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WOMEN AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE:
CREATING A BACKPACKING COURSE TO PREPARE AND EMPOWER

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Education: Natural Science and Environmental Education.

Hamline University

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To:

My family, who have always supported me.
Those who have provided guidance throughout this process.
The Red Wing Environmental Learning Center for the formative adventure opportunities.
My friends, who, despite getting soaked and eaten by mosquitoes,
still embark on wild and wonderful adventures with me.
The women who continue to inspire me.

With gratitude.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Adventure recreation consists of outdoor activities that are physically and/or intellectually challenging in some way. Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989) defined adventure recreation as "a variety of self-initiated activities utilizing an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance" (p. 125). In this paper, I use the terms adventure recreation and adventure synonymously. Examples of adventure may include (but are not limited to) backpacking, overnight canoe trips, rock climbing, and backcountry skiing. These activities offer a myriad of benefits to those who participate; in addition to promoting general health and wellbeing, they can build community through shared experience. Adventure has played a large role in my life, but I am the exception. Women are in the minority of people adventuring for recreation or career purposes. The causes of this disparity are many, with roots in education, societal norms, and traditional feminine expectations.

In this chapter, I share how access to adventure has shaped who I have become as well as challenges that I have been met with along the way. To put my experience and this capstone in context, I include interactions that I have had with adventurous women and those who aspire to be, considering the barriers that keep them from participating. My personal and professional experience, these influential women, and a drive to

understand the barriers facing others who wish to participate led me to embark on this capstone. In search of solutions, I seek to answer the following question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?*

Personal Journey

My life of adventure started young. As children, my brother and I had full run of our yard and the neighborhood. I recall adventures to the woods near our house, berry picking. We would be gone for hours in the woods, coming back with legs full of scratches and buckets full of berries. These excursions close to home expanded when I hit middle school and was eligible to participate in courses with the Red Wing Environmental Learning Center (ELC).

The Red Wing ELC is a non-profit organization that allowed me to experience coed adventure activities such as backpacking, canoeing, bike touring, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, winter camping and more. What started as single overnight trips in middle school progressed to multi-day and week-long trips in high school. For those chosen, the experience culminated with a year of junior instructing as well as planning and embarking on a final expedition. After years of participating in increasingly challenging courses, I was able to not only develop the technical skills necessary for recreating outdoors, but also the confidence and leadership skills to guide others. My cohort of peers in the program (those of us returned as junior instructors) planned and embarked on our own capstone expedition: a two-week sea kayaking expedition based out of Valdez, Alaska. Now, over a decade later, the six of us still get together on at least

a yearly basis, remaining close friends. At the time, I did not realize how rare these opportunities were; most people do not have these opportunities. I feel fortunate for both the skills and the relationships gained.

I have been able to apply the skills I learned through adventure to a solo thru-hike of the Superior Hiking Trail (hiking the trail in its entirety, from end to end), a solo Boundary Waters Canoe Area trip, and many wilderness adventures out West. I have taken the confidence I gained and applied it to independent travel and work abroad in places such as New Zealand, Europe, and Nepal. I find great fulfillment in exploring the wonderful landscapes of the world and connecting with others in the process. Through adventure, I have not only challenged myself physically and emotionally but have also been met with extraordinary kindness from strangers and built stronger relationships with friends.

When I need to stay closer to home, I find an adventure outlet through volunteerism. Volunteering with the Superior Hiking Trail Association has provided a network of other adventuring and aspiring women. Through these connections, I have met women on both ends of the spectrum: from highly experienced to novice. For example, I have become friends with one woman who has hiked over 7000 miles on 20 long trails, and who has camped at every single campsite on the Superior Hiking Trail. I have camped with others on the trail who were out on their first overnight ever. However, an experience I had with another woman recently has highlighted the need for women to have access to high quality instruction so that they can both be empowered and prepared to safely complete the adventure trips they desire.

I met this aspiring adventurer during a hike that I was leading as a volunteer. She mentioned that she was planning a thru-hike of the Superior Hiking Trail as a celebration of finishing nursing school. She shared with me all the places she was looking for information on how to backpack (mainly online forums and classes put on by gear stores) because she did not know anyone else who backpacked. She found so much conflicting information that she was a bit overwhelmed and confused, and over the course of the hike, she shared some of what she had learned. I was surprised at what she had taken away from these internet forums and classes she had attended: it did not seem like they were highlighting the necessary skills for completing trips, but rather they seemed to be making it more complicated and inaccessible.

Though she had gathered a lot of information and had physically prepared, when it came time to do her trip, she was met with some misfortune. Managing blisters and navigating were the biggest problems she had, problems that could have been avoided with proper instruction and some practice. She still had a wonderful adventure (she also was very lucky) but fell short of her goal of making it to the southern terminus: I made a trip to pick her up from about the half-way point and brought her back to her car. During the drive, she was glowing with her experience, but when describing her misfortunes, I could not help but think, *there needs to be a resource for women like her who want to get started adventuring*. Considering this, and what role I could play in the process, was crucial in developing my research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?*

Professional Journey

The skills, confidence, and friendships I gained in the Red Wing ELC shaped the direction of my professional life. In my undergrad, I majored in environmental studies, with one of my emphases being outdoor education. I worked for the Outdoor Program Center of the college and led trips in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Utah. For my required internship, I opted to return to Valdez, to the very same company we had rented boats from for our high school expedition. It was a dream job: it was the only internship I had applied for. When I got the call that I received the internship, I sat down and shakily accepted it on the spot. A few months later, exhilarated and terrified, I got on the plane to Alaska, my first time traveling alone. The confidence I gained through my adventure experiences walked me onto that plane. My capstone aims to give other women the chance to gain the confidence that comes through adventure so they can apply it to their own lives.

My summer in Alaska was fantastic but was also a time of great challenge. Though I had solid skills and confidence in leading, it was my first experience being treated differently as a woman in the guiding profession. While introduced to clients as a co-guide, there were instances where clients would disregard things that I had said and instead looked for leadership from my (less experienced) male coworkers. After it happened a few times I talked with my female colleagues and learned that this was not uncommon. A female coworker and I even had a client tell us that we would never be able to support ourselves with our chosen studies, but that we would make good “office girls” for his business. There was irony in that we were supporting ourselves by the fact

that he and others like him were paying us to guide them, in our chosen profession, but the negativity struck me and motivated me to prove him wrong.

These negative experiences contrasted greatly with the positive connections I made with clients. I often paddled in tandem boats with women who were traveling alone who wanted the adventure experience but who had not had the opportunity to gain the skills as I had. As a result, they sought out adventure in the way that they felt they could: through a guided tour. Through connecting with these women, hearing their stories and sharing my own, I was able to recognize how unique my experience with the Red Wing ELC had been. Looking back on those experiences further compels me to consider how I can provide similar experiences for other women.

Rationale

In addition to personal and professional experiences and anecdotes, the statistics are clear: women have made large strides toward equal representation but are still the minority in both outdoor adventure careers as well as recreational users (Dvorak, Watson, Christensen, Borrie, & Schwaller, 2012; National Park Service, 2011). This exclusion is a matter of equity, as there are many benefits of outdoor adventure, both to the individual as well as to society. Access to outdoor adventure can challenge traditional femininity and social stereotypes, promote self-efficacy, and build a positive gender identity (Whittington, 2006). Personal experience with the outdoors spurs participants to be active in their communities and promotes environmentally conscious behavior (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). If they do not have access, women (and the greater society) miss out on these benefits. Providing resources for women to both feel empowered as well as be

prepared to safely be able to plan and embark on their own adventures will work towards remedying this disparity.

Causes of the Disparity: Barriers to Women in Adventure

This disparity has come about through a variety of societal, educational, and economic sources. Traditional gender norms, such as women's roles as caretakers and the importance of femininity, have constrained women's adventure pursuits (Little, 2002). Expectations placed on women make it more challenging for them to take off on adventures, especially if it means they are leaving children at home (Hoffert, 2008). Financial and leisure time limitations play a role too; the gender pay gap leaves less money and less free time for adventure (Little, 2002). Finally, stereotypical masculine qualities (like strength, risk taking, rationality) can be perceived as necessary for outdoor adventure – and women who have been conditioned to believe they do not possess them may not partake (Little, 2002). Combatting all of these is a challenging part of my capstone, but having a deep understanding helps to frame my project.

