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Women and Girls in Outdoor Education

Scoping the Research Literature and Exploring Prospects for Future Body Image Enquiry

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Abstract

Research into women's and girls' outdoor programs and their influence on perceived body image has gained scholarly attention in recent decades. A systematic review of research from 1980–2017 identifies key trends and themes revealing opportunities to advance understandings in the field. In particular, while there has been extensive research conducted on women's and girls' outdoor education programs from various perspectives, there is a shortage of robust research examining the impact of outdoor education on body image. While identifying some trends, the broad scope of the enquiry highlights the scarcity of this empirical data, and calls for heightened emphasis and scholarly debate in the area of body image and outdoor education.

Keywords: outdoor education, women and girls in outdoor programs, body image, literature review

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Introduction

Rationale

The impetus for this literature review began in the early 2000s, after experiencing two month-long expeditions with adolescent girls. At many times during the expedition, conversations that touched on beauty, body image and what it means to be a girl in today's society occurred. Girls asked each other: "*How do you feel about your body?*" "*When did you last feel beautiful?*" "*Would you change the way you do things to please someone else?*" and, "*Do you try to look happy on the outside when you are feeling unhappy on the inside?*" Some felt they were too fat, too short, too tall or not very pretty. One inflicted self-harm because she thought she was ugly. "There's too much emphasis on the perfect body, the perfect person, and what is normal," Kate¹ claimed. Sandy declared "everybody wants to look better than they are, have a boyfriend and a better body."

Towards the end of these expeditions, the girls began to realize the importance of what their bodies were *capable* of doing rather than just how they *looked*. Ten years later we wonder if they still recognize their physical confidence. Are they proud of themselves and how they look and feel? Did the month spent trekking in the Australian wilderness make a difference to how they perceive their bodies? We have spent many other countless days working with girls in the outdoors, and the conversation around body image continues to be at the forefront of girls' minds.

In today's body-centric, heteronormative Western culture, girls can be alienated from their bodies by a culture in which femininity is expressed through rigorous beauty regimes, and displayed on social media (Bearman, Presnell & Martinez, 2006; Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008; Gray, Taylor, Norton, Breault-Hood & Christie, 2016; Slater, Tiggemann, Hawkins & Werchon, 2011; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). Based on this premise the social construction of femininity can interfere with a girl's appreciation of her own physicality (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002). The girls who participated in these month-long treks seemed to 'grow into' the functionality of their bodies as they learned to appreciate their physical competence and capability. The outdoor experience was a vehicle to facilitate a greater importance placed on 'being in their bodies' rather than 'being apart from' their bodies.² Out of curiosity, and the current need to find ways in which to increase body positivity, the authors

1. All names are pseudonyms.

2. See Teall, T. L. (2015).

sought to investigate past research examining the potential impact of outdoor experiences in supporting positive body image.

Objectives

The aim of this literature review is to chronicle body image research in women's and girls' outdoor education programs and to draw attention to the lack of research on the impact of outdoor education on girls' perceived body image. The literature review aims to specifically examine studies that report on the impact of participation in outdoor programs for both women and girls. This literature review serves to highlight gaps in the research linking outdoor education and its benefits for women and girls, particularly within the scope of body image and body positivity, identifying potential key areas for future inquiry in this field.

Method

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) guided the conduct and reporting of this review. A systematic search through the search engine Google Scholar and the ProQuest Central database was conducted. Search strategies using combinations of the following key words were developed: (outdoor education OR outdoor recreation) AND (female OR woman OR girl OR adolescent) AND (benefits OR impacts) AND (body image). We began the literature review using a "wide-angle lens" approach in visiting the past thirty years of research into women's experiences. The lens was then narrowed to focus specifically on research related to girls, then further refined to investigate any research pertaining to outdoor education and body image. In the first stage of the literature search, titles and abstracts of articles were checked for relevance and additional texts known to the authors were assessed for possible inclusion. In the second stage, full-text articles were retrieved and considered for inclusion. In the final stage, the reference lists of retrieved full-text articles were searched for relevance to the purpose of this review. Published articles in peer reviewed journals, conference abstracts, dissertations, and theses were included in the main search.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

We independently assessed the eligibility of the studies for inclusion using the following broad criteria: a) reference to benefits and impacts of outdoor education on women; b) reference to benefits and impacts of outdoor education on girls and c) research on the impacts of outdoor education on women and/or girls' body image.

