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Social Justice in Outdoor Experiential Education: A Literature Analysis of K-12 Outdoor Education Programs in the United States

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A Master's Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the department of Community Development and Planning

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Kathryn Madden, Chief Instructor

Abstract

Social Justice in Outdoor Experiential Education: A Literature Analysis of K-12 Outdoor Education Programs in the United States

Digby Kalert

Historically, the field of outdoor experiential education (OEE) has been exclusionary and has primarily served white middle- and upper-middle class male populations. Scholars have called for research on how to address issues of social justice in the field for decades, and leaders are finally making steps toward becoming more inclusive. Through a secondary analysis of empirical studies on OEE, this paper examines how the field has modified its focus towards minority populations in K-12 OEE programs in the United States and provides recommendations for practitioners of OEE. There is evidence of an increase in studies on how OEE is perceived by minorities and how its impacts have affected different communities over the last 40 years. The understanding of attitudes and perceptions of OEE has changed with the introduction of new concepts regarding health and wellbeing tied to outdoor experiences as well as social justice.

Academic History

Name: Digby Kalert   **Date: May 2018**

Baccalaureate Degree: B.A.: Geography, Spanish

Source: Clark University   **Date: May 2017**

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my parents for their endless support of my education and all their kind and encouraging words and phone calls that got me through the last five years. And to my sister who helped me every step of the way.

Acknowledgments

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<u>Introduction</u>

Research indicates that spending time outdoors and in nature is not only good for physical and mental health but is also crucial to children's healthy development. However, over the last twenty years, studies and popular media both have suggested that children in the United States are spending less time outside than previous generations. Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (2005), popularized the term "Nature-Deficit Disorder" (NDD) and spread the idea that children at the time of publication were spending more time indoors playing video games and sitting in front of screens than they were playing outside. Louv (2005) makes the argument that our society has disengaged children from nature which has led to skyrocketing rates of disorders such as ADHD.

While researchers have provided ample anecdotal evidence supporting Louv's claim that participation in outdoor activities is declining, few large-scale studies have actually investigated the trends in children's time spent outdoors (Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011). The hard evidence showing that children spend more time indoors may be lacking, but plenty of studies demonstrate the benefits of children's access to nature and green space. Not only does spending time outdoors provide physical benefits, such as lower rates of obesity, it has many emotional and psychological benefits as well (Aaron and Witt 2011). Research indicates that children who spend time learning and playing outdoors see positive outcomes in their attitudes toward the environment, independence, confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, and social skills (Parrish et al. 2005).

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This literature survey focuses on the benefits and impacts of outdoor experiential education (OEE), a structured form of outdoor recreation, and how OEE approaches issues of social justice and demographic inclusion within programs and activities. Social justice for the purpose of this survey is the idea that social identities such as gender, race and class are intersectional, and that these ideas do not act independently (Warren et al. 2014). Despite the widely accepted benefits of OEE, the vast majority of the literature in the field acknowledges that it is mainly an exclusive, privileged, white pursuit (McLarnon 2013). Scholars in the outdoor education sector seem to agree that if this field is to become a respected form of education, leaders must confront the obstacles to equality and equity, and work to actively interrupt systems of oppression that are rooted in our cultural, historical, and societal values.

This paper focuses on school-based outdoor experiential education programs. Outdoor education is a broad topic, so this paper focuses on K-12 day programs at public schools, excluding extended stay programs and college level programs. Income and class are not discussed to a large extent, as familial income is not a barrier for the types of programs in the public school arena examined here.

Through an analysis of the literature on K-12 outdoor experiential education programs offered through public schools in the United States over the last 40 years, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

- o To what extent do K-12 OEE programs in the US promote social justice in their programming and activities? How has this changed over the years? What can they do to improve?

o   Does the literature concerning OEE focus on the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities? How does this change over time?

This literary analysis will examine papers written over the last forty years, and attempt to find patterns in the literature concerning the statistical change in programming focus and inclusionary policies in OEE with regard to minority children, as well as to identify best practices occurring in the field. This field has historically struggled to deal with its social justice inequities and is beginning to realize that major changes must be made (Warren 2014). This analysis will help leaders in OEE understand the progress that has been made, suggest future directions for more research, and provide best practices for current practitioners to incorporate.

Literature Review and Framework

Louv's groundbreaking book (2005), sparked a national conversation and attracted interest from politicians, educators, health care professionals, practitioners, and, of course, parents (Aaron and Witt 2011). Louv claims that alienation from nature has a multitude of negative effects on both the physical, cognitive, and spiritual health of children. He argues that the rising rates of children with ADHD in the United States are the direct result of spending more time indoors in front of screens than playing in the woods. Side effects of Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD) include diminished use of the five senses; reduced creativity; issues with problem solving ability; and a range of social and emotional problems (Louv 2005).

Louv was not the first or the only person to make the claim that children in the US experience adverse effects from spending less time outdoors than ever before. According to one study, between 1997-2003, the proportion of American children (ages 9-12) who spent time on outdoor activities such as hiking, gardening, and fishing fell by nearly 50 percent (U.S. Forest Service 2007). And while the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children spend less than two hours per day in front of screens, countless studies indicate that the majority of kids vastly exceed this daily limit (Ossola 2015). Increased screen time paired with less time spent playing in nature has been linked to rising childhood obesity rates and depression and attention disorders. These issues are certainly quite complex, and claims that spending less time in nature makes children overweight, depressed, and unable to focus is a massive oversimplification of the matter. However, several studies demonstrate a strong correlation between lack of access to green space and many negative physical and mental symptoms (Aaron and Witt 2011).

Today it is widely accepted that contact with nature is important to children's healthy development. The literature shows that spending time outdoors reduces symptoms of ADHD, reduces stress and aggression, and improves kids' abilities to problem solve and be creative. (Ossola 2015). There is evidence that supports the relationship between green space and overall quality of life with benefits in wellbeing, community development, and positive self-esteem and independence (Aaron and Witt 2011). One study suggests that children and adults who have physical contact with plants and animals in outdoor settings experience strong positive effects on memory retention and recall (Scott, Boyd, and Colquhoun 2013, p. 47).

Following the release of Louv's book, the American Public Health Association launched the national "No Child Left Inside" movement in 2007, as a spinoff of the Bush administration's "No Child Left Behind" Act (Boehner 2002; Reed 2013). That same year, the U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with the National Forest Foundation and the American Recreation Coalition launched "More Kids in the Woods," a program designed to help reconnect children to nature. The program awards matching funds to organizations and programming that get kids outside and into nature, and reached more than 25,000 children in its first year (Kimbell 2007). Congress even introduced the "No Child Left Inside Act" in 2013 as an amendment the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to support the implementation of environmental literacy and education in school curriculums (Reed 2013).

What is Outdoor Experiential Education?

One of the first definitions of outdoor education, coined in the 1950s, was "education in, about and for the outdoors" (Donaldson and Donaldson,1958, p. 63). In an attempt to link it with the school curriculum, the field began favoring the term "outdoor education" rather than simply "outdoor activities" or "outdoor recreation" (Nicol 2002). As the industry grew and developed, new definitions were necessary to encompass the full mission of this type of education. In the late 1980s, leaders redefined the term, and decided that 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" (Priest 1986, p. 13).

