

An exploratory study of the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders in
relation to their personal health and wellness

by

Stephanie Christine Field
B.A., University of Victoria, 2006

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in the School of Exercise Science, Physical, and Health Education

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders influenced personal health and wellness within and outside the workplace. Guided by an adapted Social Ecological Model (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glance, 1988) and the Six Dimensions of Wellness (Hettler, 1976), five participants who had experience as outdoor education leaders were interviewed. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed. Five theme clusters emerged from the data: life cycle, relationships, transition, leadership, and health and wellness. This study was an important contribution to the overall outdoor education literature as it provided an opportunity to add the voices of outdoor education leaders to the quantitative literature currently available.

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Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. Most importantly, I would like to thank all of the participants for their willingness to so openly share their experiences. It was a privilege and delight to spend time with each of you, and I am so appreciative of your enthusiasm and investment in this project. I would like to thank Dr. John Meldrum for having such an open door. Thank you for helping me to understand my own ideas and link theory to practice. Thank you to Dr. Lara Lauzon, for your sharp eye and desire to help me reach my potential. Thank you also to Rebecca Zammit, for all of your administrative support and answering the questions I did not know I needed to ask!

Finally, I would like to thank my family for supporting me in every way. You make me feel like I can do anything I put my mind to and I am so grateful.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

General introduction

The first evidence of outdoor education can be traced as far back as 2500 BC when the Egyptians first recorded planned adventures around their surrounding world (Neill, 2005). More recently, outdoor education programs have been an effective way to reconnect with nature and outdoor activity. The Western World saw the inception of resident camping programs beginning in the 1930s, and since then, organizations such as Outward Bound, the National Outdoor Leadership School and Project Adventure have all been created to help youth and adults develop a variety of skills, both hard (technical) and soft (interpersonal), through a variety of adventure and experiential education-based learning (Neill, 2005). Often viewed as a pioneer and father of Outdoor Education, Kurt Hahn was instrumental throughout the mid-twentieth century in the development of many philosophies that guide some of the world's most recognized programs. Described as an eccentric and charismatic educator, Hahn “[b]elieved in education which called forth and developed the deepest qualities of character and compassion” (Neill, 2008). To this day, Hahn’s fundamental philosophy can be found in Outward Bound’s Mission statement, which is “[t]o help people discover their potential to care for themselves, others, and the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings” (“Outward Bound’s Mission,” n.d.). Outdoor education programs often take place in remote wilderness environments to which participants are unaccustomed. Through experiencing new environments and participating in expeditions that may include, but are not limited to, hiking, white water rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and rock climbing, organizations such

as Outward Bound aim to help students achieve personal growth through: character development, adventure and challenge, compassion and service, learning through experience, and social and environmental responsibility (“Core Elements,” n.d.). However, in order for programs to be effective, they must be led by qualified and knowledgeable staff, who themselves encompass the values integrated into the agencies’ mission statements. Research has demonstrated that these leaders devote their professional lives to ensure the programs are beneficial for the participants, but to do so, often must make many compromises and sacrifices in their own personal lives (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011; Marchand, Russell, & Cross, 2009).

Purpose

The overall goal of this study was to explore the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders, focusing on the influence of those experiences on personal health and wellness within and outside the workplace. Extensive literature exists regarding the experience of outdoor education participants (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004; Paisley, Furman, Sibthorp, & Gookin, 2008). More specifically, this literature focuses on the benefits of outdoor education programs, in particular, physical activity, being outdoors, and psychological and emotional benefits (e.g. improved self-esteem, communication, and problem-solving skills) (Goldenberg, Russell, & Soule, 2011; Sibthorp, Paisley, & Furman, 2008). Yet, such program benefits would not be available to outdoor education participants without the knowledgeable and passionate staff who dedicate their time and share their skills as leaders. Due to the demanding nature of being outdoors for an extended period of time while also being responsible for the safety of program participants, leaders often experience job-related stress and burnout

(Marchand, 2008; Thompson, 1984). However, there is limited research that addresses the influence of this career on the leader's personal health and wellness, and much of this research uses quantitative methodology. Past authors of these quantitative studies have suggested that future research use qualitative methods to further investigate leader experience in order to provide rich and meaningful data (Marchand, 2008).

This research was conducted using a qualitative research method – phenomenology. The Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988) provided a theoretical framework and lens through which to view this study. Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness (Hettler, 1976) and Patton's (2002) interview question suggestions guided the development of both the research and interview questions. Further discussion of this process can be found in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

A research question is defined as a clear, focused and arguable question around which research is centered (The Writing Center, 2012). Strong research questions help writers focus their research by providing structure throughout the research and writing process (The Writing Center, 2012). The following research questions were used to explore this topic and were guided by Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness (1976):

1. How do job-related experiences influence the health and wellness of an outdoor education leader within the workplace?
2. How do job-related experiences influence the health and wellness of an outdoor education leader outside the workplace?

Operational Definitions

According to Ewert, *outdoor leadership* is an area within experiential education that involves purposefully taking individuals/groups into the outdoors for: recreation or education; teaching skills; problem solving; ensuring group/individual safety; judgement [sic] making; and facilitating the philosophical, ethical, and esthetic growth of participants. It includes: helping the individual or group identify goals and objectives; utilizing specific action to achieve those goals; creating the opportunities for learning; and training new or less experienced outdoor instructors and leaders. (Hayashi & Ewert, 2006, p. 223)

Therefore, throughout this study, an *outdoor education leader* will be considered someone who completes the above tasks through employment at a school or a private or public organization. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, an *outdoor education program* will refer to a program that operates in an outdoor setting for five or more consecutive days.

As defined by the World Health Organization, *health* will be defined as “not merely the absence of disease or infirmity,” but “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being [sic]” (World Health Organization Interim Commission, 1947).

Wellness will be defined as “purposeful, enjoyable living . . . More than freedom from disease, it means taking steps to prevent illness and involves a capacity to live life to the fullest. A healthy and well individual has a greater capacity for personal potential” (Hales & Lauzon, 2015, p. 9).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

Spending time being physically active outdoors is beneficial for the health and wellness of any population (Louv, 2008; Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown, & St Leger, 2006; McCurdy, Winterbottom, Mehta & Roberts, 2010). However, in recent decades, there has been a substantial shift toward a sedentary lifestyle in North America (McCurdy et al., 2010). According to the *2014 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*, only “7% of 5- to 11-year-olds and 4% of 12- to 17-year-olds meet the daily recommendation of at least 60 minutes of [moderate to vigorous physical activity]” per day (p. 18). Compared with the generations of their parents and grandparents, youth are now spending less time outdoors (Hillman, 2006; Veitch, Salmon, & Ball, 2010). The 2013/2014 report on *TV Basics* distributed by the Television Bureau of Canada (2014) found that Canadian children and teens are spending upwards of 20 hours per week watching television. The same report identified that Canadian and American adults aged 18 years and older are respectively watching 29 and 38 hours of television weekly; almost the equivalent of a full-time job (Television Bureau of Canada, 2014). Over the last 25 years, obesity has risen substantially in Canada, with a quarter of adults now obese (Colley et al., 2011). The 2007-2009 report of physical activity of Canadian adults found that only 15% of adults met the guidelines of achieving 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity weekly, greatly contributing to obesity and subsequent health problems such as diabetes (Colley et al., 2011).

It has been demonstrated that participation in outdoor activities improves emotional well-being as natural environments may moderate the impacts of stress, resulting in decreased anxiety and depression (Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health, 2006; Louv, 2006; McCurdy et al., 2010). Nature provides a restorative environment for children, reducing nervous system activity and fostering fascination and a sense of being away (Maller et al., 2006). Adults may be more familiar with this notion as an opportunity to “clear your head” (Maller et al., 2006; Weng & Chiang, 2014), as being outdoors provides restoration from mental fatigue and improved attention (McCurdy, 2010). According to Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown, and St. Leger (2006), nature is an under-utilized resource, even though it is one of our “most vital health resources” (p. 52).

Literature has indicated that physical activity contributes to a decrease in many health problems, both physical and mental. According to a review by Warburton, Nicol, and Bredin (2006), “both men and women who reported increased levels of physical activity and fitness were found to have reductions in relative risk of death” (p. 801). In addition to the aforementioned physical benefits, those who participate in regular physical activity experience “improved psychological well being [sic]” (p. 806) by way of reduced stress, anxiety, and depression (Warburton et al., 2006; Weng & Chiang, 2014). Outdoor education programs are an ideal option for youth and adults to spend time being physically active in nature in order to achieve the associated physical and mental health benefits discussed above.

As previously mentioned, these programs would not exist without the dedicated staff who facilitate them. A study by Jahoda in 1980 revealed that employment can

provide an individual with an important sense of purpose, mastery, structure, and social position (Kelloway & Day, 2005). In contrast, employment also has the capacity to lead to burnout, particularly by those who do “people work” (Maslach, 1982). The following review will present some of the challenges and benefits of outdoor education as they relate to the program participants; however, the literature is largely concentrated on the leaders. Additionally, this review will introduce relevant literature on workplace wellness and the theoretical frameworks used for this study.

Outdoor education program benefits for program participants

Prior to introducing literature on leader experience, the researcher must first provide a synopsis of the programs and their impact on program participants. Although this study did not focus on program participant experience, the following literature review on program benefits was included as the researcher felt it important to inform the reader of the impact these programs can have.

In addition to the general physical and mental benefits of being physically active outdoors, outdoor education programs offer unique benefits to their participants. A case study from the National Outdoor Leadership School on student learning through outdoor education found that students learned a variety of both hard (technical) skills and soft (interpersonal) skills (Paisley et al., 2008). Students benefited from the acquisition of hard skills such as outdoor, judgment, and environmental skills, as well as soft skills such as leadership, small group behaviour, and communication (Paisley et al., 2008). A study comparing the learning outcomes of the National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound found that regardless of programmatic differences, participants came away with feelings of transference, accomplishment, self-respect and self-esteem

(Goldenberg et al., 2011). Johnson and Wattchow (2004) conducted a longitudinal study in which they interviewed Grade 10 students who had participated in Camp Mallana, an eight-day outdoor education camp. The results presented themselves in the following categories: skills, knowledge, and recreation; teamwork and social skills; personal development; and environmental learning. Johnson and Wattchow (2004) found that when students were given a challenge, particularly one which involved a risk, participant engagement and enthusiasm increased. “Similarly, when students were given more responsibility, leadership and ownership of the activity being undertaken, they became more actively involved and learned more from the experience” (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004, p. 5). This learning presented itself in many tangible ways. It was found that socialization was a primary aspect of student experience, particularly engagement with students who would not normally interact (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004, p. 6). This resulted in student attitudes changing toward their peers. Students believed that social skills and teamwork were directly transferable skills with which they returned to the classroom and would use later in life (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004). The students of Camp Mallana also experienced an improved self-concept (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004). A highlight of the experience for many of the participants was the opportunity to reflect, be contemplative, and “gain a sense of perspective on what was occurring in their lives” (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004, p. 7). This reflection allowed students to consider their beliefs and values which led to the reaffirmation of those beliefs as well as a stronger sense of identity and self-concept (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004). As participants completed challenges and requisite skills, they felt a sense of success when they achieved a goal (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004). Lastly, Johnson and Wattchow (2004) found that

the participants increased their awareness of environmental issues and began to view the outdoors as a “peaceful, inspiring place that was worthwhile conserving” (p. 8).

This section of the literature review addressed outdoor education program benefits for participants and provided a foundation to understand the importance of the leaders. The next section will introduce literature regarding leader experience, including challenges and stressors.

Outdoor education leader challenges and stressors

Literature on leader experience was reviewed by the researcher. While existing research on this topic came from a variety of sources as indicated below, the majority was conducted using quantitative methods.

Leaders may work in more than one type of outdoor education setting. Those who are stationed at a base camp live a more residential life, including proper sit-down meals, access to bathing facilities, and connection to the “real world” through various media outlets. These leaders occasionally lead outdoor expeditions, but primarily ensure the smooth running of day-to-day camp. In contrast, some leaders regularly lead expeditions. These leaders will be the main focus of this section. Leaders who are “on-trek” consistently live the life of their program participants. At minimum, this lifestyle consists of eating pre-packaged camping food, wearing minimalist outdoor gear, and living in a variety of extreme weather conditions (Marchand et al., 2009). Many staff operate on a rotating schedule of eight days on expedition, followed by six days out of the field (Marchand et al., 2009). An additional, more intense schedule “requires 21 continuous days of work on a contained expedition, with a minimum of seven rotations in a calendar year” (Marchand et al., 2009, p. 361). Writings of the late Paul Petzoldt

emphasized that outdoor education leaders tend to experience cyclical stress on each trip (Wagstaff & Cashel, 2001). The beginning of a trip, typically the first day or two, is the most intense and exhausting for instructors (Wagstaff & Cashel, 2001). While the participants and leaders on a 21-day trip may have more opportunity to settle into routine, those on a trip between five and eight days will regularly spend the first 48 hours under high stress. This type of schedule is extremely demanding both physically and emotionally and can lead to relational stress, which will be discussed further. Although constantly surrounded by program participants, this lifestyle can be isolating and challenging, and lead to stress and burnout.

Marchand (2009) described the findings of Dawson, who, in 1979, discussed burnout in the field, when he researched the impact of workload, client interaction, and interference with personal life on leader exhaustion (Marchand et al., 2009). In Thompson's (1984) article, *How to Reduce Stress on Staff in Outdoor Programs*, the author discussed burnout of Outward Bound staff.

Staff "burn-out" [sic] plagues most childcaring agencies but is particularly trouble-some in outward bound adapted programs. Burn-out [sic] is a state of exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on energy, strength and/or resources. It leads to high staff turnover. Studies indicate that the quality of services offered by a program diminish significantly with rapid turnover in personnel. Program expertise and wisdom are lost when an instructor terminates employment early. (Thompson, 1984, p. 36)

Thompson (1984) suggested that although ideal candidates are hired for these positions, staff ultimately discover "that the youth, the course structure and the environment are

stressful and rapid ‘burn-out’ [sic] is the consequence” (p. 32). A study by Hayashi and Ewert (2006) determined that ideal outdoor education leaders possess high levels of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership styles, yet even so, these leaders experience burnout. Since the presentation of these findings, additional struggles of leadership staff have been researched, including the challenges of balancing work and relationships, long work hours, inadequate compensation, safety responsibilities, and weak support from administration (Marchand et al., 2009).

Relationships are a main area of concern for outdoor education leaders. Spending time away from home can be a challenge for anyone, but especially to those trying to build relationships with others who are not in the same environment. Of 129 survey respondents, Marchand et al. (2009) found that “almost a quarter of [leaders] who had experienced a break-up reported that their work had contributed to that break-up” (p. 366). Additionally, 55% of the respondents “always” or “often” felt disconnected from their home while they were working, while 51% believed they were missing out on important time spent with family and friends (Marchand et al, 2009). One respondent commented that not only was it difficult to maintain relationships while working, but it was also “extremely hard to even meet people outside of work, especially romantic prospects or even friendships” (Marchand et al., 2009, p. 370). Finally, of those surveyed, 36% struggled to create relationships with those not associated with their work when they were outside their work environment. An exploratory study by Lawrence-Wood and Raymond (2011) echoed these sentiments, by finding that leaders had difficulty relating to friends and family who were not associated with an outdoor education lifestyle. Often when leaders returned home from expeditions, time off was

spent recuperating and preparing for the next trip as opposed to going out and meeting new people (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011).

Working relationships were found to be especially challenging regarding work with at-risk or therapeutic clients. This clientele was accompanied by a particularly intense and draining environment as participants often “demand more and give less”, making expeditions more challenging for leaders (Marchand et al., 2009, p. 362). A 2002 study by Hastings reported that staff in these environments had an increased risk of stress and related psychological problems (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011). As a result, staff turnover was higher in these environments, creating impermanent work relationships between staff (Marchand et al., 2009). A study by Vernon (2011) suggested that successful co-instruction required two instructors to “share in the negotiation of professional obligation, social roles, and personal requirements” (p. 376) in order to be able to provide a meaningful experience for program participants. The formation of relationships is becoming increasingly important in the workplace as the principle of “leaderful practice” is introduced. Leaderful practice is based on the principle that leadership is “. . . less about what one person thinks and does and more about what people do together to accomplish important activities” (Raelin, 2010, p. xiii). The concept of leaderful practice will be further developed in subsequent sections.

As reported by Marchand (2009), a study conducted by Bunce found those working with at-risk youth often experienced the following struggles in addition to relationship difficulties:

- a) tendencies to mimic maladaptive behaviors of clients while on expedition
- b) a feeling of being out of control

- c) lack of self-confidence
- d) concerns for their personal safety (p. 362)

High anxiety and low self-confidence, however, are not only experienced by leaders working with troubled populations. Literature has found that the construct of perceived self-control is an important mediator of stress and anxiety; Lawrence-Wood and Raymond (2011) found that “wilderness leaders experienced higher anxiety and lower self-confidence when they engaged in activities they had less control over” (p. 325). This information was revealed through a study of 62 leaders who completed a self-report questionnaire (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011). This study will be further explained in Chapter 5. Further support for leader anxiety, particularly regarding feelings of being out of control and lacking self-confidence, was presented in an exploratory study conducted by Bunyan and Boniface (2007). In their quantitative study on *Leader Anxiety During an Adventure Education Residential Experience*, Bunyan and Boniface (2007) reported the findings of Robinson and Stevens, stating that it was determined that leaders experienced both cognitive and somatic stress throughout an expedition (Bunyan & Boniface, 2007). The findings of Robinson and Stevens are presented below as paraphrased by Bunyan and Boniface (2007).

Research suggests that perception of control over event outcomes is particularly significant in determining whether stress is seen as facilitative or debilitating. Uncertainty of outcome (characteristic of adventure experiences and arising from such aspects as living in an unfamiliar and changing environment) can result in event outcomes being seen as beyond the control of the [leader], with stress being experienced as feelings of fear or anxiety. Stress of this nature could be

experienced by the leader of a large group who has to rely on other staff to organise [sic] and supervise participants and thus is removed from a position of being in direct control. (Bunyan & Boniface, 2007, p. 38)

Respondents in Marchand et al.'s (2009) study on field instructor job-related stress and retention were asked questions relating to three broad areas: challenges within the work area, challenges outside the work setting, and personal benefits of leadership. Difficulties within the work setting ranged from work schedule, lack of privacy, and boredom from repeated trips, to a lack of personal cleanliness (Marchand et al., 2009). Of the 15 difficulties identified outside the work setting, over 50% were connected to relationships in some capacity. Other challenges included feeling disconnected from home, limited time off between rotations, having to defend working in wilderness therapy, limited time to explore other interests, and having to re-adapt to life outside work (Marchand et al., 2009). Compared with 44 identified difficulties of being an outdoor leader, respondents identified five benefits: living in the wilderness, break from home stressors, personal growth, improved sense of self, and lack of technology (Marchand et al., 2009). It is clear through this research that there appears to be an imbalance of challenges and benefits.

One difficulty identified outside the work setting was the struggle to re-adapt to home life when not on expedition. This was a common struggle among outdoor education leaders, with many experiencing post-program psychological adjustment (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011).

