant to determine what the girls’ goals were through participation in any OA they could dream of, and the second probe wanted to determine the limitations each girl perceived to her participation in her dream outdoor activity.
The OA gender categorization activity in question 13 (Appendix H) was meant to unveil girls’ perceptions of specific OAs, the stereotypes and gender norms the girls adhere to, as well as whether they see themselves as valid participants, as females, in OAs that some may view as masculine activities. Finally, question 14 asked girls to give the researcher some ideas as to how OA practitioners can get girls more active outdoors. The probe wanted to see if girls think it is worth trying to get girls more active outdoors and why. The final two questions were used to wrap up the interview as well as to give girls a chance to speak their minds about any OA issues they were not asked about.

Data Analysis

The first stage of analysis began during the interview process as the interviewer asked girls to analyze their own responses and expound upon their answers and thoughts. In addition, the researcher took notes on the behavior and perceived attitude of each girl throughout the interview process. After the interviews were completed, the primary researcher transcribed each of the 24 interviews. The transcription process served as the first re-listening of the interview where the researcher began to formulate what she thinks is the meaning of what the interviewees said. Throughout the transcription process, the researcher began noting themes, patterns, ideas, and key concepts that arose through each interview.

After the transcription process, the researcher read the transcripts and typed each theme, pattern, idea, and key concepts comments in the margins of the transcripts. This process was repeated twice to ensure all themes, patterns, ideas and key concepts were accurately recorded. These keywords and concepts were then divided into areas of common
themes and given code terms to simplify the categorization process as well as the process of meaning interpretation. The coding process was modeled after the grounded theory approach to the analysis of qualitative data. “This analysis perspective starts from an engagement with the data and ends with a theory that is generated or grounded in the data” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006:348). Coding helped clarify the depth and consistency of thematic patterns across interviews. Through coding and notes, data was reduced to categories and sub-themes allowing for illumination of any patterns, discrepancies, causal factors, and explanations.

The different interviews were analyzed using a constant comparative process. Codes and themes were entered into a chart arranged according to major overlying theme categories as well as by respondents’ survey scores. A sample section of the code chart can be seen in Table 3. The code chart displays the number of respondents who mentioned the theme or category in their interview as well as the number of times each interviewee mentioned the theme or category in their individual interviews. From the categorized chart the researcher was able to compare and contrast any patterns, discrepancies, causal factors, and explanations between subjects of the same and different survey score ranges to examine, qualitatively, whether those reporting greater outdoor activity in the initial survey possessed different characteristics than those who participate less.
While the frequency of mentions may legitimate a theme, it is not the only way themes were projected. In addition to frequency of mentions, the researcher looked at the centrality of meaning to each respondent’s perceptions of outdoor activities. In other words, if a respondent repeatedly came back to the same topic as central to her perceptions of outdoor activities, the topic that was significant to her perceptions of outdoor activities became a theme. Many common themes and vast differences existed across respondents, and these differences and commonalities are reflected in the Results section.

**Methodological Limitations**

Adolescent girls in Missoula have certain, unique attributes including their place of habitation as well as the opportunities which have been made available to them through living in a specific area. The interviewees all have different life experiences that have had some
influence on whether they participate in outdoor activities, what rate they participate, as well as why they do or do not participate. Their different life experiences have connections to their perceptions of nature and outdoor activities and these perceptions have an influence on the level to which they participate in outdoor activities. Knowledge of the girls’ attributes, life experiences, and perceptions can illuminate the issues pertaining to limitations which hinder adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

All of the respondents in this study live in Missoula, Montana, and this entails certain characteristics about their parents or guardians and how their life choices have been shaped by their families, friends, and their place. In addition, all of the respondents voluntarily offered their time and energy for this interview knowing it was an interview about girls and outdoor activities. This could mean that the girls who returned the surveys are the ones most interested in outdoor activities. In addition, the girls who returned the surveys could also be the most outgoing or willing to undertake an interview with a person they are unfamiliar with. The girls who selected themselves, basically, for the interview process may also have done so confidently knowing they know a lot about girls’ participation or perceptions of outdoor activities, or they are familiar with outdoor activities and were anxious to share their thoughts. Shy girls, girls who lack confidence, or girls who are not interested in outdoor activities may have been inadvertently discouraged from participating in the survey and interview processes. Therefore, results should not be generalized about all high school girls in Missoula, Montana, or girls across the country.

Throughout the interview process as well as throughout the analysis of the interviews, the researcher kept in mind that girls may have constructed their responses to interview
questions as a result of preconceived notions they have learned about outdoor activities and
their place as participants in OAs. In other words, some girls may have responded certain ways
because their response is considered common knowledge or they have been taught their
notions by family, teachers, peers, and media. Girls have learned many things through
socialization and, seeing as fitting-in socially is so important during adolescence, their answers
may have relied on what they have learned through socialization. The researcher was aware of
the possibility that girls have been programmed to respond in certain ways. To reduce the
amount of behavioral reactivity, the researcher used probing questions and asked for specific
examples to support the girls’ responses. The aim of the probes and examples was to ask
questions that could not be answered as easily as one would answer through programmed
responses.
Chapter 4 - RESULTS

Introduction

Throughout the interviews, recurring themes became apparent, and respondents emphasized the importance of many incentives and disincentives to their participation in outdoor activities as well as their female peers’ participation in outdoor activities. After the introduction to this section, results will be presented based on their categorization regarding incentives or disincentives to respondents’ and their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. After stated incentives and disincentives, results related to social influences will be presented. Then, I will present respondents’ responses to questions regarding their past and future participation in outdoor activities; dream activities; perceived benefits of OAs; and ideas to get girls more active outdoors. Finally, an explanation and the results of the gender categorization exercise will be presented followed by suggestions for OA practitioners.

Above all, the following incentive themes arose above all others:

- Adolescent girls are interested in and enjoy nature and nature’s aesthetics;
- they enjoy OAs with opportunities for social interactions with their friends and peers;
- they like to do OAs for the physical health benefits;
- and they want to participate in OAs for the mental health benefits.

And the following disincentive themes arose above all others:

- Adolescent girls do not participate in OAs because of physical discomfort;
- they do not do OAs because they perceive their peers and friends do not do them;
- girls do not have the means or access to participate in OAs;
- and adolescent girls are too busy to participate in outdoor activities.
All of the interviewees have enjoyed an outdoor activity at some point in their life. While some girls participate in outdoor activities daily, others have not participated in an outdoor activity in months. Every girl stated that girls enjoy entertaining and interesting outdoor activities. In addition, they prefer to have a choice of several activities and they prefer activities that allow for social interactions. Girls have a myriad of interests in nature and nature-based activities. And, if the girls were given a choice to participate in any dream outdoor activity they wanted, many of the girls named activities that give them a rush or a sense of accomplishment.

On the other hand, the respondents in this study said they prefer the comfort of the indoors and do not like to be uncomfortable outdoors. In addition, girls do not pursue their dream OAs because they do not have the means or the time to participate in the activities. The interviewees also believe parents and peers have an influence on girls’ participation in outdoor activities, but they think their parents and peers are generally inactive outdoors. Finally, girls lamented that they are not as active in the outdoors as they used to be, but they hope to be more active in the outdoors in the future despite increasing responsibilities or busy-ness.

Incentives for Respondents’ Participation in Outdoor Activities

*Interest in and enjoyment of nature and natural aesthetics.*

More than any other incentives mentioned by study respondents, twenty-four interviewees said they like OAs because they are interested in and enjoy nature or being in natural surroundings. Every girl but one emphasized their interest in and affinity for nature and
nature’s aesthetics more than once. Twelve of these girls stressed their interest in and appreciation for things in nature, natural surroundings, or the aesthetics of natural surroundings five or more times during their interview.

Respondent #6 revealed how nature influences her enjoyment of outdoor activities:

“Fresh air, the sunshine, the smell... it’s weird but I like the smell of the forest... It’s like the atmosphere.... Like, we live in Montana, and it’s like really pretty. Like, this is what I grew up in, and love, like, the mountains and the trees and stuff.”

In addition to the pleasure she finds in relaxing outdoors, R#5 also described the attributes in nature which she appreciates, saying, “I like to be outside because it’s... sunny - especially in Montana.... It’s just relaxing to be outside, out in the fresh air... we have pretty cool forests in Montana, that’s for sure. I like to go to lakes. I like fishing. So, just catching fish is really fun or going to the river and just hanging out, laying on the beach all day.”

Social interactions.

Another influential incentive to respondents’ participation in OAs is the importance of social interactions through OAs. When asked what they do with their friends in their free-time, 18 respondents said they enjoy outdoor activities with social aspects. Six interviewees emphasized the importance of free-time social OAs twice during their interviews and one respondent emphasized this point three times during her interview.

Respondent #10 described how OAs can provide social benefits:

I think it brings you just really in-tune with where you’re living and your surroundings. That’s always good to have because if... someone comes to town, one of your friends are like, “what do you like to do?” Or, “Where do you like to go? Where’s the coolest
place to see in Missoula?” You can take them to those cool spots that you’ve found and you can share that with other people. And it’s kind of like the pay-it-forward; like other people would appreciate that, and they’d show other people...

When asked what she does with her friends in her free time, R#1 said, “Going out on walks and stuff is fun with friends and then you just get to talk and get exercise.”

Respondent #9 described her enjoyment of OAs with social aspects, saying, “Just being away from everything and like being with that group of people, and you can really connect because you don’t have your phones, you don’t have the computers, you can just talk and have like a good conversation with those kind of people.”

Finally, R#17 simply stated, “I think that it’s my group of friends is how I stay so active.”

*Freedom, openness, or escape.*

Fourteen respondents said they like the senses of freedom or openness they find outdoors or the sense of escape from the bounds of the indoors. Ten respondents emphasized this point more than once and three girls stressed their desire for the sense of freedom, openness, or escape more than four times.

When asked why she likes outdoor activities, interviewee #2, a high-scoring survey respondent, said, “You don’t feel so enclosed, and I can think a lot better outside with like the fresh air. And when I’m outside... I can feel like I can do whatever I want, and I like that.”

Respondent #3 described how she desires freedom from restrictions through outdoor activities. She said,

... when you’re inside, you feel kind of cooped-up and stuff. And so you go outside. You can kind of just be whoever you want to be outside and do whatever you want. When you’re inside, there’s a lot of restrictions like, “Don’t bounce the ball in the house,” or
“Use your inside voices.” But when you’re outside, it doesn’t matter. You’re just outside. You don’t have to worry about anything.

Respondent #4, one of the lowest-scoring survey respondents, echoed this sentiment by saying, “It’s just nice because usually you’re cooped up inside, in school. It’s nice to just be outside and feel free to do whatever you want. And it’s a really nice feeling and I like the fresh air.... It feels more free... like you can do whatever you want and it doesn’t matter.”

**Mental health benefits.**

In response to the question of why they enjoy OAs, nine respondents said they like OAs for the mental health benefits - emphasized three times by three different respondents.

Respondent #11 described the benefits of one activity, in particular:

Mountain biking gives you, like, space, like, you get your own... you can clear everything out of your mind... you don’t have to worry about drama and everything. When I’m mountain biking, everything just kind of goes out of my head and it’s just like you’re seeing all these views and stuff that a lot of girls don’t see and then... it’s somehow like relaxing. I’ve noticed the girls that do do stuff like I do. Like, we’re not really stressed out ever. And then there’s the girls that get caught-up in drama and whatever they want to get stuck in, and they never get to, like, relax.... For me, like hunting, just walking out there is relaxing to me.

A similar theme arose in R#18’s interview. She said, “(I) like feeling warm. It’s so relaxing, it takes your stress away, makes you feel better, wakes you up sometimes, or makes you fall asleep.”

Similarly, R#9 discussed how outdoor activities can relieve her from the chaos of the indoors. She said,

Obviously, I like the fresh air.... It’s nice being in that smell. Up at my cabin, it’s just green everywhere and I just like almost being away from everything because inside is
just so noisy and there’s all the stuff going on. So being outside is almost like really serene and really calm…

Interviewee #22 mentioned nature’s uplifting properties by saying, “You get to think, and outdoors is a good place to think because it’s quiet for the most part and it’s just kind of an open space and you can just day dream really well outside.... It really affects your personality and how you are that day. And the sun, it makes you happy. It makes me happy.”

The stress-relief aspect of outdoor activities was also mentioned by respondent #20: “(The outdoors is) just really relaxing and pretty and your mind can just escape the stresses of school or whatever is bothering you. And I like the exercise, too.”

*Physical health benefits.*

Nine respondents also enjoy OAs for the physical health benefits. Two respondents stressed the importance of physical health benefits through OAs three times during their interviews. Respondent #10 talked about her enjoyment of fresh air. She also mentioned that being active in the outdoors prevents laziness. “It’s clean. Like, the air is clean and it’s fresh and it just feels good in, like, your lungs, you know. And it makes you don’t feel like you’re just being lazy...”

*Perceived Incentives for Peers’ Participation in Outdoor Activities*

Respondents perceived that their peers are influenced to participate in OAs for different reasons than those incentives they perceive for themselves. When asked why they think other girls participate in OAs, girls stated their beliefs regarding what may be influencing their female
peers and friends to participate in outdoor activities. Respondents in this study named far fewer incentives than disincentives to their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. The top two incentive respondents believe influence other girls’ OA rates are health and activity and social aspects. Only a third of the respondents in this study also believe other girls like OAs for the opportunities to interact socially through such activities.

*Physical health benefits.*

Twelve respondents said other girls like to participate in OAs because they like being active and healthy and OAs give them the chance to feel that way. According to respondent #19, some active girls are the happy and healthy type. She said, “I think probably half the girls that do outdoor activities are more, like, kind of health-conscious. They want to keep themselves healthy and... more happy, I guess, because a lot of people say that they’re happier when they’re healthier.”

Respondent #15 said, “Some girls really like being outdoors, and some girls like doing all these activities and sports because it’s fun and it’s active...”

Respondent #9 says other girls, like herself, like to exercise outdoors. When asked why she thinks other girls participate in OAs, she said, “I like to exercise and they do, so exercising makes people feel happy, I guess, so that’s nice about it when they’re just outside and away from a lot.”
Disincentives for Respondents’ Participation in Outdoor Activities

Respondents in this study named fewer disincentives than incentives to their own participation in outdoor activities. The 24 respondents identified disincentives to OAs 49 times and incentives 75 times. While they were able to name more incentives for their own participation, they named far fewer incentives than disincentives for their peers’ participation in outdoor activities.

Physical discomfort.

More than any other disincentive to participate in OAs, 23 respondents in this study said physical discomfort prevents them from participating in outdoor activities. Ten girls reiterated their displeasure in the lack of comfort outdoors more five times or more throughout their interview. Factors associated with physical discomfort include: mud, dirt, pollution, bugs, unfavorable weather conditions, or lack of comforting amenities like easy access to food or comfortable seating.

Respondent #16 said she would miss some amenities from home. She also revealed her dislike of bugs. She explained,

If you’re tired, you have to sit down on the grass. There’s, like, nothing, unless you pack in a chair or something. (You) can’t really find a comfortable seat. You get overheated, or really cold, and stuff. Sometimes, during winter, you get wet outside, so it’s nice to go inside and be all dry, nice and warm. Bugs, mosquitoes - I hate mosquitoes.

Respondent #15 expressed negative sentiments about weather-related obstacles. She said, “… reasons that I don’t like being outside is that I have really fair skin and I burn like crazy.
And I get really over-heated when I get hot, so I get like heat stroke and I get really sick. So, that’s another reason why I don’t like being outside.”

Respondent #9 had similar feelings. She stated, “I hate bugs. I literally, I just can’t stand them. I am so scared of spiders. I don’t like being around that kind of stuff. So, I have the creepy crawlies, I guess. I hate mosquitoes, too, and I get sunburned a lot.”

In addition to cold weather, respondent #13 said that she does not like to go outdoors when pollutants are in the air. She explained, “I don’t like being outside when it’s, like, smoky or something or, like, when it smells bad, like, when you’re by places that pollute or something. I don’t like nasty smells outside. Or, I don’t like being outside when it’s really, really cold sometimes.”

**Fear**

Eight respondents said they do not participate in outdoor activities because of fear. Respondents said they fear the dark, animals, and being alone outdoors. When asked what prevents her from going out or what keeps her indoors, R#6 said, “When it’s dark outside, I’m always scared that someone’s going to be out there. Like, I always feel like there’s something like a big animal, like, scary animal is going to be out there or, like, someone.”

Respondent #15 brought up fear during her interview. She said,

When it’s like dark and kind of creepy, I’d rather be with someone and be in the dark than be by myself in the dark. And like the fact of it being in the woods when you can’t see anything at all, you have this, like, hearing and you, like, hear like a crack in the bushes and you’re just like, “Okay, I’m just going to walk back now.... or run”... I just don’t really like bears and stuff. I get really scared about that stuff because, I don’t know why, I’ve just always been scared of, like, mountain lions or other stuff that could come up and appear that I wasn’t expecting, and so it just kind of creeps me out.
**Lack of time, other responsibilities, and busy-ness**

Another disincentive to respondents’ participation in OAs is lack of time, other responsibilities, or busy-ness in general. When girls were asked why they do not participate in OAs, eight respondents said they do not have enough time or other responsibilities get in the way. One respondent grouped responsibilities, laziness and lack of equipment and training in her explanation for why she does not participate in outdoor activities. When asked why she does not participate in outdoor activities, respondent #17 said, “I’m really busy right now (with) school, trying to get to the end of the year. I want to do (outdoor activities) this summer. Laziness, I guess. You have to find someone to teach you and get all the stuff. Then, you have to go out and do it every day if you want to get good at it. I guess that’s the reason.”

Respondent #9 also said her responsibilities play a part in whether or not she is active outdoors. In addition, she knows that it takes more time to prepare for outdoor activities than indoor activities. She explains,

(Staying inside) probably seems more convenient, I guess. Like, school makes me tired, basketball makes me tired, so it seems appealing to just go sit down on our couch and just kind of let your mind go blank and just watch TV, I guess.... I guess that’s a lazy attitude, but that’s how I feel. It’s just a break from everything because I feel like you just have to organize more when you go outside.

Respondent #8 emphasized her desire for relaxation during her interview. When asked what keeps her inside or what prevents her from doing OAs, R#8 said, “Sometimes, I just feel like I just need to just chill for a second and not have anything going on around me, so I just want to like read or something...” Her quote suggests she has a lot “going on” around her so she relishes the chance to relax.
Perceived Disincentives for Peers’ Participation in Outdoor Activities

Respondents discussed why they think their female peers and friends do not participate in outdoor activities. Their answers are speculative as they did not say whether their friends have actually voiced these disincentives to the respondents personally.

Mud, bugs, or animals.

Sixteen respondents said they think other girls do not participate in outdoor activities because they believe they do not like mud, bugs, or other creatures. Many interviewees shared views regarding girls’ distaste for dirt, bugs, bad weather. For example, respondent #4 said, “I guess one reason that people wouldn’t (go outdoors) was... they have this idea in their head that it’s dirty or something, and they would rather be inside...”

Respondent #3 explained, “I don’t know just kind of like how... they act sometimes. Like, in science class, you can tell when we go on the field trip down to the slough and the river, you can tell that they don’t touch bugs or they don’t like walking in mud. You can just tell that they’re that kind of people.”

Respondent #2 said, “I think a bunch of girls don’t go outdoors because of like bugs and stuff like that. Like.... spiders and um... they don’t go in the woods maybe because of like bears, just things like that.”

Disinterest in or dislike of outdoor activities.

Thirteen respondents think other girls are simply disinterested in OAs or they do not like outdoor activities. When asked why she thinks girls at her school do not go outside,
respondent #5 said, “I think, like, they get outdoors when they get an opportunity, but they don’t make an effort, like, ‘I should go outside today,’ or, ‘I want to do something outside.’ They don’t really make that effort and so…” She went on to add,

People don’t really like the outdoors as much. They don’t really like camping, or they’ve never been camping, or they only go when their parents go. So, it’s like… they’re not really as interested… Because there’s never very many people that like to go outside or get a group together to go like play like capture the flag. That’s not really their first option when they think of stuff to do.

*Preference for indoor activities.*

Respondents in this study also believe their female peers and friends do not participate in OAs because they think their peers and friends would rather participate in indoor activities. Twelve respondents stated this belief saying girls would rather go shopping, play video games, watch movies, and more. Seven respondents emphasized this point more than once – six of them stressing this preference three or more times.

Technological devices provide many girls with a sense of comfort, and, to some, they seem like a necessity. Respondent #16 thinks inactive girls do not want to be away from their cell phones or other technologies. She said, “A lot of girls don’t, like, go outdoors because then they can’t get cell service.... So, I think that’s one of the reasons girls don’t like going outside, especially up into mountains, because they don’t have cell service.” She continued, “They like listening to music, so, their iPod might die. They can’t just, like, pamper themselves. ‘Oh, I’m going to go paint my fingernails today...’”

In a similar fashion, respondent # 9 answered,

... and people just don’t like being outside, don’t like being around animals, don’t like being in the wilderness on their own. They’d rather just go shopping - which is dumb -
or just watch TV. I can think of a couple people that just would rather be inside and not
do anything outside. I don’t know why though…. I think it just comes down to time,
too, and their willingness to be outside.

**Concern with appearance or image.**

Respondents believe their female peers and friends are too concerned with their
appearance and image to participate in outdoor activities. Ten respondents brought up girls’
concerns with appearance and image in their interviews. Respondent #5 explained, “... I think
that a lot of girls are really about their image and like, ‘oh if I go outside, I might get hurt,’ or ‘I
might get a scratch,’ or something like that…. or they just like to be inside... around their friends
more, and they don’t really, like, want to branch out from their friends and do something
different.”

Additionally, respondent #15 had a lot to say regarding her thoughts on why girls do not
participate in outdoor activities. She said,

... there’s not many girls who are tomboys, but there’s more girls who are, like, really
girly-girl just terribly bad to where they don’t want to mess up their hair, they don’t
want to do anything that could damage anything... they don’t want to get dirt on their
shoe, they don’t’ want to get water on their face...

She went on to say,

Some girls... really care about what other people think of them to where it gets to an
extreme where they can’t do this because this will happen, or they can’t, like, they just
get so into their, like, appearance to where they just don’t want to mess it up because if
they look really good they don’t want to go run a lap.... You’d think that most of them
would rather be inside than outside.
Respondent #10 said friends might judge girls for trying outdoor activities. She added her views on how labeling and stereotyping might influence girls’ outdoor activity rates:

... their other friends might judge them for being outside. They might call them, I don’t know what they would call them... like, there’s this one girl in our grade, and I can just imagine her being outside a lot, and people probably call her, like, a hippy, and people don’t want to be called that. But I don’t think she cares because she’s just who she is. But they might be like, “I’m not a hippy,” because stereotypes hurt worse than, like, you think sometimes.... Maybe it’s just because... it’s like them following, like, a stereotype that boys are the ones that go outside or are rugged like that, and girls are the ones that go shopping and stuff like that.

Weather.

Ten respondents said their female peers and friends do not participate in outdoor activities because they do not like the weather – whether too hot, too cold, too snowy, or too rainy, among other unfavorable weather conditions. Respondent #6 said it simply when asked why she thinks other girls do not participate in outdoor activities, “... the temperature - if it’s really hot outside, I know most of my friends don’t like to go out when it’s really hot outside or really cold outside.”

Another simple answer, as they all were for this category, came from respondent #18. She said, “Being outside for a long time, it can get hot and sweaty, and that’s like ew, gross, and that type of thing.”
Incentives to Participate in Dream Outdoor Activities

Unique experiences.