Socialization and society create the next barrier: the actual and perceived risk of adventure for women (Berger, 2017; Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). Between the men, the bears, and the snakes, the outdoors can be perceived as a dangerous place for women adventuring alone (Berger, 2017). From personal experience as well as through anecdotes from other adventuring women, it is common to be reminded of these dangers (whether actual or perceived) by those around us when they hear we are or are considering embarking on adventures. Providing accurate data on the actual risks, finding ways to

manage these risks (such as providing students with a like-minded network of adventurers so that they can go together) is a component of my capstone project.

Much of this socialization happens in classrooms, so education has played a role in this disparity. In public school classrooms, girls are frequently taught a hidden curriculum in which it is acceptable to sit on the sidelines, that they are weaker, and that they are not as rational as boys (Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2015). Additionally, boys are taught to take charge, to take risks, and to be strong (Martusewicz et al., 2015). A disparity of visibility of women adventurers plays into this hidden curriculum too. The hidden curriculum of the education system can reinforce the messages that society sends – that girls do not have the qualities needed to participate in adventure. This hidden curriculum and lack of visibility will be addressed as I answer the question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?*

Existing Resources

With increased connectivity through the internet, aspiring adventurers can find a wealth of information and some community online. Chat rooms, online forums, and many online articles provide beginners with information and recommendations on many aspects needed to adventure. Through groups on social media sites and other online community groups women may be able to connect with others to adventure with. However, though much of the information found online can be helpful, it can also be overwhelming, adding to the perceived complexity of planning an adventure. In addition, online community connections that lead to in person adventuring partners might be able to be made more

easily in more highly populated areas – leaving women in more rural areas at a disadvantage when searching for others to adventure with.

One type of resource that exists, and that is increasingly more popular, is that of women-only trips and workshops. These have a benefit of catering towards women's trend towards collaboration rather than a goal of personal achievement (a focus towards completing a task as a team) (Warren & Rheingold, 1993). All girl trips can be very empowering for girls as they navigate adolescence and can help to promote positive gender identity by redefining what it means to be a woman (Warren, 2015). They can be empowering for women leaders too; a challenge for women in outdoor leadership is that of always having to outperform men in order to be seen as equal (Hoffert, 2008). If there are not any men involved, it takes away this competition. A look into why these all-women trips are so popular helped to inform my capstone project.

While women-only trips may be very successful, inclusiveness must be considered. Though the focus of this study is on women, there is no reason why this capstone project could not be able to be used in a broader sense – including people who are gender nonconforming and men. With careful facilitation, including gender-sensitive outdoor leadership and pedagogy, all can learn much about each other and themselves while adventuring together. There are parallels here to a classroom – for example, an instructor can facilitate democratic or consensus decision making, shared leadership, and non-competitive learning environments (Warren, 2015). Addressing linguistic sexism in teaching environments and labeling traditional feminine strengths as positive increases women's engagement in the outdoors (Warren, 2015). In this way, being open to

including other genders, but doing so with clear expectations and pro-women teaching methods could have a greater impact in society. While this capstone focuses on women, considering additional ways for it to be used will help to increase its impact.

Summary

My early access to adventure has been a critical part of my personal and professional life. However, I am the exception. Women are a minority in outdoor adventure for a variety of reasons. Socialized traditional gender norms and expectations place constraints on women's activities and time. This socialization starts early and is exacerbated through hidden curriculum in schools and a lack of visibility of women adventurers.

This disparity has negative outcomes for women as well as society. The focus of my research is understanding these barriers as well as incorporating gender-sensitive teaching methods in adventure programming. The following literature review provides additional background information and lays a framework for my capstone project. In it, I delve more deeply into the benefits of participation, explore the root causes of the barriers constraining women, identify sources of and provide ways to manage risk, highlight some teaching methods, and more completely explore what resources currently are accessible to women. By reviewing the literature, I find some answers to my research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?*

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

Outdoor adventure has many benefits for those who participate. As a result of a number of constraints, women are a minority in this field. My research question is *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* The topics I address include the benefits of adventure for women, the constraints impeding their participation, risks in adventure, teaching methods, and existing resources. These topics highlight the need for equitable access for women as well as provide the information necessary to do so.

Benefits of Adventure

The historical and societal exclusion of women from adventure recreation is a matter of equity, as there are many benefits that come from participation. The first part of this section will focus on how adventure recreation can challenge traditional femininity, promote positive gender identity, and increase self-efficacy. Through shared experience, women can build friendships and a sense of community and belonging, which has additional mental health benefits. Understanding the benefits of adventure is important for understanding the need to increase access for women.

One benefit of adventure is to provide alternative ways of looking at what it means to be masculine or feminine. Whittington (2006) found that, while participating in adventure, participants utilize what are perceived to be traditionally masculine skills (like

decision-making and being in charge) as well as what are perceived to be traditionally feminine skills (like cooperation and considering others) and in this way explore different views of both. Backpacking, as an adventure activity, provides opportunities for participants to solve problems requiring technical skills, group work, and decision making. Participants complete stereotypically masculine tasks such as hauling heavy packs and stereotypically feminine tasks such as cooking (Doran, 2016). In adventure programs, participants can take risks and confront challenges while surrounded by support, allowing for space to challenge stereotypes of what it means to be feminine or masculine (Doran, 2008; Henderson, 1996; Whittington, 2006). A safe learning environment allows people learning to backpack the space to explore their capabilities and challenge these stereotypes.

Completing an adventure trip requires overcoming challenges, which can result in benefits. Backpacking can be demanding physically as it requires the carrying of personal and group gear on one's back over difficult terrain, potentially for multiple days and nights, through varying weather (Townsend, 2012). It is mentally demanding to stay positive when met with many types of challenges. However, time spent in outdoor adventure can result in satisfaction from the achievement despite these challenges (Boniface, 2006). Boniface (2006) found that the personal challenges of adventure required women to rely on their own abilities, and this self-reliance led to an increase in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence. In addition, Whittington (2006) found that participants challenged feminine stereotypes, gained feelings of strength and determination, and felt pride from their accomplishments after completing an adventure

trip. A well-designed course would include opportunities for women to gain and practice the skills necessary to overcome these challenges.

Benefits can be gained from both solo and group travel. While increasing personal risk, choosing to travel solo can augment the benefits for women going through transitions and help to reconnect with themselves as individuals (Angell, 1994). By removing all outside assistance, women are put in charge of their own decisions and their own adventure, which can be very empowering (Angell, 1994). However, solo travel is not sought out by all women. Traveling in groups, though not without its own challenges, can have additional benefits other than safety. Backpacking in a group can be socially demanding, as group members vary in ability, comfort levels, and personalities; these differences can become augmented in stressful conditions (examples include long mileage, low water, and bad weather). However, through shared adversity and shared success comes connection (Doran, 2016). Adventure provides opportunities to build these connections and provides an environment for both beginners to learn and highly skilled outdoors women to be role models and leaders (Henderson, 1996). Solo travel helped connect women to themselves, and group travel helped women connect to others. Both provided the opportunity for women to gain valuable insight and skills, though in different ways (Angell, 1994; Doran, 2016; Henderson, 1996).

In addition to increasing connection with oneself and others, adventure recreation allows women an opportunity to take a break from societal expectations and increase mental health. Socialization teaches women and girls to have more concern for others than for themselves (McClintock, 1996). However, Boniface (2006) found that adventure

was valuable for women's mental health, as the women in the study prioritized nurturing a self that was separate from the roles they played at home, and this time in the outdoors was an escape from the pressures and constraints of their normal lives. Doran (2016) also found that adventure recreation provided women a sense of freedom, the ability to be spontaneous, and the direct necessity of being responsible for one's own decisions: all of these factors help to increase self-confidence. By participating, women were also able to "view the outdoors as a feminine sphere," increasing their perception of where they belong (Whittington, 2006, p. 218). Backpacking, as an adventure activity, allows women a chance to explore themselves in different contexts and take a break from the roles they traditionally play in society.

Participating in backpacking and other adventure activities benefits women in many ways. By overcoming challenges, women expand what they perceive they are capable of, challenge stereotypes, and build a sense of self. By doing so alone they can connect deeply with themselves; by doing so in community, they can build friendships and connections. Time spent out on an adventure trip allows women a chance to step away from the roles they play in their regular life and see themselves in different contexts. Understanding the benefits of adventure highlights the need to increase access for women through providing access to additional education and support. However, providing opportunities is not enough; one also must consider the constraints that keep women from participating.