Wilderness programs are designed to be physically and emotionally intense for participants . . . Importantly, *adult staff members* also describe similar

physically and emotionally intense experiences, reporting that after program completion they undergo a period of adjustment . . . [A] small number of adult staff have described symptoms suggesting that [they] experienced a minor “traumatic event”. (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011, p. 324)

Consistent with the reaction to a traumatizing event, leaders experienced post-program symptoms including periods of crying and sleep difficulties. Of 62 leaders surveyed, 74% reported that they did not feel like themselves after a trip, while others experienced difficulties relaxing or became upset easily (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011). Due to the intense physical and emotional demands, many leaders returning from expedition also experienced a lack of energy resulting in a tendency to withdraw from others (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011), which compounded struggles in re-adapting to life and relationships back home. This literature suggested that the experience of outdoor education leaders in their workplace has room for improvement, and as such, an investigation into workplace wellness and health and wellness models will follow.

Workplace wellness

The evolution of workplace wellness has been a slow process, with greater awareness of employee health and wellness being raised in the mid-twentieth century. Historically, workplace wellness, or a healthy workplace, was determined primarily by a company’s financial bottom line (Gratwich, Gottschalk, & Munz 2006). The 1940s saw the first emphasis on wellness in the workplace, with companies beginning to organize employee outings and family picnics (Gratwich et al., 2006). It was not until 30 years later, in the 1970s and 1980s, that companies began to offer employee fitness programs and focus not only on preventing poor health of employees, but on promoting positive

healthy behaviors (Gratwich et al., 2006). As of 2006, it was determined that 90% of American organizations with 50 or more employees provided some type of health promotion program or activity in the workplace (Gratwich et al., 2006). As an average adult may spend up to a third of his or her waking hours in the workplace (Gratwich et al., 2006), these are important advances in improving the health of employees.

As written in Gratwich et al.'s article, Sauter et al. defined a healthy workplace as “any organization that maximizes the integration of worker goals for well-being and company objectives for profitability and productivity” (Gratwich et al., 2006, p. 131). In order to determine these goals and objectives, it is necessary to define what is important to any given work environment. Gratwich, Trares, and Kohler (2007) found that in developing a healthy workplace, it was advisable to remember that “[e]mployees in organizations do not have the same values, expectations of work, backgrounds, and family arrangements” (p. 276). For this reason, programs must be developed to align with the unique needs of employees; otherwise, it is unrealistic to expect employees to adopt a program which may not fit with their desires (Gratwich et al., 2007). In order to offer suggestions for the creation of healthy workplaces, it is important to include the employees in the process.

Canadian workplace wellness history

A recent study of worksite health and wellness programs in Canada determined that as of December 2011 “it was estimated that there were about 2.4 million businesses and that about two thirds of the working-age population (15-64 years) were employed either part- or full-time” (Despres, Almeras, & Gauvin, 2014, p. 486). In total, this represented approximately 18 million Canadians. With so many spending the majority of

their waking hours at work (Michaels & Greene, 2013), many workplace health and wellness initiatives have been developed in Canada to benefit this population.

Developed in 1974, the Lalonde report, a public policy document “which highlighted the need to go outside the healthcare system to promote the health of the population” (Despres et al., 2014, p. 486), was a catalyst to the development and implementation of workplace health and wellness programs in Canada during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Despres et al., 2014). Much of this development was spearheaded by the employees in the Workplace Fitness Unit of the former Ministry of Fitness and Amateur Sport (Despres et al., 2014). Additionally, the Canadian Centre [sic] for Occupational Health and Safety (created in 1978) and the National Quality Institute (created in 1992) have worked to “advance organizational excellence” (Despres et al., 2014, p. 487) through the many programs that will be highlighted in the subsequent section.

A recent study conducted in 51 workplaces in Atlantic Canada reported “an alarming prevalence of modifiable health risks, with half of the study sample having two to four major modifiable health risks, such as daily tobacco smoking, physical inactivity, overweight [sic], and elevated blood pressure” (Makrides, Smith, Allt, Farquharson, Szpilfogel et al., 2011, p. 799). Even with so many employees having health risks, a survey of Canadian workplaces between 2006 and 2009 reported that only 21% of companies assessed the health of their employees (Despres et al., 2014). The following section will outline provincial workplace health and wellness initiatives as of 2009, yet it is important to note that many of the outcomes of these initiatives are not being monitored (Despres et al., 2014).

Provincial workplace health and wellness initiatives

Canada is home to 10 provinces and three territories. Each province or territory “is responsible for the development of [its] own workplace health and wellness policies or programs” (Bray, 2009, p. 22). The initiatives listed below are some examples of provincial or territorial programs as described in the 2009 report on Canadian workplace health and wellness provincial and territorial requirements.

Alberta – Workplace Health and Safety Alberta Employment and Immigration (WE)

“The purpose of the WE program is to provide advice, facilitation and education to employers, employees and unions in Alberta” (Bray, 2009, p. 9). This was accomplished through workshops and facilitation services that worked to “address workplace issues, build stronger workplace relationships, and create and enhance safe and sustainable workplaces” (Bray, 2009, p. 9).

British Columbia – Healthy Workplaces

Created out of a recognition that juggling demands of work, family, and other personal responsibilities often means “less time or energy for health prevention behaviours [sic] like physical activity” (Bray, 2009, p. 10), the *Healthy Workplaces* initiative provides resources for employers and employees on “planning healthy meetings, tobacco cessation, healthy eating and the importance of taking the stairs” (Bray, 2009, p. 10).

Manitoba – Manitoba Healthy Living

The strategy behind *Manitoba Healthy Living* was to make choices that keep individuals fit physically, mentally, and spiritually (Bray, 2009, p. 12). The website

associated with this initiative provides information on “health[y] eating, tobacco cessation, active living and stress reduction” (Bray, 2009, p. 12).

New Brunswick – NB Wellness Strategy

Focused on four interrelated pillars (healthy eating; mental fitness and resilience; tobacco-free living; and physical activity), this wellness initiative was introduced in 2006 “to promote better connections and provide support” to facilitate further wellness action in the workplace (Bray, 2009, p. 12).

Each province and territory offered multiple workplace health and wellness initiatives within their respective locations. It is interesting to note, however, that while these initiatives are provincially and territorially developed and implemented, there was no requirement for participation from any level (employee, employer, union) (Bray, 2009, p. 22). Furthermore, as of 2009, there were no mandatory reporting measures in place to determine program outcomes, nor were there “ramifications for not completing health and wellness reporting requirements” (Bray, 2009, p. 23).

Canadian literature on workplace health and wellness provided an overview of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for employees. While these initiatives are positive, no workplace wellness programs specifically designed for outdoor education leaders were found by the researcher.

The social ecological model

Developed by Urie Brofenbrenner in the 1970s, the Social Ecological Model (SEM) uses a contextual approach to study human behavior, and identifies four systems in which we live: the microsystem (e.g. home or school), mesosystem (the interacting microsystem where the effect of, for example, the home on school or vice versa takes

place), exosystem (e.g. neighborhood), and macrosystem (the larger socio-economic and cultural context) (Lounsbury and Mitchell, 2009). As explained by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the SEM “is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (p. 3). This theory identifies the active role that individuals have on each level of the model, and acknowledges the influence of the environment on an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lounsbury & Mitchell, 2009).

Golden and Earp (2012) support this understanding and relate it to health by stating that “social ecological models recognize individuals as embedded within larger social systems and describe the interactive characteristics of individuals and environments that underlie health outcomes” (p. 364). As part of a systematic review spanning literature over 20 years, Golden and Earp (2012) determined that using a SEM may not just be a useful tool in prescribing health interventions, but may also be used as a means to better understand health behavior using a combination of individual and contextual factors. Furthermore, Fielding (2013) addressed the fact that health issues are complex, and not limited to any one factor. Instead, they are the result of a combination of social, physical, economic, behavioral, and genetic factors (Fielding, 2013). Specifically regarding workplace wellness, “workplace health promotion involves the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work” (Workplace Health Promotion, 2008, p. 1472). Effective workplace health promotion activities are “multi-faceted initiatives to improve health in the workplace based on comprehensive health promotion programs” (Workplace Health Promotion, 2008, p. 1472). These initiatives may involve the employee, family, management, or the community at large. For example, an initiative may provide an

employee with a pass to the local community fitness center where they can access fitness and nutrition programs offered through the municipality. For this reason, the SEM has been chosen as a theoretical lens through which to view this research. As identified by Brofenbrenner, and confirmed by others, an individual's health status is determined by the bidirectional relationships of the systems within the SEM. When studying the health and wellness of outdoor education leaders within the workplace, multiple layers of influence must be identified and taken into consideration to provide a comprehensive review of the factors that may or may not influence healthy behaviors.

Multiple variations of Brofenbrenner's model have been developed, but for the purposes of this study, the variation by McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, and Glanz (1988) was used as a guiding framework (see Table 1). Incorporating elements from Belsky and Stuart, McLeroy et al. developed an adapted ecological model for health promotion that viewed behavior as being determined by the following: intrapersonal factors, interpersonal processes and primary groups, organizational (institutional) factors, community factors, and public policy (McLeroy et al., 1988).

Table 1 Social Ecological Model Visual Comparison

Social Ecological Model Visual Comparison Table	
Brofenbrenner's (1979) Social Ecological Model Levels	McLeroy et al.'s (1988) Adapted Social Ecological Model Components
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Microsystem 2. Mesosystem 3. Exosystem 4. Macrosystem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intrapersonal/Interpersonal Factors 2. Community Factors 3. Public Policy 4. Organizational (Institutional) Factors

Note. Corresponding numbers indicate there are commonalities between levels/components.

Intrapersonal factors

Intrapersonal factors can be characterized as, but are not limited to, an individual's knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and personal skills (McLeroy et al., 1988). In relation to outdoor education, this may include past training or experience of the instructor, and how it has shaped his or her attitudes and beliefs in relation to the outdoors. This is the most personal level of this adapted SEM.

Interpersonal processes and primary groups

Interpersonal processes and primary groups include one's most immediate social relationships. These can include family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and general acquaintances (McLeroy et al., 1988). Arguably one of the most influential levels of the ecological model, relationships at this level "are important sources of influence in the health related [sic] behaviors of individuals" (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 356). These relationships are vital social resources. ". . . [F]requently referred to as social support, [they] are important mediators of life stress, and important components of overall well being [sic]" (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 357). For example, an outdoor education leader may use the relationship with a co-worker for emotional support while on the job. This is the first level of the varied SEM where environmental factors (e.g. workplace relationships) begin to shape an individual's lifestyle decisions.

Organizational (institutional) factors

The third level of the SEM concerns organizations. As people typically spend one-third to one-half of their lives in organizational settings (e.g. daycare, school, work), an institution has the capacity to greatly influence the "health and health related [sic] behaviors of an individual" (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 359). In relation to an outdoor

education worksite, for example, this may include considerations such as pace of work, work load, responsibilities, and job complexity (McLeroy et al., 1988). More subjective factors such as management styles, relationships with co-workers and supervisors, and communication are all social variables that can influence an individual at this environmental level. The organizational component of the SEM can also be seen as a gateway level to community factors and public policy as elements found within it “may serve as important mediators or mediating structures between individuals and the larger political and economic environment” (McLeroy et al., 1988). For example, this link can be found through the health care benefits or insurance an organization provides to its employees. An area of great importance within an organization, which will be looked at more closely throughout this study, is the effort made to “creat[e] healthier environments in addition to creating healthier employees” (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 360).

Community factors

McLeroy et al. (1988) acknowledged that the concept of community can take on many different forms. As such, for the purpose of clarity within the SEM, the authors have identified community as having three distinct meanings:

First, community refers to mediating structures, or face-to-face primary groups to which individuals belong. This view of community embraces families, personal friendship networks, and neighborhoods. This is analogous to Bronfenbrenner’s definition of a mesosystem. Second, community can be thought of as the relationships among organizations and groups within a defined area, such as local voluntary agencies, local governmental health providers, local schools, etc. Third, community is defined in geographical and political terms, such that a community

refers to a population which is coterminous with a political entity, and is characterized by one or more power structures. (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 364)

For an outdoor educator, one of the largest community factors may be the geographical location of his or her workplace. The placement of a leader, in what is usually an isolated environment, may largely influence his or her attitudes and beliefs as there are no external factors outside the geographical location to provide additional mediation.

Public policy

Public policy can be characterized by “its emphasis on the health of populations rather than the health of individuals” (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 365) through the use of various policies and procedures that are created to protect the health of community members. This is in contrast to the organizational factor, which focuses on the individual and the micro level of the SEM. Within Canada, for example, outdoor educators may be affected by public policy if they are required to comply with provincial or federal Worker’s Compensation Board regulations, or if there are training requirements for a position.

Purpose of ecological model and links to outdoor education

When considering which model to use as a theoretical framework for this study, the above adaptation of the SEM was chosen for multiple reasons. First, the SEM seeks to make connections between the multiple facets present in one’s life, for example, home and work. As the current study focused on the lives of outdoor education leaders both within and outside their workplace, it was an appropriate choice. Secondly, the SEM provided the structure and theoretical framework that allowed the researcher to make

sense of the data, by not only providing structured components, but also reminding the researcher to consider multiple levels during the analysis of the findings.

Six dimensions of wellness

A review of wellness models was conducted, and Dr. Bill Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness (Hettler, 1976) was chosen as a guiding framework for the interview questions. The Six Dimensions of Wellness are: occupational, intellectual, social, spiritual, physical, and emotional. Hettler's model has been "adopted by many university, corporate and public health programs" (Lauzon, 2002) and is currently used as the fundamental framework of the National Wellness Institute, which is a non-profit organization that seeks to "promote wellness globally" (National Wellness Institute, n.d.). Each of the Six Dimensions was considered in the creation of the interview question as seen in Appendix D.

Research gaps

The studies discussed in this literature review acknowledged many of the challenges faced by outdoor education leaders. However, the aforementioned studies all presented quantitative data. Marchand (2008) suggested that a "qualitative study directed toward field instructors could bring more depth and validity to future studies regarding challenges of the profession" (p. 288). Qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews may be beneficial as they provide room and freedom for additional topics to be explored through the use of probes and open-ended questions. This study aimed to add depth to the knowledge of outdoor education leaders by not only increasing an understanding of

the challenges and benefits of working in the industry, but by adding the personal voice of leaders to the literature.

Chapter 3 – Methods

Introduction

Qualitative research works to explain and understand the depth of a particular experience. As described by Lincoln (1995), qualitative research does not aim to confirm or deny previous research, but rather to “contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding” (p. 278) of the experience under study. For this reason, qualitative research was chosen as an appropriate method to supplement and support previous research findings on the lived experience of outdoor education leaders, but with a goal to add deeper meaning to these experiences.

Design

A descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach was selected as it focused on the description of participant experiences. The emphasis of this type of study is that “experiences as perceived by human consciousness [have] value and should be an object of scientific study” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). Additionally, a descriptive phenomenology seeks to describe, not just explain, the participant’s lived experiences. The primary purpose of this study was to achieve a better understanding of outdoor education leader experiences; therefore, a phenomenological approach was chosen as it aligned with the goals of the primary and secondary research questions. With help from the participants, a researcher conducting a phenomenological study will work to review, analyze, and describe the data. Often there is a mutual interest between the participants and the researcher, both of whom are interested in telling the same story.

This study used qualitative methods to answer the research questions. In an effort to attain a full understanding of the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders, in-depth semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) were conducted with all participants. This process is elaborated on in subsequent sections.

Researcher bias

The researcher's past experience played a role in this study. Having been exposed to outdoor education leadership from both participation and employment perspectives, the researcher was keen to undertake this study. While the researcher made every attempt to suppress her bias, she followed a Heideggerian phenomenology which assumes that personal history cannot be bracketed out of a research process and that it is an important part of understanding the findings gathered during the research process (Kerry & Armour, 2000). Interpretation of the findings cannot occur without a reference to one's background and pre-understanding of one's world (Kerry & Armour, 2000). To gain a greater understanding of the personal experience of the researcher, please see Appendix A.

Participant selection and recruitment

This study included interviews with five outdoor education leaders. To ensure the necessary demographic of participant was interviewed, purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling "focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (p. 230). In this study, the research questions sought to explore the experiences of outdoor education leaders, and, therefore, outdoor education leaders were the required

demographic. More specifically, Patton (2002) offered many varieties of purposeful sampling, such as intensity, snowball, criterion, and typical case sampling. This study used typical case sampling. “In describing a culture or program to people not familiar with the setting studied, it can be helpful to provide a qualitative profile of one or more typical cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). It is important to note that although Patton described this type of sampling as typical *case* sampling, it is not necessarily associated with case study research. In contrast to a phenomenological study, which seeks to describe and explain a phenomenon, a case study focuses on exploring an existing issue (Creswell, 2008). While typical case sampling can be used as a means of sampling in case study research, it is not restricted to that method. Remaining consistent with the information presented in the literature review, a typical outdoor education leader operates on a cycle of spending consecutive days leading in the field, followed by a period of time out of the field. In order to represent this population, purposeful (typical case) sampling was used to select participants who have experienced this work schedule. Creswell (2005) supports purposeful sampling by requiring that each participant has, or has had, personal experience in the area, or phenomenon, that is being studied. Participants in this study have led in a variety of settings, including, but not limited to, schools, youth organizations, or programs for at-risk or troubled youth. Participants have also worked with age groups ranging from middle school to older adult populations of any skill level.

As the researcher was located in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and conducted interviews in person, participants were required to reside in British Columbia, Canada or Washington State, USA.

Data Collection

Prior to commencing data collection, ethics approval was obtained from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. Data was collected using one-on-one semi-structured interviews following a general interview guide (Patton, 2002). A general interview guide approach is one where the interview questions and topics are pre-determined; however, the interviewer is able to decide the sequence of wording of the questions in order to suit the interview (Patton, 2002). This approach was appropriate for the current study as it also allowed the researcher flexibility to follow up particular comments with other related questions and probes. For example, if a participant had been asked about their experience returning home from a trip, and they spoke mostly about how it impacted relationships, the interviewer would follow with a pre-determined question about relationships, even if it was not the next scheduled question. An informal conversation interview (Patton, 2002), more commonly used in ongoing field research, did not offer enough structure and would not have ensured that each participant would be asked questions that fell under the same general categories. A standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 2002), in contrast, was too structured, not providing the freedom to allow the researcher to probe when appropriate, but instead, only asking pre-determined questions. Questions were framed around Patton's suggestion of six topics: background/demographic, experience/behavior, opinions/values, feelings, knowledge, and sensory (Patton, 2002). The scope of these questions was to ensure that the interviewer was able to attain a comprehensive understanding of the interview topic. As this study focused on job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders and the impact of these experiences on their personal health and wellness, it was important to ensure that

the formulated questions asked were relevant to that topic. This was accomplished through the consideration of Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness (1976) throughout the creation of the interview guide.