Much confusion has surrounded the terms "experiential education," "outdoor education," and "outdoor experiential education" as they are often used interchangeably. Experiential education can happen indoors or outdoors, while outdoor education obviously exclusively occurs outdoors (Higgins 2009). Rose and Paisley (2012), define experiential education as "the intentional use of activity (e.g., by an educator) to teach (e.g., students)," and does not specify the type of space where it should happen. Many outdoor and experiential education programs use adventure activities or journeys for their learning purposes. Each of these expressions, according to Nicol (2002), refers to an integrated approach or process of learning, that stimulates the development of character traits such as self-reliance, self-esteem, responsibility, and to healthy relationships with others and the environment. The terminology used in research on OEE, in one way or another, encompasses a large range of scholarship that includes recreation and leisure studies, environmental education, and adventure education.

For the purpose of this paper, I will use Warren's definition of outdoor experiential education (OEE), referring to it as: "*educational situations that take place in a wilderness/outdoor setting and have an element of adventure or challenge used as a method to educate through direct experience*" (Warren 2005, p. 89). OEE programs may be mostly adventure based, such as Outward Bound, or supplemental experiences to traditional school curriculums that allow for additional learning to occur outside the classroom (Warren 2005), however, my exploration of social justice in OEE programs will

focus on K-12 day programs at public schools. Warren's definition suits this group of OEE experiences, as it is sufficiently broad to encompass many types of programs, yet excludes indoor programming and traditionally designed education curriculum.

The Value of Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE)

Evidence shows that the benefits of getting kids outside are not limited to unstructured playtime, but rather that formalized OEE programs promote many positive outcomes as well through the positive relationship between cognitive learning and learning in the outdoor environment (Scott, Boyd, and Colquhoun 2013). It is common for students who appear bored or disinterested at school to demonstrate critical thinking skills and even take on leadership roles when given the chance to learn outdoors (James and Williams 2017). One study demonstrates that students who have long developed negative or apathetic attitudes towards classroom learning "were astonished at their own intrinsic involvement and love of learning occurring in [an] experiential outdoor education atmosphere" (James and Williams 2017, p. 64).

As a complement to more traditional teaching methods, OEE can use the outdoor environment to broaden and deepen the understanding of nature, social life, and self. OEE programs emphasize leadership, team-building, and problem-solving. Teaching and learning outdoors creates opportunities to promote communication and cooperation, and can level the academic playing field for students who are tactile and kinetic learners (Brodin 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Definitions for social justice theory are as numerous as for OEE, however, social justice theory generally embraces the idea that social identities such as gender, race and class are intersectional, and that these ideas do not act independently (Warren et al. 2014). Changing the status quo and addressing the inequities created by racism, classism, sexism, etc., requires "deliberate intervention" and a "moral use of power" (Furman and Gruenewald 2004, p. 51).

Most of the literature regarding social justice in OEE attributes a great deal of influence to John Dewey (Warren and Loeffler 2000). An early advocate of progressive education, Dewey was convinced that democracy and education were two crucial elements of a just society. In his seminal book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), he states that the responsibility of education is to balance "*the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born*" (p. 20). Dewey discusses how societal stratification can be fatal, and argued that a just society must ensure that opportunities are "*accessible to all on equable and easy terms*" (Dewey 1916, p. 88). Warren (2005) makes the case that this applies to making OEE accessible to underrepresented groups, as it offers valuable moral development and knowledge acquisition—important components for a healthy democracy.

Kurt Hahn is regarded as the other champion of the discussion about OEE and social justice (Warren and Loeffler 2000). Hahn founded the Outward Bound School in 1945 and was quite concerned with the social issues of the time. Outward Bound focuses

on older students, yet it was one of the foundational programs in the field for promoting

outdoor education and thus can also be considered an important influence on public

school-based K-12 OEE programs (Warren 2005). Hahn's philosophy that "the ultimate

aim of education is the nurturance of civic responsibility" became a powerful influence for

social justice in OEE (Warren and Loeffler 2000, p. 85). Despite this intent, Outward

Bound originally served primarily upper-class white males (and continues to serve mostly

white participants) (Warren 2005)

Social Justice in Outdoor Experiential Education

While scholars and leaders in the field disagree on the definition of OEE, most

agree that outdoor education is a traditionally white, male domain (Rose and Paisley 2012).

Many of the philosophical underpinnings of OEE, such as citizenship, leadership, character

building, perseverance, and endurance are masculine ideals (Lugg 2003). In fact, the

outdoor education movement was heavily influenced by white men—famously by Baden

Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, and Kurt Hahn (Outward Bound). Today, women and

minorities are more involved in OEE, yet the field's emphasis on a male-oriented ethos

persists.

Literature that discusses equity and diversity in OEE calls for more scholarship and

research on how to better train leaders in the field, design more equitable curriculums, and

create more inclusive programs. Goodman (2017) theorizes that the reason for this is that it

is a relatively new field of study, and researchers have only begun focusing on it in the last

two or three decades. Scholars argue that if OEE is to become a respected and valued form

of education, it must "confront the obstacles of equality and build a community that is not only receptive to new participants, but is also willing to educate on issues of social justice" (McLarnon 2013, p. 20).

Leaders in the field contend that the very concepts of adventure, wilderness, and nature are social constructs themselves, and are thus based on positions of privilege and oppression (Lugg 2003; Warren et al. 2014). The idea that people should backpack, zipline, and kayak in remote places is part of a male dominant narrative—one that left little room for women and minorities (Rose and Paisley 2012). Even the concept of wilderness preservation, and the notion that nature should be left alone by humans rather than used for sustenance, comes from western narratives (Warren et al. 2014). The U.S. has historically excluded the poor and people of color in parks and other outdoor spaces, as these places were founded on upper-class ideologies about "pristine wilderness" (Warren et al. 2014).

Warren claims that it is important to address the historical bases of these narratives and restructure them to be more inclusive. Confronting issues of social justice in OEE requires educators to adopt a more expansive lens of who belongs, and to examine social privilege such as race/ethnicity, culture, gender and gender identity, age, ability, and religion, as well as socioeconomic status (Warren et al. 2014, p. 90). Contemporary studies in the OEE field must begin to see these marginalized identities not just as differences, but as areas in need of greater justice.

Rose and Paisley (2012) argue that unpacking the complex systems underlying white privilege in OEE is necessary to ensure that the field transforms itself into one that is more just. Mainstream recreational and leisure spaces are generally associated with

wealthy, white spaces, and OEE needs to change in order to be more welcoming and comfortable for those who have been historically and systematically oppressed. This must occur at an institutional level in order to ensure that inequities and injustices are eliminated rather than just temporarily repaired. For example, providing scholarships for minority children may increase a program's diversity, but does nothing to address the underlying culture in which they may not feel welcome (Rose and Paisley 2012). Leaders in the OEE field must move "beyond a basic recognition of the need to be culturally inclusive" and allow basic concepts and practices of outdoor education to be reshaped by a diverse array of cultures and narratives (Roberts and Rodriguez 1999, p. 4).

