

**Self-Confidence in Backcountry Settings among College and University
Outdoor Programs' Staff: Does Gender Make a Difference?**

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Abstract

Leading group trips in backcountry or wildland recreation settings can provide additional challenges and test one's confidence in ways that front country or developed recreation settings may not. Historically, the great outdoors has been considered man's domain, as such some authors have suggested that it is more difficult for women to feel confident when engaged in backcountry recreation activities due to gender role stereotypes and socialization (Lee, 2001; Nolan & Priest, 1993; Saunders & Sharp, 2002), resulting in fewer opportunities for females, particularly young females, to develop skills and confidence in outdoor environments (Allin & West, 2013). Jones (2012) in her study of female outdoor educators found women commonly expressing a lack of self-confidence upon entry to the field. The present study examined university outdoor program staff through the lens of gender and its relationship to self-confidence when leading backcountry trips. A three-page survey measured respondents self-confidence across six dimensions (e.g., group dynamic concerns, dealing with nature), as well as items linked to various forms of experience (e.g., years of experience working in an outdoor program, number of trips led) and age. Data was collected late 2011 through Fall 2012 utilizing a professional association listserv whose membership primarily includes university outdoor programs staff. Two of the six dimensions revealed statistically significant differences with males expressing more confidence than females, though fairly high self-confidence group mean scores were found for males and females across each of the six dimensions. ANCOVA tests controlling for the effects of experience and age revealed some statistically significant differences for gender though the covariates were more likely statistically significant with one or more of the confidence dimensions. Future research should more closely examine how staff type (e.g., fulltime professional versus graduate student) affects self-confidence. Useful information was gleaned from the study and should prove valuable to outdoor program directors interested in more fully recognizing how gender and experience each play a role in self-confidence. Self-confident staff that blends the best of both genders in their leadership can go a long way in enhancing the experience of participants utilizing university outdoor programs.

Key Words: Self-confidence, gender, outdoor programs, leadership, outdoor education

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Introduction

Leading group trips in backcountry or wildland recreation settings can provide additional challenges and test one's confidence in ways that front country or developed recreation settings may not. For instance, dealing with a serious injury in a backcountry setting may necessitate a degree of self-confidence not needed in a front country setting where outside medical attention is conceivably closer. Not only will self-confidence associated with managing the injured participant play prominent in a backcountry setting, but also simultaneously confidence in managing the remaining participants, many of whom may feel distraught being in a remote place. Bandura (1990) distinguished between self-efficacy and self-confidence noting self-confidence refers to strength of an undirected belief, while self-efficacy implies that a goal has been set. As cited in Druckman and Bjork (1994) "self-efficacy is not concerned with an individual's skills, but, rather, with the judgments of what an individual can accomplish with those skills" (p. 174) (Bandura, 1986). Druckman and Bjork (1994) described self-confidence as the "belief that one can successfully execute a specific activity" (p. 174).

While it is common, particularly with college and university outdoor programs, to staff trips with at least two staff members, managing participants, particularly those new to backcountry settings, commonly presents challenges and tests of one's leadership ability not as present in front country settings. Historically the great outdoors has been considered a man's domain, and thus males by extension may be thought to be more confident than females in outdoor settings. Saunders and Sharp (2002) in a study aptly titled, "Outdoor Leadership: The Last Male Domain?" suggested that other factors such as age and experience may be as important to understand in the context of outdoor leadership as the role of gender.

While not based solely on backcountry settings, Graham (1997) suggested that women lead differently than males often excelling in different but complementary areas. At the same time he recognized the ideal leader uses the strengths of both genders (Graham, 1997). Although good leaders are thought to possess a number of skills including being technically competent (e.g., routefinding, reading the weather), being able to deal with group conflict and crisis, being nurturing, and being self-confident, Lee (2001) suggested that it is more difficult for women to feel confident when engaged in an activity seen to be inappropriate for their gender. Two decades ago, Nolan and Priest (1993), wrote that gender role stereotypes are deeply rooted in one's early home life, throughout schooling, by society at large, and throughout adult life. Allin and West (2013) suggest gender socialization often reinforces such stereotypical thinking and can result in fewer opportunities for females, particularly young females, to develop skills and confidence in outdoor environments. As such, women are seemingly less likely to pursue careers as outdoor leaders (Allin & West, 2013).

