

# Types of Positions, Job Responsibilities, and Training Backgrounds of Outdoor/Adventure Leaders

Jacquie Medina

*Academic degree programs in outdoor leadership continue to proliferate. There is little research, however, to indicate that employment in the field of adventure programming hinges on the possession of an academic degree in a related field. To investigate the role of academic degrees in outdoor/adventure leadership, a survey was designed to determine the types of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of outdoor/adventure leaders. This study surveyed 203 attendees of the 28th Annual Association for Experiential Education International Conference in Tucson, AZ on November 2-5, 2000. The results of the study revealed various types of positions and job responsibilities across age and gender. Personal experience was the most common type of training background identified by respondents, and 91% of the subjects had either earned or were pursuing an academic degree. The number and level of degrees earned increased over the last four decades with over one quarter of the degrees earned in the last three years.*

Keywords: outdoor education, experiential education, leadership, adventure

## Introduction

As a practitioner and college instructor of outdoor/adventure education, I have been confronted with questions regarding the necessity and value of an academic degree in the area of outdoor/adventure education. Is it essential to have a degree in an area of outdoor/adventure education, or related field, for employment in the field of adventure programming? What types of jobs are available in the field? What types of training do professionals need to be successful in the field?

Research exists which has identified the skills and techniques common among good outdoor leaders (Priest & Gass, 1997). Upon review of these studies, Priest and Gass identified 12 critical core competencies essential for effective outdoor leadership. These 12 elements

were: 1) technical skills, 2) safety skills, 3) environmental skills, 4) organizational skills, 5) instructional skills, 6) facilitation skills, 7) flexible leadership style, 8) experience-based judgement, 9) problem-solving skills, 10) decision-making skills, 11) effective communication, and 12) professional ethics.

Recent studies have begun to determine the extent to which academic degree programs in outdoor leadership are teaching recommended competencies, and the type of outdoor leaders that employers prefer to hire (Garvey & Gass, 1999; Sugerman, 1999). Sugerman (1999) reviewed four-year academic degree programs in outdoor leadership at 15 universities and colleges in the U. S. to determine if the competencies suggested by researchers were being taught in the courses offered within the degree programs. Sugerman's findings provided "no clear consensus" with respect to the competencies addressed by academic degree programs for outdoor leadership preparation. The curricula were found to develop the suggested core competencies for effective

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*Jacquie Medina is a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of Northern Colorado.*

outdoor leaders, however, the schools varied in their delivery and methods. Schools surveyed were both large and small, and public as well as private institutions. The titles of degree programs differed among schools, and the curricula often reflected the program in which they were housed. Academic degree programs for outdoor leadership preparation are proliferating (Raiola, 1997), and Sugerman (1999) encouraged continued research designed specifically to analyze the content of academic degree programs. Further research to compare outdoor leaders with and without academic degrees in the work place was also suggested.

In 1983 and 1997, Garvey and Gass conducted studies "to examine the selection practices of the individuals responsible for hiring outdoor leaders in adventure programs in North America" (1999, p.45). These studies were compared in order to examine any changes in hiring personnel, training backgrounds of hiring personnel, and hiring preferences. Two changes occurred over time among hiring personnel. First, the sources from which hiring personnel had gained their training had changed. Sources of training backgrounds included personal experience, college courses/training, Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), scouting, and other outdoor programs. Between 1983 and 1997, experience in scouting and other outdoor programs had increased, while personal experience, college courses/training, and Outward Bound experiences had decreased. NOLS experiences had remained constant. The authors suggested that these changes might reflect an increase in the diversity of leadership training opportunities. The second change regarding hiring personnel was an increase in the number of women in positions to hire staff, from 17% to 38%. This increase reflected the profession's efforts to include and advance women over the last 14 years (Garvey & Gass, 1999).

Between 1983 and 1997, hiring preferences shifted to a higher standard for staff selection and for outdoor leaders who had more balanced training backgrounds. Staff trained by institutions, such as colleges, universities, Outward Bound, NOLS and scouting, were more apt to be hired. Preferred staff were those with a combination of institutional and personal experience. The authors' suggested that internship experiences be included to promote this balance. In addition, changes in hiring preferences suggested that hiring personnel might be more knowledgeable of the characteristics that foster successful outdoor leaders.