Gaps

Warren, Roberts, Breunig, and Alvarez's (2014) state of knowledge review identifies many of the gaps in the OEE field and the need for additional social justice scholarship. The authors highlight a lack of comprehensive and meaningful research on diversity and equity in OEE, and the need to engage historically marginalized and intersecting social identities in outdoor leadership and programming. They suggest an array of topics for future research and action revolving around social justice in OEE including:

- Reconceptualizing meanings of outdoor places and the concept of adventure
- Intersectionality of race, class, gender, and other identities
- Attitudes and perceptions of ethnic minorities regarding what manner they are influenced by racialized constructions, including how different cultural groups experience the outdoors

- Immigrants/undocumented participants' potential exclusion from programs

- Understanding the role of socioeconomics and class oppression

- Cultural competency training, education and leadership development

- Understanding how to make all OEE programs multicultural

There is also a large body of literature related to environmental education, and outdoor recreation and leisure that was not examined for the purpose of this paper. Additionally, other literature focusing on the African American experience in OEE (i.e. summer camps) is not reviewed here given the explicit focus on programs offered through public schools.

Methodology

The field of outdoor experiential education is relatively new—research on the benefits and outcomes of these types of programs began in the last 40 years. The research is in response to a growing recognition of the importance of analysis of OEE programming and the literature's call for comprehensive reform. This paper provides a critical review of a set of literature related to OEE with the goal of identifying patterns in how the field has changed especially in regard to issues of inclusion. In addition, the paper analyzes a smaller set of literature to identify best practices in the field.

The parameters of the literature analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Key Dimensions of the Review[1]

Overall focus:	Empirical studies on outdoor experiential education (OEE)—both school based and private programs
Time scale:	1970-2017
Age range:	K-12 children
Geographical:	United States
Sources:	Published, peer-reviewed studies, theses and dissertations*

*These sources exclude :Publications with no empirical component; Studies of OEE programs that mainly focus on college students or adults; Studies of teachers, adult learners, or OEE program leaders and International studies

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Selection Criteria

1. I chose to focus on empirical studies rather than theoretical pieces as they include solid data and clearly outlined methodologies. The literature calls for more evidence-based research on the impacts and outcomes of OEE programs, and there already exists many opinion-based pieces about the benefits of outdoor education.

2. The time period was selected to analyze how the field has changed over the last 40 years, and to identify any patterns in OEE research over time using Richard Lov's work as a bench mark. I chose the 1970s as the starting point for this investigation.

3. Finally, there was no strict definition adopted for what would constitute research on outdoor environmental education, I expanded my search to include studies on general outdoor education, outdoor adventure programming, and environmental education.

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[1] The methodology design for this paper is inspired by Rickinson's literature analysis in a similar field (Rickinson 2001)

Search Methods

      The preliminary search was conducted using the databases accessible to Clark University including ERIC, LexisNexis, EBSCOhost, Academic Onefile, and Google Scholar. Key words including, but not limited to 'outdoor experiential education,' 'outdoor education,' and 'K-12 experiential education' were used to yield broad searches that could be easily narrowed based on geographic, age, and topic bases. Additionally, bibliographic searches from related literature in the field were conducted to identify prominent scholars and studies conducted over the last 40 years. The identification of sources for this analysis was an ongoing process and after reviewing 48 articles, 22 articles fit the criteria for my research interests.

Review Process

      In order to ensure commonality in each review, a framework was devised to track and catalogue each study, based off similar frameworks for literature analyses of outdoor and environmental education (Warren 2002; Rickinson 2001 and Appendix 1). I performed a content analysis on the focus of each study, including demographic focus, thematic and institutional focus, and geographic focus.

Using this content analysis framework, I attempted to find patterns in the literature and how they have changed over the last 40 years. I first organized the studies into four time periods (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Quantity of Studies Analyzed by Decade
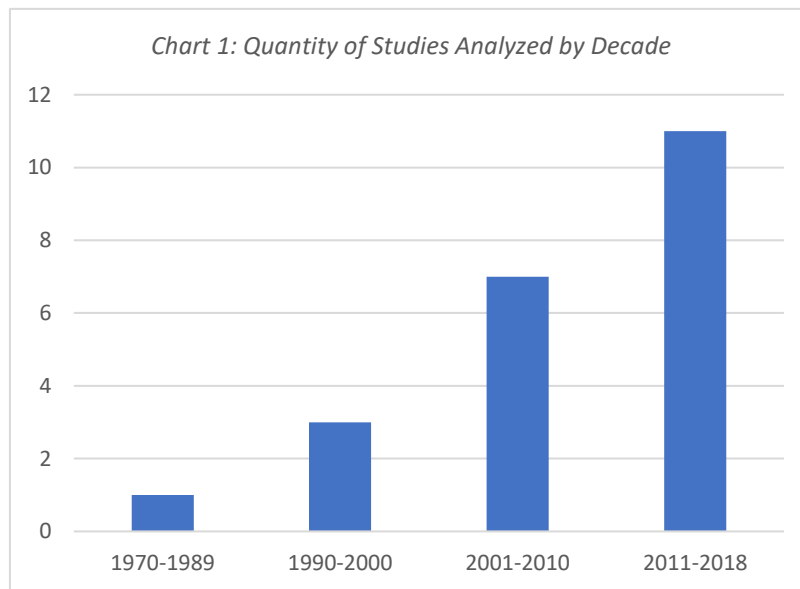
The topics used in this analysis were also categorized into groups and included the following terms found commonly in each study:

Category	Definition	Specific Terms Used
Social Identity Focus	Studies which focus on social identities of children, such as race and ethnicity. "Majority" focuses mostly on white children, "minority" focuses mainly on children of color/ethnic minorities, and "comparative" compares white children to minority children	Majority: White/Caucasian Minority (following US census designations): African American/Black; Asian; Hispanic/Latino; Other ethnic Minority Comparative
Institutional Focus	Studies which focus on the ways in which OEE affects academic achievement or on curriculum based programs such as summer camps and after-school activities	Academic achievement Programmatic Other
Thematic Focus	Studies which focus on the ways in which OEE affects attitudes, perceptions, etc. of children and the outdoors	Perception Attitude Fear and discomfort Behaviors Environmental Virtue Environmental orientation Connectedness Inclusion
Geographic Focus	Studies which focus on a certain geographic location	Urban Rural Urban/Suburban Rural/Suburban Broad Focus (spanning urban/rural/suburban)

Papers were analyzed with more than one focus, for example Latino children living in an urban area (social identity focus and geographic focus) or children's perception of the outdoors affects their participation in a nature based after-school program (thematic and programmatic focus).