Outdoor education has been defined in a variety of ways throughout its history (Donaldson and Donaldson, 1958; Ford, 1981; Hammerman, Hammerman, & Hammerman, 2001; Priest, 1986). At times used synonymously with 'adventure education', 'outdoor learning', 'adventure therapy', 'environmental education', 'wilderness education' and 'adventure tourism', outdoor education is often simply defined as "education in, about, and for the out of doors" (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958, p. 63). Hammerman et al. (2001) have stated that outdoor education is "education which takes place in the outdoors" (p. 5). Priest (1986) writes "outdoor education is an experiential process of learning by doing, which takes place primarily through exposure to the out-of-doors. In outdoor education the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships, relationships concerning people and natural resources" (p. 13). Gray (1997) wrote "the underlying aim of outdoor education was originally (and continues to be), the personal and social development of the whole person in a balanced and integrated fashion" (p. 19). As such, we chose to conduct this research using the words outdoor education in this literature review. Exclusions include references to wilderness therapy and troubled youth and youth at risk in order to separate the strand of adventure therapy from outdoor education.

It is critical to acknowledge a working definition of "women" given the often taken-for-granted entanglement of sex and gender in this research space. We consider "women" to be an inclusive term—one that includes both individuals biologically born as women and who self-identify their gender as female, as well as transgender, gender fluid and gender creative/expansive individuals who have, at any point, self-identified as women. The authors take a social constructionist position, disentangling gender from biological sex, and viewing gender as a social process, learned through culture and culturally specific (Kehily, 2002). These considerations are particularly critical for the field of outdoor education with children and adolescents, whose definitions of gender are increasingly less binary and more fluid and inclusive (Ullman, 2017). The literature reported in this review presents a (now) outdated conceptualization of "women" as cisgender; not a single article found presents the option of a transgender, or gender non-

conforming identity, to their participants. While the oversights of the past cannot be corrected, we hope that, moving forward, the term “women” will continue to receive attention and debate in the field, expanding to include all individuals who identify with this gender identity. Thus, from this point forward, where we refer to “women”, we refer to this term as defined in the literature which we have reviewed: cisgender women.

Results

Setting the Scene: Women in the Outdoors 1980–2000

In the early 1980s, Miranda and Yerkes (1982) called for more extensive qualitative research methods to be employed in order to provide empirical support for women’s specific outdoor programming. What followed, by a small number of academics, was trailblazing research on women’s experiences in the outdoors. The majority of emerging research during this period was from North America, although the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia also contributed to the body of literature. The primarily qualitative research, conducted in the late 1980s, and into the next decade laid the foundation for further qualitative and subsequent quantitative research, with a focus on women’s experiences in the outdoors.

Leading the field were academics in leisure studies, parks and recreation, and environmental and outdoor education. Roberts and Bialeschki (1995) published a review of literature on women in the outdoors, which concluded that most research, influenced by the 1982 call for action, by Miranda and Yerkes, focused on five primary topics: gender issues, effects on women, constraints and barriers, leadership and guiding, and all women’s groups. Following this review, Karen Warren edited *Women’s Voices in Experiential Education* (1996). The book curates the anecdotal and empirical contributions of practitioners and scholars in the foundational years through to the 1990s.

Shortly thereafter, Henderson and Roberts (1998) produced an integrative review of the research on girls and women in the outdoors to determine the gaps and suggest possible new directions. They looked at research that took place between 1976 and 1996. Their review suggested that leadership and participation in the outdoors were areas in which scholars highlighted the under-representation of women in the outdoors. Although the literature about girls and women was growing, much of it was from personal experience and perspective. Henderson and Roberts (1998) cautioned that “this dearth of empirical outlets is creating a breakdown in the development of theory” (p. 17), and suggested that research on women should be

Table 1. Research on Women in Outdoor Education 1980–2000

<i>Themes</i>	<i>1980–2000</i>
Benefits/Effects/ Impacts/Motivations	Hornibrook, Brinkert, Parry, Seimens, Mitten & Priest, 1997; Loeffler, 1997; Mitten 1985; 1986; 1992, 1994; Miranda & Yerkes, 1982; Nolan & Priest, 1993
Body Image	Arnold, 1994; Kiewa, 1996; West-Smith, 1997
Career	Bialeschki & Henderson, 1993; Loeffler, 1996
Constraints (to participating)	Henderson, Winn, & Roberts, 1996
Feminist theory/Feminism	Bell, 1996; Fullager & Hailstone, 1996; Henderson, 1996; Pohl, 1996
Gender	Balka, 1995; Bell, 1997; Glotfelty, 1996; Henderson, Winn, & Roberts, 1996; Humberstone, 1990, Knapp, 1995; Pate, 1997, Roberts, 1998
Leadership	Loeffler, 1996, 1997, 2000; Carter & Colyer, 1999
Meanings	Warren, 1985
Women Only Programs	McClintock, 1996; Mitten, 1985, 1986; Nolan & Priest, 1993
Spiritual Empowerment	Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Henderson, 1996b

mainstreamed. Roberts (1998) produced a review of literature and research synthesizing the research prior to 1998.