In order to advance the field of adventure programming, research should continue to examine the quality and applicability of outdoor leadership preparation experiences. What types of positions are available to outdoor/adventure leaders? Do these positions require different training backgrounds? Is the academic degree a

necessary component of an outdoor/adventure leader's training background? Sugerman (1999) examined four-year academic degree programs in outdoor leadership, but did not investigate the individuals who possess these degrees and the applicability of these degrees to their job responsibilities and types of positions. Sugerman (1999) encouraged further research that examines the degree and non-degree holding outdoor leader in the work place. Garvey and Gass (1999) found that applicants with institutionalized experiences were preferred in the hiring process and that college courses and training represented 24% of the outdoor experiences for the hiring personnel surveyed in 1997. Academic degree programs in outdoor leadership continue to increase in number, however, little research exists to show that employment depends on the possession of an academic degree.

Both educators and students in outdoor leadership preparation programs could benefit from knowing the type of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of current practitioners. Through a fact-finding investigation of outdoor/adventure leaders, information may be gathered to determine whether or not outdoor/adventure leaders possess academic degrees and the types of positions they hold. Identifying the job responsibilities and training backgrounds of outdoor/adventure leaders can provide information essential to guiding outdoor curricula and leadership development. This study attempted to identify this information in order to further the research in this area.

The purpose of this study was to determine the types of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of current practitioners in the outdoor/adventure education field. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What are the types of positions that current practitioners possess?
2. What are the job responsibilities of current practitioners?
3. What are the types of training backgrounds that current practitioners possess?
4. What are the levels of academic degrees received by current practitioners?
5. What are the patterns of academic degrees awarded over the last 25 years?

## Methodology

### Subjects

The subjects for this study were male and female attendees at the 28th Annual AEE International Conference held in Tucson, AZ on November 2-5, 2000. The total number of attendees was 1027, which includ-

ed members, non-members, students, presenters, and partial attendees. Attendees from outside the United States totaled 86.

The AEE has its roots in adventure education, and conference attendees were identified as a sample of current practitioners from which to study outdoor/adventure leaders. Conference attendees included individuals with affiliations in areas such as education, recreation, outdoor adventure, development and training, management, outdoor/environmental education, mental health, and youth services. This sample may or may not have been representative of outdoor/adventure leaders. Participants attend conferences for different reasons and may not be totally representative of the outdoor leadership field.

### Instrument

For this study, a survey was created by the investigator to identify the types of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of practitioners attending the 28th Annual AEE International Conference. Surveys were distributed at the registration and information tables throughout the conference. 500 surveys were picked up and 235 surveys were returned to the information table during the four-day conference. Content validity was determined by comparing survey questions with each of the research questions. The survey questions were designed to enable the researcher to answer the research questions, and to obtain data in the following areas:

1. Demographics—Age, gender, state, and country.
2. Position Title—Current or most recent job; Full-time, part-time, or seasonal.
3. Job Responsibilities—Subjects marked as many job responsibilities that applied from a list of 18 pre-determined categories: administrator, counselor, manager, coordinator, researcher, logistics, facilitator, trainer, supervisor, assistant, trip leader, program developer, consultant, instructor/teacher, director, therapist, builder/construction, and other.
4. Training Background—Subjects marked as many training backgrounds that applied from a list of 12 pre-determined categories: personal experience, college courses/ training, NOLS course, Outward Bound course, other outdoor programs, academic degree, internship, professional workshop/conference, Wilderness Education Association (WEA) course, scouting, certifications, and other.
5. Academic Degree(s)—If applicable, subjects completed a section that detailed the level of degree(s) earned or pursuing, area of study, year completed, and granting institution. This question sought to

determine whether the subject had, or was completing, a degree and did not limit the degree to outdoor leadership.