Constraints Impacting Women

The disparity of women in adventure settings is as a result of a variety of constraints, and understanding each is necessary in order to mitigate them. The first part will highlight the gendered history of organized adventure in the United States. The second will highlight education and society's roles in establishing these constraints. The final section will highlight gender norms and expectations that add to the disparity. Addressing these will guide course structure and implementation strategies.

The United States has a history of organized adventure; while other programs exist, some nation-wide programs include the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts, Outward Bound, and the National Outdoor Leadership School. These organizations vary in the opportunities offered to different genders. For example, the Boy Scouts, founded in 1910, had its roots in building masculinity and promoting self-discipline, and outdoor adventure was a key component (Denny, 2011). Around the same time, the Girl Scouts was founded, and while it initially incorporated adventure, quickly succumbed to society's pressure to instead provide girls with opportunities to enhance and reinforce skills for becoming wives and mothers (Denny, 2011). Though recently there has been an increase in opportunities for girls, these disparities remain: in an analysis of their handbooks, Denny (2011) found that girls were offered more communal activities (boys were offered more independence) and girl's activities were skewed toward art and homemaking (boys towards more active endeavors).

Outward Bound, a worldwide organization that provides adventure courses, was founded in 1941, and originally just served boys (Davis & Gilbert, 2016). There was a

general idea that if girls were able to participate, that boys might not want to — the connotation that, if girls could do it, it must be easy (Davis & Gilbert, 2016). Minnesota had its first women’s group in 1965, and it caused quite a stir because it was assumed that women would not be capable or interested in completing such a rigorous curriculum (Davis & Gilbert, 2016). Finally, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), also founded in 1965, was open to women participants (the first enrolled in 1966) but did not offer its first all-women course until 1988 (NOLS, 2019). While there was a range of exclusion versus inclusion in these nation-wide programs, and now women are encouraged to participate, this was not the case until much after the men.

These organizations are examples of education focused toward adventure; much socialization that increases the disparity also takes place in traditional classrooms. In public schools, girls are frequently taught a hidden curriculum in which it is acceptable to sit on the sidelines, in which they are weaker, and in which they are not as rational as boys (Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2015). Additionally, boys are taught to take charge, to take risks, and to be strong (Martusewicz et al., 2015). Stereotypical masculine qualities (such as strength, risk-taking, and rationality) can be perceived as necessary for outdoor adventure – and women who have been conditioned to believe they do not possess them may not partake (Little, 2002). The hidden curriculum of the education system can reinforce the messages that society sends: that girls and women do not have the qualities needed to participate in adventure on their own.

A lack of visibility of women adventurers, when compared to men, plays into this disparity too. Lesson plans available online highlight this; there are a great number

highlighting the pursuits of men and far fewer about women. For example, online there are ample lesson plans with titles such as “Edmund Hillary Conquers Mount Everest” (Scholastic, 2019). While searching for “first female Everest ascent” does lead to plenty of articles featuring Junko Tabei, searching for “female ascent of Everest lesson plan” leads to the earlier results: the previous lessons that highlight men’s accomplishments, rather than ones that highlight the women who have climbed the mountain. A search for “women adventure lesson plans” does yield lesson plans about such women as Sacagewea, Amelia Earhart, and Matty McNair, but ironically many more based on real and fictional masculine characters (edHelper, 2020; Scholastic, 2019). A search on “Teachers Pay Teachers,” an online resource of lessons and materials, yielded a lesson based on the book *Living Dangerously: American Women who Risked Their Lives for Adventure* by Doreen Rappaport, but far more about adventurous men or portraying women in other capacities (Teachers Pay Teachers, 2019). While not a comprehensive listing of all online resources available to classroom teachers, a trend emerges: there are more men than women represented.

Outside the classroom, advertising also disproportionately depicts men as actively engaged in adventure activities and women as passively observing them (McNiel, Harris, & Fondren, 2012). McNiel, Harris, and Fondren (2012) found that, in two adventure focused magazines, men were more often portrayed as solitary explorers and participating in rigorous activities (like whitewater kayaking) while women were usually shown with a male partner or in a group and participating in less intense activities (like kayaking on a calm lake). When bombarded with images and literature of men in adventure activities

and a lack of women, conclusions could be drawn that adventure recreation is only for men and that women do not and should not participate.

Gender norms and expectations have played a role in this disparity, historically and today. From the time they are born, children are bombarded with social and cultural expectations based on gender, and this impacts their outdoor participation and leadership (Hoffert, 2008). Traditional gender norms, such as women's roles as caretakers and the importance of femininity, have constrained women's adventure pursuits (Little, 2002). Expectations placed on women limit their leisure time and make it more challenging for them to take off on adventures, especially if it means they are leaving children at home (Doran, 2016). To do so, a woman must overcome social conditioning and meet her own needs rather than focusing on the needs of others (Doran, 2016; Hoffert, 2008; McClintock, 1996). A sense of guilt from placing their needs in front of their family's needs can also prevent women from participating (Doran, 2016). These expectations, and the guilt and social stigma that results from not meeting them, is a deterrent to women's adventure pursuits.

The disparity of men and women's participation in outdoor adventure comes from many roots: in history, in education, in socialized gender norms, in leisure time, and in the media. Understanding the roots of this disparity, and taking into account the forces that are keeping women from participating, is necessary information to incorporate when designing a course for women. While not discussed in this section, fear can also be an inhibiting factor for women. The next section will explore fear, the actual and perceived risk of adventure that provides the base for these fears, and ways to manage them.

Risk in Adventure

Adventure recreation, as defined, has an element of risk. However, there can be disparities between the actual risk and the perceived risk of participating. The first part of this section will highlight some actual risks of adventure, and ways to manage this risk in the field. The second part of this section will focus on perceived risk and what this means for instructors and participants. Managing actual and perceived risk is important in both solo and group adventures to provide a challenging, enjoyable, and safe trip, and must be included in course development and implementation.

Fear is inherently connected to risk and can be limiting, sometimes for good reason (Boniface, 2006). Women's own fear of the perceived and real dangers of adventure may direct them away from the activity (Doran, 2016). The degree of control in a situation makes a difference in women's decisions about whether or not to attempt a challenge (Boniface, 2006). Additionally, if their family and friends believe it to be dangerous it can exacerbate a woman's personal fears and self-doubt (Doran, 2016). If women do not feel prepared both physically and psychologically, they opt out of adventure activities (Boniface, 2006). However, Boniface (2006) found that, when women achieved a challenge that scared them, there was a sense of personal accomplishment. Helping women to understand the risks and feel they have the physical and psychological strength and skills will help to mitigate these fears so that they can reap the benefits.

It cannot be denied that there are risks associated with adventuring, some that are more often experienced by women. A survey of 2011 women done by Outside Magazine

in 2017 found that, while adventuring, 53% had been sexually harassed, 93% had been catcalled, 18% had been flashed, and 4% had been attacked (Berger, 2017). In regards to safety, 66% of participants responded that they had felt afraid while adventuring and the leading concerns highlighted were men (34%) and bears (12%) (Berger, 2017).

While the methodology of this survey was not published and therefore cannot be analyzed, the numbers hint that adventure activities are not immune to the harassment and mistreatment of women in society at large.

In addition to the possibility of mistreatment, there are also environmental hazards associated with adventure. However, while risks exist, one must consider the likelihood of them being realized and the severity of outcomes if they are. Using backpacking as an example, a study of 1200 participants that participated in NOLS backpacking courses found that 26 (or about 2%) of them had suffered from musculoskeletal (such as tendinitis) and soft tissue injuries (such as sprains and strains) (Hamonko, McInstosh, Schimelpfenig, & Leemon, 2011). They found that the individuals' pack weight, height, body weight, age, and gender were not significant in predicting whether a participant would be injured on a trip; instead, fitness, pre-trip training, and footwear showed the largest correlation (Hamonko et al., 2011). The most common way that participants were injured was overuse/exertion followed by falling (Hamonko et al., 2011). NOLS works to reduce these injuries through course design (such as making sure that physical exertion begins gradually), instruction on how to hike on uneven terrain, and giving advice on how to prepare for a trip (Hamonko et al., 2011). Proper physical preparation, setting realistic trip goals, and having proper footwear were all topics that were addressed before

a trip. Spending ample time in education and preparation mitigated these risks in the field.