Best Practices Analysis

For the analysis of best practices, I examined five key studies from the Content Analysis Framework (Aaron and Witt 2011; Goodman 2017; James and Williams 2017; Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011; Rose and Paisley 2012). I chose these five studies as they focused on minority students (Rose and Paisley 2012; Aaron and Witt 2011; Goodman 2017), or compared the experiences of white students to those of minority students (Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011; James and Williams 2017). These studies also all examined how social justice can be incorporated better into school-based OEE, as well as how to better evaluate the effectiveness of the programs. In addition to these studies, I include some of the analysis and theoretical framework from Warren (2002), as it complements the five other papers.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is that it is not a comprehensive study of all the empirical literature related to K-12 school-based OEE in the United States. Due to the small sample of studies represented here, analysis of additional articles may provide a more nuanced view of this field. Furthermore, the statistical analysis of the data presented in my findings is an area that can be further explored, with greater attention being spent on the differences seen in the spread of data.

While income and class were left out of this study, they certainly play an important role and should not be discounted. In future research, it is important to consider the intersections of race and class, and how this effects OEE. Although the studies analyzed in

this paper focused on school-based OEE and thus assumed that lower-income students have equal access to OEE programs, this does not represent the vast majority of programs in the field.

Additionally, the data used for this research may not correspond to the year the study was published. Data may have been collected years or even decades earlier—especially considering the census is only taken every ten years. This is especially true for the studies that are summaries of the literature (i.e. Warren et al. 2014). Therefore, the dates used in this research may display a slightly skewed timeline of the literature.

Analysis of Literature

The analysis of the literature revealed a number of major themes including how OEE research on different demographics, racial and ethnic identities, and thematic terminology changes over time. Over the span of five decades (from 1970-2018), this body of literature shows interesting changes in the language and terminology used to understand the effects of OEE programming on K-12 students.

The literature analysis indicates that the greatest amount of research on outdoor environmental education was conducted in the 21st century, with most of the studies being published after 2010 (Chart 2). It is interesting to see the decrease in Majority based demographic focus in the time period between the start of this century and the subsequent decade. The notable increase in Minority focus between 2010 and 2018 signals that the research on OEE and minority populations is on the rise. There is also an increase in

studies that do not focus on any particular demographic (n/a). Many of these studies are

summaries of previous research, and thus focus on the K-12 population as a whole.

Chart 2: Study Demographic Focus by Decade (N=22)

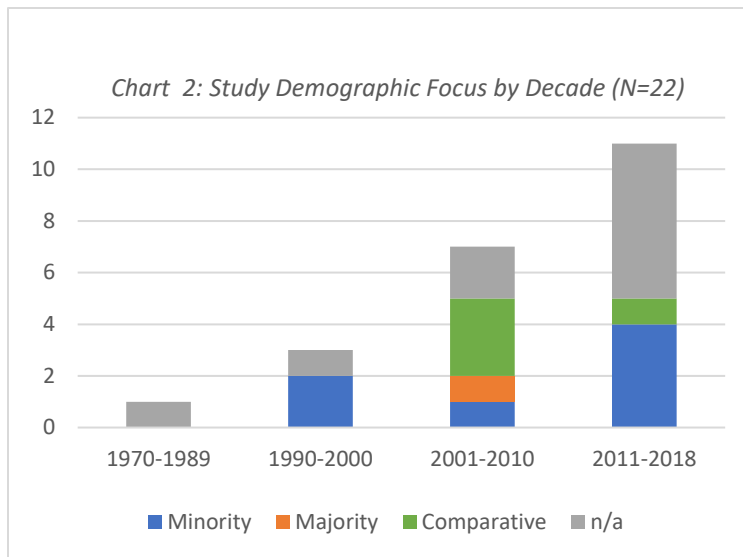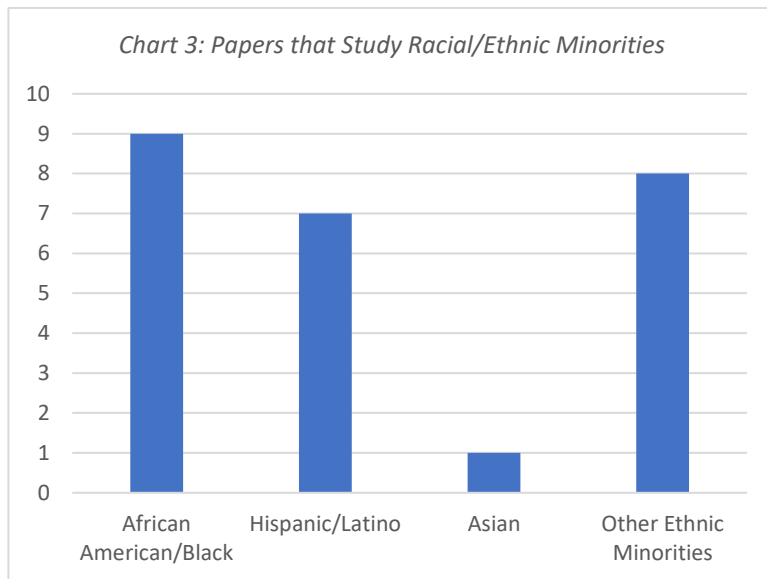■ Minority ■ Majority ■ Comparative ■ n/a

Chart 3 illustrates how many 'minority' and 'comparative' studies discussed people

of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Of the 22 pieces examined, only one (4%)

discusses the Asian minority, with the majority focusing on African American (40%) youth

experiences.

Chart 3: Papers that Study Racial/Ethnic Minorities

An analysis of the total number of studies based on social identity, institutional, and thematic focus over four time periods shows an increase in thematically focused research (i.e. attitudes and perceptions) (Chart 4). Between 1970-1989, zero studies had thematic foci, while nine were thematically focused between 2011-2018. Between 2000-2018, many papers had both thematic and institutional (academic achievement) foci, perhaps signaling an important intersection between the two. From this analysis, it appears that attitudes and perceptions may be closely linked to academic achievement, and it could be difficult to study one without the other.

The start of the 21st century also saw an increase in papers with a social identity focus (majority, minority, comparative). No papers prior to 2000 specifically focused on how social identity affects or is affected by OEE. However, over the last 20 years, it appears that researchers have begun to see the importance of studying minority student's experiences in the field and how they differ or compare to those of white students.

Chart 4: Focus by Decade

20			
15			
10			
5			
0			
	1970-1989	1990-2000	2001-2010	2011-2018

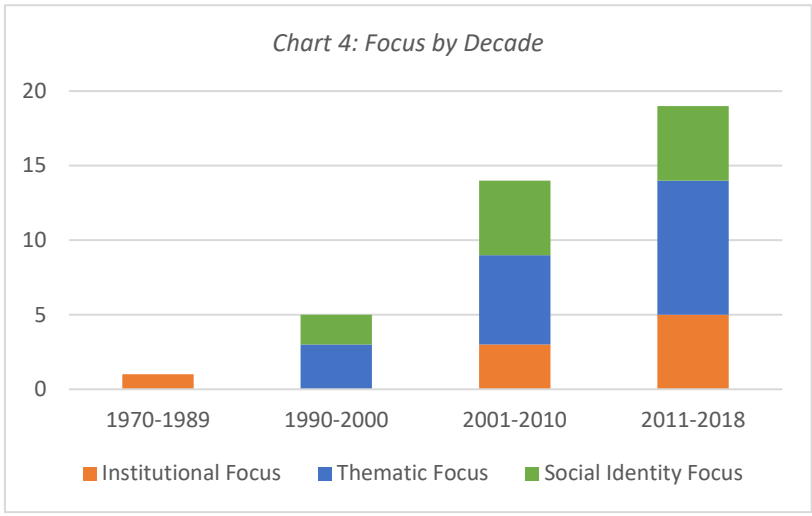■ Institutional Focus　■ Thematic Focus　■ Social Identity Focus

Chart 5 displays each of the three foci. Through this, it is evident that the thematic focus (46%) -- research on the attitudes and perceptions of youth participants in OEE programming -- is strong in the majority of research.