When asked what outdoor activity they would participate in if money and ability were not a factor, respondents revealed additional incentives for participation in outdoor activities. Eighteen interviewees said they want to participate in their dream OA for the unique experience. When asked why she would like to participate in her dream OA of flying – with a flying squirrel suit - respondent #4 put it simply, saying, “… just to say you have…. Just for like, ‘yah, I did that.’”

Additionally, respondent #19 said, “Just because not many people get to do it, and it kind of just shows that you’re willing to do bigger better things, I guess. Just, like, not many people get to do it... and not many people will do it because they’re so scared or something.”

Respondent #9 said, “I only live once.... I think I want to try making a bucket list.... I live once, and I’m not going to just sit here and be inside.... I want to do something exciting with my life, I guess. There’s just better things to do.” She later added, “It’d be something cool to say that I’ve done. Or, like not many people do those. So, I could be like, ‘Ya, I’ve done that.’ I don’t know. I just want to see what it felt like.”

Intensity, rush, accomplishment, and challenge.

Additional, plausible incentives for interviewees’ participation in OAs arose from their responses regarding dream activities. Eighteen respondents said they want to participate in their dream OA for the rush of it or the sense of accomplishment or challenge. Three
interviewees emphasized the importance of the rush, accomplishment, or challenge twice in their interviews. And five more respondents accentuated the importance of these aspects in their dream OAs three times during the dream outdoor activity portion of their interviews. When asked what outdoor activity they would participate in if money and ability were not a factor, 13 girls named extreme activities, like sky-diving and kayaking, that would give them a rush of adrenaline or excitement.

Nine girls mentioned they specifically want to feel the rush of adrenaline or excitement from their dream activity. When asked why she wanted to sky dive, respondent #18 replied, “Just for the rush of it. Being able to see over everything…. Just, like, whoosh, wake-you-up - rush of... adrenaline. Just like, ‘Wow! I can’t believe I just did that.’ (It) makes you so excited - sense of happiness I guess.”

Respondent #22 fears her dream activity but knows that she would like the feeling rock climbing would give her. She stated, “Well, I didn’t like diving off the cliff but I jumped off of the cliff. That was pretty scary, but I did it. Rock climbing on the wall the other day, I don’t like heights, but I forced myself into it. So, it gets the adrenaline up, but it’s fun in the end, after you get over it.”

Respondent #10 described the challenge and sense of accomplishment she wants to get out of her dream activity of crack climbing – a form of rock climbing without harnesses, using cracks in the rocks as holds:

Because you would feel so good after you, like, got to the top and you were, like, “I just did that.” Because it’s like you have to be so focused and precise when you do these, and like you make one mistake and you’re down, so you got to be good, you got to be smart…. It’s hard and it takes a lot of physical strength and it would be a huge accomplishment and I think it would be so cool if you could accomplish it.... It just
makes me like feel good. It makes you feel good after you like hang out. Like, I know when I go skiing for all day and then I go home and I just like sit and I’m just like, “This is the best feeling in the world,” because you were outside all day and your cheeks are still a little bit cold and your ears are still a little bit cold... and then you can talk about it and... it’s something good that you accomplished, and it makes you feel good when you accomplish something.

One challenge respondents frequently mentioned overcoming through their dream outdoor activities is fear. Girls want to face their fears and conquer them. Conquering fears was specifically mentioned by six participants. Respondent #17 wants to challenge herself and conquer her fears. She said, “I’m really stubborn, so if I’m not going to get something, I have to get it. I just want to conquer my fears, get over it, and learn something I’ve always wanted to learn.”

Learning experiences

Ten respondents said they want to participate in their dream OA for the learning experience while five interviewees said they like OAs for the chance to learn about the outdoors and nature. Respondent #6 said,

The animals for sure... how they live like how they do it... we’re so used to going home, being under a roof and stuff... when it’s raining or like thundering outside, what do they do? They have to get their food and we just go to the cupboard and like pull it out and they have to like go find stuff, I guess. It just interests me. I think it’s cool.

Another self-reported, highly active respondent, R#3, talked about what she likes about nature. “I really like looking at things in nature like really close up, like plant life and... the animals. I like looking at them and seeing how they all work.”
**Disincentives to Participate in Dream Outdoor Activities**

**Lack of means or access.**

When asked why they do not participate in their dream OAs, 23 respondents answered they do not have the access nor the means to do their dream outdoor activities. In other words, they do not have the gear or the necessary instruction, locales for their dream OAs are too far away, or they do not have enough money to do the OAs they dream of doing.

Respondent #20 states she needs guidance to accomplish her goal. When asked why she does not pursue her dream OA, she answered, “Hike a mountain? I’m sure I will, but it’s, like, I need someone to do it with me. And then skiing, I can’t pay for and my parents won’t pay for because they’ll be like, ‘Why don’t you just go cross country skiing?’ And then kayaking, like, I’d want to do that, but at the same time, it’s like I don’t want to die.” Ability, money, and fear all keep R#20 from pursuing her dream outdoor activity.

Respondent #13, stated, “… there’s not really much to do in the winter, like, at around our houses, like, in our neighborhoods there’s really nothing you can, like, do.”

**Lack of time.**

When asked what keeps her from doing her dream activity, respondent #5 said both time and the means prevent her from participating. She answered, “Time. Not having the time to miss work or school, or not having the money to be able to afford a trainer or having money to be able to afford to go somewhere that you need to do what you want to do.”
Fourteen girls said they do not have the time to participate in their dream OAs or they have other responsibilities that get in the way of participating in their dream OAs. Respondent #3 explained,

Because it would take a lot of time out of, like, our school time, and we wouldn’t be able to catch back up. Or, the money is a big factor. Like, that would be really expensive to do…. And, just, kind of, we would always want to do it, and it would just be one of those things that you’ve always wanted to do but you never did. And that’s just kind of how it is.

Parental Influence

When asked why they participate in outdoor activities, respondents did not directly state they participate in OAs because of parental influence, but girls did state they think their parents’ behaviors influence whether or not they are active. And, on the opposite end, when asked why they do not participate in OAs, respondents did not directly say it was because their parents do not model or encourage them to be active outdoors. In addition, respondents believe the behaviors of their female peers’ and friends’ parents influence their peers’ and friends’ participation in outdoor activities. For example, some respondents feel that if a girl’s parents are active outdoors the girl, as a result of parental modeling or encouragement, will be active outdoors, as well.

Parental modeling and encouragement of outdoor activity.

Girls strongly believe parents influence their own participation in OAs as well as their female peers’ and friends’ participation in outdoor activities. Twelve of these sixteen respondents emphasized parental influence at least three times during their interviews.
Sixteen of the twenty-four respondents believe modeling from parents influences girls’ participation in outdoor activities, and eight girls specifically said parental encouragement is an incentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Many of the respondents seem to understand that parents influence their child’s actions, and most girls revealed that at least one of their parents participates in at least one outdoor activity. Sixteen respondents said their mothers participate in OAs, and 16 said their fathers participate in outdoor activities. Initially 10 girls said their parents do not participate in outdoor activities, however, but five of these girls later recalled at least one outdoor activity a parent has done in the past. There was no difference between the number of girls who think their parents are active or inactive outdoors between the high-, middle-, and low-scoring respondents.

Thirteen respondents said they do OAs with their mothers. Thirteen respondents also said they participate in OAs with their dads. No respondents emphasized their participation with their fathers, and no differences were found between survey scoring respondents responses regarding participation in OAs with parents.

Girls voiced their opinions about parental influence on girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Respondent #5 described how her parents have influenced her outdoor activity throughout her life:

Well, my parents are really outdoorsy, and they like to go outside, so they’ve never held me inside. They’ve never, like, kind of sheltered me, I guess. They’ve let me go outside, experience things, and they’ve given me opportunities to, like, go camping to see what it’s really like. And then, I’ve done that ever since I was a little kid, probably since I was like one or two. We would go camping and... just hang out with our friends, my parents’ friends, and... I just got used to it, and we did fun stuff, so I enjoyed all the stuff that we did. So, I guess, I just had the opportunity, and maybe some people don’t when they’re
younger, and that, when they don’t they don’t really like know it until they’re older and then they’re like skeptical about it, kind of.

Respondent #6 also said that her mother is responsible for her own activity levels. She believes other girls’ parents have a similar influence on their daughters. When asked why she thinks some girls participate in outdoor activities while other girls do not, R#6 answered, “Because their parents make them get out of the house. Like, I know my mom always goes, ‘... it’s a nice day. You need to get out of the house and do something.’”

Other girls believe parents have a less direct influence on their activity. Rather than being told to go outside, R#2 saw her father as a model for her own participation in outdoor activity. “I have always wanted to be outside since I was little,” she revealed then added, “Because that’s how my dad was when he was a kid, and I like the way he turned out, and I just want to be able to be like that…”

*Parental modeling of inactivity outdoors.*

On the other hand, respondents also believe their parents’ as well as other girls’ parents’ modeling of inactivity outdoors can result in their own or other girls’ inactivity outdoors. When asked why her peers and friends are not active outdoors, R#3 said, “I think some people just, like, that’s how they were raised. Like, their parents are kind of always working, so they don’t really know what to do, so they just sit on the couch and watch TV, or they don’t really have... the physical ability... their bodies just won’t be able to do it.”

Respondent #12, a low-scoring respondent, drew conclusions from her parents’ lack of outdoor activity modeling. When asked why girls do or do not participate, she said, “Some,
probably, their parents didn’t. Like me - like most of the time my parents never went camping and stuff when they were younger. So I think it’s just parental stuff.”

Respondent #20 has a similar view: “Well, I think it’s way easier if your parents did, and so when you’re younger, you did that kind of thing, and then maybe you go away from it a little bit, and then you remember how fun it was. And then some people were never raised around it, so they just don’t ever think to do it.”

Family outdoor activity participation.

When asked what outdoor activities they do with their families, 14 of the 24 respondents said they participate in active outdoor activities, as opposed to sedentary outdoor activities, with their family. Only two out of the seven low-scoring respondents said they participate in active outdoor activities with their family, while six out of eight of the middle-scoring group and six out of nine of the high-scoring group said the same. And while 16 respondents said their mothers do OAs and 16 said their fathers do OAs, ten girls could not specifically name a single outdoor activity they do with their parents. Six respondents directly said they do not do OAs with their family, and four of those six were low-scoring survey respondents.

Nine respondents said they enjoy outdoor activities with their brothers, and four respondents said they enjoy outdoor activities with their sisters. Respondent #15 believes family members other than parents have the ability to influence girls’ outdoor activity participation. When asked why she thinks some girls are more active than others, she said,

... maybe they have older brothers or older sisters. Like, I have an older brother, and he’s my idol, and I love him to death. Like, I do everything he did. Like, even when I was
younger I would go outside and just watch him and do anything I could to just be like him. And some girls have older sisters where they’re just kind of, like, girly-girls, and it’s just kind of like how they are. And they, like, want to follow in their footsteps. But in my case, I want to follow in my brother’s footsteps. And that’s how some people are.

While some girls are active outdoors with their family, some girls are more active with their friends. For example, R#3, when explaining why she would rather participate with her friends, said, “… that’s just kind of the stage that I’m at where it’s a lot more fun to be with friends than with family.”

**Peer Influence**

When respondents were asked why they do or do not participate in OAs, they did not directly state their OA participation or lack thereof was because of the influence of their female friends or peers. Yet, when asked what they do with their friends in their free time, nine respondents revealed their friends influence whether or not they participate in outdoor activities. As a result, relevance can be found from what respondents say about the OAs their friends do and the OAs, if any, respondents do with their friends as well as what respondents perceive their friends think about outdoor activities. Only one of the seven low-scoring respondents said friends influence her participation in outdoor activities.

**Perceived female peers’ inactivity outdoors.**

As far as many of the respondents are concerned, their female friends and peers are not active outdoors. Eighteen respondents said their female friends are not active outdoors. Six of the nine high-, five of the eight middle-, and all seven of the low-scoring survey respondents
said their friends are not active outdoors. In addition, 13 respondents said they think their female friends and peers do not care about outdoor activities. No noteworthy differences were found between the survey scoring groups in this category.

While all but one of the girls said they have participated in outdoor activities with their friends, the same amount also stated that they participate in just as many sedentary indoor activities with their friends in their free time. For example, 21 respondents said they enjoy technology-based indoor activities – video games, computers, cell phones – with their friends in their free time.

High-scoring respondent #3 says she knows some girls who are not active. She said, “… I have friends that are just inside all the time. And lots of times I’ll try to get them outside and they won’t.”

Many girls have friends who would rather do indoor activities. When asked what activities she likes to do with her friends, respondent #19 replied, “… most of my friends aren’t very active, so just more like hanging out, sitting around, eating… watching TV, playing video games, stuff like that. Board games, blah, blah, blah.”

When asked if she knew many girls who participated in outdoor activities at her school, respondent #5 answered, “… some people don’t really like to do outdoor activities and there’s only, like, five people, like, in my really close group of friends, and we usually don’t really do much stuff outside because either, like, we’re all tired or we just really don’t want to go outside.”
**Perceptions of female peers’ and friends’ activity outdoors.**

Ten respondents from the high- and middle-scoring categories say they know other girls who participate in outdoor activities. Respondents in the low-scoring category did not say they know friends or peers who participate in outdoor activities. Twenty respondents said they enjoy nature-based OAs with their friends in their free time – three girls mentioning this idea twice and eight saying the same at least three times throughout their interviews. In addition, 18 respondents said they enjoy participating, with their friends, in outdoor activities with social aspects in their free time. Nature-based and social OAs can be one in the same. Finally, every respondent was able to name at least one OA they think, but do not necessarily know, other girls may participate in.

When asked what she likes to do with her friends in her free time, R#6 said, “Tan – like, just lay in the yard on towels and stuff. We watch the river and just like mess around…. we like taking pictures. Yah, just hang out outside and just be in the nice weather.” Her description encompasses girls’ desire to participate in OAs with friends while interacting socially – “hang out” – as well as simply relax. More often than not, when girls were asked what social OAs they like to do with their friends, “hanging out” somewhere outdoors, perhaps while walking or biking, was a common response, and no further description was given for the meaning of “hanging out” other than talking or just relaxing.
What girls do with their girl friends in their free time.

Seven girls said they do more indoor activities than outdoor activities with their friends. Only two girls said they do more outdoor activities with their friends. Ten respondents said they do more indoor activities with friends when inclement weather is a concern.

Concerning the activities she does with her friends, R#2 said, “We go to the mall a lot…. In the summer, we’ll go downtown and walk around. We’ll go to someone’s house and play on the Wii a lot and play Rock Band and games like that. And in the winter, we go ice skating.”

Respondent #3 described the activities she does with her friends and also reveals how she participates in outdoor activities with her friends more often than with her parents. She said, “Lots of times, we’ll go to the mall, or we’ll stay at someone’s house, and we’ll have big eating fests, or we’ll make cookies. Sometimes we’ll just hang out and watch TV and movies. Lots of times we’ll make up dances together which is really fun. Listen to music. Just hang out.” Regarding outdoor activities, R#3 describes how her experience has changed, saying, “I used to always go on bike rides with my family, and now I just go with friends, and they’re not as long…. Like, when we’ll go skiing together, it won’t be as long as I go with my parents because we’ll get cold, and we’ll say ’Let’s just go.’... That’s more fun to us than rather than the entire family time.”

Respondent #5 and her friends do more indoor activities than outdoor activities. She said, “Mainly, it’s inside at someone’s house watching a movie, or we go to the movies, or we take like a road trip somewhere. But mainly, it’s pretty much inside unless it’s like a specific trip that’s planned.”
Past, Present, and Future Participation in Outdoor Activities

Girls in the study were asked questions related to the amount of time they spend outdoors now compared to the amount of time they spent outdoors as a child as well as questions related to their future outdoor activity rates. The majority of respondents said that they are getting outdoors less and participating in outdoor activities less now than they did in their childhood. In addition, girls responded that they hope to or want to get outdoors more in the future. Yet, most girls think that they will have less time for outdoor activities in the future. Knowing why respondents perceive they are getting out more or less now than in the past or how they will get out more or less in the future can reveal additional incentives or disincentives to their participation in outdoor activities.

Respondents’ perceived disincentives to OAs as they relate to past participation.

Twenty-two respondents said they do not participate in outdoor activities as much as they did when they were younger. Sixteen respondents emphasized this point at least three times, but three respondents contradicted themselves by saying they are outdoors more now than in their youth. Fourteen girls said they do not participate in the same OAs as they did in their youth – a point that was emphasized at least three times by five different respondents.

The girls in this study shared their views on what is keeping them from participating in outdoor activities like they did in their youth. Respondent #2 said she used to play outside more in her youth. She has more access to technology now which has replaced her “stupid little games” of her childhood. “I probably spend less time outside now because I used to just play stupid little games when I was little,” she said, “and now I just, if I get bored, I can play the
Wii or something. I guess with the technology advances there’s less reasons to go outside. But I definitely played more outside when I was little.”

Respondent #9 also played more games outside when she was little. More time, her dog, and her neighbors all helped facilitate more outdoor activity during her childhood. She explained:

Well, when I was little, I was outside so much more. I had a dog, so that helped me go outside a lot and play with him, and then I played outside with my neighbors all the time. That was pretty much the only thing to do I guess was, like, make up games and play outside all the time – play, like, kick the can, hide-and-seek, all that. Now, I just, it’s hard for me to even find spare time with the homework and all that, but I’d rather be inside than outside now than when I was little. I don’t know, I feel like I had more energy when I was little – to just run around and get it all out.

Respondent #10 also had more fun playing games outside with her friends in her youth. Like R#2, she does not enjoy those games like she used to. She said,

Well, I was outdoors way more when I was little than I am right now. Just, I think because being, like, younger and having, like, all your middle school play friends and stuff. And you, like, go and you play tag outside and you can amuse yourself for hours, and I think that’s what we used to do a lot, play on the trampoline and all sorts of stuff. And I don’t think playing tag is that fun anymore, and so I’m not outside playing tag with everyone and everyone’s getting older and getting more busy...

Respondents are busier now than in the past

Along with decreased interest in games, girls say they are getting busier. Of the 22 respondents who said they are less active now than in their youth, 11 respondents said they are outdoors less now because they are too busy or have less free time. Respondent #12 said,
When I was little, we had, like, a swing set in my neighbor’s yard, and I always played with my neighbors outside when I was little and swing and stuff. So, I was out there a lot. And now, since I have more homework and school and stuff, more stuff going on, (I am) doing stuff less outside and stuff.

Respondent #4 shared many girls’ views on the influence lack of time has on their activity rates. She said, “I probably spent more time outside when I was younger. I guess it’s because I had more free time and just went outside all the time just to play around…. I do sometimes but I just have less free time to go do stuff like that, and sometimes I’d rather just relax.”

Respondent #21 is also very busy. She explained, “… when I was little, I was out there, like, every day on my little bike, and now it’s changed because I’m really busy. And I have other things that I have to do to get done before I can have free time or just go outside and just have fun.”

Respondents’ perceived incentives to OAs as they relate to future participation.

Twenty girls in this study have hopes of getting outdoors more or think they will get outdoors more in the future. No difference was found between the scoring groups for this category of questioning. Respondents supplied a myriad of answers when asked how they envision how they will participate in OAs more in the future.

Respondent #2 thinks her future holds more outdoor activity opportunities. She said, “I think I’m going to become more active being outside because I will have my driver’s license here pretty soon, so I don’t get stuck at my house and get bored and I can just go and do stuff…. I want to be a photographer, so I’m hoping I’ll be outside a whole lot more when I’m older so I
can take pictures out there of stuff.” She sees both access to a car and her career goals as avenues to increase her time outdoors.

Respondent #7 thinks her mother holds her back from participating in outdoor activities. When asked if she thinks she will have more or less time for outdoor activities in the future, she responded, “I think I’ll have more because, I don’t know, my mom is hard to deal with when it comes to the outdoors. I mean, she likes it but she… I don’t know, it’s never the right temperature, so, like, it doesn’t bother me too bad, and my friends like it too, so I think me and my friends would go somewhere.”

When asked the same question, R#9 answered,

I hope in college that like I’ll be outside a lot because when you go visit campuses people are always outside throwing Frisbees and stuff, and I think being away from home I’ll need something, like, an escape after all that homework because I know college will be hard, so I think I’ll be outside more…. So, hopefully it increases as I get older because I’ll find more time to be outside. And, like, even doing chores outside would be even better than what it is now.

Respondents’ perceived disincentives to OAs as they relate to future participation.

In addition, 18 respondents feel they will participate less in OAs in the future, and 15 of these respondents feel the decrease in activity will be a result of their increased time constraints. Of these 15, six of the high-, two of the middle-, and all seven of the low-scoring respondents believe they will be just as busy if not more busy in the future.

Respondent #4 sees how busy her parents and siblings are, and she believes this is foretelling of her busy future. When asked if she will be more or less active outdoors in the future, she said, “I would like it to be more outside, but honestly I think it’s going to go down a
little bit, and I’ll just have to try harder to go outside than I do now.” She continued, “Like jobs and school and just everything. I don’t know, it seems like my parents are a lot busier than I am, and along with my brother and sister - they’re like in their twenties - they seem a lot busier.”

Respondent #17 wants to carry on her parents’ influence despite the perceived inevitability of increased time constraints due to more responsibilities in the future. She said,

I think it’ll get shorter because there’s more responsibilities. College is going to be busy, then getting a job. There’s less free time that you have. But I still want to find the time to go outside because my parents have showed me that you can have a job and a family and still be outside and active. So, I feel like I should keep that going. I think it’s important because it really brought our family close, at least when I was younger. It stayed throughout my life. We just became, like, a bonding experience being outside all together.

Respondent #15’s career goals appear to be standing in the way of her future participation in outdoor activities. In response to the same question she said:

... I have a feeling that it will be less as I get more into college and more into what I want to be kind of. I, like, really want to be like a doctor or something, so I kind of want to focus on that. As I get older and I have a job, I have a feeling that I will be pulled away more from outdoors than I wish I would. It just kind of makes sense to me because older people, they have more of a choice. But I have a feeling I won’t make the choice to be outside, and I would just want to be inside. You have to work, you have kids, you have to go baby sit…. I just feel like I’m going to be outdoors less as I’m older.

**Perceived Benefits of Outdoor Activity**

When asked why they think it is good for girls to participate in OAs, every respondent said there are benefits of outdoor activities. Three respondents, however, could not specifically
name a single reason why it would be good to get other girls outdoors more. The other 21 girls, however, shared dozens of benefits. Sixteen respondents believe outdoor activities benefit girls for the entertainment or fun factor as well as for the belief there are more interesting opportunities outdoors rather than indoors. Fourteen respondents said they think OAs offer physical and mental health benefits to girls. The perceived benefits girls believe OAs provide can also be thought of as incentives to their participation in outdoor activities. Additionally, six respondents said OAs give girls freedom or chances to relax away from the stresses of everyday life, and five respondents said OAs provide a social outlet for their female peers. Finally, five respondents said OAs are great learning opportunities.

*Entertainment and interest.*

Sixteen respondents believe OAs provide benefits like fun, entertainment, and interesting opportunities for girls. Ten respondents reemphasized the idea that girls are more entertained and have more interesting options outdoors rather than indoors.

Enjoyment and health were on R#11’s mind when she responded to the question about why girls should get outside more. She said, “You live longer and... you try new things. Like, if you start liking the outdoors, you find that you try more outdoors, and, like, when you’re inside, you’re just... watching a new TV show which is boring.... It’s more, like, fun and you actually have a life when you’re outside.”