Johnson (2003) observed that women typically do not perform well in ego-oriented environments (i.e., an environment where level of ability is based on referring to the performances of others), instead preferring task-oriented environments where the standards used are perceived as achievable regardless of gender. Dingle and Kiewa (2006) in a study of college students participating in an elective kayaking course, found the competitive kayaking culture provided a source of stress for women, many of whom felt uncomfortable performing in front of more skillful male peers. One of their overall observations was that females commonly struggle to develop technical skills despite what Loeffler (1997) found in that females may be as technically competent as males but either fail to realize it or simply lack the self-confidence to showcase their skills

(Dingle & Kiewa, 2006). In sum, Dingle and Kiewa (2006) highlighted the potentially destructive nature of an ego-oriented learning environment for women.

Warren and Loeffler (2006) wrote that traditionally in the outdoor adventure field technical skills are referred to as “hard” skills, while interpersonal skills such as communication and leadership are referred to as “soft” skills. Allin and West (2013, p. 117) wrote that “radical feminism would highlight differences between men and women outdoor leaders in the possession and valuation of technical ‘hard skills’ versus interpersonal ‘soft’ skills” citing Sharp (2001) who found that male outdoor instructors value their technical ability more highly than women do. While thought to be equally important, Warren and Loeffler (2006) suggested that technical skills are commonly more valued than interpersonal skills, in general, and thus adversely affect women’s choosing to participate in outdoor adventure activities, as well as seeking leadership roles. More recently, Jones (2012) in her study of female outdoor educators found women enter the field adopting norms of competence centered on males, subjecting themselves to doubts about their competence, expressing lack of self-confidence, and feeling pressure to improve and achieve even more than male counterparts (Jones, 2012).

Today, most university and college non-academic Outdoor Programs around the United States have professional and student staff whose roles commonly include leading groups of students into settings where self-confidence can be a key to a successful and safe experience, as well as continued service in a leadership role. With a seeming increasing number of college and university age females entering the field of outdoor leadership (Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education, 2014), and no known scientific study to date, the primary purpose of this study was to examine college and university outdoor program staff through the lens of gender and its relationship to self-

confidence when leading a multiple night backcountry setting program. A secondary purpose of this study was to examine how leadership self-confidence is affected when controlling for varied types of experiences (e.g., number of overnight backcountry trips led for outdoor programs, years of experience working in an outdoor program), including age.

Methods

A three-page online survey was created which included 30 5-point Likert-scaled items where respondents rated self-confidence levels (1 = “Not at all confident” to 5 = “Extremely confident”) for each item as it related to leading trips in backcountry settings. Items for the scale were partially drawn from Ewert’s (1988) development and use of the Situational Fear Inventory (Ewert & Young, 1992), as well as through the authors’ experience with college and university outdoor programs both as a practitioner and academic. Ewert’s Inventory was widely used particularly in Outward Bound and outdoor adventure education settings to measure fear given varied social, physical and environmental situations (Ewert & Young, 1992). Ewert’s Inventory has exhibited strong overall Cronbach alpha scores (e.g., .94) (Ewert, 1988). That said, unlike Ewert’s Inventory, the measure in this study was conceived to draw from many of the items used by Ewert but rather than measuring fear the items were used to measure multiple dimensions of self-confidence using the same social, physical and environmental situations Ewert examined. Each dimension ranged from three to six items based on similar item content (e.g., dealing with natural/physical environment challenges, group dynamic concerns, dealing with participant crisis) when serving in a leadership role. Reliability analysis determined Cronbach alpha scores ranging from .648 to .877 for each dimension with respective items having moderate to strong corrected item-total correlations. No items were dropped from the respective

dimensions as each had a positive effect on Cronbach alpha values.

In addition, a number of other items in the survey measured various forms of experience (e.g., years of experience working in an outdoor program, approximate number of times leading a backcountry trip). Data was collected from late Fall 2011 through Fall 2012 utilizing the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) listserve, whose membership includes college and university outdoor programs student and professional staff. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22, was used to examine the data with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis performed including analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

Results

The sample consisted of 191 respondents (112 male, 79 female), representing staff currently working at a university or college outdoor program. Thirty-two states throughout the United States were represented in the sample. Approximately half (55.5%) of the respondents were undergraduate students with the remaining either graduate students (13.1%) or full-time professional staff (31.4%). The average age was 25.9 with a standard deviation of 8.0. Respondents had on average worked approximately three years with a college or university outdoor program, with 35.1% having worked 1.5 years or less and 27.2% having worked five or more years.