A pilot interview was conducted, with an acquaintance of the researcher, who had experience as an outdoor education leader. As Colaizzi (1978) stated, "Experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice as criteria for selecting [participants]" (p. 58); therefore, this pilot was deemed appropriate. As previously mentioned, the interview guide for this study was formed from a combination of considerations: the SEM, the Six Dimensions of Wellness, previous literature results, and suggestions of research methodologists. Patton (2002) explained that in order to maximize the time spent in an interview

it is helpful to think through priority questions that will elicit relevant responses.

This means that the interviewer must know what issues are important enough to ask questions about, and to ask those questions in a way that the person being interviewed can clearly identify what he or she is being asked[.] (Patton, 2002, p. 360)

The pilot interview successfully determined that the interview guide for this study contained clear questions. After completion, the pilot interview was transcribed and the transcription was reviewed with the researcher's advisory committee where minor changes were made to the interview questions in order to more accurately align with Patton's interview guide. Colaizzi (1978) stated that the success of phenomenological research guides "depends on the extent that they tap the subjects' experiences of the phenomenon as distinct from their theoretical knowledge of it" (p. 58).

Written informed consent and ongoing consent was required from all participants as per the ethical requirements of this study.

One-on-one interviews

Step 1: The researcher contacted each participant via telephone, electronic mail, or in person. A recruitment script (see Appendix B) was recited to each participant. If the participant chose to be involved in the study, a consent form (see Appendix E) was completed.

Step 2: Upon completion of a participant consent form, the researcher requested a one-on-one interview with each participant. The researcher allowed the participant to choose the location of their choice (provided it was a quiet environment to accommodate audio recording) so the participant would feel comfortable during the interview.

Step 3: Each interview was anticipated to be approximately 60-90 minutes in duration, however, two of the interviews exceeded that time and were 101 and 106 minutes long. Participants were informed of the time as the interview neared the 90-minute mark, to ensure they were aware of time in the event they had subsequent commitments.

Participants whose interviews ran overtime were aware and willing to stay longer as they had many stories they wished to share with the researcher. All interviews were audio-recorded. The researcher also took field notes (Patton, 2002) as they “can help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview moves along” and “[help] make sure the inquiry is unfolding in the hoped-for direction” (p. 383). At the end of each interview, participants were reminded and reassured that all names and identifying situations and factors would be changed in order to protect identity and honor participant confidentiality. Participants were given the opportunity to select their own pseudonym,

and were also reminded that the researcher would be contacting them shortly with a typed transcript of their interview so they would have an opportunity to read it over and ensure they had been understood correctly, or add any thoughts that had arisen subsequent to the interview.

Step 4: Lastly, an audit trail was kept throughout the entire collection and analysis process to ensure that any and all changes to original procedures were documented. Any changes were hand-written on original documents. For example, after conducting a pilot interview, the researcher made minor changes to the original interview guide. The researcher then electronically revised original documents and saved the revised documents in appropriately labelled folders. Amended documents were labelled by date as changes occurred. All original paper copies were filed and stored in a secure location at the University of Victoria and all electronic copies were saved on a password-protected computer.

Data analysis

Data analysis began once the interviews had reached a point of data saturation, which occurred after four participants were interviewed. A fifth participant was subsequently interviewed and interview data was included in the final analysis stage. Patton (2002) suggested there are “no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244). As such, the number of participants interviewed was based on his belief that “[s]ample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry[...]what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (Patton, 2002, p. 244). In this study, the purpose was to better understand the lived experiences of outdoor education leaders. After four interviews, it was determined

by the researcher that saturation had occurred and the purpose of the study had been met. Creswell (2008) defines saturation as the point where the major themes of the data have been identified. Creswell explains that reaching a point of saturation requires a “subjective assessment, but most qualitative researchers realize when it occurs” (p. 258). The researcher who conducted this study was confident saturation had occurred, as results were not only consistent among participants, but were also consistent with previous quantitative findings. Although saturation had occurred, the researcher conducted a fifth interview as the participant had previously agreed to participate in the study. The participant was keen to share her thoughts on her experience as an outdoor education leader, and the researcher wanted to honor the commitment the participant had made to be involved in the study.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim (Patton, 2002), including any pauses, disruptions, or inaudible sections. Verbatim transcription allowed the researcher to recall when an interviewee hesitated, or displayed particular emotion through tone of voice or body language, adding more depth to the results. In addition to following Patton’s guidelines, analysis and coding for this study was largely based on the methodology of Colaizzi (1978) and Moustakas (1994) and was further informed by writings of Shosha (2012) and Edward and Welch (2011). Additionally, a variation on suggestions by Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1999) were used (including color coding). Transcriptions were then coded by following Colaizzi’s (1978) seven-step process. The following description of these seven steps, as presented in an article by Shosha (2012), clearly and concisely described Colaizzi’s method:

1. Read over each transcript
2. Extract significant statements
3. Formulate meaning from significant statements
4. Repeat steps one to three and then organize significant statements into theme clusters
 - (a) Validate theme clusters by checking them against the original transcripts. Was there anything recorded in a transcript that is not represented in a cluster? Is there a theme cluster that does not accurately reflect statements recorded in a transcript?
 - (b) Refuse the temptation of ignoring data or themes which do not easily fit into theme clusters
5. Develop an exhaustive description of theme clusters as articulated by participants using theme clusters
6. Take the above exhaustive description and formulate it into a statement of identification where no additional exhaustive meanings are sought
7. Return to each participant with a copy of the interview transcript for clarification of findings (Shosha, 2012)

Transcriptions were initially coded by the primary researcher, and subsequently with the assistance of a member of the supervisory committee. Notes were kept by the researcher during the entire analysis process. Member checks were conducted with all interviewees to ensure accuracy and clarification of the findings (Creswell, 2005). Completed copies

of all transcripts were electronically mailed to all participants as agreed upon during the initial interview, and participants had an opportunity to review the transcripts and respond with any additional information or changes to existing statements. Two participants responded to this communication. In the case of these two participants, clarifying questions were asked by the interviewer, where it was determined, upon review of the transcripts, that a particular question would benefit from further clarification.

Assumptions and limitations

The researcher *assumed* the following to be true of this study:

1. Participants responses would be an accurate reflection of their experiences
2. Interviews were an appropriate method for understanding participant experiences

The researcher acknowledged that the following *limitations* of this study may have impacted the researcher, participants, data, or data analysis:

1. There are potential biases on behalf of the researcher and participant
2. The participants may not be able to recall all applicable memories
3. Gender, relationship status, and stage of life
4. Participant experience (e.g. working with at-risk youth, school groups, adult and youth populations)

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

Using a qualitative phenomenological method, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of outdoor education leaders. Interviews were conducted with five outdoor education leaders with varying field experience, and all interviews were transcribed and coded as outlined in the methods section. Following an introduction of each of the participants, this chapter will present the findings of these interviews.

Participant biographies

Each of the study participants was introduced to outdoor education in a different way. Below is an introduction of each participant. All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Mark

Mark did not grow up in an environment where he was exposed to outdoor pursuits. Playing more “mainstream” sports as a child such as hockey and volleyball, Mark attended a school that did not have an outdoor education program. While he had teachers who were passionate about physical activity, he was limited to a few day-trips a year that included activities such as cycling or day-hiking. It was not until grade 11 when a friend came back telling tales from a 50-kilometer hiking expedition that Mark was exposed to new possibilities. He was so captivated by the story, the following summer, after graduation, Mark and two equally inexperienced friends ventured out to complete the trip about which they had been told.

And so we went out with our school backpacks and tin cans of food and my dad had an old fondue stove that we took, and like, Canadian tire sleeping bags bungee-corded to the back of my schoolbag, and I remember getting to the first camp site *soaking* wet. It was a very eerie place, like very swampy, yeah, foggy, wet. And setting up our Fisher Price A-frame tent and all cramming in there and reading a little pamphlet about bears and we were horrified and so things just kept going on that trip. So that happened and the stove exploded on us, we just had to figure things out, like we had to cross big rivers and we had no idea how to do it, and it was awesome – like very, very, very informative, and I got home after three days and my mom looked at me, I walked into the backyard, and she looked at me and the first thing she said was, “You had a good time. You’re gonna do that again, aren’t you?”, and I hadn’t even said a word. And she just knew. And yeah, it just, it caught me pretty hard.

Mark is currently employed as an outdoor education leader.

Brynn

Brynn was first introduced to outdoor education while vacationing with family friends when she was 11 years old. After that vacation, she continued involvement in activities that would soon become her passion and career. After years of training and achieving required certifications, Brynn worked as an outdoor education leader for seven years. Brynn very simply stated that “when I am out on the water with the kids, I come alive.” Brynn is not currently employed as an outdoor education leader but remains active in the recreation community.

Peter

Growing up on the coast, Peter had been exposed to the outdoors since childhood. Through his involvement in his community, he had taken opportunities to attend and work at week-long summer camps throughout his youth before pursuing work as a full-time aquatic-based outdoor education leader. Peter expressed that he had always had a passion for investing in the lives of youth; he placed great value on the opportunity outdoor education provided to change lives.

There's just so much opportunity to connect with kids. [On the first day] it's like, "Hi, I'm Peter, watch your step" [laughs], and you know, Wednesday at noon we're sitting around having [lunch] holding hands bawling because these kids were just wanting to open up and talk about their hurt and talk about the insecurities they feel and talk about how they feel alone and it's just insane that it's possible to create an environment where people let down their walls that much.

Peter is not currently employed as an outdoor education leader.

Anna

Anna had been an outdoor education leader for two years, operating both out of her local university town, as well as from a remote location. She grew up in an active environment, but it was not until she went away to university and joined her school's outdoor program that she fell in love with it and pursued employment as an outdoor education leader. For Anna, she feels most at home in the wilderness.

I would say, when I'm in the mountains, I feel beautiful. I don't have a mirror. I can't really see [laughs] but I just like, wearing my fleece pants and my puffy

jacket and a beanie and just sitting around talking with people eating dinner out of a cup, I just feel like this is how the world should be. I feel this is how I should be.

Anna is currently employed as an outdoor education leader.

Sarah

Similar to Peter, Sarah was introduced to outdoor education through personal connections and involvement in her community. She became connected with various organizations through relationships, and was inspired to pursue employment. One of Sarah's greatest joys of working in the field was to safely facilitate the experience of a program participant to experience new things. "Oh you've just never seen anything like this before. This is a really new experience for you...and we're here to help you. We want to help you in any way we can."

Sarah has not only worked as an outdoor education leader in the field, but brings an additional perspective as she has also worked as support staff at base camp. Sarah is not currently employed as an outdoor education leader but continues to volunteer in the field.

Theme clusters - introduction

Through the coding process, it became clear that there were five main theme clusters consistent within each of the interview transcripts: "life-cycle", "relationships", "transition", "leadership", and lastly, "health and wellness". Within each of these theme clusters, multiple sub-themes were present (see Table 2). Theme clusters were relevant to all five participants, whereas sub-themes may not have been. For example, all

participants contributed to the creation of the life-cycle theme cluster, but within that cluster, not all participants spoke specifically or in depth to the sub-theme of “off-season”. In these cases, the participants will be identified by name or verbatim quotes. As is naturally occurring within conversation and qualitative interviews, certain participants were more vocal or passionate about particular areas of their work, or ways in which their work influenced their personal life; therefore, descriptions of certain theme clusters or sub-themes are at times dominated by certain participants’ comments. However, the researcher made an effort to ensure that each participant was equally represented throughout the findings section. The researcher also acknowledges that while all ideas relevant to theme clusters are represented, it was not realistic or necessary to the results to include every quote, concept, or explanation spoken by the participants in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the life of an outdoor education leader. However, to remain consistent with Colaizzi’s (1978) method of analysis, the researcher reviewed the agreement between the transcripts and the theme clusters to ensure no themes were overlooked and no comments were manipulated to fit into a theme cluster. Each theme cluster and its respective sub-themes are described below.

Theme cluster one – life cycle

Throughout each of the interviews, it became apparent that there were distinct metaphorical seasons through which each of the participants lived on a regular rotation. Similar to traditional seasons (summer, fall, winter, spring) this life cycle also contained four seasons: “pre-season”, “in-season”, “post-season”, and “off-season”. The following section will present the results of the interviews as they pertain to the life cycle theme cluster.

Table 2 Theme Clusters and Sub-themes

Theme Clusters				
Life cycle	Relationships	Transition	Leadership	Health and Wellness
Sub-themes				
Life cycle	Relationships	Transition	Leadership	Health and Wellness
Pre-season	Romantic	First 48 hours	Mentoring	What is it?
In-season	Outdoor education participants	Between trips	Skill acquisition and use	Programs offered
Post-season	Co-leaders	Back to the “real world”	Leader characteristics	
Off-season	Non-outdoor education family and friends	Other		

Life cycle – pre-season

Based on the participants’ answers, it was determined that pre-season was the time leading up to working in the field, and could be as short as a few days or as long as a few months. This was the time when pre-trip training took place, as well as the preparation of equipment, food, and the creation of lesson and route plans. Brynn explained how this was a time when she was always super excited, “[I]ike a kid at Christmas!”. For the participants who were returning to an organization, this was a time when they re-initiated communication with co-workers, and often started to feel some

apprehension about the upcoming season. When asked specifically what Mark felt anxious about, he responded that he mostly feels apprehensive about the “what if’s”:

. . . [T]he anticipation, you know? What’s the group gonna be like? What’s the weather gonna be like? Is it really gonna be what it says it’s gonna be? Are things gonna go well? Is the information we’re getting from [our supervisors] correct? What’s gonna come up that isn’t there? As it undoubtedly always does, you know, and how are we going to mitigate that?

Anna also explained that she felt anxiety over potential conditions, and if her participants would be prepared.

I just have my system together already. I know what I wear and I know how cold I will be and what will make me warmer, so I guess I just kinda have myself figured out and can pack really easily, but that took me a long time and a lot of money to develop, and so to have to find shortcuts for people and just gather things from random sources and hopefully put something together for somebody. [They] don’t know what they’ll need. I ask people if they sleep warm or cold and they’re like, uhhhhh [pause] okay, maybe you just don’t know and that’s fine, so it’s kinda hard knowing. You just prepare for the worst.

Participants did not express pre-season concern about physical safety on upcoming expeditions. Mark explained how it was part of his job to keep his participants safe and he was confident in those abilities; therefore, it was not part of pre-season anxiety. This result will be explained further in the leadership theme cluster as it relates to the sub-theme of “leader characteristics” and the leaders’ willingness to embrace risk.

Life cycle – in-season

In-season was the time when outdoor education leaders were fulfilling their contracts or in-field work responsibilities. For each of the participants, this looked different. For some, it meant weekly trips with weekends off in the spring and fall, with trips ranging from 10 to 28 consecutive days in the summer. For others, it meant four months of six- or seven-day trips with a turnaround as low as 18 hours between trips. Additionally, for one of the participants, it also meant spending extended time as a base camp staff member. Each participant had different scheduling with their particular organization; however, while these schedules varied, there were many commonalities shared by the participants. Brynn articulated her experience of an in-season of ocean/aquatic-based outdoor education leading by breaking it down into weeks. Brynn typically worked a nine- to 11-week summer and explained her experience throughout her cycle. She indicated that for the first three weeks, everyone was still tired and in a very trial and error period trying to find flow. By the middle five or six weeks, however, days were flying by, everything had fallen into a status quo, and “everyone had adjusted to the weird hours.” It was during this time that Brynn expressed that funny things started to happen more often; people joked and pranked with each other and it felt like summer was going to last forever. The last few weeks of summer always felt surreal. Staff would stay up very late contemplating what it would be like to go back home, and everyone would try to just soak in every moment. She explained that those last few weeks were a juxtaposition of “super happy and sad” and that instructors started to be distracted during the day as their thoughts drifted back home. She commented that staff

often joked that the schedules intentionally taught the most technical skills to participants during the middle five or six weeks as that is when the instructors were at their best.

While discussing life during a trip or expedition, the topic of energy surfaced multiple times. Anna talked about her experience as one that both takes and provides energy:

When I'm guiding, I'm usually pretty, unless I set aside time to just and like throw responsibility to the side, I'm usually pretty preoccupied with what I have to do, and it's fun, but it definitely feels more like work than if I were to just go out and be, um, in the mountains myself. But it's like fun work. I don't know, it's weird. It's taking energy away from you. It's requiring energy, but being out there is putting energy back into you at the same time. It's a great cycle.

Along the same lines, Peter expressed how he struggled with a lack of energy due to not being able to get enough sleep. "You know, when you're 10 days in a row and you've only had four hours a night every night [laughs]. Your body just starts to shut down. You feel physically sick. Sometimes, it's like, some of the trips are just survival." For Peter, this was not a positive experience. Often this lack of sleep and energy would prevent him from emotionally investing in a trip the way he wished to. "I gotta admit, there's [some trips] where I said, 'okay, I'm here, but I can't invest what I want to invest', so I've gotta coast for a couple of days, and you feel rotten about that, 'cause this is an experience of a lifetime for some kids[.]'" In addition, Peter raised points about more extended health, such as not having regular business hours during a season, preventing him from seeking certain medical services such as visiting a dentist.

For all participants, being out in the wilderness was one of the greatest benefits of the in-season. Each participant remarked on the simplicity of being outdoors. This concept will be further developed under the transitions theme cluster when the results for “back to the real world” are presented. However, Anna and Peter both spoke of the awe they experienced at being humbled by the beauty of the natural world.

I got a photo of it. It was probably one of the top two sunsets I’ve ever seen in my life. It was just so brilliant, so bright, so rich, and the kids are just like, blown away. And to see that exposure to what’s there every day of the year and to be able to take part in that. There’s so much awe and so much wonder. And there’s so much recognition of how small you are. – *Peter*

I still benefit from the quietness and challenge and from being, having time to think and stare in wonder and see beautiful things. I guess the mountains reset my priorities a bit. They instill in me a sense of peace and I’m like, okay, life is good, everything is going to be ok, if there’s something I’m struggling with. And just experiencing a different way of living. You’re living so simply. – *Anna*

One comment spoken by Brynn and related to the in-season, but not necessarily related to the above results, was one of acknowledging what she felt she was missing by being an outdoor education leader. She spoke of “not having a typical summer. I didn’t get to go on family vacations or camping with my friends like other people.” Brynn was the only participant who identified feelings of “missing out” as part of the in-season.

Life cycle – post-season

Post-season will be reported as the time immediately following the end of a trip. Included in this sub-theme is the time between trips, provided participants had an

opportunity to leave the field during this time. If participants stayed on-site between trips, this was not considered post-season. While this sub-theme fit logically into the life cycle cluster, the results of this section are more appropriately presented during the transition theme cluster.