Chart 5: Study Focus

■ Institutional　■ Thematic　■ Social Identity
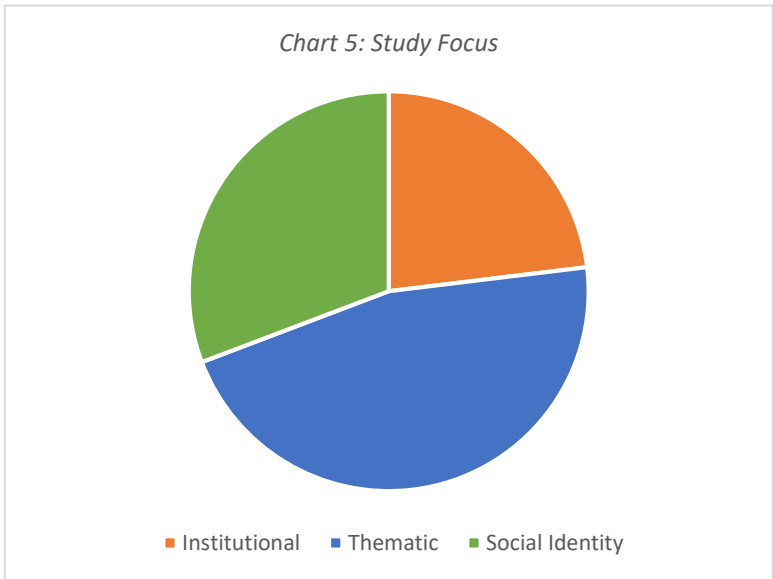
The changing foci are further highlighted by the shift in foci from an institutional perspective, as highlighted in Appendix 4. The increase in institutional programming focus

between the second and third decade is seen to wane as research on institutional academic achievement increased greatly in the last 7 years. Overall, the majority of studies in this institutional category focused on academic achievement rather than programming.

In the body of literature with a thematic focus, 'attitude' and 'perception' were by far the most commonly used words (Appendix 2). Focusing on these two terms, an analysis of how the terms are used over time highlights the increase in studies concerned with attitude and perception foci with particular increases in the last decade (Appendix 3). Overall, there were four studies on attitude-focused research between 2001-2010 compared to the previous decade, and four more focused on perception in the last seven years compared to 2001-2010. 'Environmental Orientation' and 'Fear and Discomfort' are each used in two articles, but they are both by the same researchers, and are not terms widely used across the literature.

The largest groups geographically mentioned are those centered in Urban and Suburban areas (21%) with rural and broadly focused research each accounting for only 14% of the total studies (Appendix 5).

Results

Over the study period from 1970 to present, there has been an increase in studies comparing white children to children from minority backgrounds. The majority of comparative studies look at how white children and African American/Hispanic children perceive nature and the differences in their attitudes and feelings of connectedness to the

outdoors and outdoor programming. This is crucial work if the OEE field is to begin focusing on creating more socially inclusive and just spaces. Understanding the socioeconomic and cultural barriers to OEE is an important first step.

The majority of papers that focus on minorities discuss how they study both African American and Hispanic students, yet only one specifically mentions Asians (Roberts and Suren 2010). There seems to be a lot of emphasis in the field on understanding how African American and Hispanic populations perceive nature and how they are impacted by OEE, but information on Asian population is not well-researched. Furthermore, few studies mention Native American populations. Despite this, many OEE programs may include Native American cultural and spiritual literature and practices, there is limited literature in the OEE literature addressing Native American students themselves (Warren et al. 2014).

Additionally, only one study discussed the differences between the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' (Rose and Paisley 2012). This same study, was also the only one to use the term 'people of color,' which is interesting because one might expect that the newer studies would use this term as it has become more common in social justice literature in the last couple of years. In fact, there was no clear pattern over time about these sorts of terms. I expected the use of 'African American,' 'Black,' 'people of color,' etc., to evolve over time, but this was not the case. In fact, the terms were used so sporadically that it was difficult to even chart their usages in any comprehendible way.

It is striking that while the institutional focus continues to grow over the decades, there has been a greater proportional increase in studies that focus on thematic and social

identity. Many studies used a thematic focus rather than focusing on academic achievement and programmatic outcomes, which are indicative of an institutional focus. Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of children in relation to OEE seems to be more important (or receives more funding) than looking at how OEE effects academic achievement or evaluating programming and activities. This increase may also be due to the fact that researchers have begun to see a pattern in how students' attitudes and perceptions affect academic achievement or program design, and that both of these intersect with different identities and cultural backgrounds.

There is no clear pattern to the geographic focus of this body of studies as the number of rural, urban, and suburban studies was evenly distributed and constant over time. This may be due to the fact that children in urban areas often have less access to greenspace than children in rural areas (Faber Taylor and Kuo 2006). Therefore, researchers may focus more on these urban children to better understand the effects of issues such as Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD).

Practitioner Best Practices

If school-based OEE programs are to become more intentional about programming for social justice, then incorporating best practices can advance this goal. Three central themes become evident through this research to guide best practices and future directions for OEE programs. These themes are: Governance and Leadership; Curriculum Development; and Evaluation, which are identified through the literature detailed below.

Governance and Leadership

Warren (2002) proposes to prepare the next generation of leaders in OEE, social justice-based training at all levels of the field should be provided. This begins with hiring governance teams who are committed to social justice based on race, gender, and class. The effort should be both top-down and bottom-up, with the governance team of a program providing the space and time for training opportunities, as well as being receptive to suggestions from participants and staff on the ground (Rose and Paisley 2012).

Goodman (2017) argues that training staff on social justice is extremely important to creating a safe, comfortable, and welcoming place for all program participants. The culture of any particular program is directly linked to its leadership, and therefore the leaders must be well-equipped with the knowledge, language, and skills to facilitate successful programming (Goodman 2017). Warren (2002) and Goodman (2017) agree that OEE should not rely on individuals to bring their own outside expertise of social justice philosophies into their programs. They argue that this is unfair to both participants and instructors, and that comprehensive information "and workshops that address inequity and marginalization based on race, ethnicity, and/or class in OEE" should be part of all staff trainings (Goodman 2017, p. 181). Warren (2002) identifies some tools that challenge the traditional social justice training method of "stand and deliver," or seminar style trainings. These include group initiatives, cross-cultural simulations, and journals (Warren 2002).