Other literature published in this era (See Table 1) established research on the motivations and benefits of outdoor programs, career-ship, constraints to participating in the outdoors, finding meaning in the outdoors, body image empowerment and resilience, and general discussion on gender matters in the outdoors. The emergence of a feminist leadership style and a feminist framework for examining leadership in the outdoors was recognized (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Henderson & Roberts, 1998).

Research during this time continued to question the potential of the outdoors to function as a challenge to traditional female roles. Issues of growing empowerment were leading to more conversations about body image, ethics, participation patterns, cultural experiences and career development in the outdoors (Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Wright & Gray, 2013). One of the findings from Hornibrook, Brinkert, Parry, and Seimens (1997) suggested that women-only programs led to empowerment if they included the essential elements of cooperation, support, safety, non-competitiveness and inclusivity.

Moving Forward: Women in the Outdoors 2000–Present

A more woman-centered approach to outdoor programs was solidified at the end of the 1990s; it focused on an ethic of care, cooperation, holistic leadership, safe and supportive environments and conscious choice (Gray, 2018; Gray, Mitten, Loeffler, Allen-Craig, & Carpenter, 2018; Loeffler, 1995, 1997; Mitten, 1985, 1986; Mitten, Gray, Loeffler, Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2017). There were more women and girl-specific programs started in North America and the empirical research substantiating these programs grew (see Table 2).

Studies conducted during this time consistently report on the benefits and the positive outcomes of participation in all women's programs (Irish, 2006; Jones, 2007; Kluge, 2007; Leupp, 2007; Libby & Carruthers, 2013; McDermott, 2004; Massa, 2015). Women's programs have also been found to have positive outcomes on self-concepts (Foland, 2009; Johnsson, Hoppe, Mitten & D'Amore, 2013; Kiewa, 2000; Newbery, 2003, 2004; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017; West-Smith, 2000; and Woodruff, 2009). However, constraints continue to inhibit women's participation in the outdoors (Gray, 2016; Gray, Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2017).

Gender issues continue to prevail in the field of outdoor education (Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Dooley, 2016; Haluza-Delay & Dymont, 2003; Henderson, 2009; Humberstone & Peterson, 2001; Irish, 2006; Libby & Carruthers, 2013; Loeffler, 2000; Lugg, 2003; Newbery 2003, 2004; and Gray, 2016). Although Libby and Carruthers' (2013) suggest that women develop autonomy through disengagement from traditional gender roles, connections with other women, competence through overcoming challenges and finding enjoyment, there still exists disparity in the outdoors. This disparity is confirmed by Gray (2016), who writes "Women in the outdoor profession still face gendered challenges such as being recognised and accessing the upper echelons of the academy" (p. 35). Similarly, Dooley (2016) suggests "there still exists a boy's club mentality that is difficult to ignore, and women still face challenges in their experiences because of their gender" (p. 23).

Researchers continue to find that outdoor experiences influence women's lives in a variety of ways. Issues around constraints that women face in the outdoors still remain (Jones, 2007; Shores, Scott, & Floyd, 2007) and the discussion about women as outdoor educators working in a male dominated field continues (Allin, 2004; Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Wright & Gray, 2013). For example, the current narrative in both social and print media on the representation of women in the outdoors is the discussion of inclusivity. Pick up a mainstream outdoor magazine, and