Life cycle – off-season

Based on the responses of the participants, the researcher determined that the off-season was the time when participants had no mandatory responsibilities to complete outdoor education leader tasks. It was the time between the post-season and pre-season; a time when the leaders had recovered from their previous season but had yet to think about the upcoming season. According to the participants, most vocally Mark and Peter, the off-season was a time often dictated by the amount of energy and finances available. When speaking of his lifestyle during the off-season, Peter remarked that “[s]ome people go on trips but I never trip. I didn’t feel like I had a lot of money to expend on fun things so probably lived a pretty quiet, pretty frugal life in those times.” During this time of which Peter was speaking, he was between seasons working for a not-for-profit organization that provided a salary which fell below Canada’s poverty line of \$18,421 (Income distribution and the poverty line, 2014). Other participants including Sarah, Brynn, and Anna all sought additional employment during the off-season in order to supplement their income until they returned to the field. In contrast, Mark found himself fortunate to be working for organizations that offered a more competitive salary package. As explained by Mark, these organizations did so in an attempt to provide a more “cushy” off-season for outdoor education leaders. They believed that in doing so, they would allow their leaders more time to rest in the off-season, meaning they would return

the following season refreshed and ready to invest. Essentially, during the pre- and in-season, Mark was provided the equivalent of an annual salary that would allow him to not seek additional employment in the off-season. The other participants all worked for organizations that were either volunteer, offered minimal honorariums or stipends, or a salary that fell below the poverty line and only took into account the pre- and in-season. As a result of this, Mark had more freedom during the off-season to pursue activities that recharged him for the next in-season:

You'll see me do other things that are not guiding, that are not working with people specifically, but that are building on my skill set. Personally, I get bored really fast so if I do just one thing I'll get pretty tired of it, and so I need to get inspired in other ways and kind of keep filling, I don't know...I'm a task oriented person so you'll see me work on different skills that I might not necessarily get out of guiding or instructing, but I can also take that and it directly applies back to it.

Mark felt that in doing these types of activities in the off-season, he was better prepared to lead his outdoor education participants in the future.

I need to do things that push me out of my comfort zone and push me out of my regular life and ways of learning because we do that so much with youth and with students. If I don't push myself in that situation it's hard to know what they are feeling like. And so I've realized that I really need to do that, both to know what it feels like again and because that's what got me into it in the first place; that feeling of learning and of challenge. It helps me feel a lot better and more energized.

While Peter did not have the same experience as Mark regarding having finances to be able to not work during the off-season, Peter also pursued activities that he felt would engage him in a way that being an outdoor education leader did not. For Peter, this meant writing poetry during his time off. He explained that it was a project he was able to undertake that allowed him to feel productive, engage his imagination, and do something on his own schedule.

Life cycle summary

The overall responses of each participant fit into one of the life-cycle seasons: pre-season, in-season, post-season, or off-season. This was the largest, overarching theme as it encompassed all results; there were no comments that were not able to be sorted into one of the seasons.

Theme cluster two – relationships

Relationships emerged as a common theme throughout the interviews. Four sub-themes were formulated following Colaizzi's (1978) extraction method: "romantic" relationships, relationships with "co-workers", relationships with "outdoor education program participants", and relationships with "non-outdoor education family and friends". The latter category had the potential to be further sub-divided into "friends" and "family" but based on participants' responses, it was decided that they were identified as one group of "non-outdoor education friends and family" and, therefore, will be presented within the same sub-theme. In many cases, longer quotes have been used to give a voice to the participants and to ensure absolute accuracy of their statements.

Relationships – romantic

As previously discussed, Marchand et al. (2009) found that close to 25% of 129 outdoor education leaders having relationship difficulties reported that their work was a contributing factor. Based on the responses of all five participants, it was difficult to either enter into or maintain a relationship while working as an outdoor education leader. It should be noted that at the time of the interviews, only one of the participants was in a relationship; however, four of the five participants had been involved in a romantic relationship at some point while working in the field, whether it be with a co-worker or someone removed from the field.

The results pertaining to relationships will be presented in the following order: meeting a new person, entering into a relationship, and finally, making the decision to maintain or end the relationship.

Peter commented that even prior to meeting a potential romantic partner, he would ask himself, “[d]o I even have the energy to get into a relationship?”. Peter discussed how he worked in an environment that was unlike any other, rigorous by design, and difficult to understand at best. “You’re out [in the field] for half the year, and then you’re exhausted for another quarter of it. So in that sense, it’s almost impossible to build a romantic relationship.”

If, however, an outdoor education leader did have the energy to pursue a romantic relationship, multiple participants identified roadblocks. Peter, who for a portion of the outdoor education season operated on a five-day-on, two-day-off schedule, talked about his weekends.

Sundays were usually pretty good. I'd go to the gym. Try to mix and mingle there. Make sure I got out to meet some new people, because, you know, [my work] is a very homogenous environment and you know the [staff] and you meet kids and that's it – you don't really have an opportunity to meet friends, meet, uh yeah, meet females.

In that way, he mentioned he felt that romantic relationships were “severely impacted” because of the difficulty in meeting people. Even when new groups came through the outdoor education programs, Peter stated that the chaperones or teachers, while they were great people, were often in a different age bracket or a different phase of life altogether, and in the event that there was someone who was a potential romantic interest, that person had usually travelled some distance to participate in the program, which led to the challenge of distance.

Distance was an issue surrounding romantic relationships. Brynn, who had been in a committed relationship prior to beginning a season of outdoor education leading explained how, over time, the distance became a factor.

At first he came up and visited all the time and we did amazing things on my time off. When we weren't together we talked on the phone all the time, and he always wanted to hear about my day even though he didn't really understand what I was doing. By the second year, the novelty had worn off and there was no more honeymoon phase. The distance just became a hassle for him. I wasn't able to come home, so he had to come to me, and he maybe only came twice. He broke up with me after about five days [into our second season of dating] and it totally had to do with the distance.

Distance was also a factor for Peter when considering being in a relationship. As someone who was admittedly family oriented, he took into consideration how his partner might feel in a long-term relationship. “Do I even want a wife? Fifty percent of the time she has to be a single mom, and then rest of the time she’s going to have to put up with me being exhausted.” For Peter, this was a large enough deterrent that it was a contributing factor to him leaving his career as an outdoor education leader.

Mark had experience being in a relationship while being an outdoor education leader. “Um, romantically it’s very challenging for sure. Just for those same reasons of continuity. If the person doesn’t quite understand what [an outdoor education] lifestyle is like, um, it’s hard to understand.” Mark further went on to say that it could be difficult to answer the question of why it seemed as though he was prioritizing work over his relationship. It was hard to explain why he had to leave or why it seemed as though he did not want to stick around. It is important to note, that for Mark, he did not feel he was in a stage of life where having a romantic relationship was something he would prioritize over his work, but he did acknowledge that in the event he wished to pursue a serious relationship, he may decide that working as an outdoor educator may not be conducive to that lifestyle and may consider a career change at that time. A lack of understanding for the lifestyle of an outdoor education leader was a consistent comment throughout discussion regarding romantic relationships.

Many of the romantic relationship statements by the participants revolved around relationships that were between one outdoor education leader, and one non-leader. However, it is important to note that the participants were not closed-minded regarding potential romantic partners. While the results may appear to lean toward study

participants only dating non-leaders, the point was raised that dating co-workers was a possibility. However, Peter commented that dating co-workers in such a highly emotional work environment is often nothing short of a “disaster”.

Relationships – outdoor education program participants

Although relationships, more specifically mentoring relationships, with program participants will be discussed much more in depth in the leadership theme section, there were two study participants who discussed program participants on a more relational level. Mark talked about the relationships he built with the participants.

You’ll see me doing a lot of building rapport and trust in the youth, um yeah, they often trust us with lots of questions and things about life and where they’re at and what they want to do and engaging in those conversations a lot, which is a really privileged place to be in one way, but then also, on the other side it can be a little taxing sometimes. Like at the end I think it’s really important for me to debrief those things with co-workers or professionals to make sure I’m not wearing it.

Peter talked about how meaningful the relationships with the participants could be. “I mean, there’s friendships I still have.” In particular, he mentioned returning program participants who come back year after year. In one particular case, Peter told the story of Ryan, a program participant, who ultimately ended up spending a month and a half with him over the course of multiple outdoor education seasons, and in that time, had the opportunity to share many conversations and amazing experiences. Peter explained how there were “. . . hundreds of stories. Everyday is a story [in outdoor education] ‘cause there’s just so much opportunity to connect with the kids.”

Relationships – co-leaders/co-workers/colleagues

Working relationships arose as an important dimension of relationship for an outdoor education leader. When comparing her work life to her home life, Brynn described how the work environment creates more of a team feel than one could ever recreate at home. “You have to rely on your peers to keep you happy and safe.” For Brynn, this was a large reason why she felt she was closer with her outdoor education colleagues than her other friends: “You have to trust them from day one.” Sarah explained how she also became very close with her co-leaders.

Whenever you have a lifestyle job, the people you work with, it’s like awesome for those relationships. It’s like living in a greenhouse. Things just flourish and grow so fast. It’s so intense and you get to know people’s quirks and the ins and outs of who they are. The good, the bad, and the ugly if you will.

Brynn also talked about how her outdoor education colleagues knew her better than anyone else. “They can pick up on changes in my facial expression or body language in a way my other friends can’t.” She attributed this to the amount of time they spent together in an intense environment coupled with the need to rely on one another to stay safe and keep everyone else safe. Additionally, working in an outdoor aquatic setting where it was not always easy to verbally communicate due to the nature of being outdoors on the ocean, meant that developing other means of communicating was necessary.

Having spent time in a similar aquatic environment for multiple seasons, Peter experienced both the positives and negatives of these working relationships. One of the most difficult times for him was when he joined an existing group of outdoor education leaders part way through a season.

It was a tough chapter of my life and I came in late, halfway through the season, [to a group] that had been [working] together for a long time. And it was tough, it was really tough to join with that [team] ‘cause they were exhausted and hoping I had fresh legs and I didn’t.

Peter went on to explain how he never fully had an opportunity to “gel” with that particular group, but in subsequent years, it was apparent that all staff beginning the season together, promoted staff cohesiveness.

Mark remarked on the value found in a co-leader as someone who can encourage him to be the best leader he could be. Described by Mark as “pairing talks”, Mark explained the time he spent with a familiar or new co-leader before a trip as a valuable time to identify personal goals and learn about how the other works before going out in the field. With a familiar co-leader he explained that it was easier because they each knew how the other worked, but with a new co-worker, it required more effort. There was an intention to sit down and get to know one another. “With a new instructor it’s like, ‘hey, cool, so you’re Johnny. What do you want to work on on this trip? Do you want to focus on...?’ . . . and for me, I mean, I’m not so comfortable with certain things so my co-instructor would say ‘hey, you should try and really push yourself on this during the trip’ so it’s also an opportunity to develop our own professional thing[.]”

Peter talked about the way the outdoor environment directly influenced his relationships with his co-leaders:

When you’re living in a pressure cooker, you don’t have time to sweep things under the rug. It’s amazing how you can have something wrong in our normal nine-to-five life, you know, you’ve got your own little bedroom that you can hide

in, but when you live in an environment where you're working sixteen, eighteen hours a day, it's high stress, high responsibility, emotionally burdensome, how you just can't hide your crap; you can't just sweep it under the rug and hope for the best tomorrow. You blow up or you die [laughs]. You let it out, you just can't keep that stuff in and so you know, you hit the wall physically, and then you hit the wall mentally, and then emotionally, and at some point you've got to turn to your team and say "I've hit the wall on all levels and I don't know what to do". And you gotta talk it out.

Relationships – non-outdoor education family and friends

Each of the five participants very clearly distinguished between their outdoor education relationships and their non-outdoor education relationships. This was described in a variety of ways; "my other friends", "my real friends", "my co-workers", "my best friends", "other people". In each case, there was a clear line between people who currently worked in or had experience as an outdoor education leader, and those who did not. This distinction was prominent throughout the entire interview but came out most strongly when discussing relationships, particularly in feeling understood by others and in the pursuit of friendships and other relationships. Sarah felt that maintaining relationships with non-outdoor people was one of the biggest challenges of working as an outdoor education leader.

Challenging in that when you're away a lot, um, or a lot of outdoor education ends up happening away on trips, so there is a drawback of losing relationships at home as you don't have that, like, yeah, like you're just gone, and as lifestyle jobs go, or when you're on trips, you're very focused on the trip and that's your world

when you're there, and so it's easy to just like, forget about the home piece. Or ignore it. Because you have to but also because it's really easy to.

For Anna, Mark, and Peter, being an outdoor education leader directly influenced their relationship choices:

[Being an outdoor education leader] kind of affects who I pursue; the friends I make or who I hang out with. So people who have similar interests I'm more likely to hang out with or spend time with . . . It also affects how I engage with people. I feel like it makes me a more content person . . . I think that it makes me happier for sure, after just experiencing those things it brings me confidence and that helps me pursue people in relationships with confidence. –*Anna*

I think [being an outdoor education leader] inhibits the development of certain friendships because you may not have as much continuity in a place to be able to build on that so you kinda miss out on some of the forming times of the friendship. You may see them once but you may not see them again for three months. So that can be, yeah, it can limit certain things I guess. –*Mark*

That certainly is a challenge; connecting and making new friends. I feel that is a part of natural and social health. You [make] an obscene amount of acquaintances and you make just as many friendships that you connect with very deeply and very emotionally with these people through this experience that you've shared. I look back on my photos and I'm like, 'wow, that was rich' and um, but are they your peers? No, they're younger, they're kids. And the teachers are [older] adults and you're kind of in this weird middle ground where you're almost [pause], your life's on pause. –*Peter*

According to the above comments, being an outdoor education leader can have an impact on the ability to pursue friends outside the work environment. After speaking with all participants, however, it appeared as though they unanimously gravitated toward relationships with those who had been or were involved in outdoor education as there was an understanding for the lifestyle that promoted an ease of friendship. For example, Mark said that he noticed that in his friend circle, the people closest to him

are often people that have seasonal jobs or jobs with fairly high intensity away from home, or have had it at one point in their life. And I think it's that mutual understanding of the why and what you get from it, and that understanding of, hey, you're not just leaving 'cause you don't want to see me.

The same thing was true for Peter during the off-season or between trips. In Peter's situation, the majority of his co-workers lived in the same city when they were not in the field, and as a result, often ended up spending the majority of their time together, particularly between trips. He explained how outdoor education work was different than other work, and so his friends that lived and worked in town year-round often struggled to understand why he may not have had the energy to go out and party on the weekends. As a result, Peter says he ended up closing out a lot of his friends due to a lack of their understanding of his lifestyle and his needs during his time off.

Brynn, Mark, and Anna, on the other hand, did have friends that would be considered non-outdoor education friends; however, they found they ended up compartmentalizing their lives. They rarely explained their experiences to their non-outdoorsy friends, as even when they tried, their friends did not seem to understand. Brynn described it as a frustrating experience because her non-outdoor friends did not see

the value in what she was doing. “They don’t see the benefit or joy. They wonder why you’re working a twenty-hour a day job and only getting paid for eight hours of it. After a while, I just stop trying to explain.” She, however, did carry on to say that even though they did not seem to understand her experience, her family and non-outdoor education friends were supportive of her. Her mom used to say that Brynn came home a different person after every season; the closest to the best version of herself that her mom had ever seen, and for that reason alone, she remained supportive. Reflection is an important part of the outdoor education process, for both the participants and the leaders (Johnson & Wattchow, 2004). The study participants did not appear to go through that reflection process with those who are not familiar with outdoor education, due to a lack of understanding. Mark spoke about returning home from a trip to his friends and sharing his experience. He believed it was not simply that his non-outdoor friends failed to understand, but

generally, they’re not as interested either. It’s just a totally different world. And so that’s just not necessarily a part of the world that I share with those friends. And so if they ask and they’re curious, then yeah, for sure I will. But it’s just, they often won’t have the same kind of insight[.]

Anna’s perspective on the level of understanding by her non-outdoor friends was slightly different. She, too, would tell her family and friends that “it was good” when talking about a trip, but even when people did ask more, she said she sometimes did not know what to say. “I don’t know. It’s fun to talk about but I don’t always know how many details to say. It’s kind of just like I’m lessening my own experience . . . Like I can’t really explain it well[.]” She continued to say that where she had found greatest

success in explaining things to others was when she talked about very specific, tangible experiences, for example, watching sun rises or bioluminescence in the ocean at night, or sleeping outside in the elements. “[Those experiences] kind of capture the essence of what you love about [being outdoors] and so those are good things to pull out because other people can relate to them.”

Relationships summary

Relationships, whether they were romantic, with outdoor education program participants, with co-instructors, or with family and friends not associated with outdoor education, were widely discussed by all participants. While some participants spoke more passionately about certain sub-themes, each indicated that relationships in all sub-themes impacted them personally.

Theme cluster three – transition

With regard to participant response, one of the most common topics of discussion by volume of response was the role that transition played in an outdoor educator’s life. Within this theme cluster, multiple sub-themes were discussed and will be presented in the following order: “transition within the first 48 hours of a trip”; “general transition within a trip”; “transition between trips”; and “transition back to the real world”. Transition between seasons and self-transition were briefly discussed by participants and while there was not a large amount of data on these sub-themes, it was included in accordance with Colaizzi’s (1978) method to ensure that data that does not easily fit into themes is not ignored. These sub-themes will be combined and summarized in a section titled “transition – other”.

Transition – the first 48 hours

The transition of having outdoor education program participants enter from their regular daily lives into an unfamiliar environment created the most difficulty at the front-end of trips and expeditions. It was during this time that there was a steep learning curve for the program participants, causing some tensions and frustration. Brynn discussed how there was “no flow” the first night, so bickering and conflict between program participants was the highest because everyone was tired and attempting to figure out what they were supposed to be doing and where they fit in. “[They] need lots of help that night. The first and second nights are a lot more effort for staff.” Mark and Peter echoed that statement. “So the first 48 are the hardest. Everytime. Everytime. Which is why some of the these five day trips are really hard.” Peter carried on to say that

[f]ive-day trips can be really hard. They can be so fast-paced that you don’t have time to stop and think, but [longer] trips are nice because there is still the same amount of material, but you teach it in the first five days and then you’ve got the kids trained and you can rely on them.

Sarah felt the same way about week-long trips.

Weekly it was a lot of training at the beginning. A lot of teaching time. A lot of “this is how we do things, these are the safety rules and guidelines.” So tons and tons of explaining things on the first day. Days. Explaining it so that everybody’s safe and everybody knows what they’re doing.

Anna struggled with this notion of teaching skills up front, and felt it was faster to complete tasks herself, rather than have the program participants struggle through them.

Ultimately, however, she recognized one of the goals of outdoor education was to have this transition time in the first 48 hours as a means of empowering the participants.

[A] big goal is to not just take them out into the woods, but teach them how to do it on their own. And I always wanted to do this more on trips. Was just empower people to learn how to do things and it's hard because it takes more time at the beginning. And it's not something I'm good at. Like teaching somebody something rather than me just doing it 'cause it's a lot faster.

Lastly, within the 48-hour sub-theme, Mark spoke to the importance of pre-season preparation in trying to make those initial transitions easier for program participants. "A lot of these trips, because they are introductory, the more preparation we can have, the easier it will be just because we don't have that much time." He then went on to say that on each trip "[y]ou go through the forming, storming, norming, performing kinda group development thing, and so it's super, super important at the beginning to really set the tone[.]" In this way, Mark believed that establishing a group culture early on would help to streamline the first 48 hours.

