Regular Paper

Stigma, Stereotypes, and Status: How Male North American Outdoor Educators Understand and Experience Masculinity

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Abstract

Although multiple studies have considered women's experiences in the outdoor adventure education field and the impact on women's notions of gender, little research has been conducted on men's ideas about gender in the outdoors. This research explores male-identifying outdoor leaders' notions about masculinity and how they may shape their practice. Interview, observation, and artefactual data were recorded and analyzed to determine the 18 male-identifying participants' ideas about masculinity in the outdoor education realm. Participants expressed confusion about rapidly changing gender norms, worries about stigmatization, distaste for hypermasculine performances, and a general support for gender equity. In addition, multiple participant statements reinforced gender essentialism, demonstrating adherence to a hybrid masculinity.

KEYWORDS: *Masculinity, outdoor education, experiential education, gender, equity*

Introduction

Across most modern societies and cultures, masculine values and qualities as well as masculine presentations and expressions afford men higher status than women (Connell, 2005; hooks, 2004). Hegemonic masculinity, the most socially valued expression of being a man, includes displays of strength, toughness, competition, virility, and emotional stoicism (Connell, 2005). Under this regime, women are often devalued due to essentialist associations linking their bodies to femininity (Butler, 1999). Men and boys too are labeled as feminine when they fail to adequately adhere to culturally or contextually influenced masculine norms (Renold, 2004). Critical feminist scholars have noted hegemonic masculinity's association with negative health impacts for both men (Good & Wood, 1995; Hearn, 2015) and women (Fleming et al., 2014), and that gender inequality has deleterious social, economic, and psychological impacts (hooks, 2004). Promoting alternative masculinities that include relational skills and emotional disclosure can reduce depression and risk of suicide (Addis & Cohane, 2005) as well as increase physical health (Hearn, 2015). However, hegemonic masculinity is reproduced and reinforced in various educational contexts (Martino, 2008; Saul, 2015). For example, Connell (2000) found that

schools pressure students to conform to stereotypical gender roles. In addition, Smith (2007) found that teachers often model and police stereotypical gender performances.

Hegemonic masculinity is also apparent in outdoor education. The outdoors has typically been seen as a masculine domain (Gray, 2016; Humberstone, 2000; Newbery, 2003) and outdoor recreational activities often valorize masculine physical strength (Avery, 2015; Newbery, 2003) and skills (Lugg, 2003). The same is true in outdoor education, with its discourses of resilience and rugged individualism (Newbery, 2003) that seem to correspond with the hegemonic masculine values of toughness and independence identified by Connell (2005). A hierarchy is also evident in the persistent valuing of "hard" technical skills over "soft" interpersonal skills (Martin et al., 2017, 2018) that are assumed to be gendered (Warren et al., 2019), with women being more associated with relationship-building and cooperation skills despite these being integral to all outdoor educators' effectiveness (Breunig et al., 2010; Gray, 2016; Overholt & Ewert, 2015).

Multiple studies have investigated how women experience their gender identity on outdoor education experiences (e.g., Allin, 2003; Lugg, 2003; Mitten, 2018; Newbery, 2003), but next to no research examined men's experience of their gender in the outdoors beyond one paper describing the impact of dominant forms of masculinity on environmentally conscious boys and young adults (Blenkinsop et al., 2018). The current article attempts to address this gap in the research. The current work is timely given many researchers have asserted that the outdoor education field is gendered in many ways (e.g., Gough, 2013; Gray, 2016, 2018; Mitten, 2018; Wigglesworth, 2019) and suffering from the influence of hegemonic masculinity (Blenkinsop et al., 2018; Breunig & Russell, 2020; Davies et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Kennedy & Russell, 2020). Such claims are supported by recent popular media reports of sexual harassment (Joyce, 2016; Langlois, 2017) and academic accounts of gender-based harassment in the outdoors (Avery, 2015; Davies et al., 2019; Newbery, 2004). Scholarly articles have described women trip leaders' being sexualized (Avery, 2015; Davies et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Howard & Goldenberg, 2020), devalued (Gray et al., 2017; Jordan, 2018), and overlooked in the profession (Gray, 2016; Gray et al., 2017; Mitten et al., 2018).

Multiple outdoor education scholars have called for investigation into how hegemonic masculinity is maintained but also challenged in the outdoors (Blenkinsop et al., 2018; Gray, 2016; Humberstone, 2000; Kennedy & Russell, 2020; Warren, 2016). Moreover, women researchers have questioned why few, if any, male-identifying researchers have critically considered the patriarchal structures, norms, and practices of outdoor education (Mitten et al., 2018).

With increased popular and academic attention on the topic of masculinity, growing sensitivity to gender issues in the wake of recent social media movements (Cover, 2019; Russell et al., 2018), and recent research indicating that some male-identifying outdoor leaders are becoming aware of the gendered nature of the field (Allen-Craig et al., 2020; Davies et al., 2019), this article addresses the following research question: How do male-identifying outdoor educators understand and experience masculinity? Greater understanding of how male-identifying outdoor leaders define masculinity in this moment can elucidate current opportunities and challenges to contesting hegemonic masculinity, promoting more diverse performances of masculinity, and fostering gender equity in the outdoor education field.