Respondent #17 went into a lengthy description of the benefits she thinks outdoor activities can offer girls. She thinks the outdoors offer health benefits, interesting opportunities, and a venue to forge friendships. She explained:
... I think the (girls) that aren’t very active are missing out on something that they don’t really know that they’re missing out on. If they learned that, they’d be like, “This is so cool.” There’s so many opportunities out there - that it’s not confined to one thing.... There’s so many opportunities. I think a lot of people don’t know all of them. You have to open their eyes a little bit.... They’ll miss out on a big part of life. I grew up being outside, and I feel I’m the person I am today because I was outside. It was bonding time with anyone I’m outside with. In eighth grade, we had an outdoor club, and we’d go camping. I still feel really close to my eighth grade class because we’d go camping, and winter camping, or even if it was car camping, it’s still fun and you’re still outside, and you have to be around each other all the time. It’s really fun.... For health, too - physical and mental health. Sometimes, you need a break from everything. If you’re so busy all the time, you’re going to be fried.

According to R#24, girls should be given the opportunity to see the wonders around them. In addition, she thinks the outdoors will give girls alternatives to unhealthy lifestyles. She said, “They should see what’s around them and, like, enjoy the different things Montana has to offer. And also, like, there’s so many things that people do because they’re bored, but there’s so many things people could do besides doing drugs or drinking alcohol or doing whatever they do.”

When asked if it would be good to get girls outdoors more and why, R#19 said getting girls outdoors would be good because the outdoors offer opportunities for activity. She said, “I think if they see, like, how much better things could be than just sitting at home.... there’s a lot of girls that would be like, ‘Oh, what am I supposed to do? There’s nothing to do.’ There’s always something active you can do (outdoors).”

*Perceived health benefits of outdoor activities.*

Out of the nine girls who believe outdoor activity has physical health benefits, five respondents specifically said outdoor activities can help with our country’s obesity problem.
Respondent #14 mentioned obesity and the benefits of activity outside. She stated, “I think it is - especially with like obesity so much on the rise - ... I think it would be good if more people were active.... I know I at least can get a lot more done exercising if I’m outside than if I’m inside on a stationary bike.”

When asked if she thought it would be good for girls to get out more and why, R#9 stated:

"Obviously, the exercise problem we have in America... I think there’s just so much junk on TV and so much stuff that you can’t really learn from just sitting inside. And being outside, you can learn about yourself, you can learn about other things, you can see other things, meet, like, other people, just be away from you comfort zone - which I think is important for all girls.

Respondent #23 passionately stated her beliefs in the benefits of outdoor activity:

“Being active in the outdoors is important for all people to stay healthy and live a good life. Health is important and it wouldn’t be fun to be inside all the time. I think everyone needs and deserves to be outside.”

**Respondents’ Ideas to get Girls more Active Outdoors**

By listening to the ideas respondents have regarding how outdoor practitioners can increase girls’ participation in OAs, this study has uncovered additional perceived incentives for girls’ participation in OAs. While no single idea stood out from the rest, girls in the study vocalized a myriad of ideas on how outdoor instructors, educators, and schools could get girls more active in the outdoors. They suggested numerous ways in which outdoor programs could appeal to more girls. Furthermore, they had suggestions for school teachers and administrators
to get girls outdoors more. The following ideas, listed in order of prevalence, were suggested by respondents more than 10 times:

1. give girls the choice of numerous options of OAs;
2. provide OAs with major social components;
3. offer girls comfort and relief from constraints and stresses;
4. create new programs, clubs, camps, or organizations;
5. use marketing strategies targeting girls;
6. and keep girls’ desires in mind when facilitating outdoor activities.

*Provide choice.*

Of the 24 respondents, 16 said the best way to get girls outdoors more would be to give them a selection of interesting opportunities. When asked what she would do if she was in charge of getting girls outdoors more, R#2 focused on providing choice, replying, “I would probably pick a really fun sport that is really fun to play outdoors for starters, and I’d do it on, like, a nice day so that they’d enjoy it…” She then added, “… then I’d move on to… tons of different activities, and I’d let them choose an activity they’d like to try, and if they like it, that’s good, and if they don’t they could try a different activity.”

Respondent #16 thinks girls should be given lots of choices, as well. In addition to assuring girls a warm climate, she suggested: “I would divide them, like, some girls go play sports in this area, and some girls can read and relax and, like, tan if they want.” She also said, “Try to find a common ground, I guess. Try to satisfy each one of their needs. A lot of girls go play sports when they’re outside. Other girls like to sit around read books, and tan and stuff.”
Provide a social outlet.

Being with friends and making new ones came up as a topic of interest in several interviews. Thirteen girls suggested that outdoor activity facilitators should offer opportunities for girls to interact socially whether it be with other girls, with boys, or with a diverse group of kids. For example, R#9 said, “... just being with your peers and other people you don’t know would help me be outside... so, like, getting, like, a big kind of game together.... even, like, a run for a charity - I know that people would almost do it because they want to help out, so that would get people outside to participate.”

Respondent #13 also likes the idea of being outdoors with friends. When asked what she would do if she were in charge of getting girls outdoors more, she said, “... kicking the soccer ball around or throwing, like, Frisbee, or just like planning a camping trip with all your friends or something because... it’s more fun when you’re with, like, a bunch of your friends that you enjoy hanging out with a lot.”

Similarly, R#19 explained:

I think that a lot of time when people are doing stuff alone, they get bored because I know I do when I’m doing something alone. Just say I’m going on a hike by myself, it’s very boring. But if you have someone to interact with, then you’re like talking just a little bit, or just interacting with people kind of makes everything a little bit funner.

Offer girls comfort and relief from constraints and stresses.

Twelve respondents suggested outdoor practitioners should offer girls comfort, rest, and relief from constraints. Six respondents stressed these points at least twice during their interviews. In addition, ten interviewees specifically said other girls do not want to participate
in outdoor activities because they would rather relax or they are lazy. Respondent #13 suggested offering girls opportunities to take it easy outdoors. She said, “I’d probably just do activities that maybe don’t involve, like, really hard things…. like backpacking and stuff that (girls) probably would enjoy, but just simple things… like swimming...”

Respondent #20 suggests offering girls opportunities to participate in outdoor activities with only girls – an environment that is less intimidating than a setting with boys. She said, “... I wouldn’t be intimidated, but some girls would be intimidated, like, on a ski trip and all these ski dudes are there. But, if it’s just girls, they would just bring their friends, and it wouldn’t be so intimidating.” Bringing friends along would also be appealing. She also added, “... some guys seem to be more competitive, and if girls are like, ‘Oh no! I like him and he’s going to see me suck...’”

Respondent #19 wants girls to be able to be active outdoors with other girls. She believes girls would be more comfortable being active outdoors if other, active girls are there, too. She stated, “... if there’s a whole bunch of people that are going snowboarding and a whole bunch of girls come then they’ll have more of someone that’s, like, like you.” She thinks that a group of girls would be less competitive than a group of boys and girls. “I think some more competitive people will take it differently than the people that aren’t so competitive,” she said. “But if you have a group of people that aren’t so competitive, they can kind of make each other more competitive just because they’re like, ‘Oh, okay. These guys are kind of at our same level, so then they might start trying harder.” According to R#19, a less competitive environment may allow girls to experience greater social and personal comfort in the outdoors.
Offer outdoor activity programs.

Outdoor clubs, camps, and programs, according to 12 girls, could be a good way to get girls more active outside. Three respondents emphasized outdoor programs at least twice. Along with social aspects, R#18 suggested forming a girls’ club for girls to try new things. She said, “… like a club, or get girls together, have designated days we’d go do a certain activity outdoors…. Get people social, interested in outdoors, friend-oriented, all be together…” She went on to suggest making participation optional and emphasizing friendship:

I wouldn’t want to make people, but I’d encourage people to try it, and I’d want my friends to do it with me. But I’m open to meeting new people, and hopefully everyone that did it could get know each other at some point - get to know each other - open their friend range…. Not force them, but tell them it’s something really cool, and they should give it a chance. If they don’t like it they don’t have to pursue, but everything deserves a first chance. And they should get out and try because you get to meet new people, and maybe try things that you’ve never done before and end up loving them, and you wouldn’t’ want to miss the chance to do something you could end up loving for the rest of your life.

Respondent #11 suggests using camps to get girls – even the “girly girls”- outdoors. She said, “… they should maybe try some camps. Like, the church camps I do are really, like, they’re just fun…. There’s even girly girls that go to those camps and they get outdoors and stuff but like… the girly girls... you’d probably have to take a boy with.”

Respondent #17 also thinks organizing a group would be a great way to get girls out more. She took it one step further by adding the element of an all-girls atmosphere to a camp. When asked what she would do if she were in charge of getting girls more active outdoors, she said, “I’d organize a camp, up in Flathead or something, and have it be all girls,” she suggested. She then explained,
There’d be no pressure, no competition between male and female. Show them that they can do all the stuff that they might think just guys can do. Set up canoeing and hiking and wakeboarding - all the stuff that society portrays (to) us to be like guy stuff, and show girls that they can do it, too. And they might learn that they might love something that they’ve never tried before because they think that they shouldn’t or something.

**Ideas for school-based outdoor activity programs.**

Related to respondents’ ideas to create more outdoor clubs and program, a couple of respondent believe schools should take responsibility in order to increase girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Respondent #14 placed herself in the shoes of a school administrator, saying, “… if I was an administrator… maybe (I would) talk with teachers - like science teachers having more, like, outdoor field trips…. I did a lot of outdoor field trips for science in middle school, so I feel like - I’m not sure why - but once you get to high school there’s less, like, that sort of thing.”

Aside from the classroom, R#20 felt schools could offer more opportunities for girls to be active outdoors. She suggested,

... at schools you can make... organized activities.... in middle school, we had an outdoor club, and it was the most fun thing ever because you didn’t have to be experienced or anything, and you could just be with friends, so it wasn’t overwhelming or anything. You didn’t feel like you didn’t know what you were doing or anything.... where it’s just, like, everyone’s welcome. You don’t have to have any experience, and it’s with friends, so that’s more encouraging also.

Respondent #19 would also choose to get girls outdoors through the school. She also finds that an all-girls environment would not restrict girls’ activity like a mixed gender setting. She said, “I would make... just girls’ gym class and just a boys’ gym class, just because you
always find that girls are more active and doing more stuff if they’re not around a guy that they’re like, ‘Ooh!’”

When probed about why she thinks an all-girls setting would be beneficial, R#19 added,

(The girls will) either just pretend, like, they can’t do anything, so then the guys - they’ll think - will give them more attention or something like that…. I just find that when girls are not around guys, they act completely different than when we’re around a whole bunch of guys. They’ll either try and get all of their attention, or they’ll, like, just pretend that they can’t do something…. I just think that (the girls) would act more, kind of, mature, I guess - just because they won’t be around guys to distract them, and the girls, when they’re all together, they kind of focus more, I think.

*Market outdoor activities and outdoor activity programs.*

Respondents have great ideas for getting girls outdoors. Eleven respondents thought if they were responsible for increasing girls’ participation in OAs, they would market their programs to girls through advertisements, videos, slide shows, or talks. Respondents offered many ideas when they were asked how to promote outdoor activities particularly to girls who are inactive outdoors. Their ideas for marketing can reveal additional incentives for girls to participate in outdoor activities.

Respondent #19 wants to make girls feel welcome to do things that are usually considered boys’ activities. She said, “... you can just take, like, football as an example. Like, girls can do it, but no girls will do it because... they’ll just be like, ‘Oh my god I don’t want to be a football player and be the only girl on the team.’” She then suggested, “So, I think that if there were more girls, like, if they put it more towards girls and guys, and not just towards guys, then the girls would be more interested.” She also suggested promoting outdoor activities with posters that specifically say “for girls.”
Respondent #3 suggested a couple of ways to promote outdoor activities for girls. She thinks educational talks and a video series would drive girls to participate in outdoor activities. She advised, “I would probably talk to them, and I would probably go and do the activities and take videos of it, and show them how much fun it is.... And then I’d probably take them out and show them how easy and fun it is to just go do something active and outside than just sitting inside.” She continued by suggesting talks about the benefits of outdoor activity, saying,

Somehow, convince them that the outdoors is better than the mall or how the outdoors is better than what they’re doing now.... instead of painting your toe nails inside at your house, go outside and do it and read a book. It’s so easy. In the summer, whenever I want to brush my hair or get a tan, or paint my nails, I always go outside to do it because you don’t have to worry about the mess. You don’t have to worry about what you look like outside.

*Keep girls’ needs and desires in mind.*

Eleven respondents, when asked what they would do if placed in charge of getting girls more active outdoors, said they would listen to the girls and keep their needs and wants in mind when developing and offering opportunities for adolescent girls to participate in outdoor activities.

Respondent #8 thinks research will help practitioners find out what girls desire through outdoor activities. If she were in charge of getting girls more active outdoors she said,

(I would) research fun games and stuff that you could do outside and all that stuff, so that they would be, like, more entertained and would want to actually go outside instead of, like, forcing them to and like, with a big variety of stuff to do, too. For someone who just likes, I don’t know, reading, like find something that they would do.... That’s what the research would come in handy for. And then, just keep in mind that everyone likes different things.
**Outdoor Activity Gender Categorization Exercise**

The respondents participated in an activity in which they divided slips of paper with different outdoor activities listed on them into three different categories: girls’ activities, boys’ activities, or neutral activities. This activity was meant to reveal any additional incentives or disincentive girls have to participate in OAs, whether they are consciously aware of those incentives and disincentives or not. A copy of the categorization exercise can be found in Appendix viii.

During this section of the interview, seven respondents said they felt girls do not participate in outdoor activities because of society’s influence. According to these seven girls, while they did not use the specific phrase, “society prevents me from participating,” society appears to influence their actions or the actions of their peers. Some girls believe more outdoor activities are designated as “for boys only.” Some girls think that other people negatively label girls who participate in certain outdoor activities that are too masculine for girls. Three girls specifically said that labeling outdoor activities as either boys’ or girls’ activities is stereotyping. Only one girl, however, moved beyond the stereotypes, saying all outdoor activities are neutral – boys and girls can participate in any outdoor activity they want.

After two minutes of deliberation, one respondent decided to place all the outdoor activity slips in the neutral category, while the other 23 girls took their time dividing the activity slips into the three different categories. Thirteen girls placed more activities in the boys’ outdoor activities category than the girls’ category. Six girls placed more activities in the girls’ outdoor activities category. And four girls placed an equal amount of activities in both the boys’ and girls’ outdoor activities category.
Out of the 32 activities, the respondents designated boys’ activities 123 times and girls’ activities 97 times. Neutral activities were designated 548 times throughout all of the interviews. Seventeen girls assigned hunting to the boys’ activities category. None of the girls designated hunting as a girl’s activity – even the three girls who said they hunt. Fifteen girls assigned fishing to the boys’ category, and, again, none of the girls placed fishing in the girls’ activities category. Girls assigned golf to the boys’ activity category 10 times and one girl said it was a girl’s activity. Ten girls also designated windsurfing as a boy’s activity, and no one assigned it to the girls’ activity category. The results of this exercise can be seen in Table 4.

Also seen in Table 4, seventeen respondents assigned outdoor meditating to the girls’ activity category. Sketching or painting appeared in the girls’ outdoor activity category 15 times. Respondents designated reading as a girl’s outdoor activity 14 times. Thirteen girls put bird watching in the girls’ activity category, and 12 girls put nature viewing in the girls’ category. The respondents did not put any of these activities in the boys’ outdoor activity category. After the girls placed the slips in their respective categories, they were asked why they designated the activities as they did.

*Basis for categorizing boys’ outdoor activities.*

In response to the probe of question #13 - why respondents categorized each activity as boys’, girls’, or neutral - girls shared their reasoning. Eighteen girls rationalized their results for question #13 by saying they based boys’ outdoor activities on activities they see males do or males do more often than girls. Thirteen respondents said they based their categorization of boys’ activities on what females do not do or what they do not like. According to seven girls,
when they explained why hunting was a boy’s activity, boys like to kill and destroy and girls do not. And eight girls based their boys’ outdoor activities on those activities they think require more determination, strength, or intensity or those activities that seem more rugged, difficult, or extreme.

When asked to explain her categorization of boys’ activities, R#4 said,

... because it didn’t seem like girls would like to sail a lot because my mom doesn’t like it and my sister never did, and it didn’t seem like a very girlish activity. And hunting? Mostly guys do that. Like, my dad and my brothers do that a lot, but me and my mom and sister never did. And fishing? Kind of the same with hunting. Girls don’t do that as much as guys do.... when I think of golf, I don’t think of girls playing golf. I think of like Tiger Woods or something like that.... There’s not a lot of famous women golfers.

When asked why she put certain activities in the boys’ category, respondent #9 said based her results on sports that seemed more extreme. She explained,

They’re more, like, dangerous sports, I guess. More like snowmobiling and sailing and hunting and surfing and windsurfing - you kind of just see guys doing because they’re more extreme. And then hunting and fishing... guys have that time just to go out and they like to shoot animals I guess. Like, I know girls do, but I feel, for the most part, I feel boys are the ones that do it and like to, I guess, kill animals.

To explain why she put fishing and other activities in the boys’ category, R#11 said,

I always see guys fishing and I’m always the girl that would go and it’s all my uncles and that’s just what I learned and hunting the same way. I always see guys playing golf.... and guys, like, climbing things, and I always see guys snowmobiling. And I know, like, my dad grew up and all him and his friends always surfed, and I don’t know many girls that do...

And even though R#11 fishes and hunts, she still says they are boys’ activities. To clarify her responses to the exercise, she continued her response, saying,

Because I’m usually, like, the only girl, and almost every guy that I know fishes and hunts. And I don’t know many girls that I know fish. Quite a few girls I know hunt, but...
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Table 4. Girls were asked to sort outdoor activities, seen in the left-most column, as either a boys’, girls’, or neutral activity. Totals for the number of girls who categorized each outdoor activity as boys’, girls’, or neutral are seen on the right-most columns. The bottom two rows show the total number of activities each girl designated as either boys’ or girls’.
I just grew up, like, thinking... that’s boy-ee. And, I don’t know, that’s just like the manly stuff, I guess, but I don’t really care because I still do it.

**Basis for categorizing girls’ outdoor activities.**

When respondents explained why they categorized certain outdoor activities as girls’ activities, 15 of them said they based girls’ OAs on those they think girls do or do more often than boys. In addition, 14 respondents said they placed certain activities in the girls’ category because they feel girls have certain characteristics, or stereotypical traits, which make them more apt to choose the activities in the girls’ category. Finally, 11 girls based the girls’ OAs on those which they believe boys do not do.

In response to the same question, R#12 said, “... most of the time I just think of, like, girls doing that more because they’re more patient and more gentle, you can say.” Later, she was asked why she thought boys did more intense things. She replied, “Probably because they’re not afraid of just doing, like, crazy stuff. They’re not scared of doing something that might be dangerous. Girls... think about it more before they do it, so they’re more careful.”

Respondent #11 went into detail to explain why she categorized each activity. She said, “… I don’t know many guys that meditate in the outdoors, and girls like nature viewing, and I know a lot of girls that paint outdoors.... and a lot of, like, old ladies I know like bird watching, so I figured that would be a girl thing.” She later added, “… girls just like that stuff because girls are more, like, kind of relaxed, mostly, and guys are like, ‘Oh, let’s go, like, outside and be strong!’”

One respondent claims that girls are more emotional. Respondent #15 said, ...

... I think that girls painting is a way to express your feelings, and I have a feeling that... girls have more, like, in feelings and more things going on. They’re more emotional, and they have more to express. And then with guys, they don’t really care. I mean they do
care but not enough to where it’s, like, going to be a huge issue. Because girls just, kind of, have huge issues.

Respondent #19 thinks girls like more laid back activities because they do not like to sweat in front of boys. She answered, “... these are more, like, the laid back kind of things, and most girls are, like, they’ll be active, but they’re not going to be so active that they’re like sweating or something like that.” When asked why she thinks girls do not like to sweat, R#19 replied, “Probably just because they’re like, ‘Oh, I’m going to smell nasty.’” She then added, “Or getting (a boy) that’ll be like, ‘Oh, she smells nasty,’ and then they’ll be, like, unattractive or whatever they think.”

One respondent claims that society is responsible for dictating how girls should behave. Respondent #17 said, “It’s kind of, like, society. Girls are supposed to be more, like, calm, and nurturing, I guess. I know guys that do (girls activities), too, but it’s more of a society thing.” She claims teachers perpetuate society’s gender constraints. When asked why she put hunting and fishing in the boys’ category, she explained, “Since I was little, when teachers asked you what you did this weekend, they’d ask the boys if they went hunting or fishing this weekend. You’d have a girl in your class who’d be like, ‘I did, but they didn’t ask me if I did.’ It’s a society thing, too.” Upon further questioning she simply said, “It’s a thing that we have been taught.”

*Basis for categorizing neutral outdoor activities*

Respondents placed far more activities in the neutral category than either the boys’ or girls’ category. Fifteen respondents simply stated the neutral activities were those activities they knew both boys and girls do. Five girls based their neutral categories on those activities
they believed had no gender assignments. When asked why she put certain outdoor activities in
the neutral category, R#24 replied, “Because it’s definitely all something boys and girls can do. I
mean, pretty much anything you set your mind to I’m sure anyone can do it, but I guess it just
depends on their interest.”

Similarly, R#12 said, “Because I looked at them and I just thought that girls and boys
pretty much do this equally.” She continued with a comment about how the media affected her
decision to place certain activities in the neutral category, saying, “… if you watched TV, like, you
just see both boys and girls doing most of this stuff…”

Interestingly, R#18 thinks neutral activities are a sign that more girls are beginning to
participate in activities that have been considered boys’ activities. She explained, “More
activities can be either, and they’re not either girls or boys. Both people do them. I know a lot
of girls and guys that wakeboard. I think girls are getting more into guy things.”

Respondent #8 was the only interviewee to place all 32 outdoor activity slips in the
neutral category. When R#8 was asked to do the exercise, she responded, “I seriously think that
all of them could be in the (neutral category) because there’s all sorts of people that like all
different things. It doesn’t matter if they’re a girl or a guy.” She then placed all the activities in
the neutral category. One other girl, R#3, who also scored in the high range on the survey,
mentioned all the activities could be placed in the neutral box, but she only categorized 16 OAs
in the neutral category.

Throughout the categorization exercise, five girls mentioned the exercise was asking
them what outdoor activities boys and girls do stereotypically. For additional consideration,
fourteen girls mentioned they know girls who do one or more of the activities they placed in the
boys’ outdoor activities category. Finally, four girls said they participate in activities which they placed in the boys’ category.

**Major Reoccurring Incentive Themes**

Reoccurring themes arose throughout major areas of questioning. For example, the idea that interest in nature and the aesthetics of nature are an incentive for girls to participate in OAs was mentioned by every respondent during the interview process. Each respondent stated nature’s aesthetics or interest in nature at least once whether responding that this theme is a reason why either themselves or their peers participate in outdoor activities; whether mentioned as a benefit for girls who participate in outdoor activities; or whether this theme was mentioned as an incentive to participate in a respondent’s dream outdoor activity. The theme of interest in nature or nature’s aesthetics as an incentive to participate in OAs was also emphasized at least twice throughout all themes of questioning by all but one respondent.

Twenty-three respondents also stated social outlets are an incentive throughout all lines of questioning. Whether asked about their peers’ incentives, their friends’ involvement in OAs, their ideas for getting girls more active outdoors, or perceived benefits of OAs, all but one girls said social interactions are an incentive for girls to participate in outdoor activities.