Transition – between trips

Depending on a leader's schedule, some would experience the need to regularly transition from being on a trip, to being home or off the schedule for only a day or two, to being right back out in the field. For the most part, the following experiences were shared by the leaders who operated on a five-day-on, two-day-off schedule. Leaders who spent more consecutive days out in the field were given more time off between trips and did not share the need for transition. Anna, Sarah, Mark, and Peter all experienced a quick turnaround. Sarah explained that on her days off, even when working as base camp

support staff, she would seek out the quietest, most remote location available on property in an attempt for alone time. She said she would even go to extremes by avoiding public spaces. “When people would see me, they would want to ask me a million questions even though it was my day off.” When speaking of the process she went through on her day off between trips, Anna explained that she felt

accomplished, tired, I think ready to spend time alone depending on how the trip went; how much energy [the participants] required. And, I definitely, the processing can be hard sometimes if you don’t think you did as well or you messed up or, um, didn’t think things through well, didn’t take care of people well, so there’s that, but usually you just feel like refreshed, too. It’s weird. Like physically tired, but mentally alive.

Peter spoke directly to how he felt on his weekends out of the field between trips:

... [I]t’s a pretty consuming cycle, the five days out, the two days in were pretty much like you were still working on the weekend ‘cause the weekend is your recovery time. And so the entire season, you’re not really living your own life.

On his time between trips, Mark often felt

... overwhelmed. Often relieved. Usually, as soon as we get on the bus I look at my co-instructor and we’re like “alright, high five, nobody got hurt! Perfect. We’re coming home. Well done.” You know, so that comes off, every time we’re in the van again from longer trips, transitioning, it’s like, sweet, we just spent 12 days [in the field], everything’s good, nobody got hurt, awesome. So pretty relieved. Relieved from that side. Overwhelmed in my personal life.

Transition – back to the real world

The participants all spoke about their experiences of transitioning from their field experiences in the wilderness, back into the real world, which, based on their responses, was a world with modern conveniences such as phone, internet, shopping, and banking, as well as people who did not work in the field. For all of the participants, this transition was an overwhelming one. All participants were tired when they returned home and either sat quietly and drank a beer, or rested alone. Sarah explained how she felt immediately after returning home from a trip. “When you’re mentoring, you’re managing relationships, you’re explaining things, you’re just talking a lot, you’re watching for safety like, all the time, I needed a lot of downtime, alone time, introvert time.” After that initial decommissioning, each began the transition into what they considered the real world. Brynn spoke about feeling “super disconnected” when returning home, and likened it to “returning to earth from the moon”. She described how it was always surprising that life had kept going while she was away. Mark, who had had many years experience and dealt with this transition on a regular basis, always had the same reaction when he returned home.

I just got home, I throw my bag on the couch, and I open a beer. That’s the first thing I do. Just to relax. Like I just need to sit and decompress. On the longer trips, like that are very taxing, I’ll usually, yeah, I’ll get home, I’ll drink a beer, I’ll sit – I’ll literally sit on the couch and just stare at a wall. Like that’s quite literally what I do. And so I’ll sit, relax, and just kinda ahhhhhhh, let it go, um, and just be like alright, ok, and just kinda reflect on it a little...I’ll kinda slowly reconnect to the world via phone or email, you know, facebook, whatever, and

then immediately feel super overwhelmed. It happens everytime. Super, SUPER overwhelmed.

Anna expressed similar feelings:

I find myself overwhelmed when I first get back, that there's so much I need to do and kind of, my life is in pieces that I have to find and bring back together. And so yeah, after more long term, I'm like, ok, I should probably check my account balance, find a place to live, forward my address, go the store. People aren't cooking for me anymore so I have to do that...I start doing things in the real world that are very normal [in the field], even though they aren't normal here. Yeah, even eating meals. I'm like, okay, cheese and crackers, put some mustard on it.

Anna was not the only participant who made a remark about food and cooking. All of the participants described some kind of relationship they had with food or cooking and how it changed when they transitioned back into the real world from a trip. With the exception of Anna, each of the participants expressed an enjoyment in having the freedom to make food choices again. Sarah commented that in the field "you're eating what was made for you. You don't get to pick your own food", so she greatly appreciated choice when she returned home. Not only did Brynn appreciate being able to make her own choices about what to eat, she also enjoyed making the choice about *when* to eat. "If I wanted to, I could wait until 3pm to eat lunch, and I didn't have to worry that a bunch of 12-year-olds were starving." When she did eat, she found herself making elaborate meals to compensate for the simple food she ate in the field. She explained that she would run around the grocery store like a child who had been starving and grab as

many things as possible. Similarly, Mark experienced a reaction in the grocery store. He explained that it felt overwhelming to have to make choices. “I’ll walk down the aisles and be like, what? Can’t I just take something out of my backpack right now?” As a result of feeling overwhelmed, Mark would often find himself going to restaurants instead of cooking for himself.

[T]hat’s a big challenge in transition is to start cooking for myself again and feeling like I want to make elaborate meals or make well-balanced meals. ‘Cause in the field it’s all planned beforehand. It’s like, great, everything is planned, everything is there, you know that you have everything you need. But at home, it’s like you gotta think about it on a day to day basis and so it’s way easier to go to [a restaurant] and grab a burger and fries. So that’s a hard one. A wellness piece for me is to make sure that I eat well.

Peter talked about a slightly different experience regarding the transition to making his own food. “I really loved the food [in the field], but it wasn’t exactly fresh vegetables and blueberries. So I’d come home and I’d eat really healthy. That was a really good transition – when you cook your own food.”

Transitioning from the social environment in the field to a social environment in the real world was also discussed by all participants. For Peter, a self-proclaimed extrovert, his initial reaction to returning home was to want to be alone. “I just didn’t want to see anyone. I want to see some people; people that I knew were no effort to see. Like people that I knew for a long time that you could just sit and be quiet and have a beer or whatever. Um, you know, those people that don’t take energy[.]” Initially when

she returned home, Anna had a similar reaction to Peter; however, she quite quickly realized being alone was not what she actually wanted.

Like, there's definitely a part of me [in the field] where I'm like, okay, phew, I'm ready to just go somewhere on my own. But once you get back and you have that opportunity it's almost like, that was actually really great to have everyone around all the time to experience things with, so I find that I surround myself with people a lot.

The type of person with whom each participant would spend time, or desire to see upon their return from the field, was consistent between all participants. They all felt compelled to spend time with their co-workers with whom they had just been in the field. Brynn, who typically returned from the field around three o'clock, explained that by seven o'clock she would be missing everyone terribly and would maintain extremely close contact with her co-workers upon her initial return from the field. For Peter, Mark, Anna, and Sarah, they felt fortunate to be living in a city where they were able to spend time with their community with whom they had been in the field, at least for the first few days after returning to the real world. For Mark, this was a way to ease the transition.

If instructors are still in town, which is nice, then we'll all go for dinner to just kinda close it up together. We started it together, close it together, and then it also gives us a chance to debrief, blow off some steam if we need to.

As presented in the relationship theme cluster, not feeling understood by non-outdoor education friends and family was discussed by the participants. This was also discussed in relation to the transition into the real world, particularly when talking about the initial re-integration back into the non-outdoor community. Regarding this, Mark

explained that coming back to friends and community was something he welcomed; however, he said that

[r]e-integrating sometimes is hard, after longer trips, of wanting to see friend a, b, c, d, but I don't know, like how to go about it and just kinda, it's hard to just [pause] if people haven't had that experience, if it's been really intense, it's hard sometimes to be on the same page afterwards.

Anna described an experience similar to Mark, and also brought up the concept of “field language”.

. . . and definitely catching up with people that weren't [in the field]. That's pretty overwhelming. It's a natural question, like, “how was your summer? Tell me about it.” But it like, gets to the point where it's like, okay, I don't know you super well, how much do I tell? How do I sum up this incredible time in a short amount of time? It's an interesting thing, to, it's almost like, it's [mountain] words sometimes. That's super cheesy but, it's just kind of like its own language. Like people that have gone on trips, it's really easy to communicate with them about it. Um, and so it's hard to sum it up and put it into words.

Anna explained that when she returned to the real world from the field, she missed being in the wilderness and would find ways to compensate for that loss.

I crave the mountains a lot when I get back . . . I don't sleep inside for like, a month. I just sleep outside in people's yards. It's weird to sleep inside . . . so even when I was dating James, like I would make him sleep in the yard, and he's like, “really, Anna, I wasn't just [in the mountains].”

For Anna, as explained in her participant biography, she felt at home in the wilderness, therefore, transitioning back into the real world was difficult.

And then I come back; it's like I come out of that peace. It's like a peace bubble [in the mountains]. Even if things aren't going well, even if it's pouring and I'm soaking wet I still feel like this is something, this is a very tangible struggle and I can handle it I guess. And then coming back here I kind of just feel, it's like a blur kind of goes over my eyes, like a lens that's not the right prescription. Um, and I feel like I can't see myself very clearly and I don't feel as beautiful and I guess I'm just, it's busy and I don't, it's like my vision is in a 20 by 20 feet radius. Like when you're in the mountains, it's just, you can see forever, but even in a figurative sense it seems like you can see better. Yeah, coming back here it's a bit more clouded and my perspective is a lot smaller. It gives you a headache.

Transition – other

Brynn and Mark described, how, for them, the transition between seasons was an ongoing one. For Brynn, she related it to her happiness and energy levels. "I have way more energy in June and July from being outside. On a happiness scale, my ranking would be high in summer and would drop during the year, without me even knowing it." Mark explained how doing other activities between seasons raised his awareness about how he personally handled transition. While he was not required to pursue work in the off-season, he did so as a means to keep his mind fresh, and in doing so, learned about his ability to have ongoing transition in his life.

I'm realizing this month, you know, working a job in the city, that at this point in my life, it's not for me. Like, I just need that intense full-on experience. When

I'm on, I'm on. I have a hard time switching on and off. So I think it's part of those transitions. I'm working eight hours a day, you switch off, done. Whereas [outdoor education], you're working 24 hours a day for a certain period of time, then you're done. So that transition is only once. It's once, it's intense, but it's only once. Which for me, personally, is way easier than the kinda eight hours a day thing.

Anna talked about her experience with what will be described as self-transition. In this situation, self-transition will be used to describe the process of a person learning about themselves and applying those lessons in the future. As an outdoor education leader, Anna explained that she struggled with letting others, particularly program participants, take control of their own experience. As part of her reflection process, Anna learned that this was an area she desired to grow in. "I think I could definitely work on empowering people to have more responsibility."

Transition summary

Transition both within and outside the field was addressed by each participant. Some transitions, such as setting up camp, were clearly identified by participants as such, while others, such as returning home, were more subtle and needed to be identified by the researcher as transition times.

Theme cluster four – leadership

The role of being a leader was valued by all participants. This is reflected in the following findings. This theme cluster will present the following sub-themes: "mentoring", "skill acquisition and use", and "leader characteristics".

Leadership – mentoring

When asked what the most rewarding part of being an outdoor education leader was, there was a unanimous response that mentoring program participants and watching participants have positive transformative experiences was at the top of the list. All of the outdoor education leaders felt they needed to strike a balance between mentoring the participants and allowing the participants the freedom to shape their own experiences.

Mark explained that he did

feel responsible sometimes for the experience that the youth are having. But really it's not. The idea is that it's their trip and they make of it what they put into it. The ultimate goal for me, is that when they're done they feel that they've done it all themselves. That I had nothing to do with it, right? And that they're really proud of it, but I can't help but feel responsible for that.

For Peter, he discussed how when the kids were willing to invest in the experience, he took on more responsibility and was more willing to invest back.

You get groups and it's like, okay, these kids are willing to listen, they're willing to plug in, they're willing to get involved. And you just step it up. You're willing to do everything you can for these kids. We've got an endless quiver of teambuilding and wisdom building and all those things that go with mentorship that we can do but usually a limiting factor is energy and you've got a group of kids that is jazzed, you know? They're good to go, and you just unleash your energy on these kids.

Brynn expressed the disappointment she felt when unable to execute a plan for enthusiastic kids like these because of extenuating circumstances.

It's a challenge when there's things that you can't control, like a storm, and having kids be disappointed and having the leaders miss out on seeing the kids learn and having awesome experiences. Some kids won't get to fall in love with [an activity] and it's frustrating because planning is a waste, little things that wouldn't be a conflict end up being a conflict, and there's pressure on staff to make rainy days awesome.

Another struggle, particularly discussed by Anna and Peter, was one where program participants did not have a positive experience, but not due to the weather or any reason other than participant attitude. Peter talked about one trip he had where the participants were not shy about sharing their dislike with him.

[And one of the girls said] "this trip isn't nearly as fun as the [white water rafting trip] that we did." Like, are you serious? You just said that to my face? This is my career. I'm pouring my life into this place and you just said that to me. Right, okay, well thanks for letting me know early.

Anna shared a similar experience where she was leading a group of teenage girls who were not as impacted by the experience as she would have been.

They were struggling so much and not having fun at all. They missed the whole experience; the beauty and the opportunity to be still and reflect. This experience was so out of their interest zone. They would just complain all the time, and I would just be like, this view, this rock that I'm standing on is such a gift. And you're standing in front of me complaining about it. And a place that has transformed me would not be the same for someone, and you always hope that.

Anna carried on to acknowledge that she could not feel fully responsible for participant experiences, nor could she expect to fully understand how the experience had impacted someone. “It’s funny, ‘cause you don’t always see how somebody appreciates it or doesn’t. Sometimes [you never see it] and sometimes on the last night.” For Anna, and the rest of the participants, they always hoped that program participants would “enjoy their experience, gain something from it, and pursue it later.”

All five participants shared experiences about how rewarding it was to watch program participants have, what the leaders considered to be, powerful or transformative moments.

The most rewarding part for me is watching the moments that kids have their first times, maybe mastering a highly technical skill, or showing them something in a slightly different way and then having them do it and seeing their pride. Or turning people around from not being 100% into being there into kids that have to come back next year. – *Brynn*

When talking about an expedition in rough seas, Mark recalled what it was like to watch his participants.

And so it was pretty cool for them, and for me, to experience that. Just kinda really pushing the conditions and what felt comfortable just in general. And with that the reward that came with it and the sense of accomplishment, of kind of pushing that, and realizing that you’re capable of it and what it feels like to yeah, test that boundary. It was awesome. And the next day, just sun bathing and relaxing. It was sweet. They loved it. They all got sunburned.

Mark carried on to explain how rewarding watching, and being alongside, participants having meaningful experiences can be.

There's a lot of, but some of them are those "aha" moments that you see students have is really cool; like really awesome. And just these moments of clarity that they might have where, you know, just these small successes that can really amount to bigger things later . . . And so seeing that, and being able to talk about it, and like [them] being super proud of what [they've] done, yeah, it's really rewarding.

Anna echoed these statements, saying it was "awesome to see people grow through that experience and realize potential they never thought they had." Peter talked about how his greatest reward was seeing people experience something they would never forget. "It was like, you touched something real. People look for that their whole lives and never have an experience like that." In agreement with this, one of the most rewarding experiences for Sarah was being able to provide program participants with the tools required to overcome fears, but then to also give them an opportunity to overcome their fears in a safe place.

For each of the study participants, being aware of the abilities and potential of their program participants was a large contributing factor to being able to provide transformative experiences. Understanding how age, skill level, and emotional maturity are related to outdoor education allowed leaders to mentor participants in a way that made them successful. Peter spoke about how he enjoyed leading trips with older participants, which for him, were participants in later high school years.

The older trips there's a little bit of, there's a lot more depth to students. They're in a place where they're looking to push themselves physically, push themselves mentally, to really explore some of their emotions that are bottled up, and so there's a lot of excitement in those older trips, um, at least for me.

As a result, Peter was more appreciative of the transformation of these participants, stating that "it's really exciting to see them take on more responsibility." Mark experienced a sense of pride when he was able to identify an area of strength or potential of a program participant.

If there's kids that are good at cooking breakfast, great, well then they can teach the other kids, or whether it's pacing on the trail, or how to treat water, or how to fit backpacks and all that kind of thing . . . you're not just gonna go and do it for them. You're giving them the knowledge so they can do it themselves.

Mark explained how he found watching students use the knowledge and skills they had gained to teach other students very fulfilling.

Leadership – skill acquisition and use

While ensuring that program participants were learning new skills and growing personally was identified as important for each participant, data also showed that these were important for the leaders themselves. Anna explained that it was

awesome to see people grow through that experience and realize potential they never had. And I find that I'm able to experience that myself; like I just took 15 girls into the mountains and brought them back all alive and fairly well [laughs]. So that's super empowering as a guide[.]

For Anna, this empowerment and additional hard, or technical, skill acquisition afforded her more employment opportunities that she otherwise would not have had. Anna explained that her time was split between working as an outdoor education leader during the in-season, and being a student in the off-season. As a result she “can’t always pursue outdoor sports and get really good at them, but [working in the field] does that for me.” Due to her work in the field, she was able to acquire a position as a leader with her school’s recreational outdoor education program. Brynn also felt that her work as an outdoor education leader gave her skills that transferred into other areas. For Brynn, being an outdoor education leader instilled in her a strong work ethic, greater confidence, and the ability to speak up when she felt things were morally wrong, all of which transferred to her life in the off-season.

Mark commented that he felt that outdoor education benefited from the specific and unique skill sets that a leader brings.

I think the beauty of outdoor ed is, it’s so fluid to the instructor of what they bring to the table. You know, I have a bit more of an environmental background so I really like looking at trees. I love licking slugs and eating, like, whatever, just things that just have to do with nature. I really enjoy that, and so I know that’s something that I bring.

Mark and Peter both expressed some frustration about either having or gaining skills that are not transferable between working in the outdoor education field and the rest of their lives. Although he really appreciated the opportunity to learn new skills in the field, Peter recognized that for himself, being an outdoor education leader is not a lifelong career, and as a result, he had some hesitation about spending time learning skills on the

job that he feels will not benefit his future. “I’m not going to be able to jumpstart a career at 35 or 37 with skills from [the outdoors].” Outside of the field, Mark and Peter are both avid tennis players. However, they both feel like not being able to participate in this activity while they are in the field is a setback. Mark explained his experience:

So like, I like tennis. Tennis has always been a big part of my recreational activities. But since I guide other things, like I [hike] for 60 days a year and I’m gone for a month, I can’t play tennis when I’m gone. And so that continuity of keeping fit and continually improving goes back, you know, three or four steps every time I go in the field. So I can’t be continually improving in those other activities.

Leadership – leader characteristics

A characteristic shared by four of the five participants was their ability to embrace risk in the workplace. For Brynn, working in an aquatic setting, she regularly felt fear regarding weather and the unpredictability of the ocean. However, this fear did not cause her to hesitate in being a leader. Instead, she and the other leaders used this fear to teach participants to have a respect for the outdoors – to stay safe but to also push themselves in elements that may otherwise be considered risky. Sarah explained that it was essential to embrace this fear as it was necessary to help achieve the goals of outdoor education. “You need to lead by example. You can’t just be like ‘get out there, do things that make you nervous!’ If you don’t model the same behaviour, then what’s it worth?”