Context

The outdoors became understood as masculine space in Western contexts at the beginning of the industrial revolution, when families increasingly moved to urban environments and the gendered nature of work began to take shape (Kimmel, 1995). Many writers in the 19th century bemoaned the increase in city living and indoor work that was blamed for perceived effeminacy and moral decay, in contrast to health-giving physical labour outdoors (Putney, 2003). This doctrine led to the development of the Boy Scouts and various church camps to engage boys in the outdoors (Putney, 2003). Such pursuits were also thought to combat non-heterosexual behav-

iour, especially in the Boy Scouts of America and Christian camps, demonstrating the organizations' heteronormative bent (Macleod, 2004). Other educational/recreational programs later arose, with aims to develop character and "make men out of boys" (Newbery, 2004, p. 36; see also Martin et al., 2017). One example, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), was formed in 1965 to promote effective outdoor leadership skills such as competence, judgment, tolerance for adversity, communication, vision, and action (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Martin et al., 2017), some of which are hegemonic masculine traits.

Some larger organizations such as NOLS and Outward Bound, which act as models of practice for smaller outdoor providers, have begun to place greater emphasis on group development and communication (Gookin & Swisher, 2015; Outward Bound, n.d.) and have indicated a growing commitment to diversity and inclusion initiatives (Warner et al., 2019), despite some push back. Initiatives include training for inclusive practice, (Warner et al., 2020) women and LGBTQ+-only courses (Ortel, 2020; Outward Bound, n.d.), and resources that educate about gender biases (Gookin & Leach, 2009). However, barriers remain to inclusive practice. Warner et al. (2019), assert that such programs' risk-centred and individualist self-improvement narrative limit social justice considerations. Further, although progress is being made in awareness, Warner et al. (2020) found that instructor attitudes and programmatic priorities present barriers to inclusive practice. Moreover, the two pages that NOLS dedicates to gender bias instruction in their *Leadership Educator Notebook* (Gookin & Leach, 2009), presents a critically limited treatment of the topic, focusing largely on inclusive word choice, raising awareness of stereotypes as "social myths" (p. 61), and celebrating individualism. Such strategies can be problematic as they tend to focus on individualized and obvious examples, obscuring more subtle group-level trends and power dynamics (DiAngelo, 2021).

Another factor influencing outdoor programs and the outdoor adventure education culture is class. Wall (2008) notes how private, longer-stay summer camps were designed for middle- and upper-class patrons to encourage leadership, character, and networking opportunities. In contrast, day camps, outdoor centres, and a few wilderness-based programs such as D.A.R.E. (Development through Adventure, Recreation, and Education) were created to discourage delinquency and promote the moral rehabilitation of working-class children (Nicol, 2002a; Wall, 2008). One can still detect this classed legacy in many outdoor program objectives and a concomitant inattention to privilege (Warren, 2002). In addition, at least partially because of the expense of certifications required to lead programs, outdoor leaders are composed almost exclusively of White people from the middle and upper-middle classes (Nicol, 2002a; Warren et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2014), imbricated privileged identifications which, no doubt, influence experiences of gender in the field.

In addition to being classed, and of central concern to this paper, the outdoor education field remains largely gendered. In the outdoor education realm, even now, a majority of policy setters are men (Mitten et al., 2018). Due to the resultant "gender blinkers" (Gray & Mitten, 2018, p. 4), some values, practices, and programmatic elements contribute to inequity. One example is that masculine physical strength is also lauded and those deemed "weak" are devalued (Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2018; Lugg, 2003; Mitten, 2018; Newbery, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). Researchers have noted how this valorization has played out in multiple outdoor activities (e.g., Musa et al., 2015; Newbery, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). Further, muscular, athletic bodily presentations are valorized for men, as in wider society (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 1995; Mara, 2012).

Despite these ingrained values, the outdoor setting may provide status in the masculine hierarchy for male-identifying outdoor education leaders thereby limiting the need for compensatory practices and permitting alternative masculine performances outside of hegemonic norms. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) indicate, idealized masculine characteristics can shift with context. Contextually, outdoor education facilities are often remote and somewhat removed from suburban and urban settings (Barnes, 2003). In addition, the community tends to

have a different culture from that of mainstream society, including industry-specific language, clothing or style of dress, and behavioural expectations (Barnes, 2003; Humberstone, 2000). What is more, Barnes (2003) asserts that the outdoor education community is often critical of mainstream society, potentially offering a point of resistance to hegemonic masculine norms (Humberstone, 2000).

Some evidence of resistance to hegemonic masculine norms exists. Oakley et al. (2018) offered that in nonprofessional outdoor contexts, though rare, they have observed some male practitioners exhibit alternative masculinity, which they describe as a lack of competitiveness and self-aggrandizement. These men also provided support and acceptance of others, creating an atmosphere in which women did not feel the need to prove themselves as skilled or strong to gain respect.