Table 2. Research on Women in Outdoor Education 2000–2018

<i>Themes</i>	<i>2000–2018</i>
Benefits/Effects/ Impacts/Motivations	Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Irish, 2006; Jones, 2007; Kluge, 2007; Leupp, 2007; Libby & Carruthers, 2013; McDermott, 2004; Massa, 2015
Body Image	Foland, 2009; Johnsson, Hoppe, Mitten & D’Amore, 2013; Kiewa, 2000; Mitten & D’Amore, 2017; Newberry, 2003, 2004; West-Smith, 2000; Woodruff, 2009
Career	Allin, 2004; Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Gray, Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2016; Gray, Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2017; Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Kiewa, 2018; Wright & Gray, 2013
Constraints (to participating)	Dingle & Kiewa, 2006; Little 2002b; Tsikalas, Martin & Wright, 2015; Shores, Scott & Floyd, 2007; Warren & Loeffler, 2006;
Feminist theory Feminism	Gray, 2016; Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson, 2000; Mitten, 2018
Gender	Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Denny, 2011; Gray, 2018; Gray & Mitten, 2018, a & b; Gray, Mitten, Loeffler, Allen-Craig, & Carpenter, 2018; Haluza-Delay & Dymont, 2003; Henderson, 2009; Humberstone, 2000; Humberstone & Pedersen, 2001; Irish, 2006; Leupp, 2007; Loeffler, 2000; Lugg, 2003; Mitten, 2012; Mitten, Gray, Allen-Craig, Loeffler & Carpenter, 2017; Newberry, 2003, 2004
Leadership	Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Gray, Mitten, Loeffler, Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2016; Lugg, 2003; Mitten, Gray, Allen-Craig, Loeffler & Carpenter, 2017; Warren, Risinger & Loeffler, 2018; Wittmer, 2001
Meanings	Boniface, 2006; Little, 2002a
Socio-Political	Cook, 2001, Finney, 2014
Spiritual Empowerment	Massa, 2015

look closely at the representation of women. Do we see women of colour, immigrant woman, trans or genderqueer women? Big women? Do we see Indigenous women? As this narrative is in mainstream media, empirical research will likely follow and is much lacking in what we could find pertaining to this literature review. We found several references to “race” and colour (for instance, Rao & Robert, 2018) who along with Finney (2014), call out accessibility issues in the outdoors and explore the social relationship between race and the environment. Additionally, a re-

cent publication continues the conversation about body image and women (Mitten & D'Amore, 2017).

The vast majority of the literature up until around the turn of the millennium focused primarily on women's experiences, leading to assumptions about the impact of such programs on girls. Only a few studies (both anecdotal and empirical) were conducted on recreational programs for girls (Henderson & Grant, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998) and even less research was conducted on girls' experiences in the outdoors (Culp, 1998; Gray, 1997; Humberstone & Lynch, 1991; Lynch, 1991b; Porter, 1996) (See Table 3). On an international scale, the research on women and girls was emanating primarily from North America with a growing group of scholars examining the field of outdoor education in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The work of the researchers in this period laid the foundation for further empirical research on the benefits of outdoor education programming for women.

Research on Girls in Outdoor Education

Culp (1998) noted that "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" (p. 359). Adolescence is a significant transitional period, whereby identities are developed, experimented with, and cemented (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Lamb & Brown, 2007; Pipher 1995; Simmons 2002, 2009). Researchers of girl culture³ note the difference in behaviours, values, and perceptions of adolescent girls from women (Hall, 2011; Hamilton, 2008; Jackson & Vares, 2013). These findings highlight the need for research addressing the specific needs, desires and experiences of adolescent girls.

Past studies that specifically investigate young women's outdoor participation have included the themes of body image and freedom from stereotypes, courage, leadership skills, physical activity, relationship building, resilience, self-concepts and long-term impacts (see Table 3). Gray's (1997) thesis on the impact of an extended stay outdoor education program demonstrated that "The females articulated a freedom from the gender-imposed roles, in particular, those which were the strongholds of a male domain for instance physical prowess and assertiveness" (p. 240). Whitting-

3. Mitchell, C., & Reid-Walsh, J. (2008). *Girl culture: An encyclopedia*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

ton (2006) suggested that girls challenged constructions of femininity after a wilderness experience. Others have suggested positive outcomes including increased self-sufficiency, a greater connection with others, and increased technical capability (Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000; Whittington, 2006).

While qualitative evidence exists on how these experiences impact girls' notions of femininity, challenge gender stereotypes and question body image, quantitative evidence is less apparent in the research (Breault-Hood, Gray, Truong, & Ullman, 2016). McKenney, Budbill, and Roberts (2008) conclude that there remains a need for more empirical research on the benefits of girls' outdoor programs. Although results in the studies reviewed above have indicated an array of benefits for adolescent girls, few studies have focused on the influence of outdoor programs on body image specifically.