All of the participants expressed a keen awareness for safety supervision. Anna explained that being knowledgeable and knowing the terrain enabled her to take participants into unfamiliar situations and equipped her to lead the safest way. She

admitted that she experienced nerves about being responsible for the safety of her participants, but that the confidence she had gained from her previous experience leading allowed her to know she was capable of handling the responsibility. Mark, too, would push through nerves or fear when leading and embrace the risk, knowing it was a calculated one.

You'll see me experience stress. A lot of stress sometimes. Say conditions aren't really good; the ocean's blowing up, the wind is coming up, like I know that we have a big crossing coming up and that the wind's picking up, people are getting tired; like really going through these things in my head of piecing all these risk factors. What's gonna happen? And consequences if we can't make it. So lots of decision making, lots of risk assessment throughout the day, all the time, so that's always going on in my head. I try and have my head on a swivel at all times[.]

Leadership summary

The concepts of mentoring, skill acquisition and use, as well as leadership characteristics all fell under the leadership umbrella and were consistent across the participant responses.

Theme cluster five – health and wellness

The following section will present the findings of participants' understanding of personal health and wellness, as well as their awareness of current workplace wellness initiatives provided through outdoor education organizations.

Health and wellness

When asked about their perceptions of health and wellness, all five of the participants had similar responses; health was clinical, and wellness was emotional. Brynn defined health as “a more tangible thing. For example, good blood pressure, etcetera. It’s quantifiable.” Wellness was defined as “. . . qualitative – being emotionally well, for example.” Mark commented that “[f]or me, health is a more clinical thing. Like, if I were to say how’s my health, I’d say I’m pretty healthy; I don’t have any illnesses. But how’s my wellness? Uh, well, maybe I’m a little tired; I haven’t taken enough care of myself.” For Peter, overall wellness also included the addition of a spiritual aspect. “I think physical health is huge. Well, physical health, mental health, and relationships are all huge. And spiritual health is also big in my life, although I think a lot of people would argue that.”

The participants were asked if they were aware of any programs that their employer offered to promote or support health and wellness both in and out of the field. The results were mixed. Peter, who worked for a not-for-profit organization, said that he believed his organization tried, but ultimately, resources of the company were limited. Anna found that during pre-season training, her organization would emphasize the importance of taking quiet time and delegating tasks during a trip.

So making sure that during trips you’re also taking quiet times so that you can process and take time to be still and, um, and to delegate, because it’s tiring doing everything yourself. So things like that. Just little things. Often you learn it from the [senior leader] or along the way, I guess, as you’re leading.

Brynn spoke about how her organization implemented health and wellness activities for program participants at base camp, and the perceived benefits of those initiatives influenced the creation of new programs for staff.

Physical fitness was introduced into the program, first with the kids, and when they noticed a change in their attitudes, they introduced it with the staff. They had mandatory intramural sports, healthy meal options, and made an attempt to make the daily schedule shorter so we could get an eight-hour sleep. The sleep never happened, but at least the expectation of working all night went away.

Brynn carried on to say how when she was out in the field, there was really nothing the directors of her organization could do to promote health and wellness. She explained that they were removed from that environment, and therefore did not understand it anymore because they no longer experienced it. She explained that her supervisors got a proper leave and were able to regularly be in contact with their family and friends. When asked how she felt her supervisors could make her more healthy and well during the in-season, she responded by saying “[a]llowing more time off. But then, given the opportunity to come home for four days in the middle of the season, I don’t actually know if I would take it.”

Mark was the only participant who acknowledged that his organization worked to promote health and wellness in the *off-season*. He explained that they did this by providing a salary that was high enough that it allowed leaders to have necessary rest and recovery time.

A big thing that [the organization] does in the wellness side and for the longevity of their staff, is they pay really well, and so that allows staff to not have to work

all the time between programs. And that was one of their big things of when they say that. “You know, we’re paying you this much so that you can take the time when you’re done, you can take that couple of weeks after to just come off of the program to relax and breathe and do whatever it is you need to do to not exhaust yourself.”

With regard to in-field initiatives, Mark admitted there was not much he felt they could do. While they could offer suggestions to promote leader self-care in the field, ultimately, he said, “it’s just holding myself accountable to take the time for myself.”

Health and wellness summary

The participants all openly and willingly answered the health and wellness questions outlined in the interview guide; however, they did not speak with the same level of passion regarding this topic.

Chapter summary

This chapter introduced five outdoor education leaders who were participants in the study. Quotations from the transcribed in-depth interviews gave voice to the leaders and were the basis of the five theme clusters that emerged from the data also presented in this section. The following chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the relevant literature review and the selected theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders influenced their personal health and wellness. Through one-on-one interviews, findings were generated and presented in the previous chapter. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of the current study in three sections. The first section will discuss the findings by theme cluster, connecting themes to the relevant literature and the Six Dimensions of Wellness (Hettler, 1976). The second section will discuss the findings in relation to the guiding framework of the SEM (McLeroy et al., 1988). Lastly, the third section will present outcomes of the findings as well as recommendations for future research. Findings are not discussed in the order in which they were presented in Chapter 4. Alternatively, the researcher has decided to discuss the themes and sub-themes leading with those she felt were most prevalent based on the findings.

Section one – theme cluster findings

The following section will present an analysis of the findings by theme.

Theme cluster - health and wellness

This study was about the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders in relation to their personal health and wellness. Analysis of the transcripts revealed connections between all theme clusters and health and wellness. It was anticipated by the researcher that the conversation surrounding health and wellness would have been more robust and would include more information about how organizations could support leader

personal health and wellness. However, the transcripts revealed there was not great value placed on workplace wellness initiatives and programs. Participants, while willing to discuss their views on health and wellness, did not seem particularly interested in health and wellness in the workplace relative to their other experiences. When asked, participants spoke about health in more “clinical” terms. Opinions, thoughts, and memories associated with all other themes were voiced much more in-depth and with greater interest and passion. The researcher noted that facial expressions and body language were more animated and the participants more engaged when discussing other topics. While participants did not dismiss the topic as unimportant, it left the researcher questioning. The section on future recommendations will further discuss this finding.

In order to prepare the reader to understand the findings discussed in this chapter, the theme cluster of health and wellness is being presented first. Hettler’s (1976) Six Dimensions of Wellness were considered in the creation of the interview guide. The following definitions of these dimensions (in no particular order) will allow the reader to better understand the interconnectedness of the Six Dimensions of Wellness as they relate to the findings.

1. Occupational

The occupational dimension recognizes the enrichment and satisfaction that one may find through work (Hettler, 1976).

2. Physical

The physical dimension recognizes the value of physical health through regular physical activity and healthy eating (Hettler, 1976).

3. Social

The social dimension emphasizes the interdependence between people and nature and encourages contribution to one's environment and community (Hettler, 1976).

4. Spiritual

The spiritual dimension identifies one's desire to find meaning and purpose in human existence (Hettler, 1976).

5. Emotional

The emotional dimension includes the ability to recognize and manage one's feelings, effectively cope with stress, and the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about life (Hettler, 1976).

6. Intellectual

The intellectual dimension recognizes the value of stimulating one's mind with activities to expand knowledge and skills (Hettler, 1976).

When completing an analysis of the findings, the researcher identified many connections with the Six Dimensions of Wellness. The following table (Table 3) provides a visual demonstration of these connections. While each dimension was associated with at least one theme cluster, the researcher maintained Colaizzi's (1978) methodology by not manipulating relationships between the dimensions and the themes. As represented in Table 3, some themes are connected to multiple dimensions, while others are not. It is also important to note that a connection with one of the dimensions does not necessarily indicate a beneficial relationship. For example, the relationship between physical and life cycle in-season was not only determined by a leader being

physically active while in the field (beneficial), but also by the level of physical exhaustion associated with being an outdoor education leader (detrimental).

Table 3 Findings Categorized by Six Dimensions of Wellness

Findings Categorized by Six Dimensions of Wellness (Hettler, 1976)	
Dimension	Theme
Occupational	All themes
Physical	Life cycle (in-season) Transition (between trips) Health and wellness
Social	Relationships (all sub-themes) Transition (back to the real world) Leadership (mentoring) Health and wellness
Spiritual	Life cycle (in-season) Health and wellness
Emotional	Relationships (all sub-themes) Transition (first 48 hours) Transition (back to the real world) Leadership (mentoring) Health and wellness
Intellectual	Life cycle (pre-season) Life cycle (off-season) Leadership (skill acquisition and use) Leadership (leader characteristics) Health and wellness

Theme cluster - life cycle

Each of the participants walked through the four very distinct seasons of an outdoor education leader (pre-season, in-season, post-season, off-season); however, none of the participants overtly acknowledged them as such. It was clear that the participants viewed their careers as a lifestyle, and thus, were not aware of the structured seasons of their lives. When the researcher met or spoke to the participants to share the proposed

theme clusters, those who responded to the suggestions for this theme cluster were in full agreement of the life cycle of an outdoor education leader. However, they all agreed that they had not previously conceptualized this. For them, it was simply their lifestyle choice.

Life cycle - off-season

One of the most important times to an outdoor education leader was his or her time off, whether it was the off-season, or between trips. What an outdoor education leader did with time away from the field appeared to have a large impact on behavior in the field. This was reflected in the comments of participants, such as Peter, who concluded that insufficient rest between trips resulted in an inability to invest fully in a trip. An article by Thompson (1978) on reducing stress in the lives of Outward Bound leaders stated that “regular interval time-off each month” (p. 37) is beneficial to the lifestyle of an outdoor education leader. Furthermore, “rested instructors are more likely to respond to youth constructively” (p. 37), which was consistent with the findings of this study. Additionally, Mark spoke of the intellectual benefits associated with growing his skill set and challenging his mind during his time away, enhancing his performance on the job.

One of the greatest influences on how time off was spent revolved around finances. The researcher gained insight into the powerful impact that low wages during the in-season have on the leaders during the off-season. High turnover rates were one consequence. Having to work in the off-season can contribute to burnout and resignation from the job. As a result, organizations were required to hire and train new staff. Research suggests the cost of replacing an hourly worker can be 0.25-0.5 times the

person's salary plus benefits (Hall, 2005), indicating it is more economical to maintain current employees than to hire and train new staff.

In addition to financial strain, a study conducted by Deloitte Consultancy found that in the United States it can take “up to six months to get employees working reasonably proficiently” (Birchfield, 2001, p. 33). The same study also determined that new staff may take up to 18 months to become familiar with an organization's culture (Birchfield, 2001). As indicated by Mark, setting an early tone and culture within a group is important for the success of an outdoor education program; thus, it is important for staff of a particular program to be readily familiar with an organization's culture. As Mark suggested, this could be accomplished by offering competitive salaries allowing employees to rest during off-season, leaving staff refreshed and eager to return to the field each season, therefore reducing burnout and turnover rates. Additional literature by Wilson (2009) on the level of outdoor education leader pay satisfaction, however, stated it is “unclear as to whether instructor pay has to do with job satisfaction and subsequent turnover” (p. 400), yet it has been found to be a recurring theme. In the current study, Mark suggested that pay does, in fact, impact job turnover. Reviewing the literature, the researcher also found that for some outdoor education leaders the rate of pay was associated with feelings of self-worth (Marchand, 2010). However, this concept did not surface during the present study. This may indicate the participants did not associate rate of pay with self-worth, or simply that it was not a direct question they were asked, and therefore, the connection was not made.

Life cycle – pre-season

Identified as the days and months immediately leading up to the in-season, pre-season was a time of excitement for the participants, particularly Brynn, who stated she felt like “a kid at Christmas!”. When considering the Six Dimensions of Wellness, it was during this time that the social dimension increased in connection to outdoor education leaders. For all the participants, it was a time when they would reconnect with co-workers from previous years to train and plan the upcoming in-season, or meet new colleagues with whom they would be working.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the pre-season was also a time that brought apprehension and anxiety for the leaders. It is interesting to note, however, that none of the leaders expressed specific concern over the safety responsibilities they would have in the upcoming season. Mark and Anna specifically addressed concerns they had over potentially poor weather conditions, group dynamics, or the comfort of their participants. Anna explained that she knew how to ensure she remained physically comfortable in all conditions. “I know what I wear and I know how cold I will be and what will make me warmer”, yet, many of her participants lacked this knowledge of themselves; therefore, she was apprehensive they would be uncomfortable. Mark was more interested in knowing “what the weather would be like” than worrying about the physical safety of his participants. There was no lack of acknowledgment by the study participants regarding the importance of safety; however, there was not great concern. This finding may connect with Hettler’s intellectual dimension, as the study participants were confident in the skills and knowledge they had regarding the outdoors. The pre-season training had intellectually prepared them to assess and avoid unnecessary risk through learning about

the various terrains in which their programs would take place, and equipped the participants with the confidence, safety knowledge and skills required.

Life cycle – in-season

One of the largest topics to surface during the in-season was that of energy. Throughout the interviews, all participants made mention of being physically exhausted at some point during their time in the field. Anna commented on how, for her, energy was cyclical. “It’s taking energy away from you. It’s requiring energy, but being out there is putting energy back into you at the same time. It’s a great cycle.” Peter spoke about how his “lack of sleep and energy would prevent him from emotionally investing in a trip” but additionally commented how that same lack of energy would ultimately cause him to rely on the help of his co-leaders, bringing them closer in relationship. In this way, the connections between the physical, emotional, and social dimension of wellness can be seen. In the situations of Anna and Peter, being physically exhausted ultimately heightened other dimensions of their wellness.

As indicated by the participants, one of the greatest benefits of the in-season was being in nature and experiencing the wonders of the natural world. Brynn commented how being on the water made her “come alive.” Peter talked about being in the wilderness and how there is “so much awe and wonder. And there’s so much recognition of how small you are.” While the participants were not specifically asked to define spirituality or identify “spiritual experiences”, the researcher felt it was in the in-season when participants most commented on feeling connected to nature through their being. This was highlighted by Anna, who commented that when she was in the mountains, she felt “this is how I should be.” Although it is not the place of the researcher to assume

what a spiritual experience may look like for an individual, based on Hettler's spiritual dimension, it was through the description of the participants' in-season experiences that this association was made.

Life cycle – post-season

As indicated in Chapter 4, post-season was the time immediately following the end of a season when a leader first returned home. Similar to connections found between Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness and the theme clusters, the finding that many participant comments can fit into more than one theme cluster or sub-theme shows the interconnectedness of the experience of an outdoor education leader. In this case, many of the comments regarding the post-season are more suitably discussed within the transition sub-theme of back to the real world.

Life cycle summary

The theme cluster of life cycle was interesting as, although it was a stand-alone theme cluster, it also encompassed all other themes. For example, relationships happened during each season of the cycle. However, instead of discussing each finding under the theme cluster of life cycle, the researcher divided them to provide structure within the findings and discussion. The following section will discuss the theme cluster of relationships.

Theme cluster - relationships

Relationships emerged as a major topic of this study. Many of the participants, both as self-proclaimed introverts or extroverts, expressed great appreciation for

relationships in their lives. All findings associated with relationship have a connection to the social dimension of wellness.

Relationships – non-outdoor education friends and family

It is interesting to note that the participants of this study seemed to compartmentalize their relationships into groups; someone is either a fellow outdoor educator who is able to understand their experience, or they are considered an “other”. A similar structure was used when discussing friends; friends were either “real friends” or they were not. In her response to a member check, Brynn clarified this idea. When asked what qualified someone as a real friend she explained that, for her, a real friend was someone with whom she had shared an intense, life-changing experience. She stated that working in the field was such an intense experience that it either drew people “really close together, or really far apart.” For her, real friends were the people to whom she drew closer during those experiences. The researcher further probed if the participant had real friends who did not or have not worked in the field. She explained it this way.

I feel in most cases you have stronger friendships with people who have shared an intense experience with that has bonded you. For example, one of my friends from home, well, I dealt with the loss of both of his parents with him, and that brought us closer together. But people I haven't gone through an experience like that with, well, we're just never going to be as close.

While Thompson (1978) found outdoor education leaders working regular intervals were more likely to have a normal life and that time-off intervals allowed leaders to “maintain friendships, family and community ties” (p. 37), the participants of the present study indicated otherwise. The present study's findings are more in line with

Marchand (2010), who stated that regardless of time off, the “physical and emotional burdens associated with working in the wilderness . . . and unconventional work schedules . . . often lead to extensive time away from friends and family” (p. 306). The difference in findings between Thompson and Marchand could potentially be attributed to how the industry has evolved since Thompson’s study in 1978. There is not adequate literature to further support the findings of Marchand and the current study; therefore, it is not possible for the researcher to concretely determine this. As indicated in the results, it is clear that having long, or even short, periods of time away from friends and family who are not in the field made existing relationships difficult to maintain, and new relationships almost impossible to form. This appeared to be stressful for the participants, particularly when they attempted to reconnect with non-outdoor friends and family. Having difficulty expressing their experiences and not feeling understood caused frustration and distance within relationships, yet at the same time, allowed for participants to have a clearer picture of who their real friends were.

Relationships – co-leaders

The importance that co-leaders played in the lives of the participants was highlighted throughout the interviews. The researcher did anticipate that relationships with co-workers would be important so the leaders could accomplish the tangible goals of their outdoor education programs. However, reports of the level of emotional support shared between co-leaders were profound. As expressed by the participants, particularly Brynn and Peter, working closely with others in such an intense environment allowed for deep connections to be formed. Vernon (2011), who examined the experience of co-instructing in outdoor education, discussed how

the experience of co-instruction, therefore, is not simply an arrangement between two equal professionals; it is an arrangement between two individuals engaged in an intense, shared life experience . . . Co-instruction on wilderness expeditions involves the pairing of two individuals to share in the negotiation of professional obligation, social roles, and personal requirements through the relationship they create, potentiating a sustainable and fulfilling experience for both students and staff. (p. 376)

Vernon's findings were reinforced by Mark's insight regarding the ability of co-leaders to foster personal development in one another. Furthermore, regarding an "intense, shared life experience" (Vernon, 2011, p. 376), Peter spoke about living in a so-called "pressure-cooker" environment where, at times, things may boil over and one may need to rely on one's co-leader(s) for support, not just emotionally, but in accomplishing physically and mentally exhausting tasks. In these ways, this study has confirmed that there is great value in the relationship between co-leaders, and a positive, mutually-supportive relationship may affect the experience for both leaders and participants alike.

Relationships – romantic

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Marchand et al. (2009) found that close to 25% of 129 outdoor education leaders surveyed had relationship difficulties that directly resulted from working in the field. Marchand (2009) also found that of the leaders surveyed, over half (52%) were single. This statistic left the researcher questioning the reason romantic relationships are difficult for outdoor education leaders to initiate and maintain; was it because of challenges in the field, or simply stage of life?

Distance, low energy levels, and the inability to meet new people were identified by the participants of the current study as barriers to romantic relationships. Peter explained that he worked in a very “homogeneous environment and you know the [staff] and you meet the kids and that’s it.” Additionally, he acknowledged that even if he were to meet a potential romantic partner, “you’re out [in the field] for half the year, and then you’re exhausted for another quarter of it. So in that sense, it’s almost impossible to build a romantic relationship.” Peter’s desire to be in a romantic relationship and the challenges in feeling he was not able to do so as an outdoor education leader, ultimately contributed to his leaving the industry. This led the researcher to believe that personal preference of marital status may be a contributing factor to being an outdoor education leader. Of the five study participants, only one was in a relationship during the previous in-season. Of the remaining four, one left the industry due to his desire for a relationship and another acknowledged he would consider leaving the industry should a romantic relationship become a priority in his life.