Bell et al. (2018), which compared personal narratives of women's experiences in the outdoors, suggested that only a few men enact an alternative masculinity or question the gendered nature of outdoor practices. Moreover, according to the authors, men they encountered in professional settings were resistant to critical consideration of language or practice, seeming personally affronted by any such suggestion. In contrast, Davies et al. (2019) recently found that multiple outdoor leaders in their study were knowledgeable about the gendering of outdoor skills and were enthusiastic about transgressing stereotypical gender roles. Moreover, participants indicated that they were disdainful of hypermasculine organizational cultures and practices and that they actively confronted inappropriate gender comments when heard. However, Davies et al. (2019) also found that essentialist notions about gender still predominate and sexualization of women staff persists. That said, the work of Davies et al. (2019) offers some indication of changes to men's masculine performance and awareness of gender in the field.

Though a small-scale study, the results of Davies et al. (2019) may indicate changes to ideas of masculinity in outdoor education. The current research was thus undertaken to understand how male-identifying leaders in the outdoor education field understand masculinity and, based on their statements, how they perform it. Analysis of the data was considered through the lens of Connell's (2005) hegemonic masculinities theory and Bridges and Pascoe's (2014) more recent variation, hybrid masculinity theory. Hybrid masculinity theory describes how the social and contextual variability of hegemonic norms produces a seemingly more progressive masculinity in privileged men but which supports the existing hegemonic gender hierarchy, only more subtly. Male-identifying outdoor leaders' conceptions of masculinity may affect their practice and interactions with students and other outdoor leaders. Because outdoor leaders may reproduce gender norms and ideals in their students, as do classroom teachers (Martino & Frank, 2006), outdoor leaders' notions of gender are not simply a matter of theory but may have significant, real-world consequences.

Methodology and Methods

Methodology

Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinities theory was influential in the conception and definition of this research and is the theoretical framework through which data were considered. Hegemonic masculinities theory was developed by Connell (1995) applying Gramsci's theory of hegemonic class structure to gender. According to Connell's theory, one conception of masculinity is esteemed, inculcating a patriarchal structure in which femininity and alternative masculinities are delegitimized. Connell (1990) identified the hegemonic masculine characteristics as, "toughness, physical and sexual prowess, aggressiveness, and the distancing of femininity" (p. 94). However, because the gender hierarchy is constantly contested, the dominant group may change by adopting characteristics or values to maintain its superior position (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Multiple scholars have critiqued and elaborated upon hegemonic masculinities theory. Some have suggested that with the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ lives, physical affection between men, and gender fluidity, hegemonic masculinity is an outdated concept that is no longer applicable (McCormack & Anderson, 2014) or faces diminished relevance in the future (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2012).

Bridges and Pascoe (2014) argue that the inclusive (McCormack & Anderson, 2014) or open (Elliott, 2020) masculinities demonstrated by some men's decreasing homophobia and increasing emotional vulnerability can instead be understood as a hybrid masculinity. Hybrid masculinity conceals privileged men's adherence to hegemonic values beneath a veneer of socially acceptable progressivism consistent with current contextual (e.g., local, regional) norms and layered with group norms (e.g., class, race), thus obfuscating their maintenance of the gender hierarchy (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Messner (2007) sees such enactments as a calculated co-option of feminism that reinforces the existing hierarchy. However, Duncanson (2015) questioned whether such hybrid masculine enactments, if undertaken with empathy and respect, might not be the first steps toward more equal gender relations and subverting of the gender hierarchy. Discerning between social change and hybrid masculinity therefore requires a critical eye on the data.

As White et al. (2009) assert, context matters and data collection in situ allows the researcher to more accurately describe a culture or subculture in its lived context. Case study research is most effectively used when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not easily discernable (Yin, 2017) as was the case in the current research. For reasons of simplicity and practicality, the current study employed a single-case embedded design. In the context of outdoor education, the single case to be examined is outdoor education culture and the sub-units of analysis are the individual participants across three organizations operating in six different locations.

Participants

The three organizations who hosted my research were all outdoor education providers in North America. Significantly, all three provided explicit training and/or resourcing on gender issues to their staff. Two participating organizations were outdoor adventure education providers, and one was a privately owned summer camp that provides backcountry excursions. The organizations served all genders; however, the outdoor adventure education providers offered elective women-only programs. The summer camp programming was divided by binary gender, with boys and girls offered separate accommodation and programming on the same site, though staff (all genders) was common to both programs. Both of the outdoor adventure education providers had multiple base-sites. Interviews and observational data were collected at five of these sites as well as at the summer camp's main location in 2019.

Individual participants indicated a willingness to volunteer after being contacted through their employers. While on site at each organization to conduct interviews, additional volunteers were collected at some sites. The summer camp, for logistical reasons, assigned its employees with a free period to report to the office to be informed about the possibility of participation in the study. The final group of participants consisted of 18 male-identifying outdoor education leaders with varying levels of self-reported experience, from 0 to 20+ years. All participants but one were White, Anglophone, and middle- or upper-middle class. Ages of the participants varied, from 18 to 52 years, with half of the participants under the age of 30. Of the remaining 9 participants, 5 were in their early 30s (35 years or under).

Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview format was employed to allow flexibility in the discussions and allow unforeseen discussion topics to arise (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions were prepared

in advance that addressed the research question. Interviews were conducted one-on-one; that is, with only the researcher and the participant present. To the degree possible, participant preferences were accommodated when choosing the interview location. One participant could not find time to be interviewed while on site and was instead interviewed by phone. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission of the participant and later transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms. Those who did not choose a pseudonym were assigned one.

Permission to conduct observations was granted by two of the three organizations. Notes were recorded of participant interactions with their colleagues and activity groups to better understand their practices and to assess the consistency between participant interview responses and actions. In addition, observations provided additional information regarding organizational or site culture, including patterns of interaction or unusual or outlier behaviours (Skinner et al., 2000). Due to limited permissions and logistical constraints on data collection, observation and field note data were mostly used to supplement information obtained in interviews. Artefactual data in the form of policy documents, training manuals, and evaluation forms were also collected to provide additional information about organizational culture at each site.

Transcripts and observation notes were informally coded between interviews, identifying *in vivo* codes to discern emerging themes and determine potential questions for future interviews. Once data collection was complete, all interview and observation transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti to organize the data files. As a first formal phase of coding, descriptive codes were assigned, summarizing the topics raised by participants under more accurate and appropriate umbrella codes (Saldaña, 2016). For the second phase, a pattern coding technique was employed to develop initial themes by grouping similar codes (Saldaña, 2016). After multiple rounds of comparison and reformulation, the identified themes were consolidated and have been employed as section headings below.

Findings

Participants' responses highlighted changing expectations of masculinity and a resulting confusion over the meaning of the term. However, participants' responses indicated that role models and masculine examples were important for them when deciding on valued characteristics. They also commented on the influence of homosocial groups and provided their thoughts on men who portray an intensified, hypermasculine gender performance. Lastly, participants commented on their interests. Interpretation is provided within each section and later integrated in the conclusion.

Change and Confusion

When asked about their ideas of masculinity, 11 of the participants indicated that they felt that there had been recent changes in awareness about gender issues that impacted their notions about masculinity and gender more generally. Four participants indicated that the changes had intensified within the last three or four years (at time of data collection). North indicated that much of his knowledge on gender came from training from his employer, while Gabriel attributed some of the cultural change to campaigns popularized via social media. Oliver posited that the increasing awareness of social justice issues has led to questioning of gender, specifically masculinity:

> It does seem like gender is the focus today and it does seem like men have been systematically privileged. And so ... yeah, it's ... it's an identity crisis. Not a crisis, but it's an inflection point in male identity I think, for sure, right now.

Recent campaigns such as #MeToo have generated "substantive and sustained global media coverage and public debate" (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019, p. 24) about sexual and gendered

harassment. The popularity of the hashtag and its resultant discussions led to a greater recognition of the role of power imbalances in the work environment (Mendes & Ringrose, 2019), and may have contributed to the change of men's consciousness about gender inequity described in outdoor education by Allen-Craig et al. (2020). The swift changes in awareness led to confusion over how to interact with women at work, according to surveys following the peak of the #MeToo movement (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

The perception of rapid change may cause confusion, as expressed by Roman who noted that it was an area that deserved further attention, "I think it's kind of confusing times for men. I think, you know, for a long time it was pretty clear ... what it meant to be a man, you know, certainly in the west. We have a, kind of, media-driven vision of what it means to be a man. You know, the guy that goes to work, you know, brings home the paycheque, provides the security and stability and...literal food on the table for the...you know, there's those kind of Norman Rockwellian visions of what it means to be a man… And I think it's...yeah, I think that that is shifting."

Confusion about gender, masculinity specifically, was a common feeling amongst some participants. Like Roman's awareness of cultural shifts away from breadwinner masculinity, Elijah's confusion seemed to stem from the disparity between lessons he learned early in life and current, potentially still-shifting expectations. He stated:

> I recognize a lot of men are kind of confused about what it means to be a man. I think about the things that some of our ... you know, our baby boomer moms taught us to do, right? And now Millennial women say, "Don't dare do that." Like, it's a mixed message, you know? …I think there's a lot of men who question, "Well, what is my role?"

Some participants, like John Marshall, indicated that the shifts in thinking about gender in the outdoor education realm have led to a wider array of possible masculine performances than previously existed:

> On one hand, like, you know, the stereotypical ideal of a man is someone, like, strong, muscular, kind of ... lumberjack ... that kind of thing. But, at least with my experience here ... I also think that there's more awareness today of, kind of, counteracting that [masculine] stereotype. At least more than 10 years ago… so, I think the answer to that question is more broad today.

Despite confusion, all participants voiced support for gender equity efforts. However, some felt attacked by what they felt were changes that had gone too far. For example, Liam stated,

> Men and women are absolutely equal and I think that's so important. I worry sometimes that it will go both ways, right? Like, we can be so worried about inequality that we can actually create an inequality the other way.