6. Annual Salary
7. Experience—Years of experience implementing experiential education methods.
8. Outdoor/Adventure Leader Status—Individuals who identified themselves as an outdoor/adventure leader, based on the following survey definition, were included in the study: “Someone who uses indoor and outdoor adventure activities in a variety of settings for the purpose of promoting individual growth and group development.”

### Analysis

Data from 203 of the 235 surveys returned were included in the analysis. Eighteen surveys were eliminated because they were not completed, and fourteen surveys were eliminated because the respondents did not consider themselves outdoor/adventure leaders based on the survey definition. Frequencies, ranges, means, percentages, and cross tabulations of the data were determined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A total of 203 subjects identified themselves as outdoor/adventure leaders in some capacity of their job. Of these subjects, 89 were male and 114 were female. Ages ranged from 19-61, with a mean age of 33. Subjects also included 41 students; 19 males and 22 females.

### Results

#### Type of Position

The survey question requesting the subject's position title was open ended; therefore, 13 categories were created to analyze the data. These categories included the following: college/university faculty (assistant professor, full professor, college instructor or faculty); instructor (assistant, lead, outdoor educator, naturalist, environmental educator); leader (assistant, trip leader, field supervisor); counselor (mentor); facilitator; owner (president, CEO, trainer, consultant); director (assistant, executive); coordinator (assistant); manager; teacher (assistant, field, faculty); therapist (psychology clinician, intern); health promoter (social worker); and graduate student.

The type of position data are found in Table 1. Three positions accounted for over half of the respondents: directors (26.1%); coordinators (14.8%); and instructors (13.8%). The next highest percent of subjects were teachers at 7.4%, and the least identified type of position was health promoter at 1.5%.

The mean ages for type of position ranged from 25

**Table 1. Type of Position**

Type of position	Frequency	Percent of total subjects	Male	Female	Mean age	Range age
College/University Faculty	12	5.9	9	3	45	29-61
Instructor	28	13.8	10	18	28	19-47
Leader	11	5.4	5	6	27	20-43
Facilitator	9	4.4	5	4	25	20-37
Counselor	13	6.4	5	8	27	19-45
Director	53	26.1	25	28	36	23-59
Coordinator	30	14.8	9	21	34	24-50
Manager	7	3.4	4	3	33	24-48
Teacher	15	7.4	6	9	35	23-51
Therapist	7	3.4	3	4	33	24-47
Health Promoter	3	1.5	0	3	33	28-39
Graduate Student	5	2.5	3	2	31	25-39
Owner	10	4.9	5	5	41	31-57

to 45. Facilitators had the lowest mean age of 25, and college/university faculty had the highest mean age of 45. Owners had the second highest mean age of 41. Among the college/university faculty, 8 of the 12 subjects were older than 42 for a mean age of 50. Ninety-three percent of the instructors were between the ages of 20 and 29, for a mean age of 25, which was 3 years less than the overall instructor mean age of 28. Directors had the largest age range between 23-59, for a difference of 36 years and a mean age of 36.

The most pronounced difference in gender by position was that of college/university faculty with 9 males and 3 females. Of the three most common positions, the largest gender differences were among coordinators (9 males, 21 females) and instructors (10 males, 18 females). The position of director was relatively similar with 25 males and 28 females. However, when percent of total male and female subjects were compared, the 25 male directors represented 28.1% of the male subjects, and the 28 female directors represented 24.6% of the female subjects. The four highest represented positions by males were director (28.1%), instructor (11.2%), coordinator (9%), and professor (9%). The four highest represented positions for females were director (24.6%), coordinator (18.4%), instructor (15.8%), and teacher (7.9%).

#### Job Responsibilities

The frequency and percent of total subjects for job responsibility categories are found in Table 2. Subjects were asked to mark all responsibilities that applied.

Eight job responsibility categories were marked by over 50% of the subjects. These job responsibilities included: facilitator (79.8%), instructor/teacher (65.5%), program developer (63.5%), coordinator (57.1%), trainer (57.1%), supervisor (53.7%), trip leader (53.2%), and administrator (50.2%).