This data is referring to physical risk; emotional risk experienced by participants must also be considered. Davis-Berman and Berman (2002) defined perceived risk as involving “a subjective perception of the potential for injury or death inherent in an activity” (p. 306). This perceived risk can direct participant behavior and how they cope while participating (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). Past experiences, media presentations, vicarious experiences, and predispositions to anxiety all play a role in how risky participants perceive an activity to be (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). An example of this can be seen in Coble, Selin, and Erickson’s study (2003), in which they found that solo hikers had “the fear of getting hurt by another individual, of accidental injury and life-threatening emergency, of getting lost, of wild animals and dogs, and of theft of belongings left in one’s vehicle” (p. 9). As a result of these perceived risks, and to negotiate these fears, participants avoided the threats when possible, modified their participation, used protective devices, expanded their skills, and employed a psychological approach (such as having a heightened awareness of their surroundings) (Cobel, Selin, & Erickson, 2003). As the degree of control felt by participants is of great importance for decreasing perceived risk, using these strategies helped the participants to feel a sense of control in their adventure.

Leaders need to be careful not to assume that their perceptions of risk are the same as their participants (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). Beginners (generally feeling as though they have less control) perceive activities as more risky than those who are

more experienced (Boniface, 2006; Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). Warren and Loeffler (2006) found that women and men may have different degrees of risk that they are comfortable with; when they are young, many girls are conditioned to be careful, and as a result, many women focus on preventing accidents, whereas boys without this conditioning may result in men that operate from a place of being ready to respond to the accidents that occur. Giving greater credibility to orientations that stress the prevention of accidents can empower women, as well as keep accidents from happening in the field (Little, 2002). Instructors must understand that perceptions of risk can vary by experience level as well as by gender and must incorporate this knowledge into their leadership.

A degree of risk is necessary in adventure, but too much is counterproductive. If participants perceive the risk to be too high, the impact can be damaging (Davis-Berman, 2002). The best scenario for growth is when participants feel safe, secure, and cared for, as then they can take chances to learn new skills (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). Having a group to go on trips with, that has skills that complement their own, helps some to feel more secure, and is good for beginners (Cobel et al., 2003). Structured, low-risk programs work well for beginners, while more advanced learners may prefer higher levels of risk and autonomy (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). A challenge for instructors is to assess participants accurately and match them with appropriate challenges and support (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). Matching degree of risk to participant comfort and skill level is necessary for a successful course.

Risk is a crucial part of any adventure. However, in order to make sure that they come back uninjured both physically and emotionally, those who partake must manage this risk. Through understanding common risk factors and how to mitigate them, people who adventure can complete trips that are both challenging and rewarding. Instructors must keep in mind the varying levels of comfort that participants may have as well as work to make sure that participants can challenge themselves in a supportive environment. These ideas are of great importance when considering methods of leading and teaching women in outdoor adventure, must be considered when developing a course, and will form the foundation for the teaching methods highlighted in the following section.

Teaching Methods

Adventure recreation requires interpersonal skills and leadership, self-efficacy, decision making, risk management, and technical skills. The first section will focus on gender-sensitive leadership, group considerations, and sexism in learning environments. The second section will focus on literature that highlights promoting competence and teaching the technical skills to women. Incorporating solid teaching methods will increase the effectiveness of an introductory backpacking course.

Rogers and Rose (2019) found that there was a pervading view that adventure leadership was inherently masculine, and these masculine norms created challenges for women as they developed their confidence and competence. “Instructors must be conscious of the personal bias they bring to the situation, be sensitive to the gender role expectations of their participants, and be willing to interrogate and interrupt this

conditioning” (Warren & Loeffler, 2006, p. 114). In order to change this culture of hegemonic masculinity in adventure, Warren and Loeffler (2006) highlighted the need to show that women’s strengths have equitable value in mixed-gender courses. They stated, “women and gender nonconforming people do not need to be changed to fit into adventure programs; instead the programs need to change to be accountable to values important to all genders rather than a codified male-centered outdoor identity” (p. 147). Highlighting that adventure programs require both technical and communication skills rather than just lauding technical skills is important and impacts women’s participation and leadership in adventure (Rodgers & Rose, 2019; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). By acknowledging that participants come in with strengths and that these strengths carry value in outdoor adventure, instructors can empower their participants and start to change the view that adventure is, and should be, a masculine dominated sphere.

The leadership that instructors show and teach can work towards creating an inclusive space but can take multiple forms that can cause challenges for women leaders. Instructors can facilitate consensus decision making and problem solving, shared leadership, and non-competitive learning environments (Warren, 2015; Wittmer, 2001). Making decisions democratically (stereotypically feminine) demonstrates inclusivity, however some situations (such as emergencies) require the instructor to be autocratic and authoritative (stereotypically masculine) (Wittmer, 2001). With this in mind, adventure leadership can be challenging, as women get caught in a double-bind (Rodgers & Rose, 2019; Wittmer, 2001). Those who overcompensate with stereotypical masculine leadership styles and technical skills can be perceived negatively, while those who do not

may not be taken seriously (Rodgers & Rose, 2019; Wittmer, 2001). Instructors should reflect on their own leadership styles and biases and work with colleagues to recognize where gender-role discrimination impedes success (Wittmer, 2001). Wittmer (2001) found that by acknowledging and teaching different styles of leadership and providing opportunities for participants to practice (perhaps in single-gender spaces), instructors can help participants develop leadership skills. By modeling and giving equal value to stereotypically gendered leadership qualities, instructors can provide participants with the tools to develop their own leadership styles.

As leaders, paying attention to and avoiding linguistic sexism is another way that instructors can create a more equitable learning environment. Referring to technical skills as “hard” (with masculine connotations) and interpersonal skills as “soft” (with feminine connotations) is one common example in which skills are linguistically gendered (Warren, Mitten, D’Amore, & Lotz, 2019). Referring to women as “girls” or referring to a group as “you guys” can be another way that language can undermine or exclude women (Kleinman, 2002). Using gender neutral terms (such as technical or interpersonal to describe skills, or “you all” or “folks” to describe groups) creates an inclusive environment (Kleinman, 2002; Warren, 2015). Another aspect of sexism in communication is the inequitable distribution of speaking time (Martusewicz et al., 2015; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). In mixed groups, communication can be dominated by men; making sure that genders are receiving the same amount of time to speak is important (Martusewicz et al., 2015; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Instructors can promote equity by

using inclusive and non-gendered language in instruction and in conversation and by making sure that participants are given equitable speaking time.

Sexism can also show up in other ways in instruction. For example, territorial sexism (control of space) can impact women's educational experience (Martusewicz et al., 2015; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Because learning technical skills requires physically practicing them, if put in a position where they are in a more sideline, observational role rather than an active, front-and-center role, women will not have as positive of an experience (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Designing courses with this in mind and making sure that everyone has a chance to be active participants (perhaps through stations), or to be in the front during instruction, can combat this form of sexism, and set participants up to successfully gain competence.

Competence is helpful for safely embarking on adventure trips, and through their leadership and instruction instructors can foster this in their participants. Warren and Loeffler (2006) drew an important distinction between actual competence, defined as "the ability to perform a task or skill," and sense of competence, defined as "a participant's self-assessment of his or her actual competence" (p. 110). Both are necessary, and gender socialization can play into people's sense of competence (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). There can be a disparity between their sense of competence and actual competence; women sometimes perceive that they are less competent than they actually are, and men sometimes perceive that they are more competent than they actually are (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Building both forms of competence is crucial for completing adventure trips.

There are multiple ways recommended to help build this competence. Learning environments that are collaborative rather than competitive can work well for women (Loeffler, 2000; Warren, 2015; Wittmer, 2001). Warren and Loeffler (2006) described technical skill development as “situations that involve the process of manipulating equipment to accomplish a physical task in the outdoors” (p. 107). Many women come in with a lack of childhood technical conditioning, so providing frequent non-threatening scenarios of increasing challenge helps in skill development (Loeffler, 2000; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). An example of this is in spatial ability and navigation, stereotypically masculine skills. Warren and Loeffler (2006) also found that women may not have had as much emphasis placed on these skills as they grew up, so instructors may need to progressively teach these skills and allow extra, hands-on practice. Providing these opportunities in collaborative spaces helps women to gain competence.