There seems to be a pervasive attitude in OEE that social justice education requires racial diversity (Warren 2002; Rose and Paisley 2012). However, before inviting more diverse groups to join, privileged groups should address and examine their own privilege

(Warren 2002). One example of this, outlined by Rose and Paisley (2012), is for white OEE leaders to critically examine how white middle/upper class privilege creates a certain culture and set of norms surrounding programming. By understanding how a program's leadership and governance team's privilege effects all aspects of their programming, the staff can create space for education on cultural sensitivity. Only after examining their own privilege can staff begin designing curricula that incorporates issues of social justice (Warren, 2002). However, there remains a need for programs to hire leaders and staff from marginalized backgrounds (Goodman 2017). White staff and instructors reflecting on their privilege and incorporating that into programming alone cannot create the change needed in OEE. Policies and practices that acknowledge the role that race, ethnicity, and culture play in the OEE experience is necessary, and can help leaders address their own positionality and privilege (Rose and Paisley 2012).

Curriculum Development

In a 2011 study, Aaron and Witt examine how urban minority students define and perceive nature. They conclude that even small experiences with the outdoors, such as school-based educational camps, can impact students' nature perceptions (Aaron and Witt 2011, p. 162). While they argue that it is difficult to quantify the ways in which these outdoor experiences affect their perceptions, interviews and surveys show a direct link between exposure and perceptions (Aaron and Witt 2011). Additionally, the experiences tend to be more impactful when the students have them often and at a young age.

Larson, Green, and Cordell's study (2011) also concludes that African American and Hispanic 5th graders in Texas have reduced access to safe nature-based activities and limited opportunities for positive outdoor experiences compared to white students in the same area. However, after participating in a school based OEE program, perceptions of and affinities for nature improved for all groups. African American students especially showed significant growth in these areas (Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011). Therefore, designing culturally sensitive programming that engages students from all backgrounds is critical. Cultural differences and perceptions of the safety of the outdoors may be a factor keeping certain groups of children indoors (Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011; Rose and Paisley, 2012).

Programs that are designed with the understanding that certain social groups perceive nature differently can account for these differences and work to address them. Curricula should be devised to promote positive interactions with nature in culturally sensitive ways in order to create welcoming programs for all children—regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds. Frameworks for facilitating comfort in new environments for students from minority and marginalized backgrounds should be built into curricula (Goodman 2017). Recognizing and addressing possible fears and reservations of students must be a priority of staff, as it helps foster a supportive environment where students are capable of working through their fears and discomforts (Goodman 2017; Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011).

In one school-based program in Colorado, Goodman (2017) observed how providing students with personalized student-to-instructor attention helped one child work

through the cultural disconnect she experienced during a particular activity. When a black student articulated how she felt left out and isolated in a group of white students during an OEE program, the staff was able to help her work through this and figure out ways to help her and other students of color engage positively with the rest of the group.

Goodman (2017) also describes how the concept of "cultural newness" disproportionally affects students of color or other marginalized populations in OEE programs. He argues that students who come to the programs with no familial experience or background knowledge of OEE have more difficulties adjusting to their surroundings and participating in activities (Goodman 2017, p. 109). For example, one student had never showered outdoors before, and another could not grasp the idea that hiking was supposed to be a "fun" activity. Both these students felt left out, and Goodman argues that the "cultural newness" prevented them from being fully engaged (Goodman 2017, p. 108).

 Developing racially and culturally sensitive programming will obviously look different in every program, as each one deals with different populations who bring their own fears, discomforts, and needs. Therefore, it is critical that the leadership and governance teams design curricula which take into account the populations their program serves and understand how they can best meet their needs.

Evaluation

In order to understand these needs, programs must prioritize the implementation of solid evaluation frameworks. Several scholars (James and Williams 2017; Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011; Aaron and Witt 2011) highlight a lack of research on participants' perceptions of programs. This may be due to the fact that it is difficult to measure what is

identified as "thematic foci" throughout the beginning of this paper. How does a program

measure attitudes, perceptions, connectedness to nature, etc.? Many studies survey

participants, using semi structured or open-ended interview questions (Rose and Paisley

2012; Aaron and Witt 2011), scales (Larson, Green, and Cordell 2011), and journal

reflections and drawings (Aaron and Witt 2011) to identify what works and what does not

in their respective programs. OEE programs might adapt techniques like these for their

own evaluation purposes, and work with experts in the field to develop specific

frameworks that work in each unique context.

These evaluation techniques must be carefully designed and implemented in order

to pinpoint how participants perceive a certain program. Evaluation cannot be done once

but must be repeated throughout the program and year-by-year, ensuring consistency and

allowing leadership to respond and change (Goodman 2017). It is also important to

evaluate staff and leadership, as well as their training opportunities, to ensure everyone is

equipped with the same knowledge, language and skills to facilitate programs that promote

social justice (Goodman 2017).

Evaluation at every level of a program is critical to identifying what works and

what requires improvement. Developing different techniques that may implemented at

each level of a program—from the governance structure, to leadership, to staff training,

and participant experience—helps set a tone of reflection of practice and creates a culture

that is not only accepting of, but responsive to, changes that are required. (Goodman 2017;

Rose and Paisley 2012). Evidence shows that consistent reflection on practice, as well as

how power relations and discrepancies effect programming and student participation is

crucial to running a successful programming (Rose and Paisley 2012). Combining participant and staff interviews with student and family surveys and journal reflections may provide a more critical lens into program evaluation (James and Williams 2017). Thoroughly evaluating a program is certainly a difficult task and takes a lot of time and resources, but for OEE to really move forward and focus on creating social justice-focused activities and programming, evaluation is a critical undertaking (Rose and Paisley 2012).

These three central themes—Governance and Leadership; Curriculum Development; and Evaluation—are all inextricably linked. A strong governance and leadership structure is necessary to create a racially and culturally sensitive curriculum, as well as for facilitating thorough evaluations. Leadership and staff must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to incorporate social justice into their programming and must also be receptive to suggestions and new directions for creating better programming.

Conclusions

The OEE field is making small steps toward becoming more inclusive to communities of color and attempting to work on its social justice issues. Each year, more studies are published about minority students' perceptions of the outdoors and OEE's effects on academic achievement. While the majority of the studies analyzed for this paper did not directly mention social justice issues, their focus on minority children shows that scholars in the field are trying to figure out how to be more inclusive and better serve underrepresented populations.

The terms certain communities use to identify themselves may not be included in large collections such as the U.S. Census. Until 2000, people could select more than one race or ethnicity in the survey, and each time the census comes out it includes more categories for people to select ("What Census Calls Us: Historical Timeline" 2015). Therefore, large demographic data sources need to catch up with the terms different groups of people use.

