

## **Adolescent Girls and Outdoor Recreation: A Case Study Examining Constraints and Effective Programming**

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This study primarily sought to identify constraints to adolescent girls' participation in outdoor recreation. A secondary focus probed the efficacy of outdoor programs in surmounting constraints. Focus group and individual interviews were conducted with thirty-four adolescent girls, six female outdoor program leaders, and five adult women. Qualitative analysis revealed several meaningful sources of constraints, including stereotypical gender roles, differences in outdoor recreation opportunities for males and females, peer and family expectations, access, and physical and environmental factors. Broad support was found for the notion that outdoor programs help girls overcome constraints. Themes emerged supporting both coed and all-girls programming, and structural components that could enhance girls' participation.

**KEYWORDS:** *Outdoor recreation, constraints, adolescent girls*

### **Introduction**

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 (Archer & McDonald, 1990; Pipher, 1994). Natural outdoor environments are still often viewed as male domain. Certain outdoor activities are rarely introduced to girls; for example, hunting and fishing skills are typically passed from father to son, and a daughter seldom gets the opportunity to join in (Jackson, 1988). These observations give credence to the idea that there are constraints to girls becoming active outdoor recreationists. An understanding of the barriers that constrain girls' participation in outdoor activities provides direction towards mitigating their effects through outdoor programming.

The primary objective of this study was to illuminate the constraints that influence adolescent girls' participation in outdoor recreation; secondly, it examined the usefulness of outdoor programs as a means to surmount constraints. The study placed special emphasis on the experiences and perceptions of adolescent girls. In a manner consistent with the goals of feminist inquiry, it represents a meaningful effort to provide empirical support for the expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities for girls. The investi-

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gation was carried out as a qualitative, multiple-case study using grounded theory methods.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The feminist theoretical basis of this study focused attention on the unique experiences of girls in relation to outdoor recreation, and it emphasized an analysis of gender. Feminist inquiry is aimed at correcting inequalities that place women at the margins of our society (Costa & Guthrie, 1994; hooks, 1984). Sky (1994) suggested that knowledge of our world is incomplete without incorporation of feminist theoretical perspectives. Feminist theory recognizes that all research proceeds from basic paradigm assumptions, and is therefore prone to particular biases (Henderson, 1990). A traditional bias in research has been the assumption that research conducted with primarily male subjects could serve to represent all people (Tavris, 1992). Historically, much of the research conducted in leisure and recreation studies has ignored experiential differences between men and women (Henderson, 1990; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996). By contrast, feminist research places a critical focus on female roles in society and culture. Feminists suggest that the paradigm assumptions of research guide its impact on society, and that the bias of feminist inquiry is its focus on creating wider opportunity for females (Henderson, 1990). This research was guided by the assumption that girls face particular challenges as they become active in outdoor recreation and that outdoor programs should take into account this distinctive experience.

Gender roles and biological sex are central themes in feminist inquiry, and the distinction between the two is important in this study. Sex refers to the biological characteristics that make individuals male or female, whereas the term gender applies to the social construction of masculine and feminine roles. Gender varies among cultures, as well as among individuals; gender functions as a continuum rather than a duality (Henderson, 1996c). In a study of leisure constraints, Jackson and Henderson (1995) found that differences in leisure constraints were as great within-gender as between-genders, and that gender was more constraining than biological sex. These conceptions of sex and gender were key aspects of the theoretical framework for this study.

### *Background Information*

Recently a number of researchers and professionals have concluded that adolescent girls face increasingly difficult times. Sadker and Sadker (1994) described how biased education systems discourage girls from achieving their potential, precipitating an alarming loss of self-esteem as girls enter adolescence. Similar conclusions were drawn in a study commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW, 1991). Pipher (1994) pointed out that girls who are confident and eager participants in sports and outdoor

activities as pre-adolescents frequently drop these interests as they grow older due to a loss of confidence in their physical capabilities. In an article calling for more research into outdoor programs for women, Miranda and Yerkes noted, "For girls especially, the loss of a free adventurous self has gloomy implications for social and intellectual action" (1982, p. 83). An additional theme in popular literature is the need for programs designed to help adolescent girls navigate through a difficult time in their lives so they might emerge as confident women, seeking out wider opportunities (Pipher, 1994; Stemmermann, 1993).

Research on women and outdoor recreation has often focused on the ways in which gender roles create constraints to participation. A frequently cited example is found in the fact that family life often relies heavily on women to take care of children and households, thereby limiting opportunities for leisure (Henderson, 1990; Warren, 1990). In adolescence, girls become increasingly bound by gender roles, and this is key among the posited reasons for the decrease in physical and outdoor activity (Pipher, 1994; Stemmermann, 1993). However, although adolescent girls typically begin to feel more social pressure to conform to standard female roles, they often don't face the constraints that many women experience with work and family responsibilities.

Ewert (1988) noted that outdoor recreation situations evoked significantly more fear in women than in men. Taken as a whole, the body of research on outdoor recreation points to the conclusion that outdoor programming can provide the means for overcoming this fear, as well as, gender-based constraints. The idea that natural outdoor environments have therapeutic effects on the human psyche has a long history in many cultures (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994). This philosophy has persisted into present times, and many outdoor programs have been developed with the intention of providing opportunities for self-exploration and personal growth (Friese, 1996). In the past two decades, researchers have effectively shown that outdoor recreation programs can have significant positive effects on self-esteem and personal locus of control (Ewert, 1982; Hendee & Brown, 1987). Mitten (1992) reported that women participating in outdoor programs often experienced increased self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. Frequently participation in outdoor programs provides people with the opportunity to learn practical skills that enable them to continue recreating in natural environments.

As the benefits of outdoor programming are becoming evident, researchers and professionals have focused on defining models for effective program leadership and structure. Hendee and Brown (1987) proposed a general model that emphasizes receptivity on the part of a participant, an optimum level of physical and psychological stress, a change of pace and environment from everyday life, and use of metaphors that relate the wilderness experience with other life issues. The model developed by Outward Bound is often considered a standard for outdoor programs; it stresses sustained physical, mental, and emotional effort for the duration of the course

(Abbott, 1995). The importance of stress and challenge are common themes in the two models, and these elements are incorporated into many outdoor programs.