After receiving training in the technical skills of backpacking, Loeffler recommended that participants build confidence and competence by starting off in the large group for most of the day, and then traveling the last hour into camp by breaking this group into smaller ones, then pairs, and then alone (1997). As they progressed through the course or trip, the amount of time and distance spent alone increased, with the instructor either leading or following (providing ample space) (Loeffler, 1997). However, it is important that this solo experience was chosen by the participants (it was not required), so that they were the ones in power and could claim their competence (Loeffler, 1997). By relying only on themselves, not only were they required to use their skills, but they could not attribute their success to anyone else (Loeffler, 1997). As their

actual competence coupled with the beginning of self-assessment of competence grew, instructors gave feedback (Loeffler, 1997; Loeffler, 2000). Providing these opportunities allowed women to both practice the skills that they knew and claim their competence as their own, building confidence that could be applied to future trips.

Instructors must consider the many aspects of their roles in order to be effective. In leadership roles, instructors must navigate the balance between both leading, teaching, and letting their participants develop their own sense of competence. They do this by leading by example, addressing sexism in the learning environment, explicitly teaching skills, allowing time for practice and experimentation, and providing feedback. By letting women develop autonomy in their skills they help them to both develop and claim their own competence. These methods will be incorporated into a course to prepare and empower women. The following existing resources for women incorporate some of these aspects into their programming.

Existing Resources

With an increase in interest in adventure recreation, there are several resources currently available to women. These include opportunities such as guided women-only trips and gear store workshops, as well as other informative and community building resources such as online chat boards and informal networking meetups. The first part of this section will highlight the benefits and drawbacks of women-only trips and what has worked for a few examples of these programs. It should be noted that the examples provided are not an exclusive list of providers that offer women's trips, and that they are highlighted in alphabetic order. The second part will highlight the use of online chat

boards and other informal meetups. Components that work well from these resources will be incorporated into course development.

Women-only trips have some benefits. Learning among and being supported by other women, without men, can help women to develop competency in outdoor skills. (Loeffler, 2000). Many outdoor skills fall outside traditional gender roles, and women may be socialized to believe they are less competent than men; single-gendered groups remove this comparison (Loeffler, 2000). Additionally, in mixed-gender groups, stereotypes sometimes are reinforced through unconscious delegating of stereotypical roles, such as men navigating and women cooking (Doran, 2016). Single-gender groups take away the possibility of comparison and falling into stereotypical roles, which can help women to find full participation.

There are multiple organizations that offer single-gender (as self-identified) women's courses. The National Outdoor Leadership School is one such nonprofit wilderness school. Its mission statement focuses on being "the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment" (NOLS, 2019, "Our Mission," para. 1). Ranging in length from seven to thirty-one days, and in price from \$1,750 to \$4,835 (with financial aid available), NOLS women's trips include activities such as sea kayaking, backpacking, rock climbing, and coastal sailing. The course descriptions include aspects such as building outdoor skills and developing personal leadership styles, skills, and experience to lead. "Rather than guide every step of the process, your instructors will support you as you build the experience and confidence to lead the group...form lasting relationships and return with skills to lead in your

community, in the outdoors, and beyond” (NOLS, 2019, “Women’s Alaska Backpacking - Prime,” para. 3). Their core curriculum includes topics of leadership, wilderness skills, risk management, environmental studies, and supporting goals (NOLS, 2019). Again, reviews from third-party sources are hard to find, but personal testimonies from participants on the website have transformative themes.

Outward Bound is another non-profit educational organization that seeks “to prepare students of all ages and circumstances with the strength of character and determination they need to thrive - in the classroom, in the workplace, in the family and in the world” (Outward Bound, 2019, “About,” para. 2). Outward Bound offers single-gender trips for boys and girls and for women. There are many options for youth; the opportunities for women are more limited but include rock climbing, mountaineering, and sea kayaking (Outward Bound, 2019). They range in duration from six to seven days and in price from \$1,650 to \$2,000, with scholarship and financial aid opportunities available (Outward Bound, 2019). The course descriptions break down the skills learned into technical and interpersonal, and there is an emphasis placed on overcoming challenges in a supportive community (Outward Bound, 2019). Outward Bound (2019) stresses a gradual transfer of responsibility from instructor to participants with an opportunity for a solo experience on some trips.

One for-profit entity providing guided trips and workshops for women is Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI). This cooperative company sells outdoor gear for many different outdoor activities, offers group adventures, hosts classes and events, and provides expert advice with a purpose to “awaken a lifelong love of the

outdoors, for all” (REI, 2019, “About Us,” para. 2). Adventures offered for women are both in the United States and abroad, include activities such as backpacking, climbing, hiking, kayaking, multisport, and snowshoeing, and range in activity level from easy active to strenuous (REI, 2019). They range in duration and price: from three days (around \$800) to ten days (around \$6,000). Though third-party reviews are difficult to find, reviews on the website were generally good for these trips, with many women stating that group comradery was the highlight of their trips (REI, 2019).

Women who do not go on these trips can take part in other opportunities through REI. To build some of these skills, REI also offers workshops for women in a variety of outdoor topics, prices, and locations. Listed on the websites are workshops such as “Backpacking Basics” (1.5 hours long, free, classroom, covers selecting a pack, clothing, and footwear), “Backcountry Tents and Sleep Systems” (2 hours long, \$20-40, classroom, covers tents, sleeping pads, and sleeping bags), and “Backcountry Navigation with a Map and Compass” (4 hours long, \$75-95, outdoor, covers topographical maps, taking bearings with a compass, and calculating declination) (REI, 2019). These workshops vary from one REI to another, with varied instructors, and some are not offered in all areas.

Wilderness Inquiry, a Minnesota based nonprofit, also offers women-only trips. Its mission includes “to connect people from all walks of life to the natural world through shared outdoor adventures” (Wilderness Inquiry, 2019, “Our Mission: Getting You Outside,” para. 1). The trips offered for women vary from three to nine days, from \$265 to \$2,195 (financial aid available) mostly in the Minnesota/Wisconsin region as well as one abroad (Wilderness Inquiry, 2019). Canoeing, kayaking, and hiking are activities

offered, and there are both camping and lodge-based trips (Wilderness Inquiry, 2019).

The trip description highlights that one will learn new skills and challenge one's self with other adventure-seeking women (Wilderness Inquiry, 2019).

Each of these entities provides single-gender trips, provides some degree of skill development, and highlights the comradery found between the participants. REI trips and workshops and Wilderness Inquiry are designed for women who want a guided experience with the opportunity to develop skills, while Outward Bound and NOLS focus more on building competency and leadership in their participants (NOLS, 2019; Outward Bound, 2019; REI, 2019; Wilderness Inquiry, 2019). In the NOLS and Outward Bound courses, there is a discussion of methods similar to what Loeffler (1997) recommended, in which, after instruction and practice, participants are able to take more responsibility, and in some cases have solo experiences (NOLS, 2019; Outward Bound, 2019). There is no mention of specific women-focused teaching methods, but in the few reviews that are available, women generally proclaimed various degrees of enjoyment, transformation, and skill development from each organization (NOLS, 2019; Outward Bound, 2019; REI, 2019; Wilderness Inquiry). However, most reviews and blogs were from the sites themselves; data and testimonials not affiliated with the entities were difficult to locate.

Even if women do not sign up for a trip or a sponsored class, there are online resources where they can find information and sometimes community. Chat boards such as those found on social media provide a platform for aspiring adventurers to ask questions, receive advice, and seek mentorship. One example is the Superior Hiking Trail Facebook group, with many discussion threads on all sorts of topics such as trip and gear

recommendations, information on planning logistics, and people seeking hiking partners (Superior Hiking Trail, 2020). Reddit, another online platform, includes discussion threads with titles such as *Tips for Female Backpackers* (Camping and Hiking, 2020). Other informal network meetups through organizations such as Women's Outdoor Alliance and Women Who Hike provide additional opportunities for women to form community and share knowledge. Though these events can be limited by geographic area, there is a movement toward growth and spreading the mission (Outdoor Women's Alliance, 2020; Women Who Hike, 2020). These resources can provide some access to information and community, especially if women do not start with adventure connections in their everyday life.