The positions of director and coordinator combined to represent 71.3% of the subjects who had administrative responsibilities. Eighty-five percent or more of the directors also had responsibilities in the areas of program development and supervision, and over 83% of the coordinators identified job responsibilities in the areas of program development, facilitator, and trainer. Over 79% of instructors' and 91% of leaders' job responsibilities were in the areas of trip leader, instructor/teacher, and facilitator. The category of "facilitator" was the highest marked job responsibility at 79.8%. In contrast, the type of position category facilitator was recognized by only 4.4% of all subjects.

#### Training Backgrounds

The data for the training backgrounds of subjects are found in Table 3. Each frequency and percent is representative of the total number of subjects. Personal experience was the highest rated training background with all but 9 subjects marking this category for a total of 95.6%. Four training experiences were identified by over 60% of the subjects: professional conferences (72.9%), certifications (70%), college courses/training (69%), and an academic degree (61.1%). College cours-

**Table 2. Job Responsibilities by Type of Position (more than one answer can apply)**

Job responsibilities	Frequency	Percent of total subjects	Male	Female	Types of position (frequency)												
					CUF [12]	Instr [28]	Ldr [11]	Fac [9]	Cnslr [13]	Dir [53]	Coord [30]	Mgr [7]	Tchr [15]	Thera [7]	H-Pro [3]	Grad [5]	Owner [10]
Administrator	101	50.2	46	55	4	4	2	0	1	48	24	7	3	0	0	1	7
Assistant	33	16.3	12	21	0	4	3	2	3	9	6	1	4	0	0	1	0
Trip Leader	108	53.2	47	61	4	22	10	3	6	25	16	5	9	3	0	2	3
Program Development	129	63.5	54	75	6	10	2	2	1	49	25	7	8	5	3	2	4
Consultant	51	25.1	24	27	1	5	0	0	0	16	11	3	1	1	1	2	10
Instructor/Teacher	133	65.5	57	76	12	22	10	5	7	27	20	5	14	1	1	3	6
Director	54	26.6	23	31	0	0	0	0	0	37	9	2	1	1	0	0	4
Therapist	27	13.3	12	15	0	3	1	1	2	7	3	0	2	5	1	0	2
Builder/Construction	23	11.3	13	10	0	2	0	1	1	7	9	1	1	0	0	0	1
Counselor	70	34.5	34	36	3	10	4	2	11	14	5	3	5	7	2	1	3
Manager	82	40.4	36	46	2	5	1	0	0	37	17	7	2	1	0	1	9
Coordinator	116	57.1	49	67	5	15	6	2	5	35	28	6	4	2	2	1	5
Researcher	45	22.2	22	23	3	4	1	1	2	14	7	1	4	2	0	3	3
Logistics	88	43.3	41	47	3	13	5	2	0	27	21	4	5	1	0	2	5
Facilitator	162	79.8	68	94	4	26	10	9	8	42	28	6	11	3	3	3	9
Trainer	116	57.1	46	70	5	10	3	3	3	41	27	5	4	4	1	2	8
Supervisor	109	53.7	49	60	3	7	5	2	3	45	23	6	6	4	0	0	5
Other	16	7.9	4	12	1	2	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	2	0	0	3

Abbreviations: CUF (College/ University Faculty), Instr (Instructor), Ldr (Leader), Fac (Facilitator), Cnslr (Counselor), Dir (Director), Coord (Coordinator), Mgr (Manager), Tchr (Teacher), Thera (Therapist), H-Pro (Health Promoter), Grad (Graduate Student)

es/training was experienced by a larger number of subjects than those who had earned an academic degree. This would be consistent with applicants who had taken courses, but not earned an academic degree. Forty-one subjects were pursuing an academic degree in any field of study at the time the survey was taken. If these subjects were added to the academic degree category, the percent rises to 69.5. Among the outdoor programs listed, the largest number of subjects experienced other outdoor programs, besides NOLS, Outward Bound, WEA, and scouting, at 45.8%. Internships were the seventh highest training background identified by 31% of the subjects. Eighty percent of graduate students had training backgrounds that included internships.