When asked, "Approximately how many overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you assisted with as a student staff member of outdoor programs?" the mean was 8.5 with a standard deviation of 7.7. When asked, "Approximately how many overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you led or co-led as a student staff member of outdoor programs?" the mean was 11.7 with a standard deviation of 13.2. Significant outliers

(more than two standard deviations from the mean) were removed previous to the determination of the presented means and standard deviations to meet one of the main assumptions concerning significant outliers when using ANCOVA.

Table 1 reveals mean scores, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha values for each of the six confidence dimensions. Items that made up each of the dimensions are included.

Table 2 reveals independent sample t-tests comparing males to females on the six confidence dimensions found two statistically significant ($p < .05$) mean differences (Table 2). Males had a greater group mean score for the 5-item "natural environment" (e.g., dealing with extreme weather) dimension than females, and also for the 3-item "severe injury to others" dimension, both representing more of a "hard skill" confidence. While not statistically significant, females reported slightly higher confidence for the two dimensions addressing more "soft" skill leadership – "individual participant issues" (e.g., participant not having enough food) and "group dynamics" (e.g., dealing with socially uncomfortable situations). On the other hand, males exhibited slightly greater confidence than females concerning the dimensions "own personal challenges" (e.g., having wrong clothing) and "decision making in non-injury crisis" (e.g., getting lost as a group), though both were statistically insignificant.

To address the secondary purpose of this study a series of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests were performed to assess the role that varied types of experiences and age may have had on confidence for males and females. Assumptions associated with using ANCOVA (e.g., homogeneity of regression slopes – there is no interaction between the covariate and independent variable [i.e., gender], homogeneity of variances) were examined with no violations determined (see Table 3).

Table 1*Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas for the Six Confidence Dimensions*

Confidence Dimension	Mean ₁	SD	α
Natural environment (5 items) Extreme weather Poisonous plant contact by participants Dangerous animals in the area Poisonous snakes sited nearby Stinging insects all around	19.2	3.9	.796
Own personal challenges (6 items) You becoming ill with the flu You having the wrong clothing You not having enough food Severe injury to yourself A task that is very physically demanding A task that is very mentally demanding	25.0	3.0	.648
Decision making in non-injury crisis (4 items) Getting lost as a group Making correct decisions in crisis situations for the group Trusting your intuition or gut feelings in crisis situations Trusting the intuition or gut feelings of your co-leader in crisis situations	16.0	2.4	.660
Individual participant issues (6 items) Participants becoming ill with the flu A participant getting lost Participants having the wrong clothing Participants not having enough food A participant of the opposite sex having a very personal crisis A person of the same sex having a very personal crisis	23.6	3.5	.739
Severe injury to others (3 items) Severe injury to a participant as a direct result of a planned activity Severe injury to a participant due to an unplanned situation Severe injury to your co-leader	11.2	2.5	.877
Group dynamics (6 items) Gaining the respect of the group Living up to the group's expectations Socially uncomfortable situations Group conflict among participants concerning task responsibility Group conflict concerning your leadership abilities Conflict resolution among the group	25.0	3.2	.801

₁ Means evaluated using a 5-point Likert-scale where 1 = "not at all confident" and 5 = "extremely confident."

Table 2*Independent Sample T-Tests Measuring Gender Differences for the Confidence Dimensions*

Confidence Dimension	Gender	Mean ₁	<i>p</i>
Natural environment	Males	20.0	.001
	Females	18.0	
Own personal challenges	Males	25.1	.743
	Females	25.0	
Decision making in non-injury crisis	Males	16.1	.291
	Females	15.7	
Individual participant issues	Males	23.4	.413
	Females	23.8	
Severe injury to others	Males	11.5	.031
	Females	10.7	
Group dynamics	Males	24.8	.339
	Females	25.3	

₁ Means evaluated using a 5-point Likert-scale where 1 = “not at all confident” and 5 = “extremely confident.”