The expansion of women's specific trips and outdoor organizations highlights both the lack of access historically as well as the increasing interest today. Single-gender groups for outdoor adventure, both in literature and practice, allow women the opportunity to gain skills with the support of their peers. They also create situations in which tasks that are stereotypically masculine or feminine must be filled by those present, which can result in increased skill development and competency. The organizations highlighted offer trips that show a great deal of positive feedback from participants, and some aspects could be incorporated when designing a course for women. Additionally, the online organizations and resources available to aspiring adventurers can provide both information as well as a starting place for building community. When considering this in context of the project, these organizations could provide opportunities for collaboration.

Summary

Adventure can result in many benefits for women, but there are many constraints impacting their participation. Considering these constraints and designing a course that mitigates them will increase equitable access. Incorporating teaching methods that are gender-sensitive and work to build competence will help to empower women to complete their own adventures. Existing programs with varying missions provide ideas to build from while designing a course to prepare and empower women to complete their own backpacking trip. This chapter gathered information to answer the research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* The following chapter provides an explanation and overview of the project itself, including a project description, the adult learning theories that provide the framework, how the project was assessed, a description of the setting where the project took place, a description of the participants, and a completion timeline.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Overview

This capstone seeks to address the disparity of women's participation in adventure recreation. Adventure recreation offers many benefits to those who participate, and women's participation is constrained in multiple ways. In chapter three, I explain the strategies and methods included in developing a backpacking course in coordination with my research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* In seeking to answer this question, I describe the project, highlight adult and technical skill learning theories that influenced its design, and describe the setting and audience it was designed for. Finally, I include a timeline of completion as well as implementation.

Project Description

For my project, I created a course that is designed as a series of workshops for women to empower and prepare them with skills to complete their own backpacking trips. The goals of the workshops are twofold: to teach skills necessary for backpacking and to serve as a sort of network for self-identified women to meet others with similar interests in the community. These workshops are designed to be flexible: they can be taken in succession as a complete course or women can pick and choose the topics that will be most valuable to them in their adventurous endeavors. Elements of Leave No

Trace and risk management are embedded within the workshops, and highlighted in the capstone trip. Table 1 on the following page summarizes the workshops.

<i>Workshop Descriptions</i>			
Title	Description	Duration	Cost
Trip planning and preparation	Participants discuss aspects of and actively plan a trip. They also lay out a plan of action for preparing for an upcoming trip.	2 hours	\$10
Choosing and using gear	Participants learn about gear used for backpacking. They practice packing and fitting a backpack and setting up a tent.	2 hours	\$10
Food, stoves, and water	Food considerations are discussed, with an opportunity for participants to put together a menu for a short trip. Stove options and water treatment options are discussed and demoed, with two options varying in duration and degree of hands-on practice.	1.5-2.5 hours	\$10
Navigation with a map and compass	Reading maps, using a compass to set a bearing, and calculating declination is practiced inside. Then, participants practice using maps and compasses in an outdoor setting.	3 hours	\$15
Basic wilderness first aid	Common injuries and illnesses are discussed, with an emphasis on prevention. Skills used to manage injuries and illnesses in wilderness settings are practiced in partners and small groups. Packing a backpacking first aid kit is discussed. note: not a certification course.	3 hours	\$15
Capstone trip	In this culmination of the series, participants practice the skills learned in the previous workshops. In addition, topics such as pace, resting, Leave No Trace, risk management, leadership, and judgement are taught in short lessons on trail and in camp. The trip transitions from being instructor led to participant led. Finally, there is a wrap-up meeting in which participants share their experience with each other and their community.	2-3 days in a row, plus 1 additional wrap-up meeting	TBD

All workshops are designed to have hands-on portions for practicing skills. The capstone trip is designed such that a larger group is split into smaller subgroups so that each participant has the opportunity to practice skills and so that the group leaves less of

an impact. Finally, included are some ideas of how one could link the workshops together, with additional opportunities (such as additional field practice, guest speakers, and culminating wrap-up), as a more complete course.

Project Framework

My rationale for designing this course as a series of standalone workshops stems from a place of removing the time and financial constraints that could come with an extended course. Expectations placed on women limit their leisure time, especially if it means they are leaving children at home, and the gender pay gap leaves less money allocated for leisure (Hoffert, 2008; Little, 2002). I also recognize that adult learners come in with vastly different backgrounds, skill sets, and goals (Knowles, 1980; St. Clair, 2015). Providing some options as far as which topics to attend allows learners some autonomy in what they are learning, an important aspect of course design in adult education (St. Clair, 2015). If, for example, a participant feels confident in some areas of backpacking but not others, they may choose the workshop(s) that are most meaningful to them. Offering workshops allows for participants the empowerment to self-select what they wish to learn as well as removes some time and financial constraints.

A challenge of this approach was meeting the second goal: to provide a network of like-minded individuals in the area. Indeed, a multi-week course would allow for more in-depth relationships to be built, a challenge in a singular workshop. Learning in community is powerful, and adult students and instructors have much to learn from each other (St. Clair, 2015). To work toward building this community as well as to incorporate student needs and interest into course design, I designed workshops with conversational

introductions such as “what do you hope to get out of this course?” (Knowles, 1980) or, alternatively, “what do you expect to leave the program being able to do?” (St. Clair, 2015, p. 48). An optional email list for participants to join was included to allow for participants to communicate with others with similar interests to embark on adventures with. The option of stringing workshops together in a more complete course, incorporating group hikes and local speaker sessions, allows an easy opportunity for participants to bring additional friend and family contacts into the community. Finally, offering the option of a capstone group trip would create many opportunities for community and skill building, and coming together with friends and family afterward to share the experience increases the visibility. Each of these aspects of course design sought to help build the community among the students, with the instructor, and with others in the area.

When designing learning environments for the workshops, I drew on the recommendations from the work on adult learning theory of Knowles and St. Clair. In their work, they emphasize the importance that the learning space is comfortable and conducive to mutual learning (Knowles, 1980; St. Clair, 2015). Including touches such as offering refreshments to create a comfortable, welcoming space was included in the workshop plans (St. Clair, 2015). The space, as well as the handout materials, were designed to be aesthetically pleasing, simple, and well-organized (St. Clair, 2015). Acknowledging that adults have vast experiences and diverse backgrounds and tapping this resource was incorporated into each workshop (Knowles, 1980; St. Clair, 2015). In

these ways, the workshops were designed to be a comfortable learning environment and capitalize on the wealth and diversity of experience of adult students.

Key components of skill development are highlighted in the literature and incorporated into the workshops. In general, active learning, in which people learn by doing, allows adult learners of all genders to apply new knowledge to problems or projects, and see the utility in the material (St. Clair, 2015). As women may have had less technical conditioning in their childhood, the workshops were designed to offer time and space for hands-on practice of skills, in a cooperative, non-competitive environment (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). As participants progress in their skill development and comfort level, the workshops provide them with opportunities to claim their competence through helping them to build, recognize, and assess their own abilities (Loeffle, 1997; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Addressing stereotypical gender roles and sexism in the learning environment was addressed throughout the workshops (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Finally, all workshops emphasize prevention of accidents rather than reacting to them, running in parallel with women's (in general) orientation towards risk-aversion and decreasing the likelihood of injury (Hamonoko et al, 2011; Little, 2002). Drawing from the literature, I designed these workshops in ways that increase women's learning and skill development.

Project Assessment

These workshops were assessed for effectiveness in multiple ways: through participant self-assessment, through instructor observation, and through a capstone trip (for those who chose to). The self-assessment was either written or oral (chosen by the

participant), and asked students to reflect on their experience and to rate their sense of competency as well as provide feedback, and took place at the completion of the workshop. Self-assessment is mentioned in both the adult education framework put forth by St. Clair (2015) as well as the competence development framework highlighted by Loeffler (2000). Instructor observation took place in a non-formal sense, in which the instructor not only interacted with students during the learning processes but also watched the change (or lack thereof) in their acquisition of the skills being taught. Finally, for those able to complete the capstone trip, a follow-up potluck or community meal in which participants shared their biggest takeaways provided an additional angle of assessment. By providing multiple measurements and allowing students to assess their own learning, the project goals of empowerment and preparedness were more accurately assessed.

Setting

The setting for designing and implementing this project was a city in the Midwest. This city has a population 86,000 and is in close proximity to Lake Superior, with easy access to the Superior Hiking Trail and within a two-hour drive from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. This area is known for having a robust outdoor community, but lacks specific backpacking educational opportunities. This course is designed for adult students who self-identify as women.