According to some professionals, models that emphasize physical and psychological stress may be less effective and even harmful for female participants (Jordan, 1992; Mitten, 1994). Jordan (1992) has noted that leadership styles typically employed in outdoor courses are often oriented towards men and may be less effective for women and girls. Mitten (1992) proposed an alternate model for outdoor leadership that emphasizes creating a safe and supportive environment in which women are empowered to make their own choices about participation. In place of a structured and hierarchical style of leadership that is aimed at achieving pre-set performance goals, Jordan suggested a "transformational" style of leadership in which "the group becomes leader-facilitated and group-led" (1992, p. 64). This adaptation in the commonly used "stress-challenge" models for outdoor programs may be a valuable alternative for programs that include female participants.

Another variation in outdoor program models has recently been developed. The Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) program was developed as a result of research that sought to identify barriers to women's participation in hunting, fishing, and other traditionally male activities (Thomas & Peterson, 1994; Wilson, 1994). It illustrates the value of constraint-focused research in developing effective programs. A survey of participants in an Iowa BOW course determined that women appreciated the chance to learn outdoor skills free of the competition and intimidation they felt would be present in a mixed group (Wilson, 1994). Based on the success of BOW, Iowa Women in Natural Resources started Outdoor Journey for Girls, a program that offers similar opportunities to girls ages 12-15 (Sewell, 1995).

Although a growing body of research focuses on women, the literature reveals little discussion of girls' experiences of outdoor recreation. The need for research on girls is noted by Henderson (1990) and Miranda and Yerkes (1982). We cannot assume that the research covering recreational constraints for adult women is representative of the younger population of adolescent girls. Although it is reasonable to posit a high degree of similarity in experiences of adolescent girls and women, research on girls begins to illuminate useful distinctions between the two populations. 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. This study aimed to increase understanding of girls' unique experience of outdoor recreation and to provide empirical support for the development of outdoor program opportunities for adolescent girls.

### *Research Procedures*

A case study design provided an effective format for investigating current issues in a non-manipulated context, using multiple cases to generate

comparisons and patterns (Yin, 1994). To create consistency among the theoretical framework, study objectives, and research design, a qualitative approach was selected. The chosen qualitative methods allowed for an emerging research design, meaningful interaction between the researcher and the phenomena under investigation, and analysis of textual data to generate grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Henderson, 1991). From its inception, three propositions guided the investigation: (a) constraints do exist which diminish or inhibit the participation of adolescent girls in outdoor recreation, (b) outdoor programs may provide useful means for surmounting these constraints, and (c) certain program structures may be more instrumental than others in boosting girls' participation in outdoor recreation.

### *Case Selection*

Three populations were identified as appropriate respondents in the case study: adolescent girls (ages 12-17), female outdoor program leaders, and adult women. Sampling from the three populations was based on identification of critical cases containing an array of individual perspectives and experiences. Critical cases were defined to be interview events that included respondents from the identified populations and followed an established protocol for data collection. The respondents for each case were selected through networking and contact with existing organizations. Outdoor program leaders were selected for interviews based on their involvement in outdoor recreation for girls. Adult women and adolescent girls were selected for their capacity to provide varied and thoughtful responses to interview questions, with no criteria pertaining to prior outdoor recreation experience. Overall, case selection was designed to follow emergent themes from earlier cases, to seek out variation, and to provide a means of triangulating between populations. Participation was arranged verbally and through a formal process of correspondence. Each interview event, whether it involved an individual or a group, constituted a case for the purpose of comparative analysis (Yin, 1994).

A total of fifty-five individuals participated in the study. Ten of these individuals took part in pilot cases that were used to develop and refine the interview guides, as well as, enhance the researcher's interviewing skills. These were not included in the cross-case analysis because they did not completely follow the protocols for critical cases. Hence the outcomes presented below emerged from fifteen critical cases that involved thirty-four adolescent girls, six female outdoor program leaders, and five adult women.

The fifteen cases included in final analysis resulted from five focus groups with adolescent girls, nine individual interviews with adult women and outdoor leaders, and one interview with two adult women. All of the focus group discussions and three individual interviews were conducted in a mid-sized university town in the Northwest. Three of the focus groups included students from high school sophomore biology classes; two focus groups were formed from Girl Scout troops. Five individual in-person inter-

views were conducted in conjunction with an internship at Woodswomen in Minnesota. Four telephone interviews were conducted with outdoor leaders in other states.

All of the individual interview respondents identified themselves as European-American. In the focus groups, respondents were not asked to identify their ethnicity, but they appeared predominantly to be of European-American descent. Different sets of constraints and conceptions of outdoor programming may be expected in relation to race, ethnicity, and culture (McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995; Roberts and Drogin, 1996). No data were collected pertaining to socioeconomic status. This constitutes another element that may influence an individual's experience or perception of leisure activities (Raymore, Godbey, & Crawford, 1994). In accord with case study design, the cases selected here are not representative of any of the populations listed and may only be generalized in terms of theoretical constructs (Yin, 1994).

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

All interviews and discussions followed established data collection protocols. This procedure involved providing basic information and obtaining prior written consent from each respondent. Critical cases followed interview guides designed for each type of interview event and population. These guides provided a consistent set of primary questions, with additional questions to stimulate deeper responses where necessary. Questions were formulated to elicit data about constraints and outdoor programming (see Table 1). All data were collected by the primary researcher with an effort to ensure consistency in interview style across cases. Each interview event was tape recorded for transcription.

The thirty-four adolescent girls were interviewed in focus groups of four to eight respondents. The focus group format was selected to facilitate comfortable participation by adolescent girls. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) note that teenagers frequently distrust adults and are more comfortable in peer groups. Focus groups offered opportunities for respondents to engage in discussion among themselves as well as with the facilitator, thereby creating a richer set of data (Stuart & Shamdasani, 1990). The focus groups ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. Adult women and outdoor program leaders were interviewed individually or, in one case, as a pair. Interviews were carried out in person or by telephone, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes.