George felt similarly; although he enjoyed the training sessions about gender at his organization, he felt that:

> There's a stigma that you can't celebrate your masculinity… I think it's, honestly, a great thing that the girls are doing it but there's a lot of the feminine - femininity is being celebrated on a daily basis and I'm all for it, but I don't think that men feel as safe here to celebrate their masculinity.

Roman likewise stated that he would like to "celebrate masculinity and not have to be ashamed of it." Elijah struggled with the same idea, claiming that masculine traits are not valued, "I think it's unfortunate because, again, it's one of those cases where men are kind of feeling a little demonized. Like, what is a good masculine trait? I don't ... society hasn't told me of any of them."

Levon felt similarly about recent trends in terminology, indicating that certain terms could fuel backlash,

There's a term, toxic masculinity that's been tossed around a lot lately, which I actually think benefits no one. If you were to be told that your behaviour is toxic, are you going to push back or are you going to be like, "oh, tell me more!"

The confusion around gender norms and perceived stigmatization of masculine traits seemed to lead some participants to avoid identifying with masculinity and simply want to be a good person. Tom described his approach as, "I think being a stand-up person ... is a good definition of what a man should be." Similarly, Dan described being a good man as simply being respectful, "you know, being the best person you can be and treating everyone with respect is the way to go."

O'Neil et al. (1993) found that men's confusion about masculinity has been common for some time due to gender norm shifts and clearly that remains the case if the participants in this study are any indication. According to Risman (2018), the young adults in her study reported confusion because multiple narratives of masculinity exist concurrently. Most young men in Risman's sample were apologetic about their masculinity. Their worry about the stigma attached to hegemonic enactments may explain why they do not explicitly embrace masculine characteristics (Risman, 2018). Moreover, Flood (2019) indicated that claims, such as Liam's, that critiques have gone too far is a common response "by members of a dominant group who feel threatened by challenges to their privileges" (p. 528). Such a backlash is the result of changes in gender norms that produce anxiety (Pompper, 2010). Such anxiety spurs resistance to calls for men to address their own behaviour (Flood, 2019). Instead, Pompper asserts, young White men, such as the majority (14 of 18) of the participants, become more likely to claim demonization and victimhood. The claims of White men's suffering, such as those made by Elijah and Liam, are a common trope that represents an attempt to reinstate White men's privilege by lamentation of its loss (Savran, 1998). However, Western social hierarchy remains dominated by men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), as does the outdoor education field (Gray, 2016). Therefore, the "good person" narrative may also represent a highly masculinized ideal given masculine traits have been historically considered the most esteemed in Western society (Connell, 2005).

Masculine Exemplars and Role Models

Participants' notions of what a good person or a good man might be were largely derived from media and role models. However, Marcus stated that most examples of masculinity he observed were negative examples, characteristics to avoid rather than emulate. Roman agreed, stating:

I think a large part of ... what I think it means to be a man is based on experiences of what I think it doesn't mean to be a man. So, it's largely driven by ... less by "this is an obvious example of what it means to be a man", and more of ... "oh, I don't think that's positive masculinity."

In contrast, over half of the respondents mentioned positive role models who had significant bearing on their understanding of masculinity. Mason, Sebastian, and Tom each stated that their fathers were their most influential role model. Other participants spoke about outdoor education leaders with whom they had interacted as students or professional mentors in outdoor education as important role models. For example, Barry was impressed by an outdoor leader who possessed enough self-confidence that he could admit he didn't know the answer to questions he was asked. Dan stated that one of his childhood summer camp counselors had a profound effect on him through a demonstration of caring and empathy:

And this counsellor, you know, was big, he played rugby, he played football, but also just showed the compassion and empathy, and it was a big turning point. And I don't

> want to become him, but I want to have, like, a piece of that counsellor when I am dealing with campers that are homesick and show them compassion and empathy.

Such influences likely shaped the participants' perspectives about how to communicate lessons about proper behaviour and comportment. Multiple participants also spoke about the need to demonstrate a "positive" masculinity, which for them included caring behaviour and vulnerability. Liam tried to act as a masculine exemplar for his students: "I view my masculinity as something that's important and something that can be used to help inspire others in a positive manner."

Being a positive masculine role model, the participants felt, was particularly important for students when leading all-male groups of students. Liam felt that men-only trip environments were similar to hockey locker rooms, which he called, "the worst of masculinity." As Liam said, "I don't think the way boys and men act in the woods, as guys, is any different from the way they act in hockey dressing rooms or locker rooms ... like, sport locker rooms in general." George agreed, stating that men-only environments could quickly spiral into misogyny. Mateo concurred and asserted that it is the OE leader's role to diffuse or redirect such discussions:

> A lot of times I have to steer the conversation in different directions because when there are no females around, especially with teenagers, the conversations can go south and get weird or, like, there can be a lot of stereotyping and sexualized conversation.

Although some participants abhorred such displays, others, such as Levon, posited that attempting to gain masculine credibility may simply be a part of men's developmental process. Discussing displays of physical strength, Levon offered the example of "a 16-year-old boy who's there doing push-ups with his shirt off, yelling, 'Give me more, give me more!'" He stated, "I don't know if that's toxic or just a bunch of 16-year-olds." Levon continued, stating that such students, like him at that age, were trying new things and "dipping my toe into this, recognizing my impacts have actions as a man." He posited that it was important for him as an outdoor educator to coach young men through this identity development process, helping them become more thoughtful about their actions and masculine performances.