While there is evidence that spending time outdoors is enormously beneficial to children's development, access to nature and green space continues to decline. OEE can have major impacts on the ways children learn about the environment, their communities, and themselves. After Louv's book came out over a decade ago, policy makers have been continuously attempting to expand formal OEE programs in schools and community centers.
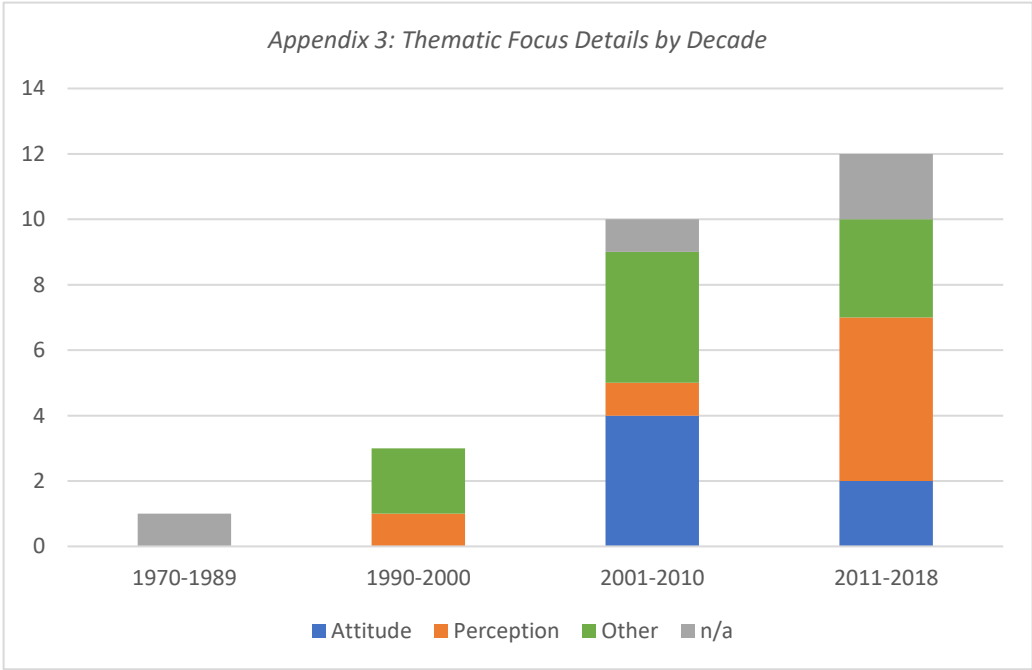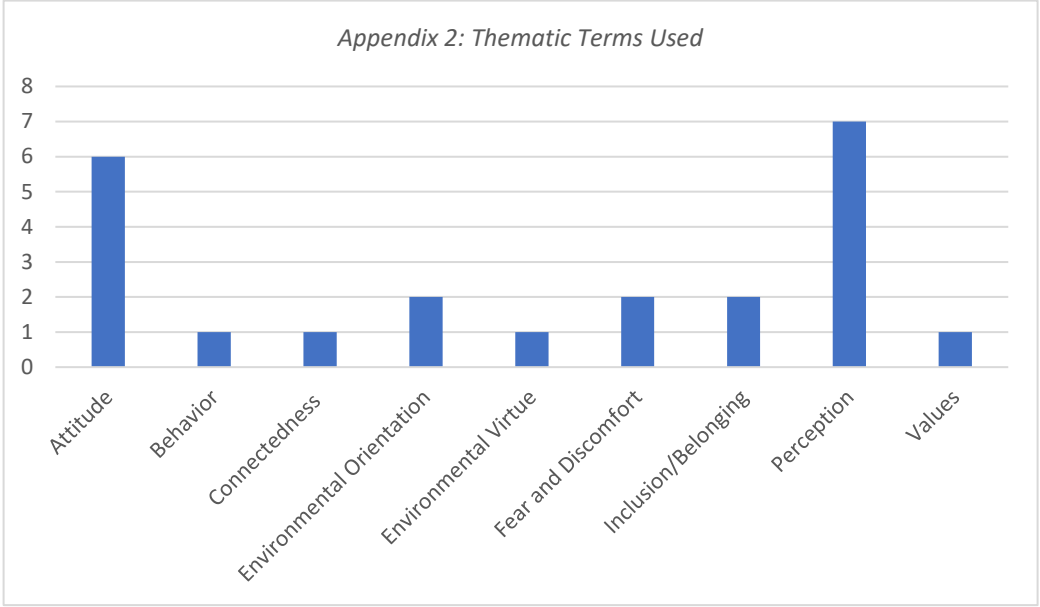
There is a growing fear that rather than understand nature as a "soulful, restorative, magical place," children today and in the future will view the natural world as "something to be used, owned, manipulated" (Aaron and Witt 2011, p. 146). Access to green space is rapidly diminishing across the country, so it is more important now than ever to promote OEE programming to get kids into nature (Faber Taylor and Kuo 2006). However, not all children have equal access to green space or natural areas, and even when they do, some choose not to participate. If the OEE field wants to be truly successful, it must work to ensure programming is accessible and welcoming to all children. Incorporating best practices related to governance and leadership, curriculum development, and evaluation may help OEE move forward in promoting social justice in practice.
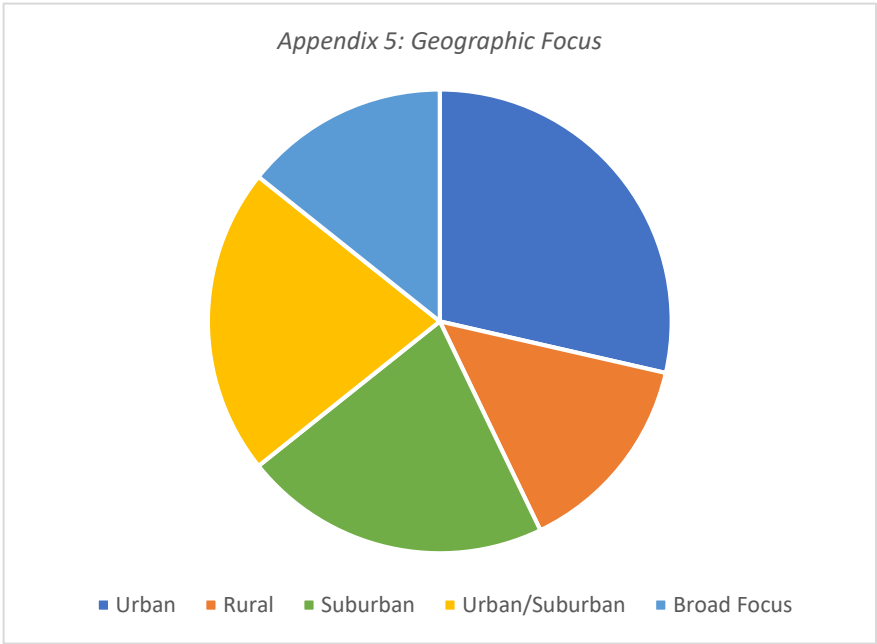
Continuing to exclude minorities from programming by being culturally unaware and even appropriative (i.e. of Native American culture). The OEE field is historically exclusionary to minorities and low-income populations, but finally seems to be waking up to the gaps in its ideologies. It is time for outdoor education leaders to include diversity issues at the forefront of their trainings and programming and create space for those who have been excluded.