#### *Analysis*

Guided by the theoretical propositions and research questions, analysis produced descriptive information about constraints that influence adolescent girls' participation in outdoor recreation and insights regarding the effectiveness and structuring of outdoor programs to meet girls' needs. Note taking, interview summaries, and transcription facilitated a beginning sense

**TABLE 1**  
*Questions From Focus Group Discussion Guide Used With 34 Adolescent Girls*

Focus group questions pertaining to constraints

1. Thinking back to when you were younger, what sorts of things do you remember doing outdoors?
  - Did you enjoy being outdoors?
2. How do you feel about those outdoor activities now?
  - What encourages you to do things outdoors?
  - What discourages you from doing things outdoors?
  - Are there any people who have encouraged or discouraged you?
3. Can you tell me some good reasons to do things outdoors?
4. Can you tell me some reasons not to do things outdoors?
5. Are there any activities outdoors that you haven't tried that you think would be fun or interesting?
  - What would be some good reasons for trying those things?
  - What are the reasons you might not try those things?
6. Do you ever feel like being a girl makes any difference in whether or not you get to do things in the outdoors?
  - Are there any things you did or did not get to do because you are a girl?
  - Do you feel like there are any activities boys get to do more often?

Focus group questions pertaining to outdoor programming

1. Have you participated in any outdoors programs?
  - What things did you like about the program?
  - What would you have done differently?
2. Do you feel like those outdoor programs helped you enjoy the outdoors more and to feel more confident doing things outdoors?
3. As you do things in the outdoors, would you rather be in a group that had only girls or a group that also had boys?
  - What are the differences?
  - What would be some differences in how you would feel about trying something new or challenging in groups with boys and groups with only girls?
  - How do you think boys feel about trying new or challenging things in front of girls?
4. If you could create your dream outdoor program what would it be like?
  - Who would participate?
  - Who would be the leaders?
  - How would decisions be made about what to do?
  - What activities would you choose?
  - Where would you want to have this program?

of the main themes and patterns in each case. The next step involved open coding, consisting of thematic keywords and concepts noted in transcript margins. The open coding process clarified the depth and consistency of patterns within and across cases. This initial coding was developed under the combined attention of the principal researcher and three research advisors to ensure intercoder agreement. Documentation of interviews, transcription, and open coding were carried out as further cases were selected and investigated, until new categories ceased to emerge.

At the point data collection was halted, analysis was further facilitated through use of Q.S.R. NUD•IST (1994) software. Tesch (1990) described computer-based qualitative analysis as a process of decontextualizing, and then recontextualizing data. This process of organizing data along abstract conceptual lines facilitates theory building. Based on the open coding, an "index tree" was developed in NUD•IST. The index system organized open codes into a theoretical structure. In a constant comparative process, the index system was then applied to each case. As the analysis proceeded, researcher peer checks were utilized in two sessions with a panel of leisure and recreation graduate students. These checks revealed fresh insights to the coding of text segments in some cases, and the peer checks were incorporated into the NUD•IST index structure in a final pass over each case. Through this process, the relevance and accuracy of the index tree to the individual cases was thoroughly reviewed and intercoder agreement was again achieved.

Once coded, data were recontextualized across cases under the emergent index categories. NUD•IST was used to generate reports showing cross referencing of index categories by text segment and to tabulate text segments from each category. These reports facilitated theory building through investigating frequencies of occurrences, connections, and relationships in the index structure across cases. In this stage, rival propositions were applied to the data; each case was weighed against the possibilities that constraints do not, in fact, influence girls' participation, and that outdoor programs are ineffective in helping girls overcome constraints. Finally, conclusions were drawn about meaningful constraints to girls' participation in outdoor recreation, as well as the effective structuring of outdoor programs to mitigate some of those constraints.

### Outcomes and Their Relation to Literature and Theory

This section focuses on the outcomes of this study, integrating theory and research on leisure and recreation constraints. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), a substantive literature review accompanied the final phases of analysis, where it functioned to support the emerging themes and patterns, suggesting strong theoretical conclusions. This grounded theory approach yielded striking results that parallel much of the work to date on leisure constraints for female and adolescent populations. The primary focus here is on identifying and illuminating constraints; secondly, outdoor programming results are included to suggest practical avenues for surmounting constraints.

#### *Constraints*

The largest part of the index structure developed in NUD•IST focused on influences relating to girls' participation in outdoor recreation. Table 2 illustrates the different categories that emerged under influences. Three the-



**TABLE 2**  
*Cross-case Ranking Based on Tabulation of the Four Most Commonly Mentioned Categories in Each Interview Event. Italicized Items Show a Sub-category That Emerged More Strongly Than the Overall Heading*

Index Categories First Four	First	Second	Third	Fourth	In First Four
Social	6	6	2	0	14
<i>gender roles</i>					
role models					
Opportunities	7	4	2	1	14
outdoor programs					
<i>gender-based</i>					
Peers	1	4	4	1	10
friends					
males in programs					
Self-concept	1	1	2	4	8
personal volition					
changes with age					
Access	0	0	0	4	4
location					
time					
money					
Family	0	0	2	1	3
Feelings	0	0	2	1	3
<i>affinity for outdoors</i>					
negative feelings					
Physical aspects	0	0	1	1	2
safety					
Environmental factors	0	0	0	2	2
comfort					

oretical categories of influences became evident: relational, structural, and personal influences. From these broad categories, influences were further broken down into more specific categories. For the most part the reporting of constraints here focuses on the first level of categories subsumed under relational, structural, and personal influences.

The relational, structural, and personal categories that emerged in the index structure closely resemble the "hierarchy of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints" to leisure participation and preferences that were proposed by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991). The general correspondence of the personal, relational, and structural categories with those found in previous research supports their usefulness in understanding the constraints to outdoor recreation participation among adolescent girls.

