

Gender Dynamics in Outdoor Co-Leadership

Vanessa Fabian

Department of Kinesiology, Department of Social Work, University of New Hampshire



University of
New Hampshire

INTRODUCTION

Co-Leadership pairs have been considered the norm in outdoor adventure education since the inception of field based expeditions. Mixed gender co-leader pairs seem to be idealized within the outdoor industry, however there is little research examining co-leadership effectiveness or mixed gender co-leadership advantages. Within the outdoor adventure education field female leaders often experience multiple forms of prejudice. Varying factors play a role in perpetuating discriminatory behaviors towards women, yet the ways in which the co-leadership framework minimizes or exacerbates this has yet to be discussed. This poster provides a review of current literature on co-leadership and gender within the outdoor industry, and suggestions for practice and research are provided.

CO-LEADERSHIP

Outdoor co-instruction is experienced as a 'negotiated relationship as individuals attempt to maintain professional, social, and personal selves while also fitting into an institutionally circumscribed staffing configuration' (Vernon & Seaman, 2012)

Co-leadership has assumed advantages: dual points of view, splitting roles, model relationships, novice/experienced apprenticeship (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)

Co-therapy effectiveness (including mixed-gender facilitation) is also inconclusive (Wright, 2003; Luke & Hackney, 2007)

Dissimilar co-leaders could be one of the main advantages of co-leadership. Clients could benefit from the modeling of healthy, cooperative interpersonal relationships. (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)



GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the ability to guide or direct a group.

Leadership involves the contribution of multiple actors and bi-directional influence that unfolds along different time scales (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Linden & Hu, 2014)

Men have predominated in leadership roles for so long [that] leadership itself is perceived as a masculine domain (Eagly & Carli, 2007)

Meta-analysis of leadership literature has shown that leader stereotypes are predominately masculine (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011)

However, meta-analysis has also shown an *increase in the androgyny stereotype for leadership* in the past 4 decades (Koenig, 2011)

Role Congruity Model: The mismatch that produces biased evaluation is between stereotypes of women and stereotypes of leaders. As such, there is a role incongruity between perceived demands of leadership and femininity (Eagly & Karau, 2002)

Women are targets of two forms of *prejudice* - deficit in ascription of leadership ability to them, and a less favorable evaluation of their agentic behavior. (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011)

Lack-of-fit Model: Workplace (leadership) role is inconsistent with attributes ascribed to an individual (femininity). This produces increased expectations of failure and decreased expectations of success. (Heilman, 2001)

Within group therapy, gender impacts power dynamics and status negotiation in co-leadership teams. Transference and counter transference in relation to gender issues can influence the group (Nosko & Wallace, 1997)

The best leaders are able to use both masculine and feminine traits



GENDER AND OUTDOORS

Outdoor Education is steeped in culture of masculinity

"Manliness is next to godliness" discourse in Boy Scouts (Springhall, 1991)

Masculinity is embedded in traditions of life in nature in Norway and UK (Humberstone & Pedersen, 2001)

Cultural tropes about male explorers conquering nature, and women's domestic social role are prevalent (Saunders & Sharp, 2002)

Outdoor leadership is constrained by an elitist attitude that favors those instructors who have graduated from expensive instructor training courses and overall, white male privilege makes outdoor leadership perspectives (Warren, 2002)

Female outdoor leaders are doubly gender-role incongruent in that they lead in a traditionally male dominated area where some masculine-attributed actions are necessary (Wittmer, 2001)

Traditional patriarchal power and men's hierarchy in leadership is persistent and idealized in residential summer camp staff (Cousineau & Roth, 2012)

'Traditional privileging of technical skills in Outdoor Adventure programs adversely affects women's outdoor participation, leadership, and career development' (Warren & Loeffler, 2006)

Again, outdoor leaders have been labeled as rational, objective and autonomous. Women have been labeled as irrational, subjective and emotional (Bell, 1996)

Greater *risk taking* in men (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999) may mean women and men operate under different orientations to risk management. Weighed attention to response portion of risk (WFR, WEMT) privileges men's orientation to risk and undervalues women's (Warren & Loeffler, 2006)

Women outdoor leaders tend to perceive themselves *as less qualified or competent* (Loeffler, 1995)



IDEAS SURROUNDING PRACTICE

Adventure education practitioners need to be more aware of gendered nature of their programs and implement more overt strategies to address gender issues (Pinch, 2003)

We need willingness to 'interrogate and interrupt the social factors that disadvantage women in the development of technical skills and limit men in the acquisition of interpersonal and communication skills' (Warren & Loeffler, 2006)

People's beliefs about leaders and women are dynamic (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011) and we can facilitate change in views!

Feminist theory would posit the dilemma that asking women to develop skill sets that support a hegemonic male-based system of Outdoor Education is questionable (Warren & Loeffler, 2006)

Co-teaching idealizes shared power dynamics, but there is a mismatch between beliefs and practice (Austin, 2001)

Outdoor instructors need support in the form of training on gender specific briefing and debriefing (Warren, 2002)

Leadership is currently seen in a dualistic / binary and heterosexual framework. We need to question this, or 'queer' leadership if androgynous characteristics continue to create the 'best' leaders.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Are issues of gender any different in Outdoor leadership teams?

How should gender role congruency within a co-leader team be addressed?

Is hegemonic masculinity challenged in outdoor mixed-gender co-leadership teams?

How can we work within this mixed gender framework to promote a different ideal for leadership? Should we?

We need research on mixed gender co-leadership!

CONTACT



Please contact Vanessa Fabian for an extensive reference list
vfl@wildcats.unh.edu