Physical health benefits were brought-up by 20 respondents throughout questioning regarding respondents’ own participation, their peers’ or friends’ participation, as well as perceived benefits of outdoor activities.

Nineteen respondents said freedom, openness, or escape was an incentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities. This theme arose through questions pertaining to
respondents’ own participation in OAs; their perceptions of their peers’ or friends’ incentives to participate in OAs; as well as their perceived benefits of outdoor activities.

Closely related to desires for freedom, openness, or escape, mental health benefits along with rest and relief from stresses were also major themes arising throughout interviews. Sixteen respondents mentioned the importance of mental health benefits, rest and relief, or stress-reduction at least once throughout all lines of questioning. This theme arose through questions regarding respondents’ own incentives to participate in OAs; their ideas to get girls outdoors more; as well as their perceived benefits of outdoor activities.

Sixteen respondents believe learning experiences are an incentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities. This theme arose through questioning regarding respondents’ dream outdoor activities; their perceived benefits of OAs; as well as their own incentives to participate in outdoor activities. Five respondents stressed this incentive at least twice in their interviews. This incentive is closely related to the incentive to appreciate nature and nature’s aesthetics in that interest in nature, nature’s aesthetics, or OAs can be either piqued or fulfilled through participation in learning experiences undertaken through outdoor activities.

Finally, eighteen respondents stated they want to participate in their dream OAs for the unique experience, to say “I did that,” or to do something considered cool. Three of these eighteen respondents also brought up the same incentive when asked why they participate in OAs in general.
**Major Reoccurring Disincentive Themes**

Physical discomfort was atop the list of mentions as disincentives throughout all themed categories of questioning. Every respondent mentioned discomfort as a disincentive at least once throughout the interview process. The theme arose through questions about respondents’ personal disincentives to participate in OAs and their perceptions of their peers’ and friends’ disincentives to participate.

According to respondents’ stated perceptions, peers play a large role in whether girls participate in OAs, as well. According to respondents’ answers to questions regarding their peers’ participation in OAs; their perceptions of peers’ disincentives to participate in OAs; and their answers related to the boys’ and girls’ OA categorization exercise, 24 respondents believe their peers’ lack of involvement in OAs is a disincentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Throughout questions regarding respondents’ dream OAs as well as their parents’ involvement in OAs, 23 respondents hinted that lack of means – money, gear, instruction – and access prevent girls from participating in outdoor activities.

Time and responsibilities are also perceived to be disincentives to girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Twenty-one respondents said lack of time and other responsibilities get in the way of their participation in OAs throughout their interviews. This theme arose through questions regarding respondents’ own disincentives to participate in OAs; reasons respondents do not participate in their dream OAs; as well as questions regarding their past and future participation in outdoor activities.
Thirteen respondents think fear is a disincentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities according to their answers to questions about respondents’ own disincentives to participate in OAs; why they do not do their dream OAs; as well as perceptions of peers’ disincentives to participate in outdoor activities.

Finally, laziness and desires for comfort and relaxation were mentioned as disincentives to girls’ participation in OAs by 10 respondents. This theme arose from questions regarding respondents’ own disincentives as well as their perceptions of peers’ disincentives to participate in outdoor activities.
Chapter 5 – DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

*Introduction*

The respondents in this study live in a region of the state and the country where outdoor activity opportunities abound. Nestled on all sides by national forests, the community of Missoula, Montana, prides itself on its bountiful access to trails, rivers, and mountain peaks. The study of adolescent girls who live in such a region can illuminate the incentives and disincentives to girls’ participation in OAs in a region where access is less of an issue than in a highly urbanized area far from federal lands and other recreational opportunities. Such a study can also give a baseline to compare other similar and dissimilar populations in regions across the country.

The following questions were used to guide the investigation of some of Missoula, Montana’s adolescent girls’ perceptions of outdoor activities:

1. Why do adolescent girls’ outdoor activity participation rates drop-off during adolescence?
2. How might adolescent girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities affect their participation in outdoor activities?
3. And how can outdoor activity practitioners increase adolescent girls’ participation in and enjoyment of outdoor activities?

In response to interview questions which were created and aligned with these overarching guiding questions in mind, respondents revealed several incentives and disincentives to adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities. In addition, respondents revealed an intricate interplay between these incentives and disincentives and many incentives and disincentives to participate in OAs interact with each other to either prevent or promote girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Given respondents’ reports of their own and their peers’ lack
of participation in OAs, somehow the disincentives to participate in OAs are overwhelming the incentives to participate in outdoor activities.

Respondents in this study brought up the following major incentives to girls’ participation in outdoor activities:

- Nature appreciation, nature’s aesthetics, and learning experiences in nature;
- Parental modeling and encouragement;
- Social interactions;
- Physical and mental health benefits;
- And opportunities to do something unique.

In the following discussion sections and sub-sections, each of these incentives will be discussed in more detail and relationships will be illuminated between incentives and disincentives that interact with each other.

The following major disincentives were also mentioned by respondents in this study:

- Physical discomfort due to weather or lack of amenities;
- Fear of animals or the dark;
- Lack of friends’ or peers’ participation in outdoor activities;
- Lack of means in the form of access, money, gear, and instruction;
- Time constraints due to school, work, family, and extracurricular activities;
- And laziness or desires for comfort and relaxation indoors.

These disincentives interact with each other as well as with incentives. The relationships between incentives and disincentives will be discussed further in the discussion sections to follow.

Overall, this discussion aims to describe the several interactions between the major incentives and disincentives. Incentives and disincentives to participate in OAs are intertwined – incentives can overshadow disincentives and disincentives can overpower incentives. Through this examination, concerned parties looking to increase adolescent girls’ participation in OAs can
see how, at least for this particular population, incentives and disincentives interplay with each other to either prevent or promote adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

According to the Outdoor Foundation’s Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, 2010, adolescent girls’ participation in OAs dramatically drops during adolescence. In addition, respondents in this study reveal they participate less in OAs now than in the past and they feel that their peers and friends, for the most part, do not participate in outdoor activities. These statistics hint that somehow disincentives may be overshadowing girls’ incentives to participate in OAs during their adolescent years. An examination of the interplay between incentives and disincentives to adolescent girls’ participation in OAs can help illuminate the possible mechanisms by which, or reasons why girls’ OA participation rates diminish during adolescence.

This examination has included descriptions of respondents’ actual incentives and disincentives as well as their peers’ incentives and disincentives to participate in outdoor activities. This section will describe the broad categories of incentives and then the broad categories of disincentives. Some major incentive and disincentive themes are presented more than once in the analysis because some serve as major categories being acted upon by other incentives or disincentives and they also serve to act upon other major themes. Main sections, entitled after major incentive or disincentive themes, are analyzed as they stand by themselves. Then, sub-headed sections of the analysis will present how the interaction of all major incentive and disincentive themes influence the major-headed sections within which they are presented.

Overall, researchers and OA practitioners must keep in mind that each girl’s needs are different, and OA facilitators, educators, and parents should treat each girl as individuals with unique needs and desires. Each girl’s story provides an example of the myriad of differences
amongst girls. Keeping this in mind, interested parties can explore this case study and compare the respondents’ stories, perceptions, and insight to the stories, needs, and desires of prospective or current clients or pupils. Recommendations for OA practitioners are listed and then explained at the end of the discussion section before the conclusion.

**Nature’s Aesthetics, Nature Appreciation, and Learning Experiences**

Closely intertwined are the themes of nature appreciation and natural aesthetics and the quest for learning experiences through outdoor activities. Every respondent said they enjoy natural surroundings, things in nature, or aesthetics, and every girl but one emphasized this point at least twice in their interviews. Girls’ appreciation of nature and its aesthetics is intimately related to their enjoyment and interest in nature. Their enjoyment and interest in nature is a major driver in participation in outdoor activities. Respondents’ enjoyment and interest in nature, however, is influenced and accompanied by a myriad of other incentives and disincentives to participate in outdoor activities.

Opportunities for learning experiences in nature can influence adolescents’ enjoyment and interest in nature and outdoor activities. The quest for learning experiences through OAs can be spurred by girls’ interest in nature and its aesthetics or the reverse: girls’ learning experiences through OAs can prompt interest in nature and its aesthetics. Either way, both incentives can influence a girls’ participation in, enjoyment of, and interest in outdoor activities. On the other hand, physical discomfort, like poor weather and distaste for mud, bugs, and dirt, along with all the other major disincentive themes, deter girls from participating in outdoor activities. The discussion of major incentives and disincentive themes acting upon girls’
enjoyment and appreciation of nature and nature’s aesthetics will be interwoven within the following discussion themes as all of the major themes influence girls’ interest in and enjoyment of nature.

**Social Influences**

Respondents believe friends’, peers’, and parents’ participation in OAs, or lack of, influences girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Friends’ influence over girls’ lifestyle choices and perceptions of OAs becomes more powerful during adolescence as girls seek approval and guidance less from their parents and family and more from their friends. The following three sub-sections will discuss overall peer and parental influences over girls’ participation in OAs as well as how the disincentive of girls’ concerns with image or appearance affects their outdoor experiences.

**Peer influence.**

Respondents in this study appear to be highly motivated to participate in OAs with their friends in their free-time. At times, respondents’ participation in nature-based OAs and social OAs coincided as it did when R#6 answered the question of what she likes to do with her friends in her free time. She said, “Tan – like, just lay in the yard on towels and stuff. We watch the river and just like mess around…. we like taking pictures. Yah, just hang out outside and just be in the nice weather.” Both “mess around” and “hang out” allude to the social aspects of the OA in which they were participating. Girls like R#6 may find support through peer groups or cliques that enjoy participating in OAs together. Yet, without support of peer groups or friends,
adolescent girls may not choose to participate in OAs and may choose to participate in alternate behaviors and activities that are more aligned with their peer group’s or cliques’ guidelines.

Unfortunately, friends’ and peers’ influence as a possible incentive to adolescent girls’ participation in OAs may possibly be affected by the perceived lack of interest and participation of girls’ friends and peers. For example, when asked if she knew other girls who participate in OAs, R#5 said, “… some people don’t really like to do outdoor activities and there’s only, like, five people, like, in my really close group of friends, and we usually don’t really do much stuff outside because either, like, we’re all tired or we just really don’t want to go outside.” The Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 report revealed that friends have a major influence on adolescents’ lack of participation in outdoor activities. According to the report, 26% of adolescent study participants, ages 13-17, said they would rather hang out with their friends instead of participating in outdoor activities.

Girls want to hang out with their friends, but most girls do not think their friends like nor do outdoor activities. Members of peer groups gain information on how to behave from other members of the group (Feldman 2008). Therefore, if girls do not believe their friends or peers are active outdoors, they may not incorporate OA into their behavior, and the incentive of OAs as a social outlet is quite possibly nullified. If a girl’s only incentive to participate in OAs is because her friends or peers are also involved, they will most likely not participate according to the majority of respondents’ perceptions of rates of peers’ and friends’ participation in outdoor activities.

Interestingly and alarmingly, the only noteworthy difference between thematic answers from each survey scoring category arose in the section of interview questions regarding
respondents’ perceptions of their friends’ participation in outdoor activities. True, the majority of respondents in each scoring category perceive their friends are not active outdoors, but every girl in the lowest scoring category claims they have no friends who are active outdoors. While other girls in higher scoring categories claim their friends are not active, the lowest scoring category’s respondents’ lack of participation may be closely related to their lack of peer or friend influence or these respondents’ perceptions of their peers’ or friends’ lack of participation in outdoor activities.

Peers’ influence as an incentive to participate in OAs goes beyond simply peers’ interest or participation, or lack thereof, in outdoor activities. Ten respondents believe their peers’ do not participate in OAs because they are concerned with their image or appearance. If girls are concerned with their image or appearance, and negative connotations can be associated with girls’ participation in OAs, girls will not seek OAs for the social aspects which seem to be an incentive to some respondents and their peers. A summary of the relationships between the incentive to participate in OAs for social aspects and the disincentive of concerns with image or appearance and social influences as a disincentive can be seen in Figure 2.
Parental influence.

While, according to literature, parents’ influence is lessening and friends’ and peers’ influence is gaining, parental modeling and encouragement can also influence girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Along with the respondents’ perceptions, literature also states parents model certain actions and behaviors which their children then emulate. If a parent is not active outdoors, a child who thinks about participating in outdoor activities may feel conflicted with arising concerns over their personal image or appearance which is in contrast to the parent models they have been imitating for years.

Participation in OAs with their parents can also have a profound effect on whether a girl sees herself as capable, driven, or willing to participate in outdoor activities. Through participation in OAs with their parents children can not only watch the modeling OAs by their

Figure 2. Disincentives are pictured in red and incentives are pictured in green. Interactions are signified by yellow arrows and circles with slashes indicate the prevention of certain incentives as a result of disincentives’ influences. Peers’ lack of interest can result in lack of participation in outdoor activities because this disincentive can counteract with the incentive to participate for social interactions. Concerns with image or appearance can also overshadow the incentive to participate in OAs for social interactions because girls may feel that OAs have not been incorporated into their self-identities. Also, peers’ lack of interest can result in concerns with image and appearance in OAs and vice versa.
parents, they may also hear encouragement from their parents as they participate in OAs together. According to literature, parental encouragement also has a great affect on whether or not a girl will participate in certain activities.

Thirteen respondents said they have participated in OAs with their moms, and thirteen respondents said they participated in OAs with their dads. Influential female modeling of participation in OAs, often via the mother, can show adolescent girls that it is socially acceptable for girls to participate in outdoor activities. Ferreira et al.’s (2007) study revealed that a mother’s modeling of PA is more often related to their daughter’s activity levels than their sons. The same study also said fathers may be more important role models of PA than mothers in childhood. Both mothers and fathers play an important role in whether their daughters participate in OAs.

Without a parental model or without parental encouragement, girls may not find it acceptable or possible to participate in outdoor activities. Parents, before friends become the more important influence, are the primary source of modeling and encouragement next to media and schools. If parents have not helped their daughters incorporate OAs into their identity by time they reach adolescence, daughters may not feel comfortable with their appearance in the outdoors or they may feel out of place outdoors. Without outdoor activities incorporated into their self-image, it would be no wonder that girls may become concerned with their personal image when they participate in outdoor activities. A visual summary of the interaction between parental influences, concerns with image or appearance, and mental health benefits of OAs is seen below in Figure 2.
Girls’ concerns with image or appearance can severely affect the incentive of freedom, openness, escape, or relief from stresses. The ten respondents who perceive their peers do not participate in OAs because of appearance or image concerns site examples like fear of persecution, labeling or judgment as disincentives to peers’ participation in outdoor activities. Their concerns are justifiable given research findings which state that gender roles bound both boys and girls to rigid and restrictive guidelines about how they should act or behave (Newberry 2004). Any divergence from these guidelines can lead to persecution, labeling, or judgment from their peers (Feldman 2008). These guidelines and girls’ divergence from the norm may be even more apparent in the outdoors (Culp 1998). If girls fear being labeled as a hippie or a tree-hugger, they may not want to participate in outdoor activities. Similarly, if girls fear they will not fit-in with a group of outdoorsy peers, they may not want to join a group of outdoorsy peers on an outdoor expedition.

In addition, if girls think boys will judge them for being dirty or sweaty because of their participation in outdoor activities, girls may not participate in outdoor activities. As R#15 said,
Some girls... really care about what other people think of them to where it gets to an extreme where they can’t do this because this will happen, or they can’t, like, they just get so into their, like, appearance to where they just don’t want to mess it up because if they look really good they don’t want to go run a lap.... You’d think that most of them would rather be inside than outside.

All of these concerns with their appearance and image create a tension with respondents’ perceptions that the outdoors offer feelings of freedom, openness, escape, and relief from stresses. If girls are preoccupied with their appearance or image, they cannot capitalize on the benefits and incentives of freedom, openness, escape, or relief, and, therefore, they will not enjoy or become interested in nature nor participate in outdoor activities.

From respondents’ answers and perceptions revealed through their completion of the boys’ and girls’ outdoor activities categorization exercise, other social influences on girls’ participation in OAs surfaced. Basically, most girls placed OAs in the boys’ and girls’ categories based on what they think other girls do or do not do as well as what they think boys do or do not do. Sometime in their life the respondents learned what OAs girls are expected to do or not do as well as what boys are expected to do or not do. Only one respondent placed all OAs in the neutral category, basically saying there are no pre-determined gender assignments to any outdoor activities. Gender role standards serve to limit girls to those OAs they think are for girls and prevent them from participating in those OAs they think are assigned to boys. In other words, respondents’ perceptions of the existence of gender role expectations for certain OAs serves as a disincentive to their participation in those certain OAs.

If girls perceive gender roles exist in OAs, they may concern themselves with their image and appearance in the outdoors if they are participating in activities society stereotypically labels as a boys’ activity. This disincentive, as with concerns of being labeled, persecuted, or
judged, can affect respondents’ perceived incentives of freedom, openness, escape, or relief as well as the related incentive of enjoyment or interest.

Additionally, the categorization exercise revealed that girls either hold-to or at least know of stereotypical traits associated with girls’ and boys’ behaviors and personalities and these traits affect their participation in outdoor activities. Fourteen respondents based their categorization of girls’ OAs on stereotypical or generalizable traits of girls. Five respondents specifically said girls are more interested in calming or less intense OAs or those OAs that require more patience. In addition, seven girls based boys’ OAs on those that are more dangerous or extreme or those showcasing how macho a boy can be. For example, R#11 explained her categorization, saying, “... girls just like that stuff because girls are more, like, kind of relaxed, mostly, and guys are like, ‘Oh, let’s go, like, outside and be strong!’”

If girls believe these stereotypes or generalizations, they may not want to participate in OAs that can lead them to be labeled as macho or extreme – traits sometimes associated with masculinity. Also, if girls do not consider themselves macho or extreme, among other stereotypically masculine traits, they may choose not to participate in OAs typically categorized by these certain characteristics or by their categorization as a masculine activity. Outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and windsurfing were all overwhelmingly categorized as boys’ outdoor activities and distinctly not girls’ outdoor activities. If girls associate certain OAs with certain gender roles, their participation in an OA associated with boys may lead to concerns with their image or appearance and, therefore, their senses of freedom, openness, escape, or relief from social constraints as well as their enjoyment and interest in nature and outdoor activities.

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Girls’ senses of freedom, openness, escape, or relief associated with incentives to participate in OAs can also be affected by the stereotypical labeling and categorizing of girls’ outdoor activities. Girls may feel their participation in OAs is limited to those activities categorized as girls’ outdoor activities. Meditating, sketching or painting, reading, bird watching, and nature viewing were all overwhelmingly categorized as girls’ OAs and distinctly not categorized as boys’ activities. Without the freedom to stray from stereotypically girls’ OAs, girls may not capitalize on incentives to participate in OAs, and as a result their interest in and enjoyment of OAs will not transpire.

**Dynamics of Mental Health Incentives**

The senses of freedom, openness, escape, and relief are closely related to mental health incentives to participate in outdoor activities. In addition, girls’ statements regarding relaxation as incentives to participation are also associated with the overarching theme of mental health. Aside from respondents’ perceptions of freedom, openness, and escape, sixteen respondents mentioned mental health benefits and rest or relief from stresses as incentives to their own or their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. Girls’ enjoyment and interest in OAs may be a direct result of the mental health benefits they accrue through participation in outdoor activities. The following four sub-sections will examine dynamics amongst the incentives of mental health benefits including freedom, openness, and escape; physical health benefits; and rest or relief and how certain disincentives, specifically physical discomfort, interact with mental health benefits.
Freedom, openness, or escape.

Respondents believe OAs give them freedom and escape from rules and social constraints. In addition, OAs give girls a sense of openness contrary to the bounds and enclosures of the indoors. Respondents also said they can be whoever they want to be outdoors. Their responses suggest the respondents feel their identities and behaviors are restricted in the indoors or when they are not participating in outdoor activities. Outdoor activities, according to the respondents, let girls be whoever they want and allow them to do whatever they want. Newberry’s (2004) article supports the respondents’ views saying that the term “outdoors” suggests a freedom from confinement of space, rules, and gender roles.

Respondents expressed their desires for freedom or escape from limiting rules other than those rules which construct society’s standards of femininity. Girls may feel stifled in the indoors – they may not feel free to be boisterous or goofy – they may feel they must behave in a certain manner because of their gender or because of the expected behaviors within their schools, homes, or other social settings. The outdoor gives girls a chance to escape the day-to-day structures in their lives that limit their expression and identity exploration and formation. Unstructured time in the outdoors can appeal to adolescent girls who feel constrained by too many boundaries and rules.

Physical health benefits.

Respondents also perceive physical health benefits are an incentive to their own as well as their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. Physical health can have a direct impact on mental health. According to some respondents, as girls attain physical health, they may feel
better about their bodies and, therefore, feel an improved sense of self-worth and well-being. As R#19 said, “I think probably half the girls that do outdoor activities are more, like, kind of health-conscious. They want to keep themselves healthy and... more happy, I guess, because a lot of people say that they’re happier when they’re healthier.”

If girls prefer indoor activities, they may not reap the physical health benefits of OAs or feel the urge to participate in outdoor activities based on physical health benefits they can acquire. Girls who are not influenced to participate in OAs based on physical health incentives may also not reap the mental health benefits nor feel the incentives of mental health benefits through outdoor activities.

Rest or relief.

Girls want a break from their busy lives. They are bombarded by school, work, and extracurricular activities and, as a result, they feel the stresses on their time and the amount of relaxation they get throughout their days. Stress has a negative impact on mental health, and rest and relief from these stresses can help girls improve their mental health.

Respondents in this study said OAs can provide rest and relief from everyday stresses by giving them opportunities to escape everyday rules and regulations. Girls also suggest that, in order to get girls to participate in OAs more, practitioners should offer girls the choice to simply hang out or lay around. On the other hand, OA programs or opportunities may be yet another structured event that adds to the stresses in girls’ lives. Girls may only feel the freeing mental health benefits of OAs if the OAs do not add another item to their to-do list. In addition, if girls feel OAs take away from their time for relaxation or relief from time constraints and other
stresses, girls may not choose to participate in OAs nor will they benefit from the freeing opportunities found in the outdoors. And, as one respondent suggested, girls sometimes do not recognize the idea that OAs can provide a sense of relief from everyday stresses.

*Physical discomfort.*

Every respondent said physical discomfort is a deterrent to their own or their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. Physical discomfort can greatly inhibit or prevent the incentive of rest or relief through outdoor activities. Without comfort, rest and relief can be hard to find. Without the incentive of rest or relief, girls may not gain or feel the incentives of mental health benefits. For girls whose major incentives to participate in OAs are the mental health benefits, reducing discomforts may be essential to ensure their enjoyment, interest, and participation in outdoor activities. Below, Figure 4 shows interactions between mental health benefits and the overwhelming disincentive of physical discomfort:

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4.** Incentives of relief, freedom, openness, or escape, and physical benefits are all closely related to the overall incentive of mental health benefits. The disincentives of physical discomforts or fear and preference for indoor activities and the comforts of the indoors can overshadow any or all of the mental health incentives resulting in adolescent girls’ lack of participation in OAs. In addition, preference for the indoors as well as physical discomforts or fears may prevent girls from ever experiencing the mental health benefits of OAs.
Ten respondents said they prefer the comfort of the indoors and its amenities or their friends prefer the indoors and its amenities to participation in outdoor activities. While some girls enjoy rest and relief as an incentive to participate in outdoor activities, some girls seeking rest and relief may prefer to find such respite in the indoors. While rest and relief indoors also provides mental health benefits, the mental health benefits offered through OAs may not become apparent or serve as an incentive to participate in more OAs to girls who choose to seek their rest and relief indoors. While rest and relief indoors may offer some of the same benefits as outdoor rest and relief, outdoor rest and relief, according to respondents, offers girls a chance to get away from societal constraints on their behaviors and self-identity.