The cross-case analysis yielded strong trends in perceptions of constraints. Table 2 shows a cross-case ranking based on tabulation of the oc-

currences of the different influences within each interview event. The frequency of discussion was used as a general indication of the meaningfulness of constraints. The most significant indications of constraints emerged from the relational and structural categories, and included gender roles, lack of opportunities, differential opportunities for males and females, and peer influence. Among personal constraints, self-concept emerged as the strongest influence, followed by physical and safety concerns and individual level of affinity for the natural outdoor environment.

The constraints that are discussed here were found to have a high degree of interrelatedness; that is, many comments were indexed under multiple categories of influence. To clearly demarcate boundaries around each constraint would inhibit the understanding of how they function to limit girls' outdoor recreation experiences. A constraint might occur under peer influence and also be a function of gender roles; a self-concept constraint may relate to lack of opportunities for skill development. Although constraints are discussed here under the imposed structure of the index system, in the context of adolescent girls' lives, they function in a complex, inter-related manner. It also deserves mention that although respondents were asked to limit their responses to outdoor recreation, many drew parallels to physical recreation in general.

*Gender roles.* The term gender roles as used here refers to the social construction of gender through prevailing ideas of what constitutes masculine and feminine behavior and identity. Gender roles have received growing attention in the field of leisure and recreation research. Kane (1990) describes a "relationship between leisure and gender-role conformity" wherein traditional masculine behavior parallels the values identified with leisure experience: independence, mastery, competence, and inner-directedness; by contrast, feminine behavior typically reflects dependency, passivity, and other-directedness; values thought to indicate "leisure-lack."

Gender roles were discussed with the highest overall frequency across cases, occurring as one of the three most commonly mentioned influences in all but one case. Gender roles were subsumed under relational and social influences in the index system. Few comments were indexed under the broader category of social influences. Based upon the frequency of indexing and the character of discussion around gender roles, gender roles were found to be a highly important form of social influence and correspondingly, a meaningful source of constraints.

There was a strong perception among the majority of respondents that there have been significant changes in gender roles in recent generations, and that there are fewer gendered restrictions on women's behavior now than in the past. Nonetheless, nearly every respondent expressed some frustration with gender constraints. This manifested as a barrier to recreation in many ways, but primarily in stereotypical gender expectations from peers, parents, and social institutions. Frustration with gender roles was expressed in the following comments:

A lot of people doubted that I could play. You know, the stereotypical thing, "girls can't play, you throw like a girl." ...I was totally made fun of and I really had to work ten times harder than the boys to prove myself. (adult woman)

It's just that our gender, being a female kind of represses us...[Guys] have organizations so they can go outdoors and do those types of things and we don't get that chance. (adolescent girl)

More specific gender role constraints included ideas that it is unacceptable for girls to get dirty, that males are considered tougher or more competitive, and that activities such as hunting and fishing are traditionally considered more appropriate for males.

I think particularly our society still doesn't value girls getting dirty and muddy and wet. There's a prevalent theme that it's ok for boys. The Boy Scouts seem much tougher than the Girl Scouts as a group. That perception holds girls and women back. (outdoor leader)

When you think of hunting, you think of a man. I mean that's the picture that society has. (adolescent girl)

Respondents seldom felt they had experienced "blatant discrimination" based on gender; they felt, rather, that gender roles functioned as a "subtle undermining." When asked if they perceived differences in whether or not they could do things in the outdoors based on being female, four out of five focus groups said no, and yet each group spent time discussing the ways gender inhibited their ability or opportunity to participate in outdoor sports and recreation. Two adolescent girls did not consider gender roles to be a constraint; one claimed, "I've never wanted to go against society's ways of girls and guys." The variance found here supports the manner in which social imposition of gender norms and individual identification with those norms describes constraints on girls' perceptions of outdoor activities.

Role models were considered by many respondents to be an important influence. Lack of female role models in outdoor recreation was viewed as a constraint, as were certain media images of women. One outdoor leader noted, "I think female role models are definitely key...a boy sees a woman in a position and says, 'oh, I could do that.' I think boys look up and see the world as open to them; girls look up and see what women do as open to them." The media influenced some respondents' comments about lack of female role models: "a lot of times TV programs show a man catching a big huge fish, and maybe you see a woman catching this tiny little fish and it's so frustrating" (adolescent girl). In a study of girls' participation in outdoor education, Lynch (1991a; 1991b) also identified lack of appropriate role models as a barrier.

*Opportunities.* Indexing under opportunities occurred with the second highest frequency across all cases. It was among the five most commonly mentioned influences in each interview. Discussion of opportunities covered the nature and availability of outdoor programs, different opportunities for boys and girls, and skill development opportunities. Coupled with a perceived lack of outdoor opportunities in general, most respondents expressed concerns about dichotomous participation and programming opportunities

based on social ideas of what constitutes appropriate activities for males and females. Overall, outdoor programs were viewed as having a positive influence on skill development and confidence in outdoor settings, and most respondents felt more opportunities were needed. All respondents in the high school focus groups reported a definite lack of opportunities for girls.

Four focus groups identified a concern that more opportunities exist for boys to participate in outdoor recreation and outdoor programs. When asked if there were any activities they felt boys could do more often, adolescent girls responded with comments such as, "just be outdoors anytime" and "there's not always chances. I mean guys have more chances generally to do outdoor things." The one group that did not bring up this constraint was an active Girl Scout troop that participated in a variety of outdoor experiences. Another Girl Scout troop felt that they had opportunities through their participation in that program, but were still able to identify many outdoor sports where girls and women are often excluded or treated differently. A third focus group spent considerable time discussing the differences between Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and expressed dissatisfaction with the types of opportunities generally available through Girl Scouts:

When I was a kid I used to watch the commercials for the Boy Scouts and I thought that was really cool. I really wanted to be in the Boy Scouts...So I joined the Girl Scouts and we did sewing and art projects. It was really disappointing because...I wanted to go outside like the Boy Scouts...There just wasn't an organization that was open to that. (adolescent girl)

One outdoor leader pointed out, "...unlike Boy Scouts camps, Girl Scouts can't do any firing of live firearms, so that leaves out the whole aspect not only of teaching hunting, but of teaching firearm handling and safety...so I think there's some huge barriers to be broken down there."