Participants

The intended audience for my project is self-identified adult women in the city and the surrounding area. To provide a platform for test-teaching the workshops, I

worked with the local Community Education. The course description was placed on the Community Education website, with the workshops to be taught during the spring and summer session. Community Education participants come from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, abilities, and interest areas.

This course or any of the workshops could be used by other instructors looking to increase women's access to adventure in their area. While this course specifically focused on backpacking, one could also use the framework and many of the skill areas to teach a course for wilderness canoeing or other adventure trips, reaching participants who may be interested in or have access to other activities.

Timeline

This project was completed during the spring semester of 2020. After doing the preliminary research and writing chapters one through three during the fall of 2019, I worked on course construction and chapter four the following spring semester. I had my course outlines and description ready for the Community Education brochure deadline at the beginning of February. Classes for the spring/summer session were shifted to June to account for the pandemic earlier in the spring. As such, the workshops were not able to be tested before the capstone was to be submitted in May. The timeline of this project and its implementation were planned to prepare participants for summer backpacking trips.

Summary

Chapter three described the project associated with the research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* Incorporating adult learning theory and course design

as well as methods shown to increase women's technical skill development, I developed a series of workshops as well as materials for linking them together into a complete course. After designing my project over winter break and spring semester, my sessions were scheduled to be taught through Community Education in June, after the capstone was submitted. The following Chapter Four revisits the literature review, contains thoughts on what I learned through the process of creating this project, acknowledges its limitations, shares recommendations for other educators, and considers the implications of the project moving forward.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989) defined adventure recreation as "a variety of self-initiated activities utilizing an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance" (p. 125). In short, adventure recreation includes activities that challenge the participant and generally take place in the outdoors. These activities offer many benefits to those who participate by promoting general health and wellbeing, increasing confidence and self efficacy, and building community through shared experience. Despite the many benefits, access and opportunities for participation in adventure are not equal: women are in the minority. The causes of this disparity are many, with roots in education, societal norms, and traditional feminine expectations.

In this capstone, I sought to answer the research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* The accompanying project, in which I compiled a series of workshops for women to prepare and empower them to complete their own backpacking trip, was built using the framework of what I found throughout the literature review. Chapter Four includes the major learnings that I had throughout this process, reflections on the literature review, possible implications and limitations of the project, ideas for further

research and related projects, how I plan to share the work I have done with others, and how it benefits the outdoor education profession.

Major Learnings and Review of Literature

As a researcher, writer, and learner, I have learned much through this capstone process and the literature review. I have gained tools not only for finding sources but for asking good questions. In many instances of the literature review, the more I read, the more questions I came up with. While this was good as it helped broaden my understanding of the many components that influence my topic, it also challenged me to stay on topic. I have practiced examining other's work, thinking critically to synthesize ideas across sources, and writing (and rewriting) to articulate these to the reader. By asking for and receiving constructively critical feedback, I have noticed tendencies that I have in writing and have thought more deeply about the questions I seek to answer.

I expected to gain quite a bit of research and analytical skills in this process and it did not disappoint. A challenge that I had with my research question is that it actually encompassed much more than I would have initially anticipated. Looking into the disparities of women in the outdoors sent me in many different directions; each of the sections of my literature review could be expanded into a project in and of itself. While I feel as though I sufficiently included information that pertained specifically to my research question, as I came up with additional considerations in each section, it was difficult to reign it in.

With a project spanning over two semesters, I was a bit apprehensive upon starting. Questions such as "How does one even begin to know what to focus on?" "Will I

fall into the procrastination trap?” and “Can I get all of this work done while still taking care of my other responsibilities?” swirled as I considered my fall semester. However, by laying out a timeline, amending it as needed (generally adding in additional work I had not considered), and trusting in the process, I surprised myself at how well I was able to stick to it. This solidified to me that, the more I have to do, the more focused I am at getting it done. While I do not necessarily want to overload my personal and professional life with tasks just so that I can avoid procrastination, I take with me an understanding of how to lay out a longer project and execute the steps to complete it.

The literature review itself led to many learnings, in addition to providing direction for my project. The parts of my literature review that directly impacted how I put together the majority of my project were those that focused on understanding the constraints impacting women’s participation (so that I could design my project to mitigate them) and those that highlighted best practices for teaching adult women through modeling, hands-on practice, and designing the learning space. The other topics of the literature review (benefits of adventure, risk in adventure, and existing resources) informed specific aspects of individual sessions and helped put the overall project in context.

By better understanding the constraints impacting women, I was able to design my project in ways that sought to minimize them. Little’s (2002) work helped me to understand that traditional gender norms and financial and leisure time limitations are a constraint to women’s participation and led me to design relatively short, inexpensive workshops in an à la carte fashion (women can choose which workshops to attend).

Unequal societal expectations placed on women as highlighted by Hoffert (2008) led me to make the capstone trip, and all of the workshops, optional, so women can choose what works for them and their personal and professional life. Since I came to adventure without many of these constraints, learning about them helped me to better understand how to make it more accessible to others.

In addition, Little's (2002) findings that stereotypical masculine qualities can be perceived as necessary for outdoor adventure (and may impede women who believe they lack these qualities) and Rogers and Rose's (2019) findings adventure leadership was viewed as inherently masculine also influenced my workshops. These findings led me to add optional sessions in which local women share their adventure stories (so women could see themselves reflected in other women adventurers) as well as creating accessible ways for women to feel more prepared through pre-trip physical preparation. By setting up workshops in ways that acknowledge that participants come in with valuable strengths (for example, through allowing sharing in each session and the promotion of participant collaboration and leadership), I designed my project with the hope of changing the view that adventure is, and should be, dominated by masculinity.

The literature also shaped my decisions to design my workshops around non-competitive, hands-on, and supportive activities. A general consensus in the literature was that learning environments that are collaborative rather than competitive can work well for women, so I fashioned my workshops in this way (Loeffler, 2000; Warren, 2015; Wittmer, 2001). Warren and Loeffler (2006) also promoted the explicit

teaching of skills and offering plenty of hands-on practice. These aspects are reflected in my project – sessions are a mix of instruction, practice, collaboration, and reflection.

Mitigating sexism in instruction is another area where the literature review provided some major learnings and guidance for my project. I found myself reflecting on my own educational and teaching experiences by looking at them with a purpose of spotting sexism. While I knew that referring to participants as “you guys” was not gender inclusive, I had never considered the gendered use of words such as “hard skills” or “soft skills.” These are words I have used frequently in the past to refer to technical skills and interpersonal skills, and I had not considered the other connotations to them. I also had not specifically considered the idea of territorial sexism in instruction. While this may not be an issue in my sessions (if there are only women in attendance) it did make me consider my own educational experiences (when I was younger I would hang toward the back) and it gave me something to watch for when instructing, whether in a non-traditional or traditional setting.

From these learnings, I included a guideline in my project that instructors should pay attention to and avoid sexism to create a more equitable learning environment, as addressed in Warren, Mitten, D’Amore, and Lotz’s work (2019). Additionally, specifically planning the learning space to make sure that women have an active, front-and-center role for learning and practicing skills (such as through stations) was incorporated in the session plans as a method to increase equity and decrease territorial sexism, especially in a situation in which it is taught to a coed group (Warren & Loeffler,

2006). By incorporating these aspects into the framework of the sessions, and addressing sexism if it arises, these workshops seek to promote equity in instruction.

Another lesson (or strong reminder) taken from the literature review was the idea that perceived risk changes based on experience. What I might view as a rather casual trip may be an extreme adventure for someone who is just starting out. Leaders need to be careful not to assume that their perceptions of risk are the same as their participants, as beginners may perceive activities to be more risky than those who are more experienced (Boniface, 2006; Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). Risk is specifically discussed in the capstone trip, but this perception disparity between leaders and participants, and potentially among participants is for instructors to consider and respect and is included in the course guidelines.

Finally, when constructing the capstone trip portion of my project, I drew from my own experience and the work of Loeffler (1997) in which it was recommended that participants build confidence and competence on a trip by starting off in the large group, and then breaking this group into smaller ones, then pairs, and then offering that participants try it alone. However, as Loeffler (1997) recommended, in my project I emphasized that each step was to be chosen by the participants (it was not required), so that they were the ones in power and could claim their competence. As in Loeffler's (1997) work, by providing these opportunities participants will be able to both practice the skills and claim their own competence, building confidence to empower them in their regular lives and future trips.