**Factors Affecting Physical Health Incentives**

Other than the mental health benefits associated with the physical health incentives, exercise, combating obesity and health concerns, as well as gaining strength were all specific benefits girls seek or perceive their friends and peers seek through outdoor activities. These incentives can draw girls into the outdoors to participate in active outdoor pursuits.

On the other hand, twelve respondents think their peers prefer indoor activities to outdoor activities and ten believe peers would rather relax than participate in activities outdoors. The majority of indoor activities listed by respondents are sedentary activities like playing video games, listening to music, or reading. Nationwide, 27% of The Outdoor Foundation’s (2010) respondents age 13-17 said they do not participate in OAs because they prefer indoor activities like watching TV or movies or playing on the computer or video games.
While indoor activities such as these may not necessarily be bad, they prove to be incentive enough for some girls to stay inside, out-weighing the incentive to participate in outdoor activities for the physical health benefits. The disincentives related to preference for indoor activities or relaxation indoors can very well overwhelm girls’ interest in physical activity in the outdoors. Girls’ quest for physical health benefits and all the benefits associated with physical health benefits can potentially overpower their desires to stay inside and sedentary. Physical health incentives to go outside will only overpower the incentives to stay inside if girls are aware of the physical health benefits of OAs and they believe these benefits outweigh any benefits they find participating in indoor activities.

**Incentives Associated with Unique Experiences**

Girls want to participate in outdoor activities because they want to do something unusual, unexpected, something they thought they would never do, or something that will make them proud to say, “I did that.” Through questions about their dream activities as well as why they like to participate in OAs, 18 respondents said an incentive to participate in OAs is the chance to participate in a unique experience. Ten respondents stressed the importance of uniqueness more than once in their interviews.

Unique experiences can come in the form of a myriad of opportunities and incentives available in the outdoors. Outdoor learning experiences, intense or vigorous OAs, and OAs that give girls a chance to improve their well-being can all offer girls unique experiences. Through these unique experiences, girls’ interest and enjoyment in OAs can grow and influence them to participate in more OAs over time.
In addition, girls’ quest for unique experiences may also be related to their quest for freedom – a journey which, according to respondents, allows girls to be whoever they want without rules or other usual constraints. Each unique experience can give a girl a chance to do something unexpected – perhaps something unexpected for her gender role, her cliques’ standards, or her home’s or school’s sometimes stifling regulations. Freedom through unique experiences can greatly influence girls’ interest in and enjoyment of nature and outdoor activities. A summary of these positive interactions between these three incentives is seen in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Some OAs give girls a chance to experience at least one of these incentives to participate, and some activities can capitalize on two or more of these incentives at the same time.

Factors Associated with Physical Discomfort or Fear

Respondents voiced their opinions and perceptions of several disincentives to their own and their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. Every respondent said fear inhibits their own or their peers’ participation in outdoor activities. At the national level, only 4% of adolescents age 13-17 said they do not participate in outdoor activities because the outdoors is scary (The Outdoor Foundation 2010). The OA access near Missoula, however, offers girls opportunities to participate in OAs in lands which may harbor many more animals and geological features that are justifiably frightening. The respondents in the national study may not cite fear as a disincentive to participation in OAs because there is less to fear in their accessible lands where
they can participate in outdoor activities. While Missoula, Montana, may have great access to lands in which girls can participate in OAs compared to other regions, girls in Missoula may have more reason to fear OAs in their lands.

Fear as well as physical discomfort can occlude girls’ perceptions of incentives to participate in outdoor activities. In addition, girls may not enjoy the aesthetics of nature if they fear the presence of bugs or large animals. The same feelings can thwart any possible incentives of learning, freedom or openness, or relaxation and relief.

Then again, learning experiences can help girls understand that which they fear. For example, if girls have the opportunity to learn about mountain lions their fears may be suppressed. The same can be said for lessons on spiders and snakes, thunder storms and tornadoes, or any other fear-instilling feature found in nature. With understanding, perhaps girls’ can face their fears and appreciate nature’s creatures and phenomena with the assurance that their knowledge can help them prevent the dangers associated with the creatures or phenomena.

Additionally, when girls are given the opportunity to face their fears in the outdoors or their fears of OAs, they may feel a sense of accomplishment when they successfully overcome such fears. The sense of accomplishment may be associated with a sense of rush or challenge, all of which are incentives or perceived incentives to some girls’ participation in outdoor activities. A summary of incentives and disincentives related to the over-arching disincentive of physical discomfort or fear is seen below in Figure 5.
Lack of Access or Means

Respondents in this study said they do not participate in OAs because they do not have the means or the access, and, nationwide, 7% of The Outdoor Foundation’s (2010) respondents, ages 13-17, cite lack of access and 11% cite lack of means to pay for or acquire gear as disincentives to their participation in outdoor activities. Without access or the means to access or participate in outdoor activities, all other incentives to participate are moot. If a girl desires physical health benefits, freedom, or stress relief through outdoor activities, she will not be able to attain any of these benefits if she does not have access, proper gear, money to get the proper gear, or proper guidance needed to participate in certain outdoor activities. Without the access or means to participate, girls’ may never even imagine all of the incentives expressed by the respondents in this study.

Figure 6. Desires for comfort and relaxation indoors in addition to the disincentive of physical discomfort or fear interact with each other as well as with the incentives of a rush, accomplishment, or challenge; learning experiences; mental health benefits; and nature appreciation. Rush, accomplishment, and challenge can overshadow physical discomforts and fear and vice versa. In addition, learning experiences can help overcome the disincentives of physical discomfort or fear, but this disincentive can also prevent girls from engaging in learning opportunities outdoors.
Girls also must be aware of available, local or regional access in order to capitalize on the opportunities to participate in OAs near to or within their communities. Also, some girls may simply be unaware of resources like rental shops or outdoor camps which offer the gear as well as the instruction which is often necessary for newcomers to the outdoor activity scene. Increased awareness of access, gear, and guidance can decrease the strength of disincentives related to the lack of means and access and can prove to be an incentive to girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

**Factors Associated with Time constraints and Responsibilities**

Respondents’ involvement in extracurricular activities, school, work, along with other responsibilities can also stand in the way of any other incentives to participate in outdoor activities. This section will examine factors that influence girls’ perceptions that they do not have enough time to participate in OAs as well as how their desires for rest or relaxation interact with their perceptions of time constraints as disincentives to girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Twenty-one respondents cited time as an issue preventing them from participating in OAs or dream OAs; they believe time constraints prevent them from participating in OAs as much as they did in the past; or they foresee time constraints preventing them from participating in OAs in the future. Nationally, according to The Outdoor Foundation’s (2010) survey of 13-17 year-olds, 29% of youth do not participate in OAs because they have too much schoolwork, 25% said they do not have the time, and 11% said they are involved in other activities. Second only to disinterest in OAs, the national survey’s results reveal that
adolescents’ over-occupation is the next greatest influence on their lack of participation in outdoor activities. To some adolescents, OAs may just be an additional time-consuming entity.

Respondent #4 believes she will be busier in the future and, as a result, she will participate less in outdoor activities. She explained, “I would like it to be more outside, but honestly I think it’s going to go down a little bit, and I’ll just have to try harder to go outside than I do now.” She continued, “Like jobs and school and just everything. I don’t know, it seems like my parents are a lot busier than I am, and along with my brother and sister - they’re like in their twenties - they seem a lot busier.” Her words, along with the words of other respondents, suggest that people, especially as they grow older, tend to have a tendency to become over-occupied with things to do – work, school, sports, clubs, and more.

Respondent #9 said she is busier now and, therefore, she does not participate in OAs as much as she used to. She said, “Now, I just, it’s hard for me to even find spare time with the homework and all that, but I’d rather be inside than outside now than when I was little. I don’t know, I feel like I had more energy when I was little - to just run around and get it all out.” She also hints at another issue related to time constraints: Respondents feel or perceive that girls’ busy-ness zaps their energy and prevents them from pursuing outdoor activities.

Laziness or desires for comfort or relaxation.

Ten respondents said their participation or their peers’ participation in OAs is inhibited by their desire to relax or their laziness. Girls’ busy schedules can overwhelm them, making them feel as though they have little time to rest or little time for themselves. If girls do not know how
to relax, feel comfortable, or take time for themselves outdoors, they will choose to take their respite indoors. That is, if they have any time for respite.

Respondents’ claims that laziness prevents girls’ participation in OAs may be a perception of more than simple laziness. True, some girls may be lazy, but other girls may choose to lie around or relax because they are so busy otherwise. Laziness or desires for comfort or relaxation may lead girls to seek convenient outlets for their activity. Outdoor activities that require less organization, preparation, and planning may be more appealing than those that require more effort and time. Girls will weigh the effort and time it takes to participate in OAs when deciding whether to participate in OAs, other, simpler activities, or simply relax in the comforts of their homes. Girls’ time is at a premium as it is and, therefore, the less time and effort it takes to prepare for an activity and the more the activity offers possibilities of comfort and relaxation, the more the activity may appeal to some girls.

Time constraints also greatly inhibit girls’ chances of feeling the powerful incentive of freedom, openness, and escape in the outdoors. Girls may seek freedom, openness, and escape specifically from those entities that restrict their free-time. Respondents’ views on their own and others’ time constraints as a disincentive to participate in OAs relates to time constraints’ powers to not only take away from the time available to participate in freeing OAs but also to increase the stresses and constraints from which girls desire escape and relief as well as comfort and relaxation. Respondents report ever-increasing responsibilities and time constraints that affect their participation in OAs now and their perceptions that time constraints and responsibilities will increase in the future. The disincentive of time constraints may be overwhelming girls’ incentives to participate in OAs, decreasing their chances of benefiting from
outdoor activity and feeling the freeing effects that may very well be needed by girls in adolescence now more than ever. These relationships are presented below in Figure 6.

**Figure 7.** The disincentives of desire for comfort and relaxation indoors and time constraints can compound each other and overpowering the incentive to participate in OAs for mental health benefits. But the incentive to participate in OAs for mental health benefits can also be appealing enough for girls to choose to go outdoors. The incentive may also help overcome the feeling that they are constrained by time or that they need to relax indoors.

**Recommendations for Outdoor Activity Practitioners**

In this section, recommendations for program implementations, marketing, and encouragement have been structured by listening to respondents’ perceptions, insights, and suggestions in addition to tying respondents’ ideas to the research literature on the subject of girls’ adolescence and girls’ OA experiences. These recommendations are intended for all interested parties seeking to increase girls’ interest in, enjoyment of, and participation in outdoor activities.

Many recommendations are given in the form of what outdoor activity programs can do, but one must consider that outdoor programs are reported to be the biggest influence on adolescents’ outdoor activity for only 1% of their study respondents (The Outdoor Foundation 2010). On the other hand, 44% of adolescent respondents in the Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 study said friends are the greatest influence on their participation in outdoor activities. Keeping these research statistics in mind, as well as considering respondents’ beliefs that parental and
social factors play a larger part in their participation in OAs than OA programs, these recommendations for practitioners should be thought of in broad terms for parents, teachers, and mentors to encourage and facilitate adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities.

Below, general categories of recommendations are introduced and actionable recommendations are bulleted below each general recommendation. These recommendations along with a few others are described more thoroughly in the sub-sections following the lists.

First of all, outdoor activity practitioners must recognize how peers influence adolescent girls’ participation. Practitioners can try to implement the following practices with their outdoor programs in order to capitalize on the incentive of peer influence:

- Encourage girls to bring their friends by offering discounts or private group events;
- offer numerous opportunities for girls to relax and socialize around their friends and peers;
- offer girls a membership to a club or organization;
- offer bonding experiences where girls can share information, opinions, and stories;
- and encourage group cohesion through group goal setting.

Other recommendations are based on societal influences. Practitioners must recognize how gender roles and stereotypes influence girls’ participation. Through understanding, practitioners can work on employing the following recommendations in their programs:

- Offer girls opportunities to get dirty without judgment or consequence;
- offer all-girls outings or programs;
- introduce girls to positive outdoorswomen role models;
- incorporate adolescent girls in OA promotional materials and presentations;
- and teach girls to interpret media and its impossible standards.

Implementation of programming involving parents may also be a key to increasing adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Recommendations include:

- Teach parents how to encourage their daughter’s OA without infringing on their
adolescent’s quest for autonomy;
• offer programming for parents to do OAs with their daughters;
• market OA programming to parents;
• offer parent workshops to teach parents how to encourage their daughter’s OA and to promote awareness of the benefits, accessibility, and feasibility of OAs for their daughters;
• and encourage girls to share their OA experiences with their parents through stories and pictures.

Girls’ concerns with their appearance or image in the outdoors also need to be addressed through outdoor programming. Outdoor activity practitioners can mitigate the effects of this disincentive through the following means:

• Provide an encouraging environment for girls to get sweaty and dirty without judgment;
• encourage girls to participate in more OA programming with the same group of peers to increase their sense of belonging to a cohesive group of outdoorsy girls;
• provide girls with the clothing, equipment, and gear they will need and make sure it fits;
• do not single-out girls to do certain OAs in front of a group of peers;
• keep a close watch over group interactions and check-in with group members regularly to assess and encourage group cohesiveness;
• offer safe opportunities for girls to participate in OAs in mixed-gender as well as single-gender groups;
• and limit use of language that perpetuates stereotypes gender roles’ limiting standards, and encourage kids to support all group members.

Outdoor activity practitioners can also increase girls’ participation in OAs by capitalizing on the incentives of both physical and mental health benefits. Suggestions for practitioners include:

• Promote activity by telling girls OAs are good for their health and well-being;
• offer lessons on how to use a heart-rate monitor or how to prepare healthy meals in the backcountry;
• to allow girls to gain a sense of accomplishment, let girls push their limits and to go to the edge of the usual rules, safety, and order while maintaining a safe environment;
• teach girls about all the inherent risks as well as safety precautions;
• give girls choices of OAs they want to do, when they want to do them, and where to do
and encourage positive risk-taking ventures by offering extreme activities that will give girls a rush.

Given the influence of physical discomforts and fear of the outdoors, practitioners must overcome such disincentives to provide girls with a comfortable and safe environment to do outdoor activities. Outdoor activity practitioners may want to try some of the following recommendations:

- Teach girls how to prepare for every weather condition;
- supply apparel and gear for girls to borrow;
- facilitators must be flexible with their plans so they can lead activities that are more suitable for the weather;
- offer activities that cater to groups of girls who enjoy the same types of weather conditions;
- teach girls about bugs as well as scary animals;
- to overcome fear of the dark, facilitate nighttime OAs like camp fire stories, flash light tag, and night hikes;
- offer workshops and teach girls how to take care of their bodies in the outdoors;
- and give girls plenty of opportunities to test the boundaries of their comfort levels.

Many girls believe there simply is not enough time in the day to participate in outdoor activities. Outdoor activity programs can help alleviate some girls’ concerns by doing some of the following:

- Offer abbreviated OA opportunities like a half-hour trail run near town;
- have the entire event ready to go before participants arrive;
- introduce girls to nature near their communities and encourage them to go there whenever they have the time;
- incorporate girls’ interest in social interactions and technology into events by allowing them to take pictures, share their iPods, or encouraging them to blog about their activities;
- and offer programs that are relaxing or teach relaxation techniques.
Additionally, girls want opportunities to participate in activities that are considered cool or unique. Outdoor programs are a great venue to give girls the chance to participate in new activities. Outdoor activity practitioners can give girls unique and cool opportunities by:

- Marketing to girls using cool, charismatic outdoors people;
- ask girls what they think would be cool and what they want to do;
- explore extreme activities and the newest OAs and develop safe ways of offering these opportunities to adolescent girls;
- and promote new and extreme OAs and offer an array of them to girls.

Finally, adolescent girls need effective leadership and mentoring. Programs can offer girls effective leaders and mentors in the following ways:

- Provide mentors who understand the unique needs and desires of adolescent girls in the outdoors;
- give girls the chance to engage in meaningful conversation with leaders and mentors;
- and perpetuate the idea that girls are and have the right to be interested in outdoor activities.

The following sub-sections will explain the aforementioned recommendations in more detail.

**Peer influence.**

According to respondents and research literature on the subject, peers and friends greatly influence girls’ participation in outdoor activities. According to The Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 study, 44% of girls age 13-17 who participate in outdoor activities have been influenced to do so by their friends. Most respondents in this study find it hard to think of female peers who participate in outdoor activities. All seven of the girls who scored lowest on the survey said they know no girls who participate in outdoor activities – they cannot think of any friends or any other girls in the school who participate in outdoor activities. Perhaps the
reason for the low rate of participation in OAs of these seven low-scoring respondents is due to the fact that they do not know anyone like them who participates in outdoor activities.

Outdoor program facilitators as well as teachers, parents, and mentors should raise girls’ awareness of the availability of outdoor activities to them and their friends and peers. Girls need to know other girls who are active in their community. Outdoor clubs and programs can give girls a chance to get to know girls who are active outdoors, but the girls must be drawn to these clubs by their peers or friends. For example, girls who are active outdoors can give testimonials of their outdoor experiences, possibly with slideshows and music, to encourage other girls to become active outdoors. Also, girls want to see other girls like themselves on advertisements or promotional materials for outdoor programs. If they only see pictures or videos of boys participating in a camp or an event, girls may not think that the camp or event is meant for girls.

If girls’ friends and peers are not active outdoors, and their friends are a major influence on whether they participate in outdoor activities, outdoor programs need to lure in groups of friends and peers to participate in OAs together. Girls may not be interested in attending a camp or an event by themselves, but if their friends are going, they may be more likely to participate, as well. Outdoor programs should encourage girls to bring their friends to events. For example, programs can offer group discounts. Girls may want the option, too, of arranging private outings for only their group of friends. True, this limits their interactions with new, diverse populations of individuals, but such an approach may be the window to increased outdoor activity. Maybe after her outdoor experiences with a group of friends, a girl will be more inclined to participate in outdoor activities with other people. And for girls who want to
get active and make new friends who are active, outdoor programs should include social events for girls to meet new friends who are active outdoors. Ice cream socials at a local park, group bike rides, or even a concert can bring girls together to share their experiences, plan outdoor activities, and form lasting, meaningful relationships.

Twenty-three respondents were able to name at least one outdoor activity they do with their friends. Knowing that 18 of these respondents said they enjoy participating in social outdoor activities with their friends, outdoor programs must cater to girls’ desires for social interactions. Respondents expressed desires to talk, meet new people, and to simply hang out. Outdoor programs should not only give girls the chance to be active and to learn new skills, they should also offer numerous opportunities for girls to socialize and relax around each other.

Peers and friends have a great influence on the perceptions girls have of their own participation in outdoor activity as well as how they perceive the influence of friends and peers on other girls’ rates of outdoor activity. Respondents, in response to questions about how they would get girls more active outdoors, also conveyed the idea that they want to participate in outdoor activities that allow social interactions, and they believe their peers want those same interactions.

Encouraging girls to attend and participate in activities with their friends is one way outdoor activity facilitators can get more girls active outdoors. Girls want a sense of belonging to a group (Feldman 2008), as well, and respondents in this study suggest girls’ OA participation may increase if they have a program, club, or group to belong to. By offering girls membership to a club, outdoor programs can give a girl a tangible group of peers to belong to. Within this
group, girls can share their thoughts and feelings through facilitated as well as unstructured social activities in the outdoors.

If a girl belongs to a social group that does not encourage outdoor activity, as some respondents indicate is the case with their peers who do not participate in OAs, she may need extra encouragement and support from outside her usual social group to participate in outdoor activities. She should feel free to experiment with outdoor activities and gauge whether her peer group will judge her negatively for her participation in outdoor activities or not. Girls need to know how to respond if their friends do not support or encourage their participation in OAs. They also need to know how to deal with friends who may strongly disapprove of, make fun of, or ostracize a girl who participates in OAs. Outdoor activity facilitators, educators, parents, and mentors should give girls advice and lessons on how to deal with friends who may disapprove of their friends’ or other girls’ participation outdoor activities. One approach would be to show girls positive outdoor role models who can help girls feel better about their choice to be active outdoors. These role models can come in the form of local community members or even famous outdoor athletes.

Respondents enjoy several social aspects of OAs including bonding experiences, making memories, having meaningful conversations, and hanging out with girls who have similar interests. Outdoor activity facilitators should encourage these types of interactions. For example, a camera is a handy tool for girls trying to bond, create memories, and start conversations with the girls in her outdoor activity group. When sharing pictures or movies, girls can share stories with their peers and spread the joys and learning experiences they have gained through outdoor activities. In addition to sharing stories, girls can share opinions and
personal goals which can also bring girls together through outdoor activity. For example, when hiking, girls should feel free to share their opinions and intuitions. They can also share a story about their previous hikes and what they did and learned on those hikes. They can also, for example, share their personal goal to learn the names of the wildflowers she sees along the hike. Peers can then share their opinions or intuitions, their stories, and their personal goals.

With each member of the group freely sharing information, members feel a sense of group cohesion (Drury et al. 2005). Group cohesion helps girls feel the intimacy they desire greatly during adolescence and, therefore, fulfills their desires for social interactions. In order to support group cohesion, outdoor activity leaders can guide girls through group goal setting. Girls can set individual and group goals. As a result, they can hold each other accountable but also give each other praise and support for individual and group successes. Sharing a common goal and common rewards, like the sense of accomplishment upon reaching a goal, can strengthen group cohesion. With adequate facilitation by trained individuals, the process of group goal-setting and accountability can be a smooth process with few glitches and more positive outcomes than not.

Outdoor programs should also encourage girls to participate in outdoor activities with their friends. Organizations should provide programming personalized to groups of friends. Personalized outdoor programs can give girls and their friends choices of activities, where to do them, and how long to do them. In addition, outdoor programs should emphasize the social aspects of outdoor activities. Girls should know that outdoor activities are a great way to get to know new people as well as know their old friends in a new way. Programs should also offer ample time for girls and their friends and peers to practice social interactions. The practice may
be structured or unstructured through games or exercises or simply free-time for girls and their friends to talk with like-minded or dissimilar peers and adults.

Societal influences.

Social factors, like gender roles and gender stereotypes, influence girls’ participation in outdoor activities. Girls think many outdoor activities are just for guys. When asked to complete the OA activity gender categorization exercise, thirteen girls placed more activities in the boys’ activities category than the girls’ activity category. More often than not, the activities girls designated as boys’ activities were more active or physically challenging than the activities girls designated as girls’ outdoor activities. Three of the twenty-four respondents said they are aware of gender stereotypes in outdoor activities and seven girls said they think society influences which activities boys do and which activities girls do.

Stereotypes prevent some girls from participating in outdoor activities. Ten girls said they were concerned that outdoor activities would interfere with their desired appearance or image. Whether they were concerned with their personal appearance – getting dirty, sweaty, or messing their hair – or how people think of them, girls had reservations about how they would look if they participated in outdoor activities. Outdoor programs should offer girls a chance to get dirty without judgment or consequence. Girls need to know that appearances are not all that matter. Outdoor programs can give girls opportunities to see they do not need to put on makeup or curl their hair to feel beautiful. Outdoor activities can help girls see a new side of themselves away from mirrors, malls, and the scrutiny of their peers. All-girls outdoor programs
may be the most effective way to give girls a chance to relax their appearance and alleviate their concerns over their image.