Both Warren et al. (2018) and Mitten (2018) assert the importance of women role models in outdoor education and the value of women-only trips. Although participants in this study see the value of men as role models, several shared concerns about men-only groups, an interesting contrast. That all but two of the participants claimed to be good role models for their students and aimed to perform a positive masculinity may be encouraging. Their willingness to be role models for other men contrasts the findings of Allen-Craig et al. (2020) who, while examining how gender impacts outdoor professionals' experience in the field, found that none of their male respondents indicated such a willingness. Perhaps the reticence found in Allen-Craig et al. (2020) is because, as Warren (2016) asserts, "men in the outdoors who resist dominant stereotypes are marginalized" (p. 364).

According to Mitten (2009), OAE leaders are aware of the general importance of role modeling and expect that students are watching them for cues about appropriate language and behaviour. Further, men's role as positive mentors in outdoor settings was described as critical by Sibthorp et al. (2011) who encouraged men to form bonds with their students to more effectively lead and teach them (see also Schumann et al., 2009). In the participants' cases, role modeling is an expectation for OE leaders at each of the three participating organizations, as explicitly detailed in their policy and training materials or expressed by participants themselves. Such inculcation of role modeling into organizational practice is likely one of the reasons participants value it so highly.

The empathy and vulnerability valued by many of the participants rest outside of the hegemonic masculine norms defined by Connell (2005). Such gender-transgressive role models may offset the influence of men-only environments. Messner et al. (2015) found that men-only

spaces, such as fraternities, organized sports, and the military, magnify sexism and heteronormativity as well as reinforce men's privilege. Flood (2008) defined such spaces as homosocial, peculiar aspects of which include that they prioritize men's relationships to other men, exclude women, and often involve the fetishization of masculinity and sexual conquest, with performances of the same for the benefit of other men. Men-only, homosocial environments, then, can contribute to hypermasculine attitudes and behaviours (Anderson, 2008; Cover, 2015; Flood, 2008; Waterhouse-Watson, 2011).

Hypermasculinity

Marcus not only disliked leading men-only groups, due to the tendency toward hypermasculine banter and behaviours, but indicated a disgust with such students:

> I, honestly, hate working with all-male groups. If they're, a reflective group of boys … it's not terrible. But if they're just a group of boys and they're just total bros, you know, what I would describe as a bunch of Brads and Chads … I'm like, "I don't care. You are a caricature of who you should be … or could be."

Such feelings were not limited to students, some participants indicated that they found overtly masculine displays by colleagues discomfiting. Oliver stated that, though he has only rarely experienced it, he dislikes working with men who display "super-masculine" traits. As he said, he has "had troubles with more masculine men and working … with more masculine men." Liam and Sebastian likewise explicitly expressed dislike for hypermasculine cultures. Elijah asserted that ostentatious displays of strength or competitive attitude are not welcome in outdoor adventure education culture:

> If you come across as … the classic macho dude, "Ooh, look at me, I'm strong, I can carry lots of stuff!" Like, who cares, man? It's not valuable. Like, "Look at how fast I can paddle!" Like, who cares? That's not valuable here.

Dan stated that aggressive and physically focused masculine performances are outdated. Oliver agreed, positing that, due to societal shifts, men need to change, "otherwise you're just going to get left behind." Being left behind operates in both a cultural and a temporal sense, as multiple participants framed the issue as generational. Elijah related a story about an older male-identifying supervisor:

> A 60-year-old course director asking one of my co-guides about, "So, you're a lesbian but you don't seem very butch." Like, this is how he starts the conversation, right?… stuff that you're like… "What makes you think this is okay to talk about as the boss?" I don't personally have huge issue with guys—older guys—making jokes about the women I work with because, in a way, it's a way that old guys bond.

Elijah wrote off this sexist and homophobic behaviour as a generation-specific communication method or attitude. A few participants, when talking about older men, even struck a pitying tone. The most pronounced of these was Liam, who said of his father's influence: "I don't blame the male role models in my life for it. I think it's the way they were raised and they don't know any better."

Although three of the oldest participants still valued some aspects of stereotypical masculinity, all participants distanced themselves from hypermasculinity in one manner or another. In this way, they mirrored the participants in Davies et al.'s (2019) study of gender attitudes in outdoor education. Separation from hypermasculinity, which is commonly equated with physical aggression and sexual assault, makes sense as such behaviours are largely disdained in current society (Cover, 2019). This distancing from the "other" can be problematic, however, as demonstrated in Macomber's (2012) study of men's anti-violence advocates who blamed violent men

for their conduct but refused to reflect on their own behaviours. PettyJohn et al. (2019) assert that such a dissociation strategy, condemning extreme examples of masculinity, is a way to signal one's goodness by comparison. Hypermasculinity, Cover (2019) argues, draws disproportionate scrutiny given that it is not the predominant masculine ideal in current Western society. It may also function to distract from the methods of more moderate masculinities to support the gender hierarchy (Cover, 2019).