The distribution of training backgrounds among the type of position was dispersed. All college/university faculty, counselors, therapists, health promoters, and graduate students earned academic degrees, however, only in the position of college/university faculty did 100% of the subjects acknowledge the academic degree as a training background. Every type of position had subjects who had experience in at least one of the outdoor programs listed. The position categories of leader,

director, coordinator, manager, and owner included all of the outdoor programs listed.

Instructors possessed the highest percent of certifications at 79%. Nine other positions had over 67% of the subjects possessing certifications (college/university faculty, leader, facilitator, director, coordinator, manager, teacher, therapist, and health promoter). First aid training was the most common type of certification listed. Forty-two subjects were certified in CPR, twenty-two subjects in Community First Aid, and eight subjects were Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). Eighty-four subjects had wilderness medical training. Eight subjects were trained in Wilderness First Aid (WFA), sixty-nine subjects were Wilderness First Responders (WFR), and seven subjects were Wilderness Emergency Medical Technicians (WEMT).

Fifty subjects had some form of water-based training, including twenty-nine paddling instructors (canoe, kayak, and rafting) and fourteen lifeguards. Twenty-three subjects were trained in high or low ropes course facilitation, and nine subjects had training in skiing and avalanche safety. Other certifications included search and rescue, caving, and climbing. The majority of thera-

pists and social workers had numerous certifications specific to their area of expertise.

### Academic Degree

The data for academic degrees are found in Table 4. Ninety-one percent of the total subjects had either earned (144), or were pursuing (41), an academic degree in any field of study. Responses to this question were

not limited to subjects with an academic degree in outdoor leadership. Between 1983 and 2000, eleven subjects had earned a doctorate (9 males, 2 females).

At the time the survey was completed, five subjects were in the process of pursuing a doctorate (2 males, 3 females). Of the 144 subjects who had earned an academic degree, 60 were males and 84 were females. Of the 41 subjects pursuing an academic degree, 19 were

**Table 3. Training Backgrounds by Type of Position (more than one answer can apply)**

Training backgrounds	Freq.	Percent of total subjects	Type of position [frequency]												
			CUF [12]	Instr [28]	Ldr [11]	Fac [9]	Cnslr [13]	Dir [53]	Coord [30]	Mgr [7]	Tchr [15]	Thera [7]	H-Pro [3]	Grad [5]	Owner [10]
Personal Experience	194	95.6	11 92%	25 89%	11 100%	9 100%	12 92%	53 100%	29 97%	7 100%	13 87%	6 86%	3 100%	5 100%	10 100%
College Courses/Training	140	69	7 58%	15 54%	10 91%	6 67%	5 38%	39 74%	20 67%	7 100%	10 67%	6 86%	2 67%	5 100%	8 80%
Certifications	142	70	8 67%	22 79%	8 73%	6 67%	7 54%	36 68%	23 77%	5 71%	11 73%	5 71%	3 100%	3 60%	5 50%
Scouting	41	20.2	2 17%	7 25%	0 0%	3 33%	3 23%	16 30%	1 3%	1 14%	4 27%	1 14%	0 0%	1 20%	2 20%
NOLS Course	34	16.7	6 50%	6 21%	4 36%	0 0%	1 8%	7 13%	3 10%	1 14%	2 13%	1 14%	0 0%	2 40%	1 10%
Outward Bound Course	36	17.7	2 17%	5 18%	1 9%	1 11%	1 8%	13 25%	5 17%	2 29%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 20%
WEA Course	13	6.4	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	4 8%	4 13%	1 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 30%
Other Outdoor Program	93	45.8	5 42%	13 46%	4 36%	2 22%	7 54%	30 57%	11 37%	3 43%	4 27%	3 43%	1 33%	3 60%	7 70%
Academic Degree	124	61.1	12 100%	11 39%	5 45%	1 11%	5 38%	37 70%	18 60%	6 86%	11 73%	6 86%	1 33%	4 80%	7 70%
Internship	63	31	2 17%	10 36%	3 27%	4 44%	5 38%	12 23%	11 37%	3 43%	4 27%	2 29%	1 33%	4 80%	2 20%
Prof. Workshop/Conference	148	72.9	7 58%	18 64%	7 64%	5 56%	6 46%	44 83%	25 83%	5 71%	11 73%	6 86%	3 100%	4 80%	7 70%
Other	5	2.5	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2%	1 3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 10%