A multifaceted interaction was evident between opportunity and gender. Concerns that girls receive fewer opportunities than boys to recreate outdoors are reflected in the literature on leisure constraints. The idea that gender determines the social appropriateness, as well as one's physical capacity for participation in physical recreation, functions to constrain women and girls' sport and leisure opportunities (Henderson, et al., 1996; Kane, 1990; Nelson, 1994). Shaw noted the "narrow range and stereotypical nature of the activities society deems to be appropriate for women and girls" (1994, p. 13). In a study of gender roles and sports in adolescent girls, Archer and McDonald (1991) identified reasons why adolescent girls did not participate in certain "masculine" sports; paramount among the reasons were tradition (based on gender) and opportunity. Social control over the leisure pursuits of adolescents tended to be more limiting for females than males (Shaw, Caldwell, & Kleiber, 1996) and girls typically had more trouble gaining access to leisure opportunities (McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995).

*Peers.* Peers figured as a highly important influence in ten of the cases. In general, adolescent girls identified peer relationships as an influence more strongly than the other categories of respondents; in all the focus groups it emerged as one of the three most discussed topics. The fact that

this category emerged most strongly among adolescent respondents parallels findings by McMeeking and Purkayastha (1995) that suggest "hanging out" with friends is a highly valued form of leisure for adolescents. Peer relationships may be particularly meaningful for girls since female socialization emphasizes dependence on others and maintenance of close social bonds (Gilligan, 1982). This idea is supported in the interview data from this study. One leader recounted her experience working with "at risk" youth: "In that environment the boys' first goal was recovery, but...the girls' first goal was to fit into that social system, to try to fight against this male environment." Other leaders who had worked with coed groups noted the greater importance of social interaction among girls as well.

Analysis showed that these peer relationships functioned at many levels to both encourage and stifle participation in outdoor recreation. Often girls became involved in outdoor activities along with friends, however girls in one group acknowledged that "sometimes people that are your age aren't really your friends." While they would rather recreate with peers than family in most cases, girls had a persistent concern about the potential for embarrassment in a peer group. The forms of embarrassment in peer groups ranged from boys ridiculing them to being in a group without other friends around:

I've found that when a guy messes up...they don't take it seriously. They think, "oh well, he had a bad day." But if a girl messes up, it's like she's stupid. (adolescent girl)

A lot of times I don't go out with a bunch of people because I know there's going to be a lot of judgment on whether or not you can do something. (adolescent girl)

Another peer constraint was evident in relation to gender roles. Interestingly, gender stereotyping by boys was compounded by peer pressure among girls themselves to behave according to prevailing social ideas of feminine identity.

In the summer, my youth group goes on rafting trips. Last year I was one of the oldest in the group...Whenever we carried the rafts out of the water, it was always the guys carrying it. I would say that I could carry it too, but they would say, "no, the girls aren't supposed to carry the rafts." (adolescent girl)

I think women get more peer pressure than they ever get from spouses or significant others for pursuing [hunting]...I think maybe hiking and canoeing don't draw the same negative pressure from other women. (outdoor leader)

*Self-concept.* Self-concept was found to be a complex and important influence on recreation participation. Eight of the cases included frequent indexing under self-concept, and only one contained no indexing in this category. Much of the discussion indexed at self-concept was an expression of the view, "if I really wanted to do it, I could." This finding points simultaneously to a constraint and a means of surmounting constraints.

Although the girls generally viewed themselves as being capable of all sorts of outdoor recreation, they sometimes did not see themselves as the type of person who would do those activities.

I've never been really athletic outdoors, I'm just not very athletic. (adolescent girl)

I've grown up, I just don't know why I turned out like this, but I guess I fit the stereotype of just a girl to most guys. I let them do the tough work because I don't need to do it...But I will still challenge any guy if he thinks he can beat me at anything, and I'll win. (adolescent girl)

Adolescent girls anticipated that participation in some outdoor sports and recreational activities would be difficult for them, often based on gender roles or different opportunities for males and females. Most times they did not choose to make the extra effort they knew it would take, but thought that if they really wanted to do it they could: "Well, girls could join the wrestling team or the football team or anything, but sometimes there's this self consciousness that won't let you. I might really want to join the wrestling team, but I don't want to be seen in a little spandex uniform."

The fact that they chose not to participate suggests a constraint that links self-concept with gender. This fits with other research that indicates sports participation is much more strongly associated with masculine identity (Nelson, 1994; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995). Many forms of physical recreation are commonly identified as male pursuits (Archer & McDonald, 1990; Kane, 1990; Nelson, 1994). Even when girls participated in sports they frequently did not identify themselves in relation to their athletic pursuits (Shaw et al., 1995)

On the other hand, some respondents told stories of persisting with activities because they didn't care what anyone else thought, an expression of confidence in their capabilities: "I played with the guys too and it's all about determination. I was determined to play and to get the ball, so I smacked guys around. You've got to go for something if you want it" (adolescent girl). This persistence in activities despite constraints has been explored by Jackson and Rucks (1995) who found that adolescents utilize several behavioral strategies to negotiate constraints. In other research, Archer & McDonald found evidence to contradict the view that "only a narrow range of stereotypical feminine sports are seen as compatible with a feminine self image" (1990, p. 239). Related findings from this case study showed that girls were interested in many high risk activities that were stereotypically considered more masculine. When focus group respondents were asked what types of activities they hadn't tried but would like to, all groups listed such high adventure activities as bungee-jumping, sky-diving, rafting, and rock climbing.

Lack of self esteem or confidence played a relatively small role in limiting participation according to the focus group respondents, although it was acknowledged often as a reason other girls might not participate: "Some girls aren't very confident, they don't think they can do it." Individual interviews with adult women and outdoor leaders revealed more of a concern with self confidence, with four respondents noting that they felt the major constraints girls faced were "self-imposed."