With “approximate amount of overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you led or co-led as a student staff member of outdoor programs” serving as covariate, ANCOVA tests revealed the same two statistically significant results for confidence as was found when running the independent sample t-tests with quite similar group mean scores. There was a significant effect of gender on the “natural environment” after controlling for the effect of the covariate - number of trips led or co-led, $F(1, 169) = 10.74, p = .001$ (Table 3). The covariate was also significantly related to the “natural environment”, $F(1, 169) = 7.82, p = .006$. Similar findings were found for “severe injury to others” $F(1, 169) = 4.08, p = .044$, with the covariate also statistically significant $F(1, 169) = 13.34, p < .001$. Although no main effect differences were found concerning gender for the remaining four dimensions the covariate was statistically significant for dealing with “own personal challenges” $F(1, 169) = 4.03, p = .046$, and “individual participant issues” $F(1, 169) = 4.37, p = .038$.

Concerning “approximately how many overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you assisted with as a student staff member of outdoor programs” serving as co-

variate, ANCOVA tests found males had statistically significant higher group mean scores than females for both the “natural environment” and dealing with “severe injury to others” dimensions. Both male and female group mean scores slightly increased for each dimension in comparison to the independent sample t-tests findings. There was a significant effect of gender on the “natural environment” after controlling for the effect of the covariate – approximate number of assisted trips experienced, $F(1, 148) = 9.42, p = .003$ (Table 3). The covariate was also significantly related to the “natural environment”, $F(1, 148) = 6.19, p = .014$. Similar findings were found for “severe injury to others” $F(1, 148) = 4.57, p = .034$, with the covariate also statistically significant $F(1, 148) = 9.52, p = .002$. While no main effect differences were found concerning gender for the remaining four dimensions the covariate was statistically significant for dealing with “individual participant issues” $F(1, 148) = 8.28, p = .005$.

When asked about number of years working in an outdoor program one statistically significant difference was found with males exhibiting larger group mean scores for the “natural environment” than females (Table 3).

There was a significant effect of gender on the “natural environment” after controlling for the effect of the covariate – years of experience, $F(1, 188) = 8.50, p = .004$ (Table 3). The covariate was also significantly related to the “natural environment”, $F(1, 188) = 11.61, p = .001$. No main effect differences were found concerning gender for the remaining five dimensions although the covariate was statistically significant for “individual participant issues” $F(1, 188) = 9.49, p = .002$, “severe injury to others” $F(1, 188) = 4.83, p = .029$, and “group dynamics” $F(1, 188) = 4.18, p = .042$.

When asked about the approximate number of trips respondents had taken in wilderness or backcountry areas as a child/adolescent one statistically significant difference was found with females having a greater group mean score for “group dynamics” than males. Note: Respondents who did not have such experiences were excluded from the analysis. There was a

significant effect of gender on “group dynamics” after controlling for the effect of the covariate, $F(1, 125) = 3.80, p = .050$ (Table 3). Unlike some of the other findings concerning experience the covariate concerning number of trips taken as child/adolescent was not statistically significant for any of the six dimensions.

When examining age, one significant result was found for the “natural environment.” The ANCOVA test found males had statistically significant higher group mean scores than females. There was a significant effect of gender on the “natural environment” after controlling for age, $F(1, 184) = 7.51, p = .007$ (Table 3). The covariate was also significantly related to the “natural environment”, $F(1, 184) = 3.96, p = .048$. No main effect differences were found concerning gender for the remaining five dimensions although the covariate was statistically significant for dealing with “individual participant issues” $F(1, 184) = 4.96, p = .027$.

Table 3

ANCOVA Results for Gender and Varied Experiences including Age across Confidence Dimensions

Type of Experience	Confidence Dimension ₁	Gender	Mean ₂	SE ₃	<i>p</i>
Leading or co-leading a backcountry trip for outdoor programs	Natural environment	Males	19.9	.387	.001
		Females	18.0	.435	
	Severe injury to others	Males	11.4	.246	.044
		Females	10.7	.276	
Assisting (e.g., apprentice) a backcountry trip for outdoor programs	Natural environment	Males	20.1	.382	.003
		Females	18.3	.445	
	Severe injury to others	Males	11.7	.241	.034
		Females	10.9	.281	
Years working with outdoor programs	Natural environment	Males	19.8	.348	.004
		Females	18.2	.416	
Number of trips in backcountry areas as child/adolescent	Group dynamics	Males	24.7	.339	.050
		Females	25.8	.470	
Age	Natural environment	Males	19.9	.362	.007
		Females	18.3	.441	

₁ Only dimensions where a statistically significant difference was found are reported.