Abbreviations: CUF (College/ University Faculty), Instr (Instructor), Ldr (Leader), Fac (Facilitator), Cnslr (Counselor), Dir (Director), Coord (Coordinator), Mgr (Manager), Tchr (Teacher), Thera (Therapist), H-Pro (Health Promoter), Grad (Graduate Student)

**Table 4. Academic Degree**

Degree	Frequency	Percent of total subjects	Male	Female	Mean age overall	Mean age male	Mean age female	Range age overall	Range age male	Range age female
Highest degree earned										
None	59	29.1	29	30	30	28	31	19-57	20-57	19-50
Associates/Specialist	3	1.5	1	2	25	28	24	20-28	28	20-28
Bachelor	66	32.5	29	37	31	33	30	22-51	23-45	22-51
Master	64	31.5	21	43	36	36	37	24-50	24-50	25-50
Doctorate	11	5.4	9	2	48	47	54	29-61	29-61	48-59
Degree pursuing										
None	162	79.8	70	92	35	35	35	19-61	20-61	19-59
Associates/Specialist	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bachelor	18	8.85	7	11	24	24	24	20-38	21-27	20-38
Master	18	8.85	10	8	30	31	28	22-38	25-38	22-33
Doctorate	5	2.5	2	3	33	32	34	24-39	32	24-39

males and 22 were females. Mean ages increased with the higher level of the degree earned.

The type of position and level of degree are found in Table 5. College/university faculty, therapists, health promoters, and graduate students were the only positions in which all subjects had earned degrees. Six professors, four directors, and one owner held doctorates. All but one teacher had a degree for 93%. The highest degree earned among facilitators and counselors was a

bachelor's degree. Instructors had the largest number (15) and one of the highest percentages (54%) of subjects who did not possess an academic degree. Directors had the second highest number of subjects (14) who had not earned an academic degree for a percentage of 26.4%. All degrees were earned between 1967 and 2000. Seventy-four and a half percent of the degrees earned occurred between 1990 and 2000, and 28.5% of these degrees were granted between 1998 and 2000.

**Table 5. Academic Degree and Type of Position**

Type of position	Frequency	Percent of total subjects	Male	Female	Highest degree earned				
					None	Associates/Specialist	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate
College/University Faculty	12	5.9	9	3	0	0	1	5	6
Instructor	28	13.8	10	18	15	1	10	2	0
Leader	11	5.4	5	6	3	0	5	3	0
Facilitator	9	4.4	5	4	7	0	2	0	0
Counselor	13	6.4	5	8	7	1	5	0	0
Director	53	26.1	25	28	14	0	12	23	4
Coordinator	30	14.8	9	21	8	0	11	11	0
Manager	7	3.4	4	3	1	0	4	2	0
Teacher	15	7.4	6	9	1	0	9	5	0
Therapist	7	3.4	3	4	0	0	2	5	0
Health Promoter	3	1.5	0	3	0	1	0	2	0
Graduate Student	5	2.5	3	2	0	0	3	2	0
Owner	10	4.9	5	5	3	0	2	4	1