*Other constraints.* The influence of access appeared in thirteen of the cases, and in four of these it was the fourth most discussed influence. Access constraints included the expenses associated with outdoor recreation, time

constraints, and location. Living in an urban environment was seen as a constraint, "especially if the kids are from real inner city settings" (outdoor leader). Again gender showed up as a differentiating factor in access: "I think a lot of times it may be more difficult for females than males to gain that access" (outdoor leader).

Although family members sometimes posed constraints, their influence appeared to be less significant in this study than in other studies (e.g., Hultsman, 1993; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995; Shaw, et.al, 1996). Constraints related to the family generally stemmed from parents' non-participation or their adherence to gender stereotypes and subsequent inattention to providing equal opportunities to sons and daughters: "If my dad wants to go camping, he'll ask my brother because he's a guy. He thinks, 'oh, he'll probably have more fun because he's a guy and girls like staying at home and primping their hair' " (adolescent girl). Also there was some perception among adolescent girls that doing an outdoor activity with parents could be embarrassing or unpleasant, particularly when other peers might take note: "When I'm with my family, I wish I was with my friends because my friends don't embarrass me half as much as my family". (adolescent girl)

Individual feelings about outdoor environments and activities constituted an influence for many respondents, but did not generally present any constraints. Many respondents expressed an affinity for the outdoors and a sense of freedom associated with being in natural environments; only a few claimed to dislike being outdoors. Although negative feelings would certainly function as a constraint to enjoyment of outdoor recreation, there appears to be a more subtle barrier in the relationship between feelings about the outdoor environment and forces of gender socialization that discourage girls from developing an affinity for outdoor environments. This is an area that would benefit from deeper investigation.

Physical considerations emerged as the third most discussed influence in one case, and fourth in another. Overall, constraints relating to the physical aspects of outdoor recreation were covered in thirteen out of fifteen cases. Responses centered around two main areas, physical strength and personal safety. In eight cases, respondents talked about men having a size and strength advantage in some outdoor sports. One adolescent girl stated, "[Girls] don't have the muscles for it, no matter how hard they try." An outdoor leader reported similar frustrations: "I've seen and felt myself those situations where there's a physical difference that the females can't necessarily make up for, and it can be very frustrating or discouraging."

Related findings in other research focus on constraints resulting from body image perceptions among females. Lynch (1991a; 1991b) reported that body image and concerns about menstruation in the outdoor environment constituted barriers to girls' participation in outdoor education courses. Fredrick and Shaw (1995) found that although body image didn't prevent young women from participating in aerobic exercise classes, it constrained their enjoyment of the experience. Body image concerns and the discomfort associated with menstruating in the outdoors received passing mention in

some cases, but were not strong among the personal physical constraints found in this study.

Safety concerns arose out of the dangers of some high adventure activities ("You might get hurt") and possible threats from animals ("...there's bears and mountain lions"). Also threats from hostile people were mentioned, particularly with regards to women being outdoors alone or without any male companions: "...being comfortable alone and I think the whole aspect of a certain amount of fear, even walking my dog alone at night...I think if I were a man, I wouldn't have those fears" (outdoor leader).

The physical aspects of outdoor experiences also constituted a positive influence in several cases. Many respondents considered outdoor recreation a good way to maintain health and fitness.

The influence of environmental factors on participation in outdoor recreation surfaced in ten cases. Environmental factors including weather, bugs, and animals presented constraints for some respondents. This was related to an emerging concept of comfort in outdoor environments. The prospects of "roughing it" were unpleasant to some respondents and others recognized that there are ways of making the outdoor environment seem more comfortable.

I like hiking better than camping out overnight. It's something about being in a tent in the middle of the night with all these bugs and animals and ticks. (adolescent girl)

...it can be enjoyable, it doesn't have to be harsh. There's a friend of mine who talks about being able to go out into the woods not to rough it, but to 'smooth it.' (outdoor leader)

The influence of environmental factors in creating structural constraints relates to personal feelings as well, showing once again the interrelated nature of influences and constraints. Many respondents who had a deep affinity for the outdoors were less concerned about the comfort aspect of environmental factors:

A lot of people these days think that camping means a shower, a flushing toilet, a motor home. It's just like being at home except there's a tree next to you. But true camping is like going out and setting up your tent. There are no cars, no pollution. You're free in the wild instead of having a car and a road and a flush toilet. (adolescent girl)

### *Outdoor programming*

In addition to identifying constraints, this study investigated ways that respondents perceived outdoor programming could be used to surmount constraints. Interview questions probed respondents' thoughts about programs they had experienced, the capacity for outdoor programs to increase skills and confidence in outdoor environments, and what the characteristics of an ideal outdoor program would be (see Table 1). In the cross-case analysis, the focus on outdoor programming yielded three main categories of interest: program philosophy, structure, and gender composition. This secondary as-



pect of the study tended to elicit specific responses requiring less analysis to derive themes and patterns.

*Program philosophy.* The term program philosophy is used here to refer to underlying principles respondents felt were important to outdoor programming. This category was generated from comments made by outdoor program leaders and other adult women in seven cases. The most consistent theme to emerge was the importance of girls being able to express themselves: "We were also pretty focused on having girls express themselves, who they are, without any judgment on it" (outdoor leader). Another main theme centered on creating an atmosphere in which girls could attain a true "sense of accomplishment." One woman emphasized the importance of girls having a choice about their participation. She noted, "I think it's important because if you are forced into something, you are not as likely to be able to get something out of it or have the desire to ever do it again." The suggestions respondents gave align with the prevailing discourse on how outdoor programs should be modeled to meet the needs of female participants (Henderson, 1996a).

There was some variance in the idea of challenge, a reflection of the different models of outdoor programming discussed earlier (e.g., Abbott, 1995; Hendee & Brown, 1987; Jordan, 1992; Mitten, 1992; Thomas & Peterson, 1994). Responses ranged from, "[doing high adventure] things that let them stretch their limits" to "focusing on teaching activities and skills rather than beating a challenge." These responses illustrated a continuing dichotomy of thinking about the role of stress in outdoor programs. The balance appears to be in offering challenges as a matter of choice rather than coercion. The importance of skill building, fun, and enjoyment of the outdoors was emphasized by several respondents. Of further significance was the idea that girls get feedback from leaders and a chance to apply their newly acquired skills: "that feeling that not only are they capable of building a fire, but they're building the fire we're cooking on" (adult woman).