Relationships – outdoor education participants

Relationships with outdoor education participants was another sub-theme that demonstrated the interconnectedness between the theme clusters. Many of the participants’ comments could apply to either the relationship or leadership theme cluster. The researcher has decided to discuss the findings of this sub-theme in the leadership section, as many of the comments regarding relationships with program participants centered around mentoring, and therefore, were included in the leadership mentoring discussion.

Relationships – other

It is noteworthy that of all the types of relationships discussed, there was very little mention of relationships with supervisory or management staff. This could be attributed to the fact that outdoor education leaders spend very little time in these relationships. The majority of their time is spent in the field with their participants and co-leader, or at home, with family and friends. It had been anticipated at the outset of this study that management would have had a larger influence on the participants, but that was not the case. This particular finding will be further discussed in connection with the organizational component of the SEM.

Relationships summary

Hettler's (1976) social dimension emphasized the importance of interdependence between people, as well as one's contribution to a community. The above discussion demonstrated the connection between relationships and the social dimension of wellness as it stressed the importance of personal relationships between outdoor education leaders and that of their family and friends.

Theme cluster – transition

Transition was a well-represented theme throughout the interviews. When analyzing the transcripts, the researcher determined that transition took place in all seasons of a leader's life cycle, whether it was preparing for a trip (pre-season), during a trip (in-season), or when returning home (post- and off-season).

Transition – first 48 hours

While the first 48 hours of a trip can be difficult for program participants, they also appeared to be very challenging for the leaders who participated in this study. Not only were the leaders in charge of teaching lessons, handling conflict, and maintaining safety, but they had to actively work through the transitions the program participants were experiencing as well. During this time, there was no respite for the leaders. On introductory trips, program participants did not initially have the knowledge or skills to alleviate some of the burden on the leaders. Activities such as setting up camp, treating water, and cooking were all tasks that had to be completed by the leaders while they were simultaneously teaching the program participants. This made for a difficult, stressful, and exhausting few days. Literature on the life and leadership experiences of Paul Petzoldt supported this finding. After his passing, partially completed documents written by Petzoldt were uncovered in his personal files. Wagstaff and Cashel obtained these documents, and contributed them to the literature on outdoor education. The following ideas and concepts were formulated by Petzoldt, and were reported in an article by Wagstaff and Cashel.

Petzoldt was a major leader in the development of outdoor leadership in the United States (Wagstaff & Cashel, 2001). As a chief instructor for Outward Bound, and the founder of the National Outdoor Leadership School, Petzoldt had written about his many experiences in the field. He, too, echoed the experiences of the participants in the current study, agreeing that the initial days of an expedition are the most difficult.

Ask any outdoor leader about the most intense teaching times in a course and you will probably hear that the first day or two are the toughest. So much is

happening. Group members meet each other and gear is issued. The environment and course elements produce student stress. (Wagstaff & Cashel, 2001, p. 161)

The current study confirmed this personal insight by Petzoldt. Petzoldt offered suggestions on how to combat the first few stressful days. These suggestions will be presented in the following section on “practical implications” of the current study.

Transition – back to the real world

The Six Dimensions of Wellness were well-represented in this sub-theme. Of the six dimensions in this model, the researcher was able to find connections with five dimensions: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Ironically, the only theme that could not specifically be identified through a participant’s comments in this sub-theme was occupational; however, as this study focused on the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders, the researcher felt the occupational dimension was an overarching theme under which all others were present.

According to the researcher, the greatest connection between the findings and the physical dimension of wellness was a participant’s ability to control his or her diet upon returning from the field. While all five participants voiced opinions regarding being able to make their own food after returning home, not all felt it was positive. Sarah, Peter, and Brynn all greatly appreciated their ability to cook for themselves. Peter savored fresh fruits and vegetables, while Brynn searched the grocery aisles for all the treats she had not had in the field. Sarah enjoyed the freedom of being able to make her own food choices again. In contrast, Mark and Anna felt that grocery shopping and cooking were chores they were happy to sacrifice while in the field. Anna commented that instead of wanting to create elaborate dishes, she craved food from the field. “I’m like, okay,

cheese and crackers, put some mustard on it.” Mark would find himself eating at restaurants instead of cooking for himself, but when he would venture into the grocery store, he would become overwhelmed by all the available choices. “I’ll walk down the aisles and be like, what? Can’t I just take something out of my backpack right now?”

In addition to healthy eating, physical activity is an important part of the physical dimension. Only two of the participants commented on their physical activity levels when they returned home. While gender was outside the scope of this study, it may be worth noting that both of those participants were the male leaders. Mark and Peter were excited to resume the practice of physical activities in which they were unable to participate while in the field.

Emotionally, all of the leaders felt overwhelmed when they returned home. Some participants, such as Mark and Anna were overwhelmed with relief that a trip had been successful. All leaders were emotionally overwhelmed by relationships, which will be further discussed in connection with the social dimension.

Returning home to family and friends was largely connected with the social dimension. Many of the participants reported feeling misunderstood by people who were not familiar with life in the field, and as a result, would gravitate toward spending time with co-leaders that lived nearby. As discussed by Johnson and Wattoo (2004), reflection was an important part of the outdoor education experience. Having friends and family who were unable to understand a participant’s experience seemed to make it difficult for leaders to reflect on and process their experience with anyone other than a fellow leader. Anna described that when she attempted to explain her experience to friends and family who did not have knowledge of the field, she felt as though she was

“lessening [her] experience.” For many of the participants, this was a contributing factor to spending more time with outdoor education colleagues, and less time with others.

In-person social interaction was not the only aspect of this dimension that participants experienced. With an increase in social media as a communication tool, Mark described how he would “slowly reconnect to the world via phone or email, you know, facebook, whatever[.]” However, as soon as Mark engaged in these activities, he would “immediately feel super overwhelmed. It happens everytime. Super, SUPER overwhelmed.” With so many avenues to socialize after returning home, the use of technology appeared to add an additional dimension of stress.

The intellectual dimension showed subtle yet considerable connection to returning home. Although often required to multi-task while on the job, the participants acknowledged there were only so many things to think about at any given time. Priorities would include safety, shelter, and food. However, upon arriving home, the participants needed to reacclimatize to the real world. The scope of the real world appeared larger to the participants as there were more things to consider. Anna commented that even language at home was different, as living in the wilderness was so “simple.” The process of cooking, for example, was more intellectually challenging at home than pulling something out of a backpack and eating from a cup. It appeared that in the real world, participants were much more intellectually overwhelmed as there were more stimuli to process on a daily basis. Mark discussed how there was constantly noise in the wilderness, the rustling of leaves and chirping of birds, but in the real world, it was much more “in your face”.

The spiritual dimension can be most closely connected with the description of Anna's experience in the mountains. As previously mentioned, when in the field, Anna felt like "this is how the world should be. I feel this is how I should be." In reviewing Anna's comments, the researcher felt that it was in the mountains that Anna found meaning in her human experience. When she returned home, it was as though she attempted to recreate that experience through actions such as sleeping outside.

Transition – between trips

The time between trips, whether it was a few hours or a few days, was an emotional experience for each participant. Having to "return to earth from the moon", as Brynn described, was not a task easily accomplished in one or two days. Peter explained how he never really felt as though he had a break from work during his days off. He explained that he felt he was "still working on the weekend 'cause the weekend is your recovery time." Not being able to fully recover between trips had an impact on each of the participants. For some, it influenced their next trip, and for others, it dictated what they did on their time between trips.

Although personality tests were not completed as part of this study, participants identified themselves in a variety of ways during the interviews: "introvert", "extrovert", "social" people, and those that "need time alone." It was interesting to note, however, that regardless of the way a participant categorized his or her personality, each required the same combination of rest and solitude between trips. Even those who claimed to be extroverts or social people craved alone time.

Transition summary

Transitions were a substantial part of an outdoor education leader's job-related experience. From transition in the field to returning home, each change impacted a leader in a unique way.

Theme cluster – leadership

The following section discusses the leadership theme cluster, including the sub-themes of leader characteristics, skill acquisition and use, and mentoring. During the analysis of the leadership section, a connection between the findings of co-leader relationships and leaderful practice was identified and therefore, included in this discussion.

Leadership – leader characteristics

When discussing a typical Outward Bound instructor, Thompson (1978) informed her readers that instructors “. . . are skilled in wilderness pursuits, are adventuresome in spirit, and have a high level of motivation, a desire for self-actualization and a genuine interest in helping others” (p. 33). This is consistent with the findings of the current study, particularly that leaders are adventuresome and interested in helping others. Taking ownership over participant experience and being keen to facilitate positive, transformative experiences were consistent with an interest in helping and mentoring others. Additionally, as seen in the leadership results, leaders seem to be adventuresome by nature, which would explain their ability to embrace and push through risk factors, regardless of personal stress or anxiety. A quantitative exploratory study of 30 outdoor education leaders found that many leaders experience cognitive and somatic anxiety (Bunyan and Boniface, 2000). Bunyan and Boniface utilized the Competitive State

Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2), a 27-item questionnaire that scores anxiety symptom intensity levels on a scale of 1 (“not at all”) to 4 (“very much”) (Martens, Burton, Vealey, Bump, & Smith, 1990). Participant scores could range between nine (low anxiety) and 36 (high anxiety) (Martens et al., 1990). It was determined that cognitive and somatic anxiety were highest early in the morning (15.70 ± 2.95 ; 11.80 ± 3.16) and later at night (13.30 ± 3.84 ; 10.40 ± 2.99) than during the day, due to concerns about weather, suitability of activities, and responsibility for a large group of people in a public place such as a camping site (Bunyan & Boniface, 2000). The findings of Bunyan and Boniface are supported by the participants in the current study as all expressed similar anxiety over the weather and conditions during their trips; however, it did not prevent them from moving forward, provided conditions were deemed safe. It was during these times that leaders were required to be flexible and innovative in order to meet the needs of the group and accommodate changing environmental conditions; nevertheless, they did not reveal their stress, demonstrating their desire for the program participants to have a positive experience.

It is important to note that the previous study on leader anxiety suggested that “stress need not necessarily be debilitating and a certain level of stress might facilitate performance” (Bunyan & Boniface, 2000, p. 38). This is supported by the current study as participants stated they often wished to push the limits of conditions and comfort in order for program participants to experience feelings of accomplishment. This finding is consistent with the concept of “eustress”. Dr. Hans Selye, the “Father of Stress Theory”, stated that eustress is the positive stress present in one’s life (Selye, 1974). “Eustress challenges us to grow, adapt, and find creative solutions in our lives” (Hales & Lauzon,

2015, p. 54). All participants of this study appeared to seek eustress, and in turn, encouraged program participants to do the same. Stress need not always be considered negative as it has the ability to allow one to push personal limits and achieve successes that may be perceived to be beyond reach.

Leadership – skill acquisition and use

In the same article by Bunyan and Boniface (2000), it was found that stress was also associated with delegating tasks to others. “In addition to the concern any leader will have about their [sic] own performance and that of the group members, consideration needs to be extended to concerns over delegated responsibility that has been given to other members of the staff team” (Bunyan & Boniface, 2000, p. 42). Anna’s comments over her difficulty in delegating tasks supported these comments by Bunyan and Boniface, as she felt she was able to complete a task on her own with a higher level of efficiency. This, however, was not a finding verbalized by other participants in the current study, suggesting overall there is a trust level between co-leaders and other staff members that they will be able to carry out tasks with equal efficiency. Anna did, however, comment that this was an area on which she was working, and found great confidence when she was able to improve this skill. Additionally, Anna felt she identified that the skill set she gained from being an outdoor education leader provided her with the skills to make lateral moves within the industry, and find employment with organizations for which she would not previously have been qualified.

Leadership - mentoring

Participant response on the importance of facilitating transformational experiences was considerable. In a 2006 study of outdoor education leaders, Hayashi and

Ewert asked: “What is the structure of an outdoor leader’s type of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership? Are their structures fundamentally different from the general population?” (p. 226). Their results found that “when compared to the general population, outdoor leaders demonstrated a more transformational leadership style on two subscales: a) the way they inspired and motivated students; and b) the level at which they considered individual student issues” (Hayashi & Ewert, 2006, p. 230). Lastly, this study found that “transformational leaders strive to motivate followers to achieve beyond what was originally thought possible” (Hayashi & Ewert, 2006, p. 230). It was encouraging to see that the qualitative results of the current study participants supported these quantitative findings. Based on all findings presented in this paper, outdoor education leadership appears to attract a certain personality type.

Leadership – leaderful practice

Upon analysis of the findings, it was determined that data included in the leadership section can be tied to the concept of “leaderful practice”. Leaderful practice is based on the humanistic principle that “when people who have a stake in a venture are given every chance to participate in and affect the venture, including its implementation, their commitment to the venture will be heightened” (Raelin, 2010, p. xiii). This was true of all participants in that each showed great commitment to the field through sacrificing important aspects of their lives such as relationships and personal interests.

Co-leader dynamics have been discussed throughout this study, and have supported the concept of leaderful practice. In an article on leaderful practice, Raelin wrote that:

[L]eadership need not be centred [sic] on the traits of any one individual . . . It is less about what one person thinks and does and more about what people do together to accomplish important activities. What makes the exchanges between people leaderful is their commitment to collaborate with one another to accomplish a shared purpose. They don't contribute to leadership sequentially, however, or one at a time; they do so all together and at the same time. (Raelin, 2010, xiii)

The results of the current study reinforced what Raelin suggested; outdoor education would not be as successful without the ability of co-leaders to work together toward a common goal.

Leadership summary

Leadership took on many forms during this study. A leader's personal characteristics, ability to mentor and provide transformative experiences, as well as grow personally through the acquisition of new skills, allowed each of the leaders in this study to provide their program participants with meaningful experiences.

Theme cluster discussion summary

This section has discussed the analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4. By identifying relationships between the theme clusters and the Six Dimensions of Wellness, it has been shown that the job-related experiences of an outdoor education leader are connected to a holistic model of health and wellness.

Section two – relationship of findings to the SEM

Although a variation of the SEM was used as a theoretical framework, this study was exploratory in nature and, therefore, did not seek to prove or disprove any part of this theory. All of the literature reviewed in this study touches on, in some way, at least one component of the theoretical framework used: intrapersonal factors, interpersonal processes and primary groups, organizational (institutional) factors, community factors, or public policy (McLeroy et al., 1988). As explained in the literature review, the SEM was used to provide a framework and structure through which to organize and sort the data, and to remind the researcher of the connections that are present both within and outside the workplace. While the results showed clear connections to the SEM, certain components were more represented than others.

The area of the SEM which showed the greatest connection to being an outdoor education leader was interpersonal processes and primary groups. Relationships with friends, family, and co-leaders were greatly valued by the participants, and were emphasized throughout. It is important to remember that the SEM is used as a way to evaluate why people behave the way they do; what factors influence their behavior? For two of the participants, their behavior was directly influenced by their relationships or desire for a relationship. In each of these cases, the relationship in question was a romantic one. After Brynn's relationship ended due to long-distance challenges, she was reluctant to pursue another romantic relationship while working in the field. For Peter, his desire to have a romantic relationship influenced him to make a career change toward a job that allowed him to remain in one location throughout the year in the hopes it would be easier to meet new people. Mark's self-awareness allowed him to know that for the

time being, he was satisfied to not pursue a romantic relationship and as a result, he was happy to continue working in the field. However, he did acknowledge that once he no longer felt that way, he would consider a career change that would, in his opinion, be more accommodating to a romantic relationship.

The ability of the participants to feel understood by their non-outdoor education family and friends also influenced their behavior. Often, they would not attempt to communicate their experiences as their explanations were not received in a way that was satisfying. Instead of feeling understood, they felt frustrated and, therefore, reduced attempts to connect with those family or friends about their field experiences. The desire to feel understood and share common experiences influenced leaders on an interpersonal level by causing them to gravitate toward certain social circles. In some cases, the participants explained that it was easier to be with people who were familiar with outdoor education, and, therefore, they spent the majority of their time with that group.

Another component of the SEM that influenced participant behavior was intrapersonal factors. Participants who were self-proclaimed introverts appeared to require greater recovery time between trips and seasons, prompting them to spend more time pursuing solitary activities. Other, more extroverted participants, while still requiring time to decommission after an expedition, were able to rebound more quickly and, therefore, sought more social activities sooner after returning home.

When reviewing the results in relation to the SEM, one component of the modified framework that was less represented than anticipated was organizational (institutional) factors. Discussion regarding relationships with management or supervisory staff was kept to a minimum by the participants. Particularly regarding

workplace health promotion, it was believed by the researcher that an organization would have a greater effect on the behavior of a leader both in and out of the field. As written in the literature review section of this study, “workplace health promotion involves the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work” (Workplace Health Promotion, 2008, p. 1472). For this reason, it was anticipated that organizational factors, as well as community factors and public policy to a certain extent, would have been more significant; however, this was not the case. Ultimately, it was found that, even with direction and guidance from an organization, a leader made his or her own decisions in the field and at home. While suggestions could be made on how to improve health and wellness in both of these locations, it was up to the leader to follow these suggestions. When in the field and at home, participants did not necessarily have a supervisor to keep them accountable; therefore, their behavior was largely based on personal values, wants, and needs.

Section three – contributions, practical implications, and future recommendations

Contribution to literature

The greatest contribution this research has made to the literature is the addition of the previously unheard voice of the outdoor education leader through the use of an in-depth, qualitative study. As mentioned throughout this study, quantitative literature exists in this area; however, this study provided new depth through the inclusion of personal interviews representing experiences through the thoughts and feelings of outdoor education leaders. Many of the findings in the current study support previous quantitative results, and, therefore, strengthen the literature by presenting consistent findings through qualitative methods.

Practical implications

With regard to those outdoor education organizations struggling with a high turnover rate of leaders, one of the findings that may be most relevant was that of staff compensation. Providing leaders with sufficient financial stability to afford a comfortable life with ample recovery time during the off-season sustains energy level and ability to invest in programs.