**Table 6. Mean Salary Range by Gender, Age, Highest Degree Earned and Type of Position**

Category	Frequency	Gender		Mean salary range
		Male	Female	
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	89			\$26,235–38,314
Female	114			\$21,272–32,193
<b>Age</b>				
19-29	84	35	49	\$13,095–23,095
30-39	73	33	40	\$27,877–38,973
40-49	44	15	20	\$27,500–38,523
50-61	11	6	5	\$37,727–54,545
<b>Highest degree earned</b>				
None	59	29	30	\$15,508–24,237
Associates/Specialist	3	1	2	\$20,000–30,000
Bachelor	66	29	37	\$21,439–32,121
Master	64	21	43	\$30,391–42,109
Doctorate	11	9	2	\$46,818–67,727
<b>Type of position</b>				
College/University Faculty	12	9	3	\$37,917–51,667
Instructor	28	10	18	\$12,500–23,036
Leader	11	5	6	\$10,000–20,000
Facilitator	9	5	4	\$ 2,222–12,222
Counselor	13	5	8	\$14,615–24,615
Director	53	25	28	\$28,679–40,943
Coordinator	30	9	21	\$27,000–37,500
Manager	7	4	3	\$21,429–31,429
Teacher	15	6	9	\$27,000–40,000
Therapist	7	3	4	\$24,286–34,286
Health Promoter	3	0	3	\$33,333–43,333
Graduate Student	5	3	2	\$ 6,000–16,000
Owner	10	5	5	\$45,000–59,000

**Salary**

The mean salary range data by gender, age, highest degree earned, and type of position are located in Table 6. Male subjects earned approximately \$5,000 more annually than females.

The age of subjects were divided into four categories of 9–11 year increments. Subjects between the ages of 19–29 had the lowest mean salary range of \$13,095–\$23,095 while subjects between the ages of 50–61 had the highest mean salary range of \$37,727–\$54,545. The mean salary range of subjects between the ages of 30–39 was approximately \$300 higher than the subjects between the ages of 40–49. This is accounted for by one subject between the age of 30–39 who was in the \$100,000+ annual salary category,

whereas no subjects between the ages of 40–49 were in this category.

The mean salary range increased with the highest level of degree earned. The largest differential was between subjects with a doctorate as opposed to a master's degree. Subjects with a doctorate had an increase in mean salary of \$16,400–\$25,600. The positions of college/university faculty and owner possessed 64% of the doctorates held by subjects. College/university faculty and owners also earned the highest mean salary with ranges of \$37,917–\$51,667 and \$45,000–\$59,000 respectively. The remaining 36% of doctoral degrees were held by subjects in the position of director, the fourth highest mean salary range (\$28,679–\$40,943). The lowest mean salaries were held by facilitators



(\$2,222–\$12,222) and graduate students (\$6,000–\$16,000).

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the types of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of current practitioners attending the 28th Annual AEE International Conference held in Tucson, AZ on November 2–5, 2000. Upon examination of the data, a number of interesting points emerged. A discussion of each of these points and their interrelationships follows.

**Types of Positions.** The data indicated that outdoor/adventure leaders were employed in a variety of positions. The most common types of positions being that of a director, coordinator, instructor, and educator among both male and female subjects. The majority of male educators were college/university faculty, while the majority of female educators were elementary and secondary teachers. In addition, males earned \$5000 more a year than females in the overall study. Although this discrepancy is consistent with previous research exploring salary and gender issues in outdoor leadership and experiential education, this study did not investigate the relationships between variables, and these findings represent only this study. No attempt has been made to generalize the data to the field.

The number of females in outdoor leadership positions continues to increase, however, the length of time males have been employed in their positions, as opposed to females, may influence the discrepancy in salaries and the types of positions held. As Garvey and Gass (1999) highlighted in their study, an increase in the number of women in positions of hiring staff increased by 21% between 1983 and 1997. The data in this study showed an increase in the number of degrees earned between 1990 and 2000, with an additional increase in degrees granted between 1998 and 2000. As more women attain academic degrees at all levels, this pattern may continue to develop. Further studies are recommended to determine the relevancy of the academic degree to outdoor leadership employment and the type of position held.

Subjects in this study identified their position title and all applicable job responsibilities listed in the survey. This study did not control for subjects with similar position titles that may have differed in their position description and primary responsibilities. Further research could be improved by including criteria to identify the primary responsibilities of each position and the percentage of overall job focus for each one. Exploring programmatic differences in similar types of positions may also lend some insight into the wide dis-

parity in the types of positions, salary, and age among outdoor/adventure leaders.