*Structure.* The category of structure has a strong relationship to program philosophy. Indexing under structure holds comments that suggested particulars of program content and organization. Structure was further broken down into ideas about activities, types of leadership, and who would participate.

Across cases, outdoor leaders, adult women, and adolescent girls consistently identified the following desirable characteristics of outdoor programs: (a) activities should be both "hands on" and fun, (b) there should be a wide variety of activities to choose from, including individual activities or time to be alone, (c) there should be opportunities to learn technical, activity-oriented skills and outdoor survival skills, and (d) there should be plenty of unstructured time for "just hanging out with friends." These basic programming tenets are already incorporated into many programs, and according to the outdoor leaders interviewed, they are effective. Respondents expressed interest in a wide variety of activities, including traditional residential camp type activities such as canoeing and horseback riding, high adventure activ-

ities such as rock climbing, non-traditional (for female participants) activities such as hunting, and common outdoor program activities associated with wilderness travel. Girls desired opportunities for learning about nature and viewing wildlife as well. The idea of having choices was especially important for girls: "There can be options, but it can be your choice whether you want to do them" (adolescent girl). The setting for the program was important, as well, in terms of having variety: "It would be fun if you were by a lake and you could go swimming or canoeing and then there were also hiking trails and a big lawn so you could play other sports" (adolescent girl). Also, some girls expressed interest in "a year round thing so we could go in the summer, spring, and go in the winter" and many respondents thought that programs should last two to three weeks, although shorter durations were not ruled out.

A significant amount of discussion focused on girls having a say in the planning process or designing some component of the program themselves. Most respondents thought that this was desirable, with two exceptions. One adolescent girl felt that she wasn't "old enough" to be able to plan and an outdoor leader stated, "I'm not one for involving people in the planning when they don't know what they are planning."

Regarding who should participate in the program, the importance of friends came up often, especially among the adolescent girls in focus groups. In addition, one outdoor leader specifically noted, "They should be able to bring their friends with them." This indicates once again the importance of friendly peer groups, and it relates to their insistence that part of what they want is simply a place to "hang out with friends." The idea of peer leadership also emerged in some cases. In one focus group, a respondent suggested, "We could have a leader write down some questions about what people know and then [everyone] could fill out the survey and then they could invite all the people that [know] different activities to teach them." In another group, however, a respondent expressed a preference for being in a group with the same level of skills.

Several adolescent girls felt there should be minimal adult supervision, that an ideal situation would involve "going out with your friends instead of going out with an older person telling you what to do." This sentiment was in accord with the idea expressed by other adult respondents that girls have a fair amount of autonomy in deciding what they wanted to do in the program. Having good female role models was also considered an important aspect of program leadership, particularly by program leaders.

*Gender composition.* The third aspect of outdoor programming that was addressed involved whether single- or mixed-gender programming would better meet girls needs. Eleven out of fifteen of the cases covered the gender composition of outdoor programs. The within-case and cross-case analyses revealed a strong pattern. Outdoor program leaders and adult women all saw a clear benefit in single sex programming: "It's really hard to pull off mixed gender programs so that it really works for girls...I think single gender programs for girls are a lot more effective" (outdoor leader). Four outdoor

program leaders noted that in a coed situation, many girls would simply stand back and not participate fully.

Adolescent girls who participated in focus groups had considerable discussion in all cases about whether or not they would prefer all-girls or coed groups. The consensus in all groups was that although they would like to have boys around for the social aspect, they often would not participate fully if boys were present. In all groups, there was agreement that a single sex program would probably facilitate higher levels of participation among girls: "If it was all girls and I saw some of them do it, I'd feel confident because they're girls and I'm a girl and I'd be like, 'I can do that,' versus if I saw boys do it, I wouldn't feel confident that I could do it." There remained a persistent claim among adolescent girls that they would like to have coed programs, leading to an idea that it might be good to "have both options."

### Discussion

From its inception, this study was framed with a feminist theoretical perspective that informed the conception of the topic and the chosen research procedures. Given this theoretical perspective, a focus on gender as an influence in girls' lives was implicit in the data collection. It follows, then, that gender emerged as the most consistent theme connecting the constraints identified through cross-case analysis. To date, much of the related leisure research has identified gender as a primary barrier or constraint influencing female participation rates (Henderson, et al., 1996; Kane, 1990). This study extends the reach of the developing theory of gendered constraints on women's recreation to adolescent girls.

Overall in this study, substantially fewer responses made reference to biological characteristics than to manifestations of gender construction. This is consistent with findings reported by Jackson and Henderson (1995) that gender tends to pose greater constraints than sex. Whether or not respondents directly identified gender as a constraint, social construction of feminine roles infused their experience and perceptions of outdoor recreation and their access to outdoor opportunities. Results obtained by Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford (1994) indicating adolescent females face significantly higher levels of overall constraints than their male peers support this study's findings; adolescent girls and other respondents perceived fewer opportunities for girls to become involved in active outdoor programs, and generally they attributed the difference in levels of opportunity to gendered notions about appropriate recreation for girls. Often through their own volition, girls felt they could overcome the limitations of social constructions of gender. The exception that proves the rule can be found in the instances where girls identified quite comfortably with typical feminine gender roles and hence didn't view them as limiting. For these respondents, gender role identification precluded their perceptions of possibilities, thereby representing an acceptance of constraints.