The scorn for the hypermasculine may also be classed since physical aggression has been associated with the working class (Kemper, 1990; Wall, 2008; Willis, 1981). It is easily marked and pathologized whereas upper- and middle-class masculinity is less easily identifiable (Lindisfarnē & Neale, 2016). Use of the popular term "toxic masculinity," then, may be an easy method to "other" certain masculinities or to obscure the multiplicity of masculine enactments by constructing a toxic versus healthy masculinity dualism. Waling (2019) states that the toxic/healthy dichotomy reproduces gender inequity by limiting the discourse to a choice between only those two options, both of which are often poorly defined.

Another method of othering is differentiating by age, in this case that the modern or egalitarian man is an improvement upon older macho or stereotypically masculine men (Aarseth & Olsen, 2008; Neuman et al., 2017; Szabo, 2014). The condemnation of older generations as regressive or out of touch is common, serving as a method of identity creation through separation from one's parents' generation, an effort that also provides an in-group and therefore certain status (Ravn & Roberts, 2020).

Cultural Capital and Status

Ironically, despite vilifying hypermasculine and stereotypical masculine performances, eight of the participants took pains to establish themselves as being, or having been, athletes. Involvement in organized team, extreme, or endurance sports was expressed by these participants. One example was Oliver, who stated that he has "always been, kind of, right on the edge of skiing professionally in a bunch of different contexts. And, like, doing videos."

In addition to athleticism, outdoor skills were also clearly valued. For example, Liam stated, "I can portage really far and paddle really far … a lot farther than a lot of people I know and I have very good technical skills." In addition to strength and skill, multiple participants highlighted their expertise and experience in the field, such as by indicating the number of days logged in the backcountry. Others indicated current or past high-level positions at outdoor organizations. However, a major point of status was intelligence, either by indicating the degrees they had attained or their analytical abilities. For example, Zack equated critical thinking with masculinity: "I think what it means to be a man is to be … a critical thinker." Oliver combined physicality and intelligence when he stated,

> My two biggest, like, insecurities, I think, are both, … more masculine insecurities, athleticism and intelligence. And those two things … I've been working through for a long time and … I think that I need, like, external affirmation to feel … to feel whole with both of those things. Which is why, you know, I chose to blow another $20,000 to get a degree from [Ivy League university] this past two years.

As mentioned in the methods section, all but one of the participants are White, middle- and upper-class men. Both physical ability and intelligence are valued by the middle class as success in both demonstrates that one is a well-rounded individual (James, 2012), garnering one cultural capital. Within the middle and upper classes, in particular, intelligence can indicate earning power (Prokosch et al., 2009), providing opportunities for status and dominance.

That many participants lauded their own intelligence, positions of influence, and leadership also demonstrates an adherence to a stereotypically middle- and upper-class masculinity (Whitehead, 2003). These values identified by Whitehead (2003) and Courtenay (2000) still

seem to resonate (Ingram & Waller, 2014) and dovetail with participants' responses. Moreover, Risman's (2018) research on young adults' views on gender found that they claim to favour more progressive attitudes, identification with which may further enhance their status.

Despite most participants' claims to value gender equity, some also expressed belief in inherent or essentialized gender traits. Dan and Sebastian indicated that they enjoyed instructing with a woman co-leader because women leaders were inherently more risk averse (Dan) and empathetic (Sebastian). Elijah indicated that he preferred to take recreational (nonprofessional) excursions with other men, because men were stronger and more risk-taking. Four participants noted that that the planning and communication was more challenging when leading with a woman co-leader because of the need to negotiate power dynamics, whereas leading with a man was easier due to a "common language" and, according to Zack, that men-only staff teams provide an "affinity space" for men to connect.

The participants' views support Davies et al.'s (2019) findings that beliefs about inherent physical capabilities persist in outdoor adventure education, as do perceptions of communication challenges between genders. Such statements contribute to discrimination in the workplace (Coleman & Hong, 2008; Newbery, 2003), due to "othering" and gendered role expectations. Moreover, these participants' statements support the gendered hidden curriculum in outdoor adventure education (Allen-Craig & Carpenter, 2018; Kennedy & Russell, 2020; Lugg, 2003; Mitten, 2018; Newbery, 2003, 2004; Weaver–Hightower, 2010). The idea that women are more risk-averse than men ignores that men are rewarded for successful risk-taking behaviours, while women are more harshly penalized for taking risks, particularly those that fail (Fine, 2017). As well, it overlooks the daily risks that women take simply by venturing outside given the preponderance of harassment and violence against women by men in the city (Solnit, 2014) as well as fears of the same when outdoors (Howard & Goldenberg, 2020). In the current context, highlighting perceived differences serves to separate men from women, emphasizing a divide that may permit othering.

Discussion

As the findings reveal, the majority of participants found it difficult to articulate their ideas of masculinity or what it means to be a man. Many expressed confusion, citing changes to gender norms, particularly following the height of the #MeToo movement, in 2017 and 2018 (Cover, 2019). The perceived cultural and normative changes resulted in many of the participants distancing themselves from masculinity, reminiscent of many of the participants in Risman (2018) who worked to avoid the stigma attached to hegemonic enactments.