**Job Responsibilities.** Over 50% of the subjects identified a minimum of eight job responsibilities from the list provided. This multi-faceted role of the outdoor/adventure leader is consistent with many of the recommended competencies of effective outdoor leaders identified by Priest and Gass (1997). For example, the responsibilities of trip leader, instructor/teacher, and facilitator were identified by most instructors and teachers as job responsibilities. However, among all 18 job responsibilities listed, the only responsibility not identified by any instructors or leaders was that of director. Subjects in the positions of director and coordinator identified all job responsibilities listed as being necessary.

As stated previously, this study identified all related job responsibilities for each subject, but did not provide a means to clarify the primary responsibilities for each position. Future research identifying the competencies of specific positions may assist educators in designing curricula and advising students in their course of study, as well as guiding leaders in identifying the most appropriate outdoor leadership preparation program to meet their professional goals.

**Training Backgrounds.** A combination of various training backgrounds prepared the outdoor/adventure leaders in this study. Personal experience was the most prevalent training background identified by all but nine subjects. With an overall age range of 19-61, subjects could differ in their definitions and in the amount of personal experience they identified as training. Personal experience may be defined as recreational experiences (individual or group), work related experiences, educational experiences, and/or volunteer experiences. This study did not account for individual definitions of personal experience duplicating the other training backgrounds listed in the study. The implications of personal experience as training could provide valuable data for advanced practitioners who wish to pursue advanced training opportunities, and for educators who are responsible for designing post-graduate degree programs. Future research can be improved by identifying the dimensions of personal experience and clarifying these in the data collection process.

The identification of professional workshops and conferences as a common method of training poses interesting questions for professional organizations, outdoor leadership preparation programs, and academic institutions. Do professional organizations sponsoring these events design, promote, and make these workshops and conferences available to practitioners of various skill and knowledge levels? Do outdoor leadership preparation programs, both academic and non-academ-

ic, encourage and provide resources for their administration, faculty, staff, and students to exhibit, present, and attend professional workshops and conferences? Also, how much is the high response rate (72.9%) a reflection of the lack of standardized curricula for outdoor leadership preparation including possessing an academic degree?

The results of this study indicated an increase in the number and level of academic degrees earned over the last four decades with over one quarter of the degrees being earned in the last three years. This data is consistent with the increase in the number of academic degree programs for outdoor leadership preparation. To determine the viability and application of an academic degree, further studies are recommended that examine the employment path and training experiences of outdoor leaders possessing an academic degree.

### Future Research

Suggestions for future research have emphasized investigations which explore more specifically academic degrees earned, primary job responsibilities, and clearly defined training backgrounds. Garvey and Gass (1999) found that experience from scouting and other outdoor programs had increased between 1983 and 1997. In this study, 45.8% of total subjects identified other outdoor programs as training backgrounds. With an increased recognition of other outdoor programs in outdoor leadership preparation, future research would be enhanced by identifying the outdoor programs being referred to in this category.

Sugerman (1999) found that the titles of academic degree programs in outdoor leadership preparation differed between schools, and that the curricula often reflected the program in which they were housed within the university. To further the knowledge in this area, future research studying the academic degrees earned by outdoor/adventure leaders is recommended to investigate the academic degree program curricula and their applicability to employment and job responsibility, execution, and success.

If employers prefer a balance of institutional and personal experience as suggested by Garvey and Gass (1999), then the results of this study suggest that an academic degree program can better serve students by integrating professional workshops/conferences, internships, and certifications into the curriculum. Knowing the types of training backgrounds, both available and preferred, can assist educators in designing effective academic degree programs and assist students in designing their own career path in outdoor/adventure leadership.

The intent of this study was to expand upon the research in outdoor leadership preparation. By investigating the types of positions, job responsibilities, and training backgrounds of outdoor/adventure leaders, educators can evaluate whether outdoor leadership preparation programs are adequately preparing leaders. Continued research in this area is recommended to further assist and prepare current, as well as future practitioners, for securing employment opportunities in the field of adventure programming.

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