Shaw (1994) described three theoretical constructs that can be applied to women's experiences of leisure; these include, constraints to leisure par-

ticipation, leisure itself as a constraint, and leisure as a form of resistance to gender constraints. These constructs further illuminate the function of the identified constraints in girls' lives. It is evident in reviewing the outcomes that most constraints functioned to inhibit participation in outdoor recreation. In many circumstances, relational, structural, and personal influences in girls' lives made engaging in outdoor recreation difficult or uncomfortable. Viewed from another angle, the data support the idea that the types of programs often available to girls, family or peer expectations, and personal gender identification sometimes created a situation in which leisure itself can become the vehicle for the social enforcement of gender norms; for example, girls who participated in programs expecting to learn practical outdoor skills described being channeled into more traditionally feminine activities. When this happens, the outdoor program or recreational activity itself becomes the constraint to girls' full self-expression. Girls' insistence on participating in non-traditional activities despite typical gender-based constraints illustrates their willingness to engage in "leisure as resistance." Application of Shaw's framework for understanding gender and leisure constraints contributed to a grounded theory that gender functions to limit adolescent girls' participation in outdoor recreation through the same vehicles that it constrains the leisure experiences of adult women.

While the results of this study suggest that there are many similarities between adult women and adolescents, it hints at distinctions that may be useful in understanding the particular constraints girls face, and in planning for outdoor recreation opportunities. One vital distinction is that girls gave greater weight to the influence of their peers than other groups of respondents. A juxtaposition of theories about adolescent identity development through leisure participation (Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995) and female identity development through relating to others (Gilligan, 1982) supports the idea that, for adolescent girls, peer relationships are a particularly defining influence in the perception and experience of constraints. This distinction becomes especially important in understanding girls' interests and needs for comfortable participation in outdoor recreation, and indicates the types of program opportunities that may mitigate peer related constraints.

According to the feminist paradigm for research an understanding of constraints must be accompanied by practical notions of how to remedy inequities. Henderson (1996b) calls for the creation of "just recreation for girls and women." She stresses the empowerment that comes through learning skills in a safe and encouraging atmosphere. Other researchers and professionals confirm this perspective (e.g., Jordan, 1992; Mitten, 1992; Thomas & Peterson, 1994) Providing opportunities and environments in which girls can learn outdoor skills not only opens wider recreational choices, it becomes an avenue for girls to move beyond stereotypical gender roles. While certain types of outdoor programming can create or enhance constraints, carefully structured programs provide a means to overcome constraints. The aggregated evidence from fifteen cases confirms the idea that outdoor programming can be used as a way to develop lifelong skills and confidence for outdoor pursuits.

The concept of opportunity plays a complex and central role in the relationship between constraints and outdoor programming. First, on the most obvious level, study respondents identified a lack of opportunities for girls, suggesting that greater emphasis on development of outdoor programs for girls could elevate the number of opportunities available. Secondly, the type of opportunities offered to girls frequently manifested as a constraint to outdoor recreation, making the philosophy, structure, and gender composition of programs critical aspects of their effectiveness. The study's outcomes provide valuable indications as to what outdoor program characteristics effectively empower girls. Central to most respondents conception of ideal programs was the notion of choice. This reflects the idea that females often perceive lack of choices in their lives, and that for adolescents, the ability to make their own choices fosters a sense of empowerment and independence. A focus on allowing girls to make choices about the types of skills they would like to learn or challenges they would like to face requires that programs be flexible and sensitive to individual needs. By making choice a central theme, programs can provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for engaging in outdoor recreation.

The study also substantiated the idea that the different gender socialization processes that influence males and females can lead to different perspectives on outdoor environments, as well as varying approaches to participating in outdoor activities. While it is important to recognize and affirm that girls often have a distinctive relationship to the outdoors and outdoor activities, it is also important not to make this difference basis for further stereotypical gender roles. For example, many respondents in the study observed that girls often feel intimidated by the competitive atmosphere that frequently characterizes coed groups, but some respondents also expressed frustration over the stereotype that "girls are not interested in competition." Outdoor programming that is sensitive to a range of gender influences in girls' lives can provide them a means to overcome constraints to participation in outdoor recreation.

### Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that several constraints affect adolescent girls participation in outdoor recreation, and that among the respondents, gender roles, lack of opportunity, peer relationships, self-concept, and access problems were the most likely to pose restrictions. Other constraints were found in environmental factors, physical constraints, and safety considerations. The conclusions are supported by other published research in the fields of leisure and physical recreation that found gender roles, peer and family relationships, and access problems to be constraints to participation. The findings further illuminate these constraints as they pertain especially to outdoor recreation for adolescent girls. Additionally this study probed the concept of opportunity more deeply than previous research and found that not only is lack of opportunity a constraint, frequently there is a perception

of disparity between girls and boys in the types and availability of outdoor programs, as well as in overall access to outdoor recreation.

The evidence accumulated in this study strongly suggests that outdoor programming builds skills and confidence in girls, thereby making the outdoor environment less intimidating and more available to them for recreational pursuits. The results indicate that outdoor programs should provide girls with an opportunity to learn outdoor skills; provide a wide range of choices, including unstructured time for "hanging out;" allow girls to participate with friends; provide positive female role models; and encourage girls to take leadership roles amongst themselves. Additionally, programs should emphasize enjoyment of the outdoor environment, creative expression, and having fun. The study has supporting evidence for both coed and single gender programs. Coed programs would mainly provide the opportunity for social mingling and competing athletically with boys. Single gender programs would give girls a chance to learn skills that they might not attempt in the presence of males. Overall, single gender programs are more strongly supported by the data.

This study suggests several areas for future research, including deeper probing of how self-concept and personal affinity for outdoor environments may function as constraints through their relation to gender roles. Since the study used a homogenous sample in terms of race, class, ethnicity, and sex, further investigation around these variables could illuminate the different experiences and perspectives across diverse populations. Studies differentiating adolescent girls' experience and perceptions from those of adolescent boys and also of adult women, would enable direct comparisons to be made. Investigating the extent to which constraints actually limit participation and examining possible negotiation strategies would shed further light on the topic.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to a richer understanding of the barriers that limit or constrain the participation of adolescent girls in active outdoor recreation. Guided by a feminist theoretical perspective, this study has placed the experiences of girls solidly within the discourse on leisure constraints and opportunities. The outcomes suggest practical applications in outdoor programming for girls. Above all, this study is intended to contribute to increased opportunities for girls to experience the natural outdoor world and to grow into confident outdoors-women.

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