₂ Means evaluated using a 5-point Likert-scale where 1 = “not at all confident” and 5 = “extremely confident.”

₃ SE = Standard Error.

Discussion and Implications

Typically females are regarded as being more sensitive and caring which by extension would make them better at tasks relating to soft skills. Whereas, hard skills are often more technical based like reading the weather or dealing with injuries. The examination of the confidence dimensions somewhat supported this notion, revealing females reporting higher levels of confidence in areas relating to soft skills while males reported higher levels in dimensions relating to hard skills. That said, only two dimensions, both of a “hard skill” nature, revealed statistically significant differences between males and females. Even among the two statistically significant differences – “natural environment” and “severe injury to others” the group mean differences between males and females were not very large in a meaningful way. Indeed for each of the confidence dimensions, males and females exhibited fairly high self-confidence, averaging around “mostly confident” or four on the 5-point self-confidence scale.

While gender was the primary variable to be examined in this study, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) allowed for the testing of various types of experience, including age, acting as covariates. In other words, how is gender differentiated across confidence after controlling for the contribution of experience? The ANCOVA tests controlling for the effects of “approximate amount of overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you led or co-lead as a student staff member of outdoor programs” and “approximate number of overnight wilderness/backcountry based programs have you assisted with as a student staff member of outdoor programs” determined the same results as found when the independent sample t-tests examining gender and dimensional confidence were performed. Only negligible differences were found when these two covariates were included even for the two dimensions that were statistically significant - “natural environ-

ment” and dealing with “severe injury to others” (see Table 2 and Table 3). Although the ANCOVA tests had seemingly little effect on the role of gender, both of these covariates were statistically significant with gender concerning the “natural environment” and dealing with “severe injury to others.” Moreover, though no significant differences were found for the remaining four dimensions one or both of the covariates was statistically significant for dealing with “own personal challenges” and “individual participant issues” revealing that experience leading or assisting trips may be a better predictor of certain types of confidence than gender. With greater trip leading or assisting experience, it intuitively makes sense that more self-confidence should come as it relates to dealing with more soft skill related concerns.

The number of years working in an outdoor program also supported the statistically significant difference found between males and females for the “natural environment” with years of experience also statistically significant as a covariate. Years working in an outdoor program was also statistically significant for “individual participant issues”, “severe injury to others”, and “group dynamics” suggesting how experience gleaned on the job in an outdoor program affects self-confidence across multiple dimensions both of a hard and soft skill nature.

Approximate number of trips respondents had taken in wilderness or backcountry areas as a child/adolescent found females having a statistically greater group mean score for “group dynamics” than males, though the covariate was not significant for it or any other dimension. This may imply that early experiences, at least as it relates to travelling in wilderness or backcountry areas, provides similar opportunities to develop varied types of self-confidence for both males and females. The lone exception related to group dynamics supporting the general perception that females tend to be more caring and attentive to others than males.

As was found for the majority of experiences measured in this study, a significant result was found for the “natural environment” concerning age with males exhibiting a greater mean self-confidence score. Age as a covariate was also significantly related to the “natural environment” as was age alone concerning dealing with “individual participant issues.” If the backcountry and wilderness areas are still primarily male domains, it would seem with increasing opportunities male confidence would generally be greater than for females overall. On the other hand, the finding concerning “individual participant issues” may support the notion that females are more open to confronting individual participant problems since they themselves may be more expressive in that way versus males.

Much as Allin and West (2013) suggested in their research, the findings from this study do seem to support the notion that women possess more self-confidence on some soft skill areas (e.g., dealing with individual participant issues) while males seem more confident in other more technical or hard skill areas (e.g., confidence with the natural environment). The overall findings also confirm the role that varied types of experiences and age can have on certain types of wildland leadership confidence. Indeed, the confidence dimensions of the “natural environment” and “individual participant issues” particularly stood out throughout the analysis, with the natural environment dimension standing out across multiple analyses potentially confirming that males, in general, naturally seek out and gain more experience in wildland settings and thus exhibit greater self-confidence than females in that domain. Whereas females not only may be more open to dealing with individual participant issues in general, but when including varied types of experiences, including age, will repeatedly display greater self-confidence than males, whether it be linked to a natural trait or not. These findings hold potential implications for outdoor program directors seeking to enhance staff training

and recruitment efforts.