Respondents in this study showed adherence to gender role stereotypes through their participation and responses in the OA gender categorization exercise. In order to overcome these limiting stereotypes and their affect on girls’ perceptions of OAs, girls need to be aware of positive female role models who are active outdoors. Respondents believe many physically challenging OAs are just for boys because they only see males doing those activities. If outdoor programs show girls female examples, mentors, and role models of girls and women who are active outdoors, adolescent girls may come to realize that outdoor activities are for everyone, regardless of gender. In fact, both boys and girls need to be aware of positive female role models and women and girls who are active outdoors. As boys’ awareness of outdoorswomen is heightened, stifling social norms and expectations can be deconstructed. With heightened awareness, individuals may be less likely to perpetuate stifling social norms and standards, and such expectations will diminish throughout a child’s lifetime and subsequent generations of children.

Three respondents mentioned OA programs should specifically market to girls to let them know they are welcome and show them OAs are not just for boys. To help encourage girls’ participation in OAs despite stereotypes and social norms and standards, as R#19 suggested, outdoor program promotional materials should have images of girls participating in outdoor activities – especially those OAs stereotypically dominated by males.

In addition, outdoor instructors and mentors need to be respectable, charismatic women with outdoor activity knowledge and skills. Adolescents respond more positively to charismatic,
colorful, or powerful models (Ormond 1999; Bandura 1977). Positive, active female role models can show adolescent girls there are no gender barriers to the activities girls want to do. Adolescent girls will respond well to reputable, charismatic, or even famous women who are active outdoors. Outdoor lessons and instruction presented about impressive women will also show adolescent girls positive role models who make girls feel like they can become whatever they dream to be.

Some all-girls organizations are implementing lessons about impressive women in sports. For example, the Women’s Sports Foundation has outlined a number of life-lessons, from diversity and respect to eating disorders and personal health. Each of the 14 lessons is based on famous women in sports like Julie Foudy, Jeanette Lee, and Dominique Dawes. The lessons are outlined in their Go Girl Go! Leaders’ Guide for Teen Girls (Women’s Sports Foundation 2009). In each lesson, the influential female athlete reveals her personal story related to the instructional issue. Girls are then asked to discuss the issues as well as offer their point-of-view and possible solutions. The same or similar lessons can be used for girls in an outdoor program. Famous outdoorswomen like professional mountain biker, Missy Giove, or free climber, Lynn Hill, are good examples of influential women who girls can aspire to be like and who girls would be willing to read about or listen to.

Parents, teachers, mentors, and outdoor activity facilitators in general should help girls interpret media and social constructions of gender norms so girls are better equipped to recognize the impossible standards created by the media. Leaders should teach girls about real, influential women who participate in outdoor activities, and girls should understand the positive attributes, aside from appearances, these women have. Girls can compare the real-life women
to the women in the media. They can compare the women by asking what these women are doing to help society. Girls can also learn a lot from thinking about why the women of mass media get more attention than the outdoorsy women or women doctors or women soccer players. Facilitators should help adolescent girls think critically about issues like media’s perpetuation of gender role standards and limitations from the outset of their incredible strides they are taking in cognitive development.

Influence of parental modeling and encouragement.

Parents play a key role in a girl’s outdoor activity rates. The Outdoor Foundation (2010) reports 64% of adolescents, ages 13-17, who are active outdoors, have been influenced by their parents. The Outdoor Foundation’s 2010 study also reports parents are the largest influence on adolescents’ participation in outdoor activities. Given their influence, parents are in an advantageous position to influence their daughter’s participation in outdoor activities. Studies of parental influence on the PA of their children show that children are more physically active when their parents are more physically active (Culver 2009). Keeping this in mind, OA practitioners should understand that parents should be as much a part of programs that increase OAs as their children.

Parents serve as models of behavior and attitudes for their children. Similar to a child’s observation of a parent jogging on a treadmill or riding a stationary bike, a child may observe their parent jogging on the road or biking on a trail. According to Madsen et al. (2009), parents’ reported physical activity and girls’ perceptions of parents’ physical activity influence their daughters’ physical activity levels. A child may choose to adopt the same behavior as their
parents or not, depending on varying circumstances – an opinion share by respondents in this study as well as by researchers.

Most parent-child relationships are positive, even through adolescence, putting parents in an advantageous position to influence their children’s attitudes and behaviors. The girls in this study say they do outdoor activities with their parents. Outdoor program facilitators should provide parents with instruction on how to get their daughters more active outdoors without infringing upon their daughter’s quest for autonomy. Also, programs should give parents opportunities to do outdoor activities with their children.

Yet, during adolescence, girls are attempting to gain autonomy from their parents. Girls are trying to find their way through the world on their own, so they may no longer want to do activities with their parents but would rather do activities with their friends. A fine line exists between wanting to maintain the parent-child relationship and encouraging parental modeling but also encouraging autonomy and supporting a girl’s quest for her independence from her parents. In order to capitalize on the reported influence of both peers and parents, outdoor programs, teachers, and mentors should encourage both the parent-child bond as well as healthy peer relationships. Outdoor activity facilitators can support both ventures by giving girls chances to try outdoor activities with either their friends or parents, or both. During this developmental transitioning period, programs and concerned parties should provide opportunities for and encourage parents to take their children outdoors with their friends. In this way, the bond and influence of the parent can be maintained while encouraging and monitoring the influence of the child’s friends.
Parents must also understand their incredible influence on their children’s behaviors and attitudes regarding outdoor activity. Even if they do not participate in outdoor activities with their children, parents need to learn how to encourage their children to be active outdoors. Parents can encourage their children to be more active outdoors by telling them stories about their youthful outdoor adventures, by buying them a new fishing pole, or by encouraging their children to join an outdoor club or participate in an outdoor program.

Parents must also recognize their child’s need to interact with their peers. Parents can help kids meet positive peer influences by arranging outdoor activities for their children and their friends; researching outdoor clubs and programs to find those which provide positive peer interaction as well as guidance from adults other than parents; and discussing and asking their children who they are hanging out with and what they are doing.

Mothers and fathers both hold important roles as models of behavior and attitudes and as the main facilitators of their children’s participation in outdoor activities. Proponents of the positive powers of nature should encourage mothers and fathers to take their adolescent daughters outdoors. In addition, parents need to know how they can effectively model positive attitudes and behaviors related to being active outdoors so their daughters can find inspiration to follow their dreams in the outdoors. Outdoor programs should market their programming to parents of adolescents in addition to their promotions to teenagers. Promotional materials should list the benefits of outdoor activities for adolescents as well as list the relational and physical benefits of parent-child outdoor activities. By increasing the OA of children by getting their parents more active outdoors, OA facilitators are giving both parent and child opportunities to reap the benefits of outdoor activity.
Concerning the apparent perpetuation of gender role stereotypes in outdoor activities, parents must understand their role. If parents do not believe their daughters belong outdoors, their daughters may be less likely to be active outdoors. Parents who believe and hold to traditional gender stereotypes are less likely to encourage their daughter’s quest for autonomy (Feldman 2008). So, if parents believe daughters are more dependent than sons, their daughters will not be as driven to gain autonomy. In order to get girls more active outdoors, outdoor activity facilitators should increase parental awareness of how their words, modeling, and actions affect their daughters’ development and independence. Workshops can teach parents how to encourage their daughters’ activity as well as independence by dissipating stereotypes and raising parents’ awareness of the benefits, accessibility, and feasibility of outdoor activities for their daughters.

Parents influence over their daughter’s behaviors may wane as teen girls establish their independence and spend more time with their peers. As a result, there may be a limited amount of time during which parents can effectively model outdoor activity. Respondents in this study also say they do not participate in OAs with their family as much as they used to. To be most effective at increasing girls’ OA, practitioners should offer programming that encourages and provides opportunities for parents to participate in OAs with their children in their pre-adolescent years.

Over all, parents, teachers, and outdoor activity facilitators must keep in mind that a girl’s peers are becoming more important and more influential throughout their adolescent years. The transition of time expenditure with family to spending more time with friends can greatly sway a girl’s perception of outdoor activity and its importance in her life. Girls in this
study are participating in outdoor activities less with their family during adolescence. Respondent #3 explained why she would rather participate in outdoor activities with friends, “...that’s just kind of the stage that I’m at where it’s a lot more fun to be with friends than with family.”

Several respondents said their families used to spend more time together, doing more outdoor activities, and now family time has been replaced by time with friends, and the activities they choose to do with their friends are often sedentary, indoor activities or low-intensity outdoor activities. Outdoor activity facilitators should encourage girls to stay active with their families but should also understand the adolescent desire to interact with their peers. Many girls may not be participating in outdoor activities because they no longer participate with their parents and they do not know any peers that are active outdoors. While girls may want to distance themselves from their parents and adults, outdoor programs can still offer a venue and give girls guidance on how to become and stay active outdoors with their friends. Adolescents may not want to hang out with their parents anymore, but they may appreciate the guidance of an adult. The right adult mentor or instructor can take girls outdoors with their peers and offer girls skills instruction and guidance when needed.

Programs can also offer girls take-home lessons to share with their friends and family. For example, guides can take girls on a hike and then encourage the girls to take their family and friends on the same hike. Girls can also take pictures on the hike and then have those pictures developed so they can share them with their family and friends. In this way, their family and friends may not be directly involved in the activity, but they are still given the opportunity to share the event so parents and friends can support their healthy ventures outdoors.
Appearance or image.

Ten respondents in this study also perceive that adolescent girls do not participate in outdoor activities because they are too concerned with their appearance or image. Adolescent girls may not want to get dirty, mess their hair, or sweat and smell. In addition, they may be hesitant to do OAs because they do not want people to think they are masculine or a hippy. Girls report that many girls do not do OAs because they want to fit-in with peer groups that do not approve of girls who are different from their idea of an ideal female or from someone in their clique. For example, a girl may enjoy shopping for new clothes with her friends, but she also likes hiking. Her peers may not accept her if they know she wears worn-out jeans while she hikes because she is not upholding her group’s desired image of what a girl should look or act like.

Outdoor programs can offer girls a safe place to get messy or sweaty among other girls who share common interests but who also come from diverse backgrounds. Facilitators can encourage girls to come together as a cohesive unit to participate in outdoor activities that may get them dirty or smelly, but they will know they are all dirty and smelly and, therefore, no one will stand out, and no one can exclude a muddy or smelly girl for being different from the group. By engaging in such activities together, the girls form a bond which builds relationships. Girls gain confidence in themselves, their group, and their identity as a hiker, fisherwoman, or skier.

Girls also need to know they will not be judged by their appearance. Before, during, and after events, facilitators can remind girls to encourage one another and maintain a positive, safe environment for everyone to take risks trying new, possibly challenging activities. In addition, programs can encourage groups of girls to return again to participate in OAs together so they
can continue to gain comfort and trust in each other while building intimate relationships. The friends girls make through outdoor activities can give girls the sense of belonging they desire. Their sense of belonging may also give girls the confidence they need to face peers who may possibly judge them for their participation in certain outdoor activities. And with a group of similar girls to back them up, girls may be less likely to hide their true desires and identity around others, increasing their confidence and well-being.

The interviewees also perceive that other adolescent girls do not do OAs because they do not want to look silly, smell, bad, or appear masculine or tough in front of boys. Outdoor activity practitioners should curb girls’ fears of boys’ judgment by encouraging cohesive group dynamics among coeducational groups just as with all-girls groups. Instructors should eliminate judgmental attitudes and comments; promote encouragement and positive feedback; and support group bonding and relationship building. If girls are concerned with how they look, whether in front of boys or other girls, OA facilitators should eliminate girls’ apprehension as much as possible. They can do this by making sure they have equipment and gear that fits and is functional for every body type of every individual who may participate in their program. Programs should also give girls equipment to use prior to events so they can try out and become comfortable with the equipment.

Outdoor activity practitioners and facilitators should consider girls’ desires to appear socially acceptable while they are participating in outdoor activities. First, they can introduce girls to less appearance-invasive activities so girls can see the benefits of outdoor activities without sacrificing their hair-dos or makeup. Ideally, facilitators should not have to deal with this limitation to girls’ activity, but it is reality that to get girls more active outdoors, facilitators
must learn how cater to girls’ desires to invest in their appearance. With time and experience, girls may learn to see their appearance is not a factor when they are outdoors, away from media’s influence and the social constraints that are much more apparent in their daily lives.

Boys and girls may make fun of girls because of their physical characteristics. Physical differences can become more apparent through physical activities. Outdoor activity facilitators should do their best to prevent singling out girls in front of a group of their peers and especially in front of boys. For example, instructors should not force girls to climb a route while a group watches. They may feel uncomfortable wearing a climbing harness that accentuates hips and other body parts that they are most concerned with. Programs should also provide girls with equipment in all sizes so no one is left out because of their size and no one feels they stand out because they are wearing something that does not fit well. In addition, programs can consider standard issue boating gear, for example, on rafting trips so that girls are not concerned with how they look in their swimsuits compared to other girls who are less or more physically developed than they are.

Keeping in mind girls’ preoccupation with their appearance and image – their desire to fit-in – as they relate to social interactions, instructors and facilitators of group outdoor activities should emphasize the importance of good group dynamics. By sharing common goals, sharing information, and building intimate bonds with group members in other ways, the group’s trust and respect for its members will strengthen, and the group will become more cohesive. In addition, as members of the group gain trust and respect for and from one another, individuals’ self-esteem will increase (Drury et al. 2005). When the group is cohesive, and girls as well as boys feel comfortable with their appearance or image within the group in the outdoors, no one
feels excluded or left out. Outdoor activity facilitators need to ensure all girls feel as though they are part of the group. Facilitators must keep close watch over group interactions and check-in with the group members regularly to assess their perceptions of group cohesiveness and their view of their role and place within the group.

Outdoor activity facilitators must also consider the fact that girls are interested in social interactions with boys. As adolescents enter puberty, their usual gender-homogenous peer groups of childhood evolve into mixed-gender peer groups (Feldman 2008). Outdoor activity practitioners should offer girls opportunities to participate in OAs with mixed-gender groups so they can fulfill their interests in social interactions with both boys and girls.

With increased interest in the opposite gender, however, girls, perhaps for the first time, become concerned with how they think they appear to and how their image is interpreted by boys. As social groups become more diverse and gender-integrated, girls are faced with more judgment from peers, influencing how they think, act, and behave. The possibility of judgment occupies a girl’s mind in her quest for positive social status. Outdoor activity facilitators should ensure girls’ freedom from judgments in order to encourage their participation in outdoor activities. An all-girls OA program is one mode of reducing judgment in the outdoors. In addition, in mixed- or single-gender groups, youth should understand the power of words. Leaders should teach children how to create a group dynamic that encourages rather than discourages participation and enjoyment in OA pursuits. By teaching kids how to encourage each other and telling kids what words and types of phrases are forbidden, OA practitioners can help break down barriers caused by fear of judgment.
**Health incentives.**

Twelve girls said they participate in outdoor activities for either the physical or mental health benefits or both. Outdoor activity programs and facilitators should not ignore the importance teen girls place on their good health and well-being. Programs, teachers, and other interested parties should promote activity by telling girls outdoor activities are good for their overall health and well-being. Girls may be interested in knowing the specific benefits of activities. With their newfound mental capacity, girls may want to hear exactly why and how a mountain bike ride is good for their physical and mental well-being. Without being too school-like, outdoor activity programs can offer girls opportunities to learn how to use heart-rate monitors or how to prepare meals and snacks that promote optimal performance on the trail. As girls mature, they may want to be treated as mature young women, and giving them serious talks about their personal health and well-being may be exactly what some girls need and want.

**Freedom, openness, and escape incentives.**

The freedom and openness in the outdoors can give girls opportunities to form a positive self-identity without the influences and pressures of school, peers, parents, media, and more. Respondents frequently spoke of the freedom and openness of nature. While their definitions of freedom and openness may not be exactly the same, they similarly refer to limitations set on them in their day-to-day lives and the converse freedom they feel in the outdoors. They desire freedom to think, freedom from rules, freedom to be who they want, freedom to play, freedom to clear their minds, and the like. With freeing opportunities, girls can explore wherever their minds will take them whether the outdoor activity at hand, how beautiful their surroundings
are, what personal goals they would like to set, and more. In the outdoors, girls can benefit from limited time constraints; freedom of choice; freedom from judgment; as well as freedom from gender roles and stifling stereotypes. Freedom can also come from the absence of media’s influence as well as the absence of people who perpetuate media’s gender standards and their stifling affects on girls’ goals, self-image, and self-esteem.

While rules are good for maintaining order and safety, there should be a different standard of rules for girls in the outdoors. Outdoor activity instructors should allow girls to push their personal limits – to go to the edge of the usual rules, safety, and order. When they push the limits, they may find they are more capable of accomplishing difficult tasks – they will feel a sense of accomplishment that will carry over into their daily lives where rules limit their actions and dreams. Teach girls to reach for their wildest dreams - to rock climb, mountain bike, and skydive. Let them feel the sense of challenge and accomplishment that may elude them in school and at home. Let girls say, “I did that!” with pride. Of course, girls must also know about the risks involved in OAs, and OA practitioners must assure safety throughout all activities. Girls need to know how to take all the necessary precautions when engaging in OAs. With their awareness of the risks and their knowledge of the safety precautions, girls may also experience increased confidence in knowing they are doing all they can to make the OA experience as safe as possible.

Programs should offer girls choices of what outdoor activities they want to do, when they want to do them, and even where they want to do these activities. Girls will feel empowered by choices and will not feel as though anyone is hindering their quest for independence and autonomy if outdoor facilitators guide girls through their choices as well as respect their choices.
In addition, instructors and mentors must give girls the space and freedom they desire. Instruction and mentorship is very important, but along with structured activities, girls need the time and freedom to do as they choose with whom they choose. For example, on a backpacking trip, guides should allow girls an hour or two of completely unstructured free time to do as they choose while in the wilderness. Such opportunities can give girls a chance to think about whatever they like, talk to whomever they want, or even nap.

**Challenge and risk-taking incentives.**

Girls desire challenges and accomplishments through outdoor activities. Outdoor programs must closely monitor and facilitate opportunities for girls to take risks in a safe environment amongst their peers. In the outdoors, girls, for example, can confront their fears of heights or water in the presence of their peers and friends. Their peers may be facing the same fears or goals. And through confrontation of their fears and accomplishment of their goals together, girls can form relationships built on mutual experiences and the support they have given each other. Relationship building, based on positive aspects like encouragement and praise, should be a major emphasis in outdoor activity facilitation for adolescent girls.

Thirteen respondents said they want to participate in dream activities that give them a rush, like skydiving, or a sense of accomplishment or challenge, like backpacking to the top of a mountain. Risk-taking behavior increases in adolescents as their mental capacity increases (Feldman 2008). From the insight respondents have given, as well as Feldman’s expertise on adolescence, outdoor activity facilitators may increase benefits to their adolescent participants by capitalizing on adolescents’ desire to take risks. In addition, they should see their facilitation
of outdoor activities as an opportunity to influence girls toward positive risk-taking ventures rather than negative risk-taking practices.

Through anti-drug or at-risk youth programs, outdoor activities can give girls, as well as boys, a new way to channel their cravings to take more risks. Outdoor programs should promote their activities through at-risk and anti-drug programs in addition to schools and other youth organizations. Parents and teachers should also direct at-risk youth toward outdoor programs that offer high-risk, but safe, activities. Of course, not every adolescent is looking to take risks or get an adrenaline rush. Again, an assessment of the participants should reveal their needs and wants, and then the adolescent can be directed toward appropriate activities.

*Overcoming physical discomfort and fear disincentives.*

Respondents in this study said comfort is an issue when considering whether to participate in outdoor activities. Overall, girls say bad weather, physical discomfort, as well as discomfort regarding mud, bugs, and other creatures, influence their participation in outdoor activities. Respondents also discussed some fears they had regarding outdoor activities. Outdoor activity facilitators should attempt to curb girls’ fears, discomforts, as well as perceptions of discomforts in the outdoors.

Girls in this study think that weather plays a large part in girls’ decisions to participate in outdoor activities. Every respondent said weather, good or bad, influences their participation in OAs. Sixteen respondents said they do not like to do OAs in certain weather conditions like rain, snow, or the cold. To overcome the negative influence of certain weather factors, girls need to know how they can prepare for rain, snow, cold, and other conditions. Not only can OA
practitioners tell girls how to use certain gear for certain weather conditions, they can also supply proper gear for girls to borrow for events.

When leading an outdoor event, OA facilitators should also consider what activities they are leading, what the weather conditions are, and how the weather will affect the activity and the participants. For instance, if the weather is excruciatingly hot, participants may prefer swimming in a river to climbing on a south-facing rock. Outdoor activity facilitators should be flexible. If the weather does not cooperate for a certain activity, or participants think the weather will inhibit their enjoyment of a certain activity, in addition to teaching girls how to adapt to the weather, OA facilitators must be ready to change the planned activity to an activity more appropriate, or more comfortable, for the weather conditions. Girls also need to know how to take care of themselves in the outdoors. Outdoor activity instructors and guides must remind girls to apply sunscreen regularly to prevent sun burns; to apply bug spray to prevent bug bites, and to drink water often to prevent dehydration.

Outdoor activity facilitators should seek to understand the girls they wish to serve by getting to know their likes and dislikes. By interviewing the girls or having a simple conversation with them, instructors, guides, teachers, and parents can determine which environmental conditions are most appealing to which girls. Outdoor activity facilitators can take girls outdoors when the weather conditions are most favorable for each individual’s enjoyment. Facilitators can group girls together according to their preferences for certain weather conditions as well as for certain activities. Girls can find strength with each other as they enjoy the good or bad weather together. Outdoor programs can consider starting clubs for girls who love playing in the rain or a specific program for all snow-related activities. Girls who enjoy these perceivably
negative weather conditions can participate with other girls who share their perspective and can find strength in their interactions with other girls who enjoy the snow, rain, or other weather conditions.

Girls in this study also think some girls do not participate in outdoor activities because they dislike certain environmental elements other than weather. Sixteen of the twenty-four respondents said they do not like mud, dirt, bugs, or other creepy-crawlies in the outdoors. Outdoor activity practitioners can help girls overcome the inhibitions related to bugs by teaching girls about bugs – their characteristics, where to find them, and how they may or may not harm people. If girls are more aware of the small creatures inhabiting outdoor environments, they may be more likely to understand their function, and rather than detest their presence and appearance, they may be more likely to appreciate the flies, slugs, rodents, and the like which could otherwise scare or gross-out some girls. And regarding mud and dirt, exposure to such elements may be the key to overcoming girls’ negative perceptions that getting dirty is bad or uncomfortable. Outdoor activity practitioners should give girls opportunities to jump in mud puddles without consequence. Girls can borrow and wear rain gear to tromp through a slough and then run through a spraying waterfall to wash their gear. Then girls can see being dirty is only temporary and, through the process, they may achieve the sense of freedom they perceive to be so important in their outdoor experiences. By teaching girls how to maintain acceptable comfort levels in perceivably uncomfortable conditions, OA practitioners can deter girls from choosing sedentary indoor activities and promote their participation in a myriad of beneficial outdoor activities.
Fear can also keep girls from participating in outdoor activities. As with bugs and small creatures, awareness of the larger species in certain environments may bring girls to an understanding of how these animals operate, where they can be found, and how to prevent unwanted interactions with them. With understanding, girls may be more willing to venture outdoors where intimidating animals may or may not exist. While the forests surrounding Missoula harbor large animal species, increased understanding may help girls realize that bears, lions, and similar scary animals are not necessarily present in every wild place. To confront girls’ fears of the dark, OA instructors and guides can facilitate enjoyable nighttime activities. Instructors can teach girls to identify constellations and planets in the night sky. Girls may also appreciate activities that allow them to listen to as well as identify night sounds in the wilderness. Flash light tag, camp fire stories, and night hikes can alleviate girls’ fears of the dark, as well.