It was clear that outdoor education leaders find their careers rewarding for a number of reasons such as watching participant transformation, being outdoors, and developing strong relationships. There are also challenges. One of the greatest of these is the energy required during the first few days of an expedition. In an attempt to reduce this energy consumption and associated stress, literature suggested that leaders be honest with their participants about personal leadership methods. Petzoldt suggested setting the tone at the beginning of an expedition by telling the program participants the following:

[T]here may be many ways to do outdoor skills and teach outdoor leadership. We know one way, one method that has proven to be effective and to accomplish our goals and this way, our way is the one we will teach and use on this expedition . . . What we wish to do for you is to teach you our proven way and encourage the development and improvement of your judgement [sic] . . . Therefore to make our learning most efficient and effective we ask your help in accepting our methods and our teaching on this one and only expedition. (Wagstaff & Cashel, 2001, pp. 162-163)

In an article on managing the various roles of an outdoor education leader, Thomas (2010) told the story of an experience where he allowed his participants (in this case,

students training to become outdoor education leaders) to see his leadership process in action. In this scenario, Thomas had permitted his students to pick their own rafting groups, which resulted in rafts with uneven skill levels, potentially resulting in a frustrating experience for the less experienced rafters. Instead of correcting the situation, Thomas let it play out as the students chose, even though he knew it would result in a stressful experience for everyone involved. As a result of not intervening in this situation, Thomas experienced more stress than necessary and the majority of participants did not have a positive experience. Thomas shared the lessons he learned from this experience, stating that, as Petzoldt suggested, informing participants of the reasons for certain actions at the outset of a trip or activity, may benefit the leader and the participants. Thomas (2010) explained that a leader's transparency about his or her leadership difficulties is not necessarily negative. "I do not think I have ever lost credibility or the respect of my participants by discussing the struggles I am experiencing as a facilitator" (Thomas, 2010, p. 252). As such, it may be beneficial, as part of pre-season training, for outdoor education leaders to be encouraged to be honest with their participants when they are experiencing difficult times. To an extent, taking the program participants along on the journey of the leader may allow for a less stressful experience for the leader.

Future recommendations

While this study was able to contribute a new voice to the experiences of outdoor education leaders, there is still much that can be learned. The current study conducted interviews with outdoor education leaders who were either "retired" from the field, or in the off-season. Field research that includes interviews with outdoor education leaders in-

season may generate different responses from those interviewed off-season. Future research may benefit from the use of methods such as participant observation allowing the researcher to witness the experience of an outdoor education leader in-season, while at the same time, comparing and contrasting in- and off-season experiences.

Additionally, a study into how gender impacts a leader's experience would add a new dimension to the literature. Gender was outside the scope of the current study, but a review of how men and women react differently to their experience as a leader may be a valuable addition to the literature.

Future studies may benefit from exploring the degree to which outdoor education leaders value health and wellness in the workplace. A study focused in this area may identify effective workplace wellness initiatives for the field, and whether these initiatives would be utilized by leaders. The current study identified connections between outdoor education leaders and multiple dimensions of Hettler's wellness model, yet, there are challenges that still need to be identified, as these dimensions remain unbalanced.

It is the intention of the researcher to disseminate the results of this study in the following ways:

1. Distributing copies of the study to all participants
2. Presentation of results at applicable conferences such as the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) and National Outdoor Recreation (NOR) conferences
3. Publication of findings in related academic journals such as the Journal of Experiential Education, the Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, the

Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership, and the Journal of Outdoor Recreation

4. Distribution of short articles to local and provincial outdoor education clubs and organizations including the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia
5. Public presentations to local and provincial outdoor education clubs
6. Public presentations at local high schools, specifically targeted to schools offering outdoor education programs

Overall summary

This study explored the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders in relation to their personal health and wellness. Through the use of qualitative interviews, five consistent theme clusters arose from the data: life cycle, relationships, transition, leadership, and health and wellness. Through explanation of the theme clusters using the voice of the participants, the researcher was able to paint a broad picture of the life of an outdoor education leader, adding more depth to the literature of this phenomenon.

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Appendix A

Researcher personal reflection of being an outdoor education program participant

This reflection was written by the researcher in August 2013. The trip it discusses took place in July 2013.

It had been 11 years since I had taken the 10-hour trip up the coast. I had forgotten how long it felt. How many boats we had to take and how many times we had to pack and unpack our bags in and out of cars and boats. I had already been tired when I left home, busy with school and all. So by the time we were heading up the inlet to base camp I was a bit on edge. Did I really have the energy for this? Why had I not been mentally preparing? The training hikes had been good for my quads, and that was about it. But then we rounded the final bend. It took my breath away. I had forgotten the majesty of this place. This place where I had first been introduced to spirituality. Not hard to be when you are surrounded by this kind of unimaginable beauty. "Hold on girls, it gets rough through the rapids here!" We were in for a ride in more ways than one. I was overcome with emotion. These people, friends to the core, that I hadn't seen in such a long time, were waiting for me on the dock with open arms. We docked and the whirlwind began. I remember being on that side of the dock. Welcoming participants, campers, students, climbers who had no idea what they were in for. But this time I was the one getting off the boat. There was a barrage of high fives and smiles. Warm embraces from my friends who were so happy to see me because I represented their home life. Workers swiftly carried our bags off the boat and up to the landing, I'm sure partly doing so to be kind to us upon our arrival, but ultimately realizing that they were so much more efficient if they just did it themselves and didn't have to explain where

we needed to take them and answer our questions. A theme that I would see regularly throughout my week in the mountains.

There was no time to settle. We were at camp! After repeat-after-me songs, introductory skits of our guides, and a quick sing-a-long introduction to life in the mountains, things kicked into gear. The military-like organization of this place amazed me. The kindest people you will ever meet had a mission. Get these needy, unaware, novice hikers to organize all of their equipment as fast as possible. We had other things to get done before dark. After we had our gear sorted, we headed to our campsite for the night. After setting up camp for the night, we were free! The ocean has never felt so refreshing. A good wash was in order, because we all knew it would be the last one for days. It was such a hot day and the water was so delightful. The end of the inlet meant calm waters - the kind that are so warm on top but bitterly cold as soon as you swim down a meter or so. We paddle boarded, washed our hair, and swam out to the closest island. We got called back when we tried to swim around it. There were rules here. I had forgotten that I was now under someone else's care for the week. Someone was officially responsible for my life and the choices I would make for the next seven days. When it was time, we reluctantly headed back to our campsite where the guides were already hard at work preparing dinner and the evening's activities. As they served us, we were introduced to the meal system. "Pass all the way to the right until your canteen returns to you." They were even responsible for rationing the food. Dinner was delicious. Afterward we cleaned up and headed to the fire pit where we had to display every item of clothing we had brought for the guides to ensure it was appropriate for the trip. God help anyone who brought anything cotton. A definite no-no in the mountains. "You will be wet for a week." Noted.

Twilight rolled around. My absolute favourite time of night. Although I don't think it was that late. The mountains were so high they cast early shadows. But I wasn't sure; we had surrendered our watches upon arrival. Only the guides were on a schedule, and we just followed. We had surprisingly few questions that night. Except for our curiosity about the bathroom 'facilities' for the next week. "Well, we can't leave a trace. So I will be carrying any waste in my pack and will dispose of it when we return." A beautiful, vibrant young lady I had never met was now responsible for my life and would carry the waste of 13 girls for a week. A true labour of love. I think we were all naïve. We were told to sleep in our hiking clothes so we could get ready more efficiently in the morning.

Before bed, myself and a few others headed down to the dock to reconnect with some of our friends from home who had been in the mountains for two months already. It was so great to see them and to finally see their world. It would make it easier to relate to them when they come home and tell us their stories. We would now understand the places they were talking about. People often say it's hardest to be the one who stays home when someone else goes away, but I feel it can be the other way around. With no ability to connect to the outside world for months, they were so curious about what was going on in our lives. They wanted to know about everyone and everything. There were about a dozen people on the dock. All guides who were not hiking this week. They were sitting around eating the candy we had brought up with us, writing encouragement notes for their fellow guides who were hiking that week. It was a true community. Everyone was laughing as the sun set and the ocean turned pink. We joked about the upcoming week - about the different personalities on our trip and how they would click and clash. One guide laughed along with us while

the other looked marginally concerned. Twilight turned to dusk, and dusk to night, so armed with headlamps, we ventured back to camp. On the way, we were met by campfire sparks and singing, so took a small pit stop to enjoy some time in community, laughing and singing under the protection of the tree canopy.

The next morning came quickly. We were awoken by the chipper song of one of our guides, who, no doubt, had been up for at least an hour preparing for the day ahead. Breakfast was served, and camp was cleaned up. We were corralled to main camp, which was the last civilization we would see for a week, although calling it civilization might be a bit of a stretch. We did a final bag check and secured our packs. We put our full packs on for the first time. "Hey! This isn't as heavy as I thought it was going to be!" Famous last words. We triumphantly marched down to the dock where our water shuttle was waiting. We took a group photo and hopped aboard.

It was a short ride down the inlet before we hit the start of our trail. We climbed off the boat and watched as it returned to base camp to shuttle the next group. We had a quick huddle and one last chance to use an outhouse before we started up the mountain. "Okay, everybody here? Let's go!" What? That was it? Where the pomp and circumstance? Where was the starting pistol? Or the brass band to play us off? Nothing but some yachters who gave us a polite nod of the head as we marched past them. And so we were off.

It took about 15 minutes before the first person started to feel a blister. It was me. For the next few hours, we started and stopped regularly as our delicate feet were shredded by our new boots that were supposed to have been worn in. There was a chorus of 'oops' as we all began

to understand that they really meant that was important. The guides gently taped up each heel and toe like magicians. Undoubtedly silently frustrated that we hadn't heeded the pre-hike notice but outwardly kind and empathetic. When I asked if they ever got blisters they said that they used to, but now they can't feel their toes so it doesn't bother them anymore. Yikes.

The next six days were a bit of a blur. I have never experienced so many emotions in so few days. I thought I was going to die but have never felt more alive. Each morning was met with the challenge of a heavy backpack, wet socks, and the optimism that my feet wouldn't hurt today. That I wouldn't be scared when I have to walk straight up a cliff face with nothing but determination and trust in my boots. Each day was full of singing and laughter, and unexpected moments of compassion and tears when we faced and overcame obstacles. Each night was met with relief. That we had conquered another day and were rewarded by the dancing northern lights.

To be a guide on this trip almost requires superhuman strength. You need to carry the load that others can't in every sense.

It was amazing that as soon as we hit the summit and started our descent, thoughts turned to home. We had completed our mission. We had climbed a mountain. Going down was just a formality. Minutes before we reached the dock to meet our waiting shuttle, I flippantly said to one of the guide, "You must feel good that we made it down in one piece!" Without batting an eye, she responded, "You have no idea", as if the weight of the world had just been lifted off her shoulders. The boat ride back to base camp was full of excitement, despite the fact that our bodies were so exhausted. As we rounded the corner, we could hear the

ringing of the huge iron bell, signalling a group was just about to arrive at the dock. That same welcoming committee from day one ran down to the dock to take our packs and congratulate us on a job well done. They understood what we had been through. It's hard to put it into words.

We spent that night scrubbing our feet, eating fresh fruits and vegetables, and re-living our experience around the campfire. It had only happened a few hours ago yet it felt like a lifetime. It's amazing how your perspective can change so quickly. How easy it is to adopt a simplistic lifestyle. I resisted the urge to look at my watch, and was grateful to not have cell reception. I needed to ease my way back in. I can only imagine what it would be like to spend four months in this place only to be thrust back into society. I'm not sure I have ever slept as well as I did that night. It's amazing how with every step up and down the mountain I told myself, "I will never do this again." Yet here I am, fresh off the boat, and I can't wait to go back.

Appendix B

In-person recruitment script

Hi 'Participant',

As part of the requirement to complete my graduate studies and thesis at the University of Victoria, I will be conducting research on the lived experience of outdoor education leaders. As you have experience leading outdoor education programs, I would like to invite you to be part of this study. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria.

Involvement is completely voluntary, and would include a one-on-one interview with myself, that would last approximately 60-90 minutes, and may also include a 30-minute follow-up interview. During this time, I will ask you about your current and/or past experiences as an outdoor education leader. Participants are not obliged to participate if there is a prior acquaintance with the researcher, nor are they required to divulge any information they do not wish to or feel uncomfortable discussing. Should you wish to know more about this study and potentially participate, I will provide you with additional information and a detailed consent form that is required to be signed by you prior to involvement in the study.

Interviews will be recorded and all information will be kept secure at the University of Victoria. Confidentiality of information is guaranteed, and should you wish to withdraw from participation, you may do so at any time without penalty or explanation, and all documentation pertaining to your participation will be destroyed.

Should you have any questions prior to involvement in this study, please feel free to contact myself (sfield@uvic.ca), or my supervisors Dr. John Meldrum (jmeldrum@uvic.ca) and Dr. Lara Lauzon (llauzon@uvic.ca).

Appendix C

Interview guide

Assessing Health and Wellness of Outdoor Education Leaders Interview Guide

Thank you for meeting with me today. Before we begin, I just want to remind you that you are free to end your participation at any time without explanation. Any data collected until that point will be disposed of. If you have any questions throughout the interview process, please do not hesitate to ask.

1. Background/Demographic Question

Where have you worked as an outdoor education leader? For how long?
What certifications do you hold?
What demographics did you work with? (Children, adults, at-risk youth, etc)

2. Experience/Behavior Question

Please think about what a typical trip is like. If I followed you on that trip, what would I see you doing? What experiences would I see you having?

If I followed you home after a trip, what would I see you experience? In the short-term?
Long-term?

3. Opinions/Values Question

What do you believe are the most challenging and rewarding parts of being an outdoor education leader while on the job? When you go home?

4. Feelings Question

How do you feel when you leave home for a trip? How do you feel during your trip?
How do you feel when you return home?

If you feel being an outdoor education leader impacts your relationships, how so?

Do you feel any other areas of your life are affected by this job?

5. Knowledge Question

How would you define health and wellness? What do you do on your own to achieve health and wellness, if anything?

To the best of your knowledge, what programs or training does your workplace offer to promote being healthy and well at work? Is there anything they do to assist you in overcoming the challenges you previously mentioned?

In your opinion, how could an organization help outdoor education leaders being healthy and well?

6. Sensory Question

Think back to a specific impactful event that took place while leading a trip. What did you see, hear, smell, etc, at that time?

How do you feel the transition from nature to the ‘real world’ and vice versa impacts you?

7. Is there anything you would like to add that I haven’t asked about?

Thank you so much for your time. Should a follow-up interview take place, I will contact you to arrange a date and time and to confirm your willingness for continued participation.

Appendix D

Interview guide – connection to Six Dimensions of Wellness

Six Dimensions of Wellness: Physical, Occupational, Intellectual, Social, Emotional, Spiritual

1. Background/Demographic Question

Occupational - Where have you worked as an outdoor education leader? For how long?

Intellectual - What certifications do you hold?

Occupational - What demographics did you work with? (Children, adults, at-risk youth, etc)

2. Experience/Behavior Question

All Dimensions - Please think about what a typical trip is like. If I followed you on that trip, what would I see you doing? What experiences would I see you having?

All Dimensions - If I followed you home after a trip, what would I see you experience? In the short-term? Long-term?

3. Opinions/Values Question

All Dimensions - What do you believe are the most challenging and rewarding parts of being an outdoor education leader while on the job? When you go home?

4. Feelings Question

All Dimensions - How do you feel when you leave home for a trip? How do you feel during your trip? How do you feel when you return home?

Social - If you feel being an outdoor education leader impacts your relationships, how so?

All Dimensions - Do you feel any other areas of your life are affected by this job?

5. Knowledge Question

All Dimensions - How would you define health and wellness? What do you do on your own to achieve health and wellness, if anything?

Occupational - To the best of your knowledge, what programs or training does your workplace offer to promote being healthy and well at work? Is there anything they do to

assist you in overcoming the challenges you previously mentioned?

Intellectual - In your opinion, how could an organization help outdoor education leaders being healthy and well?

6. Sensory Question

All Dimensions - Think back to a specific impactful event that took place while leading a trip. What did you see, hear, smell, etc, at that time?

All Dimensions - How do you feel the transition from nature to the 'real world' and vice versa impacts you?

Appendix E

Participant consent form

Assessing the Health and Wellness of Outdoor Education Leaders

You are invited to participate in a study entitled ‘Assessing the Health and Wellness of Outdoor Education Leaders’ that is being conducted by Stephanie Field.

Stephanie Field is a Graduate Student in the department of Exercise Science, Physical, and Health Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at sfield@uvic.ca or phone (250.744.0981).

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Kinesiology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lara Lauzon and Dr. John Meldrum. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8378 or 250-721-8392 respectively.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to gain a greater understanding of the lives of Outdoor Education Leaders.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it will contribute to the larger body of knowledge and may ultimately lead to more effective leader workplace wellness.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Outdoor Education Leader who has experience leading trips that lasted consecutive days away from home.

What is involved?

This study is comprised of one-on-one interviews in which you would be asked a variety of questions regarding your current and past experiences as an Outdoor Education Leader. Interviews can be expected to last between 60 and 90 minutes, and would take place at a location of your choice. Follow-up interviews to review any un-discussed material and to confirm accuracy of your interview may take place after the initial interview and will last approximately 30 minutes, depending on additional information you may wish to provide. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. Prior to any follow-up meeting, I will re-confirm your consent to participate. Participation in this study must be on a voluntary basis.

All interviews will be audio recorded and the interviewer will take additional notes. A verbatim transcription of each interview will be made.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. However, should you feel uncomfortable discussing any topics or answering any questions, please feel free to say you would prefer to not answer a specific question without any explanation. Please remember you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation or penalty.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

To the participant: dissemination of knowledge and participation in this study may increase awareness of areas of improvement for outdoor education leader working conditions

To society: potential delivery of improvements of outdoor education programs

To state of knowledge: results will contribute to filling a current research gap regarding experiences of outdoor education leaders

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used and will be deleted from electronic storage and shredded confidentially.

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will request that you sign this form with the understanding that interviews may take place on multiple occasions, and follow-up communication may be required to ensure accuracy of data collected during the interviews. Prior to follow-up interviews, I will re-confirm your continued willingness to participate.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, the only person who will be privy to your involvement in the study will be the interviewer, as you will communicate and meet with her in person. For this reason, we cannot guarantee full anonymity; however, beyond this interaction, your identity will not be disclosed in any manner.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected through secure storage of all data at the University of Victoria. All names, places, and organizations will be replaced with pseudonyms, and identifying factors will be removed. A limit to confidentiality may exist through recruitment, as you may be requested to contact a potential participant that is known to you, but not to the researcher. This is voluntary only, and it is not necessary to inform potential participants that you have participated in the study.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: each participant will receive a one-on-one informal presentation of the results (optional), results will be published in a thesis and academic journals, and will be presented at appropriate academic and non-academic conferences.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be deleted from electronic storage devices, and paper data will be shredded.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:

Stephanie Field – Researcher sfield@uvic.ca 250.744.0981

Dr. Lara Lauzon – Co-Supervisor/Committee Member llauzon@uvic.ca 250.721.8378

Dr. John Meldrum – Co-Supervisor/Committee Member jmeldrum@uvic.ca 250.721.8392

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix F

Certificate of approval



Human Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
Administrative Services Building
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 2Y2 Canada
Tel 250-472-4545, Fax 250-721-8960
ethics@uvic.ca www.research.uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Stephanie Field	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 13-241
UVic STATUS: Master's Student	Minimal Risk - Delegated
UVic DEPARTMENT: EPHE	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 18-Oct-13
SUPERVISOR: Dr. John Meldrum	APPROVED ON: 18-Oct-13
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 17-Oct-14
PROJECT TITLE: An exploratory study of the job-related experiences of outdoor education leaders in relation to their personal health and wellness	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER: None	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
<p>Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p>Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p>Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
Certification	
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.	
 <hr/> Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President, Research	

Certificate Issued On: 18-Oct-13

13-241 Field, Stephanie