While it is not clear from this study as to whether college outdoor programs tend to rely more heavily on technical skill development, it is interesting that females reported higher levels of self-confidence in areas more related to soft skills while males scored higher in hard, technical skills. If indeed there are some biases in college outdoor program training and leadership development towards traditionally male norms (e.g., technical skill development at the expense of soft skill development), Jones (2012) concerns about females adopting norms of competence centered on males, could have negative implications for females concerning self-confidence as well as feeling pressure to achieve even more than their male counterparts. Not only may outdoor programs suffer in terms of long term viability through their appeal to female participants, but also in their potential loss of outstanding female candidates for staff leadership positions.

While greater numbers of females are entering the outdoor education and leadership field today, particularly in college and university outdoor program settings, Graham (1997) suggests outdoor organizations can improve the conditions for their programs by not only actively recruiting females, but also by amplifying the roles of females already in leadership positions, as well as reminding women that they don't have to model their leadership after “the way men do it” (p. 51). That said, the same can apply for men who may not possess great technical skill competence, but whose primary strengths tends to be more soft skill oriented (e.g., having strong interpersonal skills to deal with group and individual issues).

Useful information was gleaned from the data analyzed and should prove valuable to outdoor program directors interested in more fully recognizing how gender and experience play a role in self-confidence. Potentially of greatest importance is that female and male staff are similarly and “mostly” confident when

leading wilderness and backcountry experiences. This is good news considering Allin and West's (2013) suggestion that gender socialization often provides fewer opportunities for females, particularly young females, to develop skills and confidence in outdoor environments.

Future data analysis should examine what factors (e.g., gender and the various experience types) are the best predictors of confidence. A confirmatory factor analysis of the six confidence dimensions used in this study is also recommended, particularly if the scale was to be used with other types of groups (e.g., Outward Bound instructors). In addition, a further examination of soft and hard skill self-confidence should be conducted using existing data and through the inclusion of additional items related to wilderness or backcountry confidence (e.g., setting up a campsite), as well as activity specific self-confidence (e.g., setting up a climbing site, navigating a river on a kayaking trip). Moreover, an examination of staff position should be considered as professional staff may exhibit different degrees of confidence than graduate students and undergraduates alike. Lastly, a closer examination of the role of overall participation in backcountry experiences as a child/adolescent should be considered as many of the stereotypes that Allin and West (2013) suggest accrue through gender socialization. If these stereotypes could be mitigated it is plausible greater overall self-confidence in outdoor environments among college and university level women could be the byproduct, be it in leadership roles or not.

Limitations to the study include, among other things, a relatively small sample size. With upwards of 600 members in the Association for Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE), a larger response would have aided this study, particularly since the data collection was not truly random. That said the gender breakdown was fairly representative of the AORE. Although some additional experience-related questions were posed to participants in the larg-

er study, they were asked in a "yes/no" format that was not conducive to running analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests. As well, the question that asked participants to identify the number of years they have been associated with an outdoor program was posed in an ascending categorical way possibly confounding some of the findings associated with the question. Asking respondents to identify the approximate number of trips they had assisted with or led could have posed some challenges for those who have worked in the profession for many years. Lastly, it is possible some confidence scores were somewhat inflated due to the "social desirability" effect. In other words, respondents felt compelled to represent themselves in a positive (i.e., self-confident) light and thus possibly inflated their responses to the confidence items.

In sum, with more people entering the adventure and outdoor education fields, and with a concomitant increase in the number of participants looking to college and university outdoor program staff for safety and sound leadership, it seems important that gender and its relationship to self-confidence and varied professionally enhancing experiences be further examined. Furthermore, an extension of this study might also include a measure of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1990) to better capture the link between self-confidence and goal achievement. Not only should these considerations be examined in the context of college outdoor programs, but also in other types of work environments (e.g., National Outdoor Leadership School, Outward Bound) where backcountry and wilderness experiences play significant roles. Self-confident staff that blends the best of both genders in their leadership, particularly in wildland, often "ego-oriented" settings can go a long way in enhancing the experience of participants utilizing college and university outdoor programs.

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