In addition to shaping the design of my project, the literature review helped me to understand more deeply the root causes of the disparity, to reflect on my own journey towards feeling empowered to embark on adventures, and to solidify the importance and timeliness of my project. While I had my own experience and anecdotal evidence to consider for many of the topics, the literature review provided a larger lens from which to examine each aspect of my research question. Through reviewing the literature, I was able to better consider the constraints that impact women's participation in adventure recreation as a whole, and better recognize how the opportunities that I had as a girl and have had as an adult woman are rare for most women. Finally, through connecting the role that adventure has played in my life with the benefits of adventure to participants as a whole, I was able to better understand my project in context and was reminded of why I embarked to answer my research question in the first place.

Possible Implications

In addition to the designed outcomes of the project (to prepare and empower women to complete their own backpacking trip), there are other possible implications that might come as a result of implementation. Women who are able to participate in adventure recreation may see the benefits that come with it such as self-efficacy, confidence, a positive gender identity, and others (Whittington, 2006). An additional effect may be more connection among participants through the adversity and successes of a trip, as found by the women in Boniface's study (Boniface, 2006). This connection could spread to their communities, and the direct experience in nature could result in more community engagement of participants in policy work that promotes and protects

their natural resources (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Women who are empowered to complete a challenging trip may also feel empowered to make other changes in their communities, personal, and professional lives.

By becoming more comfortable in the outdoors, women who are also mothers may be more likely to bring their children and families outdoors too, spreading the effects to the next generation. This has additional benefits, as Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) found that childhood experiences in nature were the most influential aspect of pro-environmental behavior later. Even if they themselves do not bring their children outdoors with them, they may be more likely to feel comfortable signing them up for a nature camp, supporting their classroom teachers in incorporating outdoor education, sending them on a field trip to an environmental learning center, or other outdoor opportunities. Finally, women (with or without children) may share their skills with their friends, both increasing the scope of people the project can influence as well as truly letting women claim their competence by teaching others what they know.

Limitations

My project is limited in a variety of ways. First, who will be able to see it. For the 2020 spring and summer community education sessions, the workshops are advertised online rather than getting sent out in a brochure all over town. In this way, people must be looking on the website to begin with in order to see the courses, so it limits the visibility and the demographics that the course will be seen by. Additionally, if it is advertised and taught through the Folk School, the clientele already has a predisposition towards homemade and traditional craft, and in this community, there is a lot of overlap in people

who are interested and out adventuring already. As such, it might not bring new people into the adventure community. However, in this way it may provide additional ways to strengthen the bond between people already in the community, and may provide opportunities for those already interested to gain the skills and companionship to feel confident heading out on the trail themselves.

Next, it is limited by location: women still have to be able to go to a workshop. By offering it only in-person, it greatly limits the number of women who will be able to participate. Those who live too far outside the area, or who are lacking transportation, are unable to attend as the sessions are planned. In a similar vein, those who have small children and do not have access to childcare may also be unable to attend. Our current pandemic crisis also brings front-and-center the value of having the ability to share ideas in ways that are not face-to-face. Designing a resource that could be used online or remotely would increase the access to these women whose physical location, responsibilities, or other reasons keep them from physically attending a workshop. A challenge with this approach would be community building; perhaps incorporating a blended approach of online videos and resources as well as in-person check-in meetings and a place to share pictures and experiences would help create this community.

Another limitation is that the capstone backpacking trip requires a degree of mobility, as it is written. A person with a physical disability may need to work closely with the instructor, but accommodations could be made for the skill-building workshops. The capstone trip as planned on a rugged trail is not overly accessible (though by choosing trails and mileage it can become more so); however, one could consider a

different sort of adventure trip - perhaps along a paved or crushed gravel path — where the skills of planning, preparation, packing, navigation, and first aid would still be used. Through finding challenge in this alternative way, a person with a physical disability could still partake in adventure, despite the limitations of the project as written.

An additional limitation is that it requires the instructor to have a solid foundation of the basic skills both of backpacking as well as group facilitation. It would not be easy to pick this class up and teach it, having no background and personal experience. In creating these workshops I drew on nearly twenty years of adventure and backpacking experience, including leading groups in the outdoors, professional training in wilderness medicine, and quite a bit of written resources. Though I tried to distill the crucial information in a way that would be accessible both for the participants as well as a facilitator, there are simply quite a lot of skills that are not specifically described in the workshops, skills that the instructor would have to have experience with prior to facilitating.

In designing these workshops and drawing on my experience, I also recognize the limitations that come with teaching my particular way of backpacking. Though I have had other experienced women backpackers take a look at it and agree that I have covered the basics well, so many of the skills in backpacking require people to get out, do it, and figure out what works best for them. What works for me will not necessarily work for other people. Throughout the project, I tried to highlight this, but experience truly is the best instructor. My project serves to give participants enough material to get them out

there and back again safely, and they will pick up the additional knowledge they need through their experiences.

Future Research and Related Projects

In the future, I would like to extend this to offer additional adventure opportunities. One area I would like to expand to would be to offer opportunities for youth. For this to be successful, I would have to look into the differences in facilitation for youth in adventure, as well as build my local network. Perhaps I could bridge the gap by offering mother/children hikes and workshops. I would enjoy researching more about the benefits of co-ed versus single gender groups for adolescents and how to make it accessible to a diverse population, letting the research guide the design of the program. By providing these opportunities to youth, especially girls, the next generation could be more empowered.

I also would be interested in expanding the overnight trip opportunities for women who would rather not adventure by themselves. I am also a yoga instructor and could see facilitating an adventure trip while including yoga, mindfulness, and meditation for stress reduction. In this women would not only gain the skills and accomplishment from embarking on an adventure trip, but would also build community and gain some stress-reduction techniques that they could apply to their lives off of the trail. To be successful in this I would have to expand my research to see if there is literature about mindfulness, yoga, mediation, and backpacking. I would also have to consider the business side of the venture, perhaps finding a way to make a sliding scale, incorporating an optional donation to support other women, or looking into grant funding. .

Sharing and Benefits to the Profession

My plan to share this project is to implement it in my community through a variety of venues, with the goal of reaching a diverse network of women. Perhaps, as I am able to assess how effective the workshops are, I will consider traveling to host them in other communities, or training others to do so. Additionally, the current push towards online learning has led me to consider ways to make at least some of this learning available in other formats. In this way, women from outside the area and those who are unable to attend a physical workshop for other reasons would still be able to participate. Finally, I intend to include a copy of this curriculum in the digital commons, for others who may want to implement similar programming in their area.

My project benefits the outdoor education field as it provides a jumping off point for additional projects or programs within the community. Despite the potential direct outcomes of my project, I feel as though it is just the start of what could become a larger movement toward increasing access to adventure in the community, not only for women, but also for families, children, and everyone. By starting to offer my workshops, amending them as necessary, and building on the learnings from them and from additional research, there is potential to make a lasting impact both within my community and beyond.

Summary

In this capstone, I sought to answer the research question: *what are the key elements of a course that prepares and empowers women to plan and complete their own adventure trip?* The research process both stretched and validated me in both expected

and unexpected ways. Though I foresaw gaining research and writing skills, I did not anticipate all of the different directions my research question would take me. The knowledge I gained throughout the literature review both shaped the construction of my project as well as placed it in context. By reflecting on the process in this chapter, I was able to consider some of the possible implications that my project may have, such as increased community, increased activism in access and conservation policy making, and the spreading of adventure recreation to those close to the participants. Acknowledging the limitations of the project, I have considered additional ways to expand and to be able to offer this training in alternative ways and how I can widen the scope to include more diverse people. By implementing this in my community through a variety of venues, I hope to gain valuable feedback from participants and to continue to amend and adapt these workshops. This work benefits the outdoor education profession not only by increasing access for women in adventure but by providing a base from which to grow.

Adventure has played a large role in both my personal and professional life, shaping the decisions I have made and actions I have taken. On adventure trips, I have been uncomfortable, tired, sore, frustrated, and scared, but I have also found joy, beauty, strength, friendship, and self-efficacy. Through adventure I have practiced both teamwork and claimed self-reliance. The empowerment that I have found through these adventures has expanded my views as to what is possible. By embarking on this capstone and implementing my project, I hope to increase other's access to the life-changing benefits that can be gained through adventure.

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