Body Image and Outdoor Education

The previous chronological review was intended to situate the reader within the broader field of research on women's and girls' experiences in the outdoors. We acknowledge important work in related areas such as queer pedagogy in outdoor education, fat pedagogy, and feminist outdoor education, to name a few, has emerged over the years; however, is beyond the scope of this review. Generally, trends over the past thirty years demonstrate the ongoing research into constraints of participating in the outdoors, the benefits and impacts of outdoor education programs particularly relating to self-concepts, the complexity of gender issues in the outdoors and finally discussion on the advantages of 'girls-only' programs. Anecdotal evidence exists that there are positive outcomes on how girls think and feel about their bodies during and after an outdoor experience. Thus, this literature review sits within a larger research study examining the benefits of outdoor education on girls' body image.

Although early researchers conceptualized body image as a one-dimensional construct, it is now considered to be, and is measured as, a multi-dimensional construct including the dimensions of perception, thought and feeling (Blood, 2004; Bordo, 2003; Cash & Smolak, 2011; Grogan, 2008; Russell, Cameron, Socha, & McNinch, 2014; Wright & Leahy, 2016). Cash and Smolak (2011) suggest that "body image transcends a singular experience" (p. 10) and can be defined and contextualized in multiple ways. Grogan (2008) defined body image as "a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his or her body" (p. 3). These

Table 3. Research on Girls in Outdoor Education 1980–2018

<i>Themes</i>	<i>1980–2000</i>	<i>2000–2018</i>
Body Image, Social Construction of Femininity	Gray, 1997	Barr-Wilson, 2012; Breault-Hood, Gray, Truong, & Ullman, 2016; Budbill, 2008; DeBate & Thompson, 2005; Edwards-Leeper, 2003; Gray & Mitten, 2018a & b; Whittington, 2006; Whittington & Budbill, 2013; Whittington, Mack, Budbill & McKenney, 2011
Courage	Porter, 1996; McKenney, 1996	Whittington & Mack, 2010; Whittington & Budbill, 2013
Leadership	Jordan, 1992	Whittington, 2006; Whittington, 2011; Dooley, 2016
Long-Term Benefits/Effects/Impacts	Gray, 1997; Wang, Liu & Kahlid, 2006	Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Galeotti, 2015; Gray, 2017; Massa, 2015; Whittington, 2011; Whittington, Aspelmeier, & Budbill, 2015
Rationale	Culp, 1998; Henderson & King, 1998; Henderson & Grant, 1998; Holzworth, 1992; Lynch, 1991a, 1991b; McKenney, 1996; Mitten, 1992; Walton, 1995	McKenney, Budbill, & Roberts, 2008; McNatty, 2014
Relationships	Culp, 1998; Pohl, Borrie and Patterson, 2000	Allen-Craig and Hartley, 2012; Barr-Wilson, 2012; Denny, 2011; Hurtes, 2002; Sammett, 2010; Whittington, 2006; Whittington & Budbill, 2013; Whittington, Aspelmeier, & Budbill, 2015; Whittington, Mack, Budbill, & McKenney, 2011
Resilience		Whittington, Aspelmeier, & Budbill, 2015; Whittington & Budbill, 2013
Self-Constructs	Culp, 1998; Gubitz & Kutcher, 1999	DeBate & Thompson, 2005; Galeotti, 2015; Leupp, 2007; McGowan, 2016; Massa, 2015; Whittington & Budbill, 2013; Whittington & Mack, 2010; McNatty, 2014

definitions call attention to the multi-dimensional nature of body image, including perception, thought and feelings. The common characteristics of these definitions encompass how you see your body, how you feel about your body, and how you think about your body.

Earlier work on body image includes positive results in expanding self-image (Mitten, 1992), re-evaluating norms for the female body (Arnold, 1994) and increased capacity in their bodies (Kiewa, 1996, 2000). Later, Foland (2009) and Woodruff (2009) demonstrated that women had increased body satisfaction after an outdoor experience. Woodruff's study showed that "as the value on the significance of the body's capabilities develop, consciousness and appreciation of the body amplifies, and self-perceptions of physical attractiveness increase" (p. 2). West-Smith (2000) claims that an outdoor experience can provide a shift in focus from how one's body looks, to a focus on what one's body can do. The results of their work support that psychosocial variables may influence body image and adds to the growing data about the influence of outdoor activity on women's body image. A growing body of research shows that women who participate in outdoor activities are more likely to realize their body's strength and capabilities and maintain a more positive body image (Johnson, Hoppe, Mitten & D'Amore, 2013; McDermott, 2004; West-Smith, 2000; Woodruff, 2009). These researchers have explored first and foremost, the experience of women. For adolescent girls, who are navigating the transition from girlhood to womanhood, where they are increasingly bound by gender roles and experience intense social pressure to conform, outdoor programs may provide opportunities to provide a shift in focus from how one's body looks, to what one's body can do.