Girls in this study are also concerned about being away from the amenities of the indoors like shelter, toilets, and food. Through outdoor activities, instructors can teach girls how to build shelters, take care of their personal hygiene, and feed themselves in the wilderness. Yet, if girls are unaware that their needs can be taken care of in the wild, they may not be willing to venture outdoors to learn such skills. Promotional materials and talks along with introductory workshops must assure girls that their needs will be met. Programs should also provide girls with gear and lessons to help them meet their needs in the outdoors.

By introducing girls to OAs within their comfort zone, they may be more likely to try OAs that are a little beyond their comfort zone. Little by little, girls may become more willing to push their own boundaries and try activities that can enhance their experiences of freedom and
openness, their chances to think and explore their self-identities, as well as to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. In addition, giving girls the opportunity to try OAs that test their comfort levels while participating with other girls who also may not be comfortable allows girls to share common thoughts, experiences, and goals. When they experience OAs that test their boundaries as a cohesive group, they can build bonds which may help them form the type of intimate relationships that are important during adolescence.

Overcoming time constraints.

Given respondents’ concerns about time constraints, outdoor programs and facilitators should offer brief workshops that let girls participate in abbreviated versions of outdoor activities. For example, instructors, teachers, mentors, or parents can take girls on one-hour long mountain bike rides or a half-hour long trail run. Of course, getting to the trailheads adds time to the event and even more time in more urban areas. Having the event as prepared as possible, with as little extra time spent talking, pumping tires, and tying shoes, will eliminate extra time which girls seem to need to take care of all their other responsibilities.

Asking some girls to dedicate an entire week or even a single day to an outdoor activity may not be reasonable for girls who have jobs, play sports, or participate in clubs. A quick introduction to outdoor activities may be all a girl needs to decide she likes outdoor activities enough to alter her schedule in order to make time for more outdoor activities. Even a little time each day spent engaged in activity outdoors can do ample good for a girl’s mental and physical well-being. Outdoor activity practitioners should promote OAs by introducing youth to nature near their homes and schools. Teaching a girl how to make the most of her spare time by
doing a bit of outdoor activity in nearby nature can become a healthy habit she may carry into adulthood. Stressing the importance of physical activity and the added bonus of doing those activities outside, outdoor activity facilitators should teach girls time management skills as well as how to prioritize beneficial outdoor activities over time-consuming, sedentary activities, like watching TV or checking statuses on Facebook.

Respondents believe girls may prefer indoor activities over OAs because of their busy schedules, their need for relaxation, and the ease of indoor activities. Indoors, girls participate in technology-related activities like using their cell phones and playing video games. They also engage in social activities like hanging out and talking. Perhaps OA practitioners can incorporate girls’ interests in technology and social interactions into outdoor activity opportunities. Outdoor activity facilitators can help and encourage girls to blog about the outdoor activities they enjoy or set up an email listserv for girls who want to join other girls in outdoor activities. And instead of forbidding the use of technological devices like cell phones or mp3 players, outdoor activity facilitators can incorporate their use into their activities and events. Girls can feel free to take pictures with their phones and text those pictures to their friends to show them what they are doing outdoors. This way, the girl’s quest for social interactions, even if over the phone, is not diminished, and she is sharing her experience with others. In addition, girls can be encouraged to share their music with others around the camp fire which may strike up interesting conversations and promote a positive group dynamic.

Respondents also feel busy because, as adolescents girls age, they tend to take on more responsibilities, and, as a result, they may experience less free time and more desire to relax and let their minds wander when they do get free time. As R#9 said,
I just keep coming back to the time we have and just how, like, everyone just complains about being tired all the time. And, I think that really factors into people not getting up and getting outside. So, it’s almost like we need to find more energy to do it because I know that’s why I don’t do it because I just want to lay down and just rest. But, I think, like, being outside can almost be that rest if we found a way to do that.

Outdoor activity facilitators can show girls the relaxing side of outdoor activities. While some girls may desire the challenge, the risk, or the adventure of OAs, other girls may desire oneness with the environment, respite from stresses, and the simple appreciation of nature’s peacefulness and beauty. Meditation, yoga, and bird watching are examples of activities that introduce girls to some of the benefits of nature. Activities like these can also show girls how the outdoors provides uninhibited and uninterrupted relaxation. In a comfortable environment with a few minor amenities, girls can be content, participating in outdoor activities far from their computers, cell phone reception, or nagging adults. Outdoor programs can offer relaxation workshops or events that teach girls how to engage in relaxation techniques in outdoor settings. And given that girls’ time is at a premium during adolescence, it is important to offer girls outdoor relaxation opportunities that are easily accessible – those that do not require excess gear, travel time, or energy expenditure. For example, instructors can take girls to a quiet local park and show them a secluded grove of trees where they can practice mediation or take a nap in the shade, listening to singing birds.

*Unique or cool opportunities.*

The interviewees in this study maintain dreams of participating in outdoor activities that are unique or considered cool. Eighteen girls said they want to participate in activities that are cool or unique. When asked why they wanted to participate in their dreams activities, many
girls simply said they wanted to say, “I did that.” They want their peers and friends to know they have accomplished something unique or cool so that their social status becomes elevated. They can imagine certain activities that would raise their social status and those are the activities they dream of doing.

Outdoor programs can capitalize on the cool factor by marketing their activities by having cool people in their advertisements or having charismatic leaders give their promotional talks. Of course, merely slapping the term “cool” on promotional materials is not enough. Concerned parties must find out what the girls think is cool by asking the girls what activities are cool, what sort of instructors are cool, and where it would be cool to go, among other questions. As organizations and other concerned parties delve deeper into researching girls’ perceptions of and participation in outdoor activities, organizations can create programs that are genuinely cool for girls.

Outdoor programs must also offer unique opportunities. More than any other activity, girls said they dreamt of sky diving. While this may be an insurance nightmare, outdoor programmers should keep in mind that girls dream big, so the sky should be the limit when planning activities for girls. Organizations should explore the newest outdoor activities, offer them to girls, and promote those activities in the hippest ways possible. Girls will be more likely to try activities that are considered cool or unique, so programs should offer girls a myriad of cool and unique activities to reach as many girls as possible. If activities are cool or unique, girls will be more likely to invite their friends or make the effort to get together with their friends to participate in such activities. And when their friends are involved, girls are more likely to follow along.
Effective leadership and mentoring.

Eleven respondents said OA facilitators should keep girls’ unique interest and needs in mind when planning activities. In addition, 16 respondents recommend OA facilitators give girls a selection of interesting OA opportunities. In order to understand the needs and desires of adolescent girls, as well as to understand what is of interest to them, OA facilitators must be able to form a positive rapport with adolescent girls. Girls must feel free to share their interests and opinions with their OA facilitator who may effectively build relationships with girls in the form of mentorship.

For a mentor, parent, leader, or other OA practitioner to be an effective model, the model must demand the attention of the adolescent (Ormond 1999; Bandura 1977). Adolescents will be more likely to pay attention to the modeling of a mentor if the mentor is dramatic or colorful, if they have similar characteristics to the mentee, or if the mentor is attractive, prestigious, or appears to be particularly skilled (Ormond 1999; Bandura 1977).

Outdoor programs for girls should provide mentors who understand the unique needs and desires of adolescent girls in the outdoors. Research has found that, while boys may desire mentors who encourage autonomy, girls are more likely to desire a mentor relationship that emphasizes empathy, authenticity, and intimacy (DuBois & Karcher 2005). In other words, girls want to feel connected to someone – in this case, a mentor can be that someone. Outdoor programs can facilitate this connection by giving girls a chance to engage in meaningful conversation with their mentors.

The outdoors is an ideal environment for uninhibited, undistracted, meaningful conversation. The immensity, beauty, and isolation of some outdoor activities can give girls and
their mentors a great setting for unrestricted, uninterrupted, and private conversation.

Mentorship, however, should go beyond the outdoor experiences. Girls need to feel they can come to their mentors with issues on a regular basis – especially when they need guidance and intimacy the most. Whether a phone call or a hike, organizations must consider how their mentors will facilitate the intimate relationships girls desire during adolescence.

Mentors, parents, teachers, and OA practitioners must understand that adolescent girls are attaining the necessary cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development characteristics to try activities beyond childhood outdoor activities, games, and lessons. Respondents expressed the desire to move on from their childhood games and participation in activities with their parents. If respondents and their peers are to participate in outdoor activities at all, they appear to want to participate in more challenging outdoor activities with their friends.

In addition, girls’ interest in OAs can be affected by a mentor, parent, or teacher. Like in Cooky’s (2009) article, girls who are told girls are not interested in sports will not be interested in sports, girls who are told girls are not interested in OAs may not have interest in outdoor activities. If influential people in girls’ lives said, “Girls are interested in outdoor activities,” girls may begin to feel they can and should be interested in outdoor activities. When their interest is piqued, their participation in OAs may increase.

**Conclusion**

Considering the lack of literature and research specifically about adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities, a study listening and interpreting girls’ unique voices adds to
the richness of the data on leisure, recreational, and educational studies. The richer the data, the more likely outdoor activity practitioners, educators, teachers, and mentors will be able to increase peoples’ involvement in the outdoors, and, therefore, increase connections to nature. As interested parties increase youth’s connections to nature through outdoor activities, our world will gain a fresh population of conservationists and stewards for the environment.

Girls’ participation in outdoor activities decreases most dramatically during adolescence. Adolescent boys’ participation in OAs decreases, as well, but girls’ participation decreases at a greater rate. In order to surmount the barriers to girls’ participation in OAs, OA practitioners, parents, educators, and mentors need to listen to girls’ stories and ideas to increase girls’ participation in OAs. In addition, as OA practitioners, educators, parents, and mentors listen to girls, they will become more capable of facilitating OAs that appeal to and benefit adolescent girls and their unique desires and needs. The respondents in this study revealed how unique each girl’s perspective on OAs is. Overall, listening and catering to each girl’s unique needs and desires is the greatest step to ensure each girl’s receptivity to OAs.

Based on the following guiding questions, respondents revealed an intricate interplay of actual and perceived incentives and disincentives to their own and their peers’ participation in outdoor activities:

1. Why do adolescent girls’ participation rates in outdoor activities drop-off during adolescence?
2. How might adolescent girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities affect their participation in outdoor activities?
3. And how can outdoor activity practitioners increase adolescent girls’ participation and enjoyment of outdoor activities?

Respondents’ reasons for their decreasing participation in OAs were labeled as disincentives and respondents’ reasons for participating were labeled as incentives. Respondents perceive more
incentives than disincentives for their own participation and perceive more disincentives than incentives for their peers’ participation. The reported OA activity rates of respondents and their perceptions of their peers’ participation in OAs indicates that the interplay between incentives and disincentives leads to less than desirable OA participation rates. In other words, the fewer major disincentives overpower the incentives for girls to participate in outdoor activities.

Major disincentives to girls’ participation in OAs include: 1) Physical discomfort and fear; 2) Peer influences and perceived lack of peer participation in OAs; 3) Time constraints and desires for relaxation and relief. Of particular note regarding disincentives are the reports by all seven of the low-scoring respondents who said they have no friends who participate in OAs. This finding is the only notable difference between the three scoring groups.

Major incentives to girls’ participation in OAs include: 1) Nature appreciation, aesthetics, and learning experiences through OAs; 2) Social outlets through OAs and peers’ active participation in OAs; 3) Physical health benefits; 4) Mental health benefits including freedom, openness, and escape from societal constraints; and 5) Unique experiences through outdoor activities.

The overall goal of this study was to gain insight into how adolescent girls’ experiences and perceptions of OAs effect their participation in outdoor activities – an instrumental key to their overall well-being. While these stories are specific to these 24 young women, their stories can be used to help other girls across the state and across the nation. In addition, their stories are meant to be shared with the people who have the most power to effect their participation in and perceptions of outdoor activities: their parents, their teachers, outdoor activity practitioners, and mentors. The more stories are shared, the more knowledge we can gain and
the more we will be able to spread the joys and benefits of the outdoors to our future conservationists and stewards of the environment.

**Over-arching recommendations.**

Encouraging adolescent girls’ participation in outdoor activities will benefit not only the girls through the myriad of mental, emotional, and physical health benefits provided by OAs, but our society and environment as a whole will benefit from the maturation and inclusion of a new generation of land conservationists and stewards who are unbound by gender. Understanding the dimensions of education, outdoor activities, and social construction as they relate to land conservation and stewardship will broaden the reach of those seeking to increase the knowledge and power our society needs to protect our wild places and resources.

Outdoor activity practitioners, parents, educators, and mentors can change the way girls perceive and experience outdoor activities by focusing on the following tenants: (1) Respect, understand, and cater to the needs of adolescent girls and their respective developmental transformations, (2) Give girls opportunities to freely and openly explore their self-identities without restraint, in the awe-inspiring, freeing, and open setting of the outdoors, and encourage them to find themselves apart from the influences of media, (3) Involve family members, especially parents, in the process of modeling positive behaviors through outdoor activities, (4) Encourage girls to participate in OAs with their friends and peers, and (5) Make girls’ outdoor activity experiences both physically and socially comfortable for adolescent girls by dismantling discomforts and socially constructed barriers that dictate the current models of how they should perceive and experience outdoor activities.
In the end, OA practitioners must continue to pursue knowledge and awareness of the populations they seek to engage and, hopefully, nurture into the future stewards of our environment. Two questions in particular rose to my attention through this research:

- Why do the respondents in this study believe that other girls do not participate in OAs, and why do these girls believe there are more disincentives than incentives for their peers to participate?
- Why does adolescent boys’ participation in OAs decrease during adolescence, and how can OA practitioners increase adolescent boys’ participation in and enjoyment of outdoor activities?

The investigation into the OA participation of adolescents must continue to ensure future generations will enjoy nature and take care of it for all generations to come.
REFERENCES


http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html


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Student Screening Survey

If you would like to be considered for an interview, please fill out this student screening survey and return it, along with the parental permission form and either the minor assent or subject consent form, to your teacher. The contact information you provide below will allow me to reach you if/when you have been chosen to participate in the interview portion of the research.

Contact Information:
Name:______________________________________   Age:_________
Phone:_______________________________________   Email:_______________________________________

In the past 12 months, about how many times have you participated in the following activities?

1. Hiking, mountain biking, climbing, walking or jogging outside?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

2. Camping or backpacking?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

3. Swimming, boating (rafting, tubing or kayaking), fishing or wading in a river, lake or pond?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

4. Skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, or snowshoeing?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

5. Sketching, painting, writing, reading, relaxing, and/or meditating outside?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

6. Bird watching, wildlife viewing, or nature viewing?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times
7. Just playing or hanging out outside?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

8. Playing an outdoor sport like soccer, softball, golf, etc.?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

9. Participated in an outdoor activity or activities that is not listed above?
   __ never
   __ 1 to 5 times
   __ more than 5 times

**Which activity/activities did you participate in that are not listed above?**

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Answer the following questions:

1. *Do you enjoy spending time outdoors?* Yes   No (circle one)

2. *Do you spend as much time outdoors as you want?* Yes   No (circle one)

3. *Do your parents enjoy spending time outdoors?* Yes   No (circle one)

4. *Do you spend time outdoors with your parents?* Yes   No (circle one)

5. *On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not outdoorsy at all and 10 being very outdoorsy, how would you rate yourself as an outdoorsperson?* Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   not at all very

6. *Would you be willing to participate in an interview that may take up to 45 minutes of your time (you will be provided with a snack)?* Yes   No (circle one)

7. *When would you prefer to be interviewed?* (circle one or more)
   Before school   After school   During lunch   Study Hall   Arrange a time
Dear Teacher,

Greetings from the desk of a hard working graduate student. I recall great memories of working with some of the kids in your school through coaching and substitute teaching. It is due to these experiences with these kids, and others, that I have found myself pursuing a master’s degree in Resource Conservation on a quest to create an outdoor program for adolescent girls. This goal has led me to conduct research regarding adolescent girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities.

I am writing to request access to some of your class time and some of your students. Would you be willing to allow me to come into your classroom for about 10 to 15 minutes to hand out a survey to your female students who are now between the ages of 14 to 18? I would be greatly appreciative of your sacrifice in helping me conduct my research for my thesis. I understand that you will have other students in the class that will not be participating in the survey. For this reason, I am willing to entertain any ideas you have regarding how we should arrange the class so that, if you wish, you can conduct an alternative activity with the boys. Please let me know if you have ideas or suggestions regarding alternative placement of participants and non-participants.

My time in your class will include an explanation of who I am and why I am conducting the survey. I will hand each girl a parental consent form, a minor or subject assent form (depending on their age), as well as the screening survey. I will give the girls directions regarding how to complete all the forms and the survey. They may choose whether or not they would like to participate. If they choose to participate, girls can complete the forms and survey at home and will be asked to return the forms and survey in to you in a manila envelope which I will provide. I will check back at one and two weeks after I have visited your class to retrieve completed forms and surveys. From the survey results I will contact selected girls to ask if they would like to participate in an interview with me. Girls will be chosen for an interview if they represent a portion of the adolescent girl population of Missoula that is either inactive, moderately active, or very active in the outdoors, as determined by their survey answers. If they are willing to participate, the interview would last about 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews will take place on school grounds before or after school, during study hall, or during lunch.

The survey and interview will involve questions about the girls’ participation levels and perceptions of outdoor activities. During the interview I will ask them what experiences they have had outdoors and what their inspirations or barriers have been to get outside and get active.

It is my goal that this research will lead to better outdoor instruction, and overall education, for all – regardless of gender. Thank you for your time. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Megyesi
UM College of Forestry & Conservation
sarah.megyesi@umontana.edu
Written Script for Verbal Description of Study

Thank you, (Teacher’s name) for letting speak with the girls in your class today. And I thank you, too, ladies, for letting me interrupt your class.

Let me introduce myself. I am Sarah Megyesi, a graduate student from the University of Montana. I am currently pursuing my master’s degree. As a part of my master’s program I must conduct an intricate research project and then follow it up with a thesis. The thesis is a huge paper, about 100 pages. It’s going to be a big project and it will be the most important project I will undertake for my future.

Being a woman who has grown up in Montana, I have chosen to research girls’ beliefs about the outdoors. I wonder what it is that causes some girls to jump at opportunities to go for a hike or a bike ride, I wonder what it is that drives some girls to chat online or text message, and I am also wondering what girls in this town prefer to do with their free time.

You may love to play volleyball or enjoy your involvement in a club. You may prefer to read or write poetry or draw. Regardless of what you do with your free time, I am looking for girls who would not mind sharing their experiences as a high school girl in Missoula, MT. You might be a shop-a-holic, a golfer, an artist or a skier. I’m interested in all types, shy or outgoing, loud or demure. Whatever you are, whatever your views, I want to hear your stories! I want to make your voice heard (of course, my research will leave all your names confidential).

So, without any commitment from you whatsoever, I would like to give each of you a survey and a permission form or two. If you choose to participate in my research you will need to fill out this simple survey and, if you are under 18, have your parents read and sign the parental permission form and you must also sign the minor assent form. When you’ve got all that done, fold it all together, staple it if you wish, put glitter or stickers on it, and give it to your teacher who will put it in this confidential folder which they will keep very secure.

So, you may want to know, is it that simple? No. It isn’t that simple. By returning your surveys and permission forms you will be entered into a process that may or may not result in a private interview with me.
The interview will ask you questions regarding what I spoke of earlier – your interest and involvement in certain activities and your life experiences as a girl in Missoula. The interview will last 30 to 45 minutes and will be pain-free. I promise that I’ll even make you laugh at least once. You’ll probably make me laugh, too, but I’ll try to keep myself under control. For your interview we’ll meet in one of the spare counselor’s offices. I know it’s not too exciting but I’ll try to entice you with some snacks and some jokes. We can meet whenever you prefer, but, given how teachers like for you to attend class, you’ll probably have to meet me before school, after school, during lunch or, hopefully, during study hall. If none of those times work, we’ll work something out.
Let’s look at the survey for a second. All you have to do is fill out your contact information, make some check-marks and circle stuff. If you don’t know an exact answer, just guess. You won’t be graded on any of this. This will just help me distinguish the different types of girls we have at this school. I know it looks like all the questions are about the outdoors – because they are. After all, my study aims to find out what girls do or do not like about the outdoors and why or why not. Just be honest and open and willing to help out a grad student and her research.

So, there you have it. All I can do now is leave these forms in your hands and hope that you will help me out. I will sincerely value all of your unique views on life and all your stories that you might share with me. It will be a great chance for you to practice your interpersonal communication skills (your teacher will like that one) as well as your story-telling techniques (that’ll make you popular around the campfire) in addition to sharpening your self-reflection skills (you might turn out pretty sane as an adult).

All right, we’re wrapping it up now. Just get these into your teacher within two weeks of this date. Write it down. When is two weeks from now? Got that!?

After you turn them in I’ll have to sort through the waiting list of all the girls who want to help me out, so it might take some time before I get back to you. Just know that I will get a hold of you and I will work with you so we can find the best time to meet.

Also, if you think a friend might be interested in sharing her point of view, go ahead and give her my contact info which is on the permission forms. She can call or write and then I can get her the forms, as well. I would really appreciate it, in fact, if you convinced some of your friends to help out, too.

All-in-all, I would like to thank you in advance for your time and effort. I know you’re all busy women with places to go and people to see, as we all are. But just remember, your input could result in some big changes for our society. And we would have all of you to thank for that.

So, thank you, again for your willingness to share your stories so that adults, educators, and other interested parties can understand a little more about young women like yourself and what makes them tick.

Any Questions?

Thanks. And I hope to see you all again soon.
PARENTAL PERMISSION

Students, if you choose to participate in this study, please have your parent/guardian read and sign this consent form and return it to your teacher with the completed survey and the minor assent form. Return the forms and survey within 2 weeks of receiving them. Your survey will then be scored and, according to the scores, you may be randomly chosen to participate further with a 30 to 45 minute interview at your school. You will be contacted using the contact information you provide on the screening survey. Thank you.

Title: What do Missoula’s High School Girls Think of Nature and Outdoor Activities?

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Both the Project Director and the Faculty Supervisor can be reached at the following address:
College of Forestry & Conservation
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT  59812

Special instructions:
* This permission form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you or contact the project director.

Purpose:
* You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study which will collect and analyze high school girls’ perceptions of nature and outdoor activities.
* Your child has been chosen because she is a high school student in Missoula. Given her unique upbringing and experiences, I believe that she has a unique perspective on nature and outdoor activities that is valuable to the research project.
* The purpose of this research study is to learn what high school girls think of nature and outdoor activities so that educators and instructors can provide an appealing and valuable outdoor experience for adolescent girls.