The dynamic expectations left some participants feeling that masculinity had been stigmatized. This feeling may have resulted in many describing their masculinity as being a "good person." Definitions of positive masculinity or good personhood were informed by various negative influences as well as positive role models. A noteworthy finding is that all but three participants explicitly stated that they were trying to be role models for others, implying that they viewed themselves as examples of positive masculinity or a good person.

The participants made clear that they found hypermasculine displays distasteful. They sought to portray themselves as progressive, caring, intelligent men who are respectful and responsible, arguably the currently dominant form of masculinity in the west (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Elliott, 2020). The disdain expressed for hypermasculinity may be the result of social changes or the results of othering, either through possible classed masculine enactment or age, which serves to distance participants from "bad" men (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Paradoxically, participants also bragged about stereotypically masculine status markers, such as athletic prowess. Similarly, some participants described essentialized traits of men and women, and claimed that they, or men in general, have been stigmatized. Such contradictions and resistance to,

or even bitterness toward, changing gender norms and practices is not unusual, according to Connell (2006), even amongst those ostensibly committed to gender equality.

The data indicate that stereotypical masculinity has been challenged in the outdoor adventure education field. However, there remain problematic aspects of these outdoor leaders' masculinity that reinforce gender inequity. Based on interview responses and observations, I argue that the type of masculinity most prevalent amongst the participants reflects Bridges and Pascoe's (2014) concept of hybrid masculinity. This form of masculinity, often practiced by privileged White men such as the participants, appears progressive and inclusive, demonstrating non-stereotypical traits, such as emotional vulnerability and concern for social issues, but which nonetheless subtly maintains the hegemonic masculine paradigm (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Participants' critique of gender norms and avowed commitment to gender equity, while simultaneously devaluing some groups of men as well as essentializing and othering women, is a prime example of hybrid masculinity. Such a finding is consistent with those of Salovaara (2020) who found that hybrid masculinity is the most common masculinity portrayed in various outdoor media. Salovaara (2020) analyzed multiple mountaineering texts, including outdoor documentary films, Salomon outdoor equipment advertisements, an outdoor athlete's social media posts, and two mountaineering narrative texts (one a novel and the other a memoir). In his analysis, he determined that the men are portrayed, or portray themselves, as caring and ecologically conscious while at the same time intentionally employing narratives of risk-taking, skill, physical strength, and pushing through pain that provide them masculine status. Further, he notes the commodification of experiences in nature, which further perpetuates a capitalist narrative of competition and consumption. Such experiences and narratives, Salovarra (2020) states, valorize privileged White men and exclude others, given the costs of activity-specific outdoor gear and the required free time, both of which tend to accompany middle- or upper-middle-class careers.

Duncanson (2015) argues that such hybrid masculinities could be an entry point to greater gender equity. To make progress toward greater equity, she suggests, requires a shift from considerations of what actions men need to change and instead a reconceptualization of relationship to include greater focus on "similarity, interdependence, empathy, respect, and equality" (p. 244). This means viewing others as similar and identifying shared interests, simultaneously avoiding othering or feminisation of others, which in a hegemonic masculine system equates to subordination.

Such a shift, Arata (2022) suggests, requires that men, to the best of their ability, work to decenter their perspectives and try to understand others. In doing so, empathy can be created. In addition, Arata (2022) indicates that men need training that fosters a critical consciousness and to be accountable to women and other men. Accountability could be accomplished by regular meetings with a mentor or other critical voice who is non-male. In addition, Arata (2022) suggests having a male colleague confidant with whom to discuss issues, raise critical perspectives, and draw support. DiAngelo (2021) suggests a similar strategy when considering issues of allyship to combat racism. The participants' stated respect for mentorship may make them more amenable to such strategies. Moreover, given large outdoor organizations' resources and staff base, they could likely facilitate such mentorships, devising models and resources that are tailored to the outdoor adventure education field. Such models could then be distributed to other, smaller providers.

Hindering the applicability of the results to cases beyond my study is that all three organizations demonstrated evidence that they value and promote gender equity via training, policy, and resourcing. Although some interest in gender issues recently has been evinced in the field (Davies et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020), these equity efforts may not be representative of the field as a whole. Further, data was collected from volunteers rather than a random sampling of men adventure education leaders. Those who volunteered expressed interest in the topic of masculinity

and some, it was clear, felt well informed and confident in their knowledge of the topic. Results should thus be considered with this possible selection bias in mind.

Thinking ahead to future research needs, because only one perspective was collected at each site, that of male-identifying outdoor leaders, it would be interesting to learn the perspectives of staff who identify as women or other (or no) genders, and how those might resonate with and differ from participants in this study. The current study revealed that there have been promising shifts in gender awareness although some impediments and blind spots exist as demonstrated by the majority of participants enacting a race- and class-informed hybrid masculinity. Further work evaluating masculinities in the outdoor adventure education field and how conceptions of masculinity shape outdoor leaders' practice is warranted.

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