Our review identified only five studies that specifically attempt to investigate the implications of outdoor programs on girls' body image. These studies, listed chronologically, include: Edwards-Leeper, 2004; Budbill, 2008; Parsons, 2010; Barr-Wilson, 2012; and Galeotti, 2015. Consistent in each study is working with adolescent girls in North America and a feminist approach and perspective.

A phenomenological approach was used in three out of the five studies with researchers sharing the belief that studying the lived experiences of their research subjects creates the theoretical foundation of their study. Studies used both quantitative (Edwards-Leeper, 2004, Budbill, 2008, Barr-Wilson, 2012, Galeotti, 2015), qualitative (Parsons, 2010) or a mixed methods approach (Edwards-Leeper, 2004, Budbill, 2008, Barr-Wilson, 2012, Galeotti, 2015). Instrumentation varied across the studies with researchers developing their own quantitative and qualitative tools for measuring the

impact of the program on girls' body image. The timing of the studies varied with only one study using a pre, post and follow up survey (Edwards-Leeper, 2004). Three were retrospective in approach (Barr-Wilson, 2012; Galeotti, 2015; Parsons, 2010) and one study used a pre-test and post-test program design (Budbill, 2008).

Findings in Edwards-Leepers' (2004) study suggested that there was some change in acceptance of their bodies, but reasons were unclear. Quantitative results revealed that the participants experienced greater acceptance of their bodies after participating in a two-week canoe expedition compared to girls in other summer programs. A moderate change in positive body image over a five-day mountain bike program was noted in Budbill's (2008) study. Although findings indicated that participants showed a shift from body as object, to subject, results on feelings about the participant's appearance were moderate (i.e., 33% of participants reported feeling more confident about their bodies, compared to 60 to 100% of participants supporting other program objectives). Budbill's study showed 90% of those girls who felt more confident about their bodies also said this was because they realized they did not need to be thin to be good at things and to be happy (p. 79). In Parson's (2010) retrospective study one subject described her transformational experience from before the four-week long program to after: "I just feel so comfortable with my body and it doesn't even cross my mind ever when doing anything. So it's just like a concern that has gone away and one stress that I don't ever have to stress about" (p. 9). In Barr-Wilson's (2012) study all alumnae attributed their course with positively influencing body image during and immediately after their course ($n=13$) (p. 80). Almost all alumnae claimed that their positive body image at the time of the study was due to participation on a course ($n=9$). Galeotti's recent study identified 30.8% of girls said the running program "helped me like my body" (2015).

Collectively, research supports that participation in an outdoor education program has a positive influence on body image. These research studies suggest a need to investigate further with more empirical evidence, the potential positive benefits of outdoor programs on how girls think about themselves so that they can navigate society with strength and resilience and a strong sense of self.

Conclusion

Working with girls in outdoor programs in Australia has prompted an exploration into the relationship between the outdoors and body image. Our past experience suggests that girls who participate in outdoor programs seem to recognize that ‘body’ is much greater than ‘image.’ These observations led to the impetus for this literature review, as well as a broader study on the impact of outdoor education on girls’ body image. Positive body image is thinking about the way you physically feel and what your body can do—not just the way you look (West-Smith, 1997; Mitten & D’Amore, 2017; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010). With only five studies demonstrating a link between outdoor education and positive body image for adolescent girls, there is scope for more empirical research to add to strengthen the field. The current body of literature is limited in terms of geographic scale, socioeconomic and cultural representation, participant numbers and a standardized method of measuring the impact of the outdoors on girls’ body image.

The past thirty years of research into the experiences of women and girls in the outdoors has been rich and varied. By retracing the ebbs and flows of research over the past thirty years, our systematic review on both women’s and girls’ experiences in the outdoors has helped fortify the scholarly work of researchers in the field. Our scan of the field highlights the shortage of robust scholarly work undertaken in the area of body image and outdoor education. There remains much room for further empirical research to strengthen the value of outdoor education, through a wide range of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. In particular, quantitative measures are essential to strengthen the case of positive outcomes for women and girls who participate on outdoor education programs. This literature review serves to inform further research that will include pre, post and follow up research on the impact of outdoor education on body image on girls, using both a quantitative and qualitative approach.

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