**Procedures:**

* Your child will first be asked to fill out the screening survey and return it to her teacher within 2 weeks of receiving it. The survey will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
* If you agree to your child’s participation in the interview, your child will be given a healthy snack during the interview.
* Your child will be asked general questions regarding their thoughts and experiences regarding outdoor activities.
* The interview may be audio recorded if you give permission to do so (your signature is required below). An audio recording will ensure that your child’s views are accurately portrayed in the research process. The recording will be transcribed and used to find themes that will help in the research process. The tapes will be deleted after being transcribed.
* Your child may also be asked follow-up questions which they may or may not choose to answer. Follow-up questions may be asked if, through the analysis of their interview, confusion arises from their answer(s) or new questions arise pertaining to an answer they provided or if clarification, in general, is needed regarding their answer(s). These questions will be posed using the contact information provided on the screening survey.
* Your child will be asked to participate in the interview within the confines of their school. The interviews will take place before school, after school, during study hall or during their lunch break. If you would prefer the interview take place elsewhere please contact the project director.
* The individual interview session will last for 30 to 45 minutes.

**Risks/Discomforts:**
* Answering the questions may cause your child to think about feelings
that make him/her sad or upset. They may choose to stop participation at any time.
* You will be informed of any new findings (such as a change in interview time or place) that may affect your decision to allow your child to remain in the study.
* There is no anticipated discomfort for those contributing to this study, so risk to your child is minimal.

Benefits:
* Your child’s help with this study may help them or young women like them benefit from educational/outdoor programs whose directors and instructors have used the research to implement their programs.
* There is no promise that you or your child will receive any benefit from taking part in this study.
* It is also a good opportunity for your child to practice their communication skills in an individual interview.

Confidentiality:
* All records will be kept private and will not be released without your consent except as required by law.
* Only the researcher and her faculty supervisor will have access to the files.
* Both your and your child’s identity will be kept confidential.
* If the results of this study are written in a scientific journal or presented at a scientific meeting, neither you nor your child’s name will be used.
* The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet.
* Your child’s signed consent/assent form, as well as this parental permission form will be stored in a cabinet separate from the data.

Compensation for Injury:
* Although we do not foresee any risk in taking part in this study, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms:

  In the event that your child is injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of
its employees, your child may be entitled to
reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the
Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by
the Department of Administration under the
authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event
of a claim for such injury, further information may
be obtained from the University’s Claims
representative or University Legal Counsel.
(Reviewed by University Legal Counsel, July 6, 1993)

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:
* Your decision to allow your child to take part in this research study is
  entirely voluntary.
* You may refuse to allow your child to take part in or you may withdraw
  your child from the study at any time.
* If you decide to withdraw your child please contact the project director.
* Your child may leave the study for any reason.
* Your child may be asked to leave the study for any of the following
  reasons:
  • Failure to follow the Project Director’s instructions;
  • The study is terminated.

Questions:
* You may wish to discuss this with others before you agree to allow your
  child to take part in this study.
* If you have any questions about the research now or during the study
  contact: Sarah Megyesi (406) 546-5658
* If you have any questions regarding your child’s rights as a research
  subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of
  Montana Research Office at 243-6670.

Parent’s Statement of Permission:
* I have read the above description of this research study. I have been
  informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have
  been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that
  any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the
  research team. I voluntarily agree to have my child take part in this study.
  I understand I will receive a copy of this permission form.
Printed Name of Subject

________________________________________

Signature of Parent or Legally Authorized Representative  Date

Statement of Permission to be Audiotaped:
* I understand that audio recordings may be taken during the study.
* I give permission to having my child be audio recorded.
* I understand that audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription, and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

________________________________________

Signature of Parent or Legally Authorized Representative  Date
SUBJECT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Students, if you choose to participate in this study, please read and sign this consent form and return it to your teacher with the completed survey. Return the form and survey within 2 weeks of receiving them. Your survey will then be scored and, according to the scores, you may be randomly chosen to participate further with a 30 to 45 minute interview at your school. You will be contacted using the contact information you provide on the screening survey. Thank you.

Title: What do Missoula’s High School Girls Think of Outdoor Activities?

Project Director(s):
Sarah Megyesi
UM College of Forestry & Conservation
Graduate Student
sarah.megyesi@umontana.edu
(406) 546-5658

Faculty Supervisor:
James Burchfield
Interim Dean of College of Forestry and Conservation
Professor of Forest Social Sciences
james.burchfield@umontana.edu
(406) 243-6650
Office: FOR 108C

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* You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled.
* If you decide to withdraw your survey, contact information, forms, and audio recordings will be destroyed or erased.
* You may leave the study for any reason.
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Minor’s Assent for Being in a Research Study  
University of Montana

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Title: High School Girls’ Perceptions of Outdoor Activities

Why am I here?  
We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about what you think of activities in the outdoors. We are inviting you to be in the study because we feel that you have a perspective that is unique and valuable to our study.

Why are they doing this study? 
It is important for outdoor program instructors, teachers and parents, among other people, to know what kids think about outdoor activities. Knowing your ideas can help these people create programs or design outdoor activities and events that are appealing and beneficial to you and young people like you in your town and across the country.

What will happen to me? 
You will participate in a written survey that you can complete at home and return, with the parental permission form, to your teacher within two weeks. This survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. From the survey results, certain participants will be selected to participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher. If you so choose, you will participate in an interview that will last about 30 to 45 minutes before school, during lunch, during study hall, or after school. The researcher will provide you with a healthy snack, if you would like. The interview will include questions about your participation in and thoughts about outdoor activities. You will be asked what sort of activities you like and don’t like, who you like to do them with, and what makes you want to do certain activities. If you have revealed something through your interview that may need a second look, the researcher may contact you, via the email or telephone number you provide on the screening survey, for additional questioning which you may feel free to accept or decline. Follow-up questions may be asked if, upon studying your interview, confusion arises from your answer(s) or new questions arise pertaining to an answer you provided or if clarification, in general, is needed regarding your answer(s).
Will the study hurt?

The study will not hurt. You will merely be asked questions and you may choose not to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

Will the study help me?

The study is meant to help young adults in the region and, perhaps, across the country and the world. The researchers want your views to be heard so that people can understand your thoughts and feelings. Participating in this research process will also help you practice being in an interview situation and allow you to think about things in a new light. You may come away with some new ideas as well as some valuable experience talking one-on-one with a researcher.

What if I have any questions?

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can call me at 406-546-5658 or email me at sarah.megyesi@umontana.edu.

Do my parents [guardians] know about this?

This study was explained to your parents [guardians] and they said that you could be in it. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

Do I have to be in the study?

You do not have to be in the study. No one will be upset if you don’t want to do this. If you don’t want to be in this study, you just have to tell me. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It’s up to you.

Writing your name on this page means that you agree to be in the study, and know what will happen to you. If you decide to quit the study all you have to do is tell the person in charge.

_________________________________________                  ___________________
Name of Minor (printed)                        Date

_________________________________________                  ___________________
Signature of Minor                        Date

_________________________________________                  ___________________
Signature of Researcher                        Date
Interview Guide

Date: ____________
Interview #_____

Introduction

First of all, thank you for volunteering your time to help me with my research. I’m really interested in what you think about outdoor activities. Your interview responses will be analyzed along with other high school girls’ responses. With all of this information from adolescent girls I hope to write my graduate thesis in order to earn my master’s degree from the University of Montana. We’ll begin the interview with some basic questions. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers and your honest opinions will be extremely valuable. Keep in mind, as well, that all of your answers will be held confidential so feel free to share anything that you feel is important and answer each question as completely as possible. Take some time to think about your answers and let me know if you have any questions at any time.

1. Pretend you don’t have any homework to do, no job, no extracurricular activities. What would you prefer to do with all of your free time?

2. If you have a chance to participate in an outdoor activity, anytime, anywhere, what would be some of your favorite activities to do?

3. Why do you like being outside?
   probe: When you are outdoors, what sorts of things in nature are interesting to you?

4. What don’t you like about being outside?
   probe: What things in the outdoors, if any, keep you from spending time outdoors?

5. What outdoor activities do you enjoy with your family and with whom in your family do you enjoy these activities?

6. What sort of things do your parents do in their free time?
   probe: Do they participate in any outdoor activities?

7. What sort of things do you do with your friends when you all have some free time together? (**why do you do more inside things than outdoor?)

8. Do you know girls (friends or not friends) that spend much time outdoors? Majority?
   probe: Do you know what they do outdoors?

9. Why do you think other girls participate or do not participate in outdoor activities?

10. How has the amount of time you spend outside changed since you were younger?

11. How and why do you think this amount of time will change in the future?
12. Imagine you were outside. You can be anywhere you want, doing anything you want and money or ability is not a factor. You could try something you have always wanted to do. What would you like to be doing?
   probe: What would be some good reasons for trying those things?
   probe: What are the reasons you might not try those things?

13. Take a look at this list of outdoor activities. What I want you to do is place any activity cards that are more “boyish” in the “boy” box and those that are more “girlish” in the “girl” box. If you think there is an activity that is more neutral, neither “boyish” nor “girlish”, then place that activity card in the “Boys & Girls” box. Discuss your reasoning.
   probe: Why did you select certain activities as “boyish”? “Girlish”? “Neutral”?

14. Pretend you were placed in charge of getting girls more active in the outdoors. What would you do?
   probe: Do you think it is worth trying to get high school girls more active in the outdoors? Why?

15. Is there anything else you can tell me about what girls like or do not like about outdoor activities?

16. Do you have any questions for me?

Conclusion

Well, that winds things down for us. You can call me anytime if you want to add anything else with your comments. Thank you, once again, for all the time you were willing to take to help me with my research. Your answers were very thoughtful and will be very useful as I proceed towards my thesis. It was great meeting you and awesome talking with you.
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<th>Bicycling</th>
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Girls

Boys
Interview #9 (middle scoring survey respondent)

pretend you don’t have any homework, you don’t have a job, you don’t have any extracurricular activities. what would you prefer to do with all of your free time?
a: free time (quietly). kay well I do like to sleep and yes I am a couch potato so I do watch tv but there are times when my mom makes me but I do go outside too like I’ll go for a run or something. but I kind of am more of an inside person I guess so. I don’t know I’m not really around. like I guess it depends on the season too cuz in the summer I do go hiking with my friends up Blue mountain and stuff but mostly like when it’s during school and I have free time I’ll stay inside.

if you have a chance to participate in an outdoor activity anytime anywhere. what would be some the outdoor activities you do?
a: well, soccer. and then um we have a cabin so I’m outside all the time up there so we wakeboard, water ski, like go swimming all the time, cliff jumping, which is fun and then I did mention hiking I like going up there and camping which I love that I love camping a lot so. ya.

any other outdoor activities that you like to do?
a: mmm.... let me think. no that’s pretty much it I guess.

what do you like about being outdoors?
a: um, obviously I like the fresh air I know that’s really like generic or whatever but its nice like being in that smell. up at my cabin it’s just green everywhere and I just like almost being away from everything cuz I inside is just so noisy and there’s all the stuff going on so being outside is almost like really serene and really calm and I don’t know I just like being away from all that atmosphere I guess.

is that the only thing that you like about being outdoors or why do you like being outdoors? what do you get out of it?
a: um, exercise. I don’t knjow. can I talk about being at night too? cuz I loooove the stars my family and I will sit out by the camp fire til two in the morning just looking at all the stars and all the constallations and that’s my favorite part just checking all that out I gues.

do you know some of the constellations
a: ya, my dad brings out his book and we’re just all into it.

so yo umentioned stars, what else is it about the outdoors that interests you? what in nature interests you?
a: hm, that’s a good question. um, I guess I like seeing fish. I don’t know I like seeing the animals which are pretty cool like up at legendary it’s a camp up there and we get, and we like walk around it’s really outdoorsy we’re outside all the time and we see all these animals and we’ve seen like bears out there and mountain lions and its like spooky but its really cool to see wildlife doing its action. not disturbing it.

anything else?
a: no that’s good.
what don’t you like about being outdoors? or what sort of things outdoors keep you from going out?

a: I hate bugs. I literally I just can’t stand em. I am so scared of spiders I don’t like being around that kind of stuff so I have the creepy crawlies I guess. I hate mosquitos too. and I get sunburned a lot. that’s why I don’t like being outside cuz I hate re putting on sunscreen and I just get sun burned a lot so. ya I don’t know I’m trying to think what else I don’t like about it cuz I do like it it’s nice.

so why would you not go outside today?

a: today? cuz it’s slushy and dirty outside. I don’t like getting messy if I don’t have nice clothes I guess. and in the summer I don’t like being hot at all so that can really sometimes keep me inside and in the basement and cool I guess.

what about the other extremes?

a: mmmm... I can handle cold weather pretty well I kind of like going outside and sledding I guess and skiing, I can’t snowboard but. like the cold doesn’t effect me until its like negative zero but I can handle it pretty well.

what outdoor activities do you enjoy with your family and with whom in your family do you enjoy these activities?

a: well, like I said up at my cabin, skiing, wakeboarding, I do that with my mom and dad a lot and then um, I hike with my friend chanelle all the time we always go hiking and we bring her dogs too which is cool I like doing that. and then star gazing with my parents and my sister. and then my sister and I will go outside and just juggle a soccer ball and just hang out outside, too.

so one older sister? that’s it?

a: ya, that’s it.

any other outdoor activities with you rfamily?

a: my family? we ski, too. we go downhill skiing I guess. I’m trying to think. that’s about it.

all right. what sort of things do your parents do in their free time?

a: well, my dad is, loves music so he plays guitar and he sings a lot and then he does all the yard work I guess and my mom does all the needy chores and cooks I guess. umm.. I’m trying to think what else they do. when its spring they’re outside all the time gardening and putting up new things and building a garage that we just put on our house. but it’s kind of chores but they do like to be outside too which is cool

is your dad a good singer?

a: ya. he plays in our church choir or band

and so your mom you mentioned she cleans and cooks in her free time? (ya) does she have any free time?

a: she’ll work out in her free time. she runs outside all the time like all the time. but like in the winter we’ll watch tv and work out but that’s literally all she ever does she doesn’t ever sit down

where does she work out in the winter?
a: we have an elliptical. so she’s very indoors when it’s winter time. do they participate in any outdoor activities? a: like?
aside from the ones you already mentioned that they do with you, and the running?
a: no they kind of just do what I mentioned I guess. they’re not in any leagues or anything.

alright. what sort of things do you do with your friends when all of you have some free time together. it could be outdoors or indoors but I want to hear what you do most of the time.
a: most of the time? again, it depends on the weather but if it’s in the winter we’ll stay inside and just watch movies and hang out at someone’s house. in the summer we float the river a lot which is I love that a lot.
you float on innertubes?
a: ya. on tubes and um we’re going to go kayaking which will be sweet. ya and then we hike but other than those things outside we kind of just stay inside too and hang out I guess we’re not too eventful

in the summer when you hang out inside what do you do?
a: watch tv and watch movies
and when you say hang out with your friends is it just watching movies?
a: ya, just watching tv and kind of talking I guess or playing Wii.
anything else you guys do?
a: no.
do you know... actually how about: why do you do more inside things than outside things?
a: probably seems more convenient I guess like school makes me tired, basketball makes me tired so it seems appealing to just go sit down on our couch and just kind of let your mind go blank and just watch tv I guess. I don’t know I guess that’s a lazy attitude but that’s how I feel it’s just a break from everything cuz I feel like you just have to organize more when you go outside.
do you know many girls that spend much time outdoors?
a: my friend morgan has a ranch up by Butte. so she goes cross country skiing and she has horses. she’s outside all the time they go backpacking with her horses in the summer so I’d say she’s probably the most active one outside which is pretty cool and she’s going to take me backpacking which will be fun. um, trying to think what else she does. having that ranch, I love going up there too cuz we like hang out all the time and ride her 4 wheelers around and her horses and it’s really cool cuz you can just explore the land. and we went rock climbing out there with nothing else but just huge rocks and we saw a wolf and it was so cool. it was scary but it was really cool.

but do you know many girls that are outdoorsy?
a: not, like a lot of people I know like play the sports outside but not like, they’re just not recreational I guess. they’re outside but they’re not crazy outside. I don’t know.
so, those girls that aren’t competing in sports, you mentioned morgan, do you know what other girls do outside in general?
a: this kind of sounds dumb but like going to parks I guess is fun just swinging around and floating. everyone floats even if they’re not athletic or anything they float. there’s some that like playing with their dogs and stuff. nothing like hiking n stuff but they do get outside.

so why do you think other girls participate or do not participate in outdoor activities?

a: that’s a good question. I don’t know. um…. well, I think why some is because some might be extreme. I’m trying to think of like sports I guess why I do and some people don’t. that’s a hard question. I guess it goes back to are they willing to get up and do it. and people just don’t like being outside, don’t like being around animals, don’t like being in the wilderness on their own. they’d rather just go shopping which is dumb or just watch tv. I can think of a couple people that just would rather be inside and not do anything outside. I don’t know why though. that’s a good question. mmmm... I think it just comes down to time too and their willingness to be outside. I don’t know that’s a hard question.

can you think of any other reasons? no pressure.

a: I’m trying to think.

so what do you think, you know the girls that do go hiking or biking or tubing, what do they get out of it?

a: well, it’s kind of a release like I said in the beginning. just being away from everything and like being with that group of people and you can really connect cuz you don’t have your phones you don’t have the computers you can just talk and have like a good conversation with those kind of people and also I like to exercise and they do so exercising makes people feel happy I guess so that’s nice about it when they’re just outside and away from a lot.

and then so those girls that just like to shop or watch movies or watch tv?

a: very into their phones, very into all that, being connected to people 24-7

so do you think that prevents them from going out?

a: ya I could see that that’s a good point. cuz they always like to be connected to the. like they’d struggle going on our basketball bus I feel cuz they wouldn’t have their phone but.

let’s think about when you were younger and how much time you spent outdoors then. and think about how much time you spend outdoors just in your free time now. how has that time changed?

a: well, when I was little I was outside so much more. I had a dog so that helped me go outside a lot and play with him and then I played outside with my neighbors all the time. that was pretty much the only thing to do I guess was like make up games and play outside all the time play like kick the can, hide and seek, all that. now I just, it’s hard for me to even find spare time with the homework and all that but I’d rather be inside than outside now than when I was little. I don’t know, I feel like I had more energy when I was little to just run around and get it all out.

do you have a dog now?

a: no, he died

are you going to get one?
a: well, I want to but we’re not home a lot. but having a dog makes me want to go outside more cuz we keep our dog outside we don’t let him inside so that makes me want to go outside. I feel like that’s prevented me from going outside as much which kind of stinks but....that’s interesting. so, now that you’ve imagined what you know it was like back then to now, how do you envision your time outdoors changing in the future through college and into adulthood?

a: well, I hope in college that like I’ll be outside a lot cuz when you go visit campuses people are always outside throwing Frisbees and stuff and I think being away from home I’ll need something like an escape after all that homework cuz I know college will be hard so I think I’ll be outside more and when I’m an adult I’d like to be in leagues. so hopefully it increases as I get older cuz I’ll find more time to be outside. and like even doing chores outside would be even better than what it is now.

imagine you were outside. you can be anywhere you want doing anything you want and money and ability are not a factor. you can try something new or something you know you like. what would you be doing?

a: skydiving (no hesitation). I’ve always wanted to do that. or tubing cuz I love tubing which would be really cool.

you’ve never tried tubing?

a: no I have but I just like doing it like having tube wars. I could be on the lake for the whole day just doing that but skydiving would be cool cuz my sister did it and she said it was awesome. it would be a good adrenaline rush.

ya it would. anything else that you would imagine trying?

a: well, did go parasailing in mexico and that was really fun so I’d do that. and be outside in the ocean I like the ocean a lot and swimming probably.

so what are some good reasons to try skydiving or parasailing or tubing?

a: would you try them? (ya) like sky diving tests your boundaries for adrenaline and stuff but it would be cool just having those new experiences of being in different places and I’m afraid of heights but the parasailing was cool and just kind of testing my fears which I like doing. I’m trying to think what else. good experience. I don’t know.

back to reality, why don’t you try skydiving?

a: if you’re scared, so scared that it’d just take the fun out of it and you wouldn’t want to focus on it and make you not go outside even like just not try the extreme things and stick to your comfort zone which could limit you to just being outside.

so why don’t you try it?

a: I will.

you will?

a: ya

what’s stopping you from doing it right now?

a: money and time to get up there I guess. I don’t know where else you could do it but in a big city
I think you can do it tkalispell
a: really? I never knew that. I want to do it so bad.

Now we have a little activity. On this thing, there are cards with different outdoor activities written on them. What I want you to do is take those activities and each card place them based on whether they are a girl/boy/neutral/activity. These are ones that boys do, these are ones that both do, and these are ones that girls do. It’s totally up to you to categorize it however you want.
a: what is adventure racing? (I explain) sounds cool.

So under the boys category you have fishing, windsurfing, surfing, hunting, sailing, bird watching, and snowmobiling. Under the girls you have meditating and sketching or painting. And then all the other activities you put in the boys and girls category.

Now I’d like to ask you why did you put meditating and sketching/painting in the girls category?
a: well, I don’t know in my experience I feel like more girls do that it’s just more of a calming thing and I feel like boys are more like they can’t sit still so I feel like girls do that more I guess.

And then why did you put all those activities in the boys category?
a: there more like dangerous sports I guess more like snowmobiling and sailing and hunting and surfing and windsurfing you kind of just see guys doing cuz they’re more extreme. And then hunting and fishing um guys have that time just to go out and they like to shoot animals I guess. Like I know girls do but I feel for the most part I feel boys are the ones that do it and like to I guess kill animals and bird watching, it reminds me of Morgan’s dad cuz he does that all the time. But I don’t know like they’re just like to be with the wildlife which kind of links those hunting and fishing and bird watching.

And then why did you put all these other activities in the middle?
a: I think they’re almost more common so like everyone can do them. Like I know people that do em all and um like everyone runs, everyone reads, I don’t know, there’s not really a gender base that prefers one or the other.

So you mentioned like the fishing the hunting the bird watching all has to do with kind of getting in tune with the animals so why would this be any different? (she moved wildlife viewing into the boys category now)
a: but I feel that nature viewing is kind of (different). cuz it’s almost like it can go with meditating like people girls like being outside and then it’s also with the nature.

Pretend you were in charge of getting girls more active in the outdoors. What would you do?
a: hmmm.. what would I do? I think participating, errr, getting big games together with a bunch of people would like help I know when school puts on like a big capture the flag or dodge ball just being with your peers and other people you don’t know would help me be outside like we’re together with everyone so like getting like a big kind of game together. And this is kind of random but like doing a, even like a run for a charity I know that people would almost do it cuz they want to help out so that would get people outside to participate.

Cool. So do you think it’s worth trying to get high school girls more active in the outdoors?
a: ya I think it’s important to be outside than just inside by yourself and on the couch all the time.

why do you think..?

a: well, obviously the exercise problem we have in America but just I think there’s just so much junk on tv and so much stuff that you can’t really learn from just sitting inside and being outside you can learn about yourself you can learn about other things, you can see other things, meet like other people, just be away from you comfort zone which I think is important for all girls. so how do we get those girls that don’t want to run for charity or play silly games outdoors? how do you think? could you help me out here? how do we get those girls who are maybe even afraid of the outdoors out there?

a: I don’t know that’s a tough question cuz some people don’t like going against what they are afraid to do but like inviting them to go do things even like to a park where it’s just outside, nothing too extreme, just to hang out and be outside, even just going swimming or like the little things not something big. like hiking or something just being outside.

is there anything else that you can tell me about what girls like or do not like about being outdoors or participating in outdoor activities?

a: I just keep coming back to the time we have and just how like everyone just complains about being tired all the time and I think that really factors into people not getting up and getting outside so it’s almost like we need to find more energy to do it. cuz I know that’s why I don’t do it cuz I just want to lay down and just rest but I think like being outside can almost be that rest if we found a way to do that.

anything else you want to tell me?