Appendix 1: Content Analysis Framework

Text	Year	Social Identity Focus	Specific Terminology	Institutional Focus	Thematic Focus	Geographic
A comparative of Eighth-Grade Pupils' Achievement in Selected Portions of Biology Using the Traditional Indoor Environment and the Experimental Outdoor Environment Taught from an External Morphological Approach (Johnson, 1977)	1977	n/a		academic achievement	n/a	n/a
Observed Fears and Discomforts Among Urban Students On Field Trips to Wildland Areas (Bixler & Carlisle, 1994)	1994	minority	low-income	n/a	fear and discomfort	urban
Inner-City Black Community (Kahn & Friedman, 1995)	1995	minority	black	n/a	perception, values	urban
Nature is Scary, Disgusting, and Uncomfortable (Bixler & Floyd, 1997)	1997	n/a	hispanic/African American/White	n/a	fear and discomfort	urban/suburban
The Effectiveness of Three Experiential Teaching Approaches on Student Science Learning in Fifth-Grade Public School Classrooms (Powell, 2002)	2002	n/a		academic achievement	n/a	urban/suburban
Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California (Parrish et. al, 2005)	2005	minority	Hispanic, white, at-risk	n/a	attitude	rural
Young Children's Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors (Evans et. al, 2007)	2007	majority	white	n/a	attitudes and behaviors	rural
Assessing the Development of Environmental Virtue in 7th and 8th Grade Students in an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound School (Martin et. al, 2009)	2009	n/a		n/a	environmental virtue	n/a
The Impact of a Summer Education Program on the Environmental Attitudes and Awareness of Minority Children (Larson et. al, 2009)	2009	comparative	African American, white, Hispanic	n/a	attitude, environmental orientation	urban
Effects of an Environmental Education Program on the Environmental Orientations of Children from Different Gender, Age, and Ethnic Groups (Larson et. al, 2010)	2010	comparative	age, gender, ethnicity, African American, white	programmatic	environmental orientation	urban/rural
Through the Eyes of Youth: A Qualitative Evaluation of Outdoor Leadership Programs (Roberts & Suren, 2010)	2010	comparative	Asian, African American, Latino/Hispanic, Caucasion/White	programmatic	attitude and perception	n/a
Urban Students' Definitions and Perceptions of Nature (Aaron & Witt, 2011)	2011	minority	Hispanic/African American/Caucasion	n/a	perception	urban
Evaluating the Effects of Environmental Education Programming on Connectedness to Nature (Ernst, 2011)	2011	n/a		n/a	connectedness	n/a
Childrens Time Outdoors: Results and Implications of the National Kids Survey (Larson et. al, 2011)	2011	comparative	Hispanic, White, African American, ethnic	programmatic	n/a	urban/rural
Measuring the Educational Impact of Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids (PEAK): The Development and Implementation of a New Scale (Miller et. al, 2012)	2012	n/a		n/a	attitude	suburban
Forging family outdoor identity: Natural conversations about the effect of outdoor experiences on attitudes toward environmental science (Crocket, 2013)	2013	n/a		n/a	attitude	suburban
Inclusive Outdoor Education: Bridging the Gap (McLarnon, 2013)	2013	minority	ethnic, race, low-income, marginalized	n/a	inclusion, perception	n/a
Considering Students' Experiences in Diverse Groups: Case Studies from the National Outdoor Leadership School (Paisley et. al, 2014)	2014	minority	socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, white, Black, Latino	programmatic	perception	n/a
Demonstrating the Efficacy of Learning Ecology in an Outdoor Science Education Program on 5th Grade Science Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test Scores (Perez, 2014)	2014	n/a		academic achievement	n/a	urban/suburban
Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Nature Appreciation, Environmental Awareness, and Well-Being of Participants in Sully's Hill Nature Education Program (Schlenker, 2014)	2014	n/a		academic achievement	perception	suburban
Landscapes of Belonging: Systematically Marginalized Students and Sense of Place and Belonging in Outdoor Experiential Education (Goodman, 2017)	2017	minority	people of color, race, class, marginalized	n/a	belonging	n/a
School-Based Experiential Outdoor Education: A Neglected Necessity (James & Williams, 2017)	2017	n/a		academic achievement	perception	n/a

Appendix 2: Thematic Terms Used

Appendix 3: Thematic Focus Details by Decade

Appendix 4: Institutional Focus Details by Decade

Appendix 5: Geographic Focus
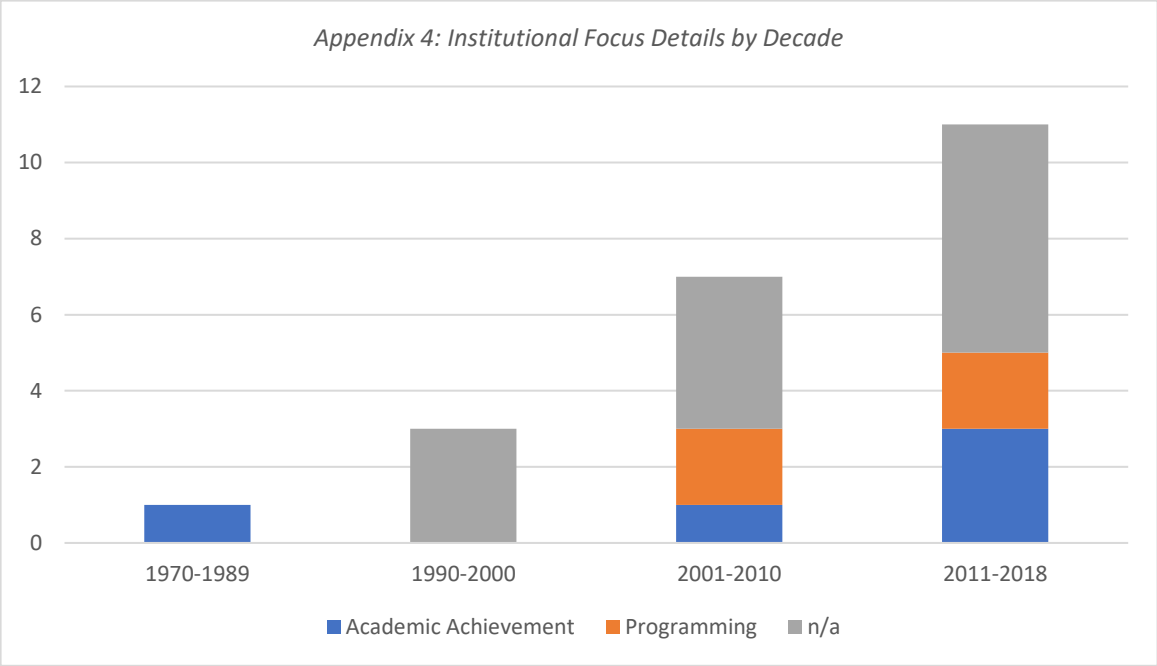
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