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Learning leadership: Becoming an outdoor leader

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Recent research in the broad field of leadership has demonstrated a need for better understanding of the process of *becoming* a leader because it might be qualitatively different to *being* a leader. If so, there is likely to be a need for pedagogies designed deliberately to support first-time outdoor leadership experiences and any such pedagogies must be informed by the needs of first-time leaders. Becoming a leader in outdoor educational settings involves moving from the relative equality of being one participant among several in a group to a position of some influence in the group. In business settings, the process of becoming a leader has been found to involve four transformations: in understanding of leadership; in interpersonal judgment; in self-knowledge; and in coping with the stress of leadership. This paper draws on empirical data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with adult outdoor education (friluftsliv) students in Norway to explore factors influencing experiences of becoming an outdoor leader in a formal educational setting. We found that becoming an outdoor leader involves some of the transformations found elsewhere and that these transformations can be complicated by the educational setting. We discuss implications for pedagogical approaches to outdoor leadership development in formal education settings.

Keywords: first time outdoor leadership, transformation, pedagogy, friluftsliv

Introduction

Leadership in general has been defined as "doing the right things" (Bennis, 1994, p. 30) to ensure that people respond to changes, establish and maintain relationships, and remain motivated to act in desired ways (Kotter, 2012). Outdoor leadership is most commonly defined by descriptors of leadership competences (Smith, 2011; Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, Breuning, 2006; Priest & Gass, 2005) and leadership in general has been primarily understood in terms of achieved or expert leadership and leadership success (Smith, 2011). In Norway, outdoor (friluftsliv) leadership has been also associated with ethics. Dreyfus & Dreyfus' (1999) stage model of skill development and Raiola & Sugerman's (1999) outdoor leadership development cycle – both widely referenced in outdoor leadership literature – are valued for their power in explaining the process of development from novice to expert, however neither focuses specifically on first attempts to become a leader. Haaland & Dale (2005) refer to this specific point in general leadership development as 'first time leadership' and regards it as a transformation in which the foundations of leadership understanding and identity become established and where the individual evaluates their desire to continue pursuing leadership or not. How well an individual's learning needs are met at this crucial point in their leadership development is, arguably, important to their subsequent leadership efforts. It is therefore necessary to understand the process of leadership development from the perspective of first-time leaders, and, from there, develop appropriate pedagogies. Apart from Haaland and Dale (2005) and Hill (2003), we found no other studies of the process of becoming a leader and it remains a 'black hole' in leadership research generally. This paper draws on an investigation of the first time outdoor leadership experiences of a group of Norwegian university students in order to explore, through Hill's four transformations, the process of becoming an outdoor leader in an educational setting.

Hill's (2003) research focuses directly on becoming a leader in a business perspective and provides important insights that also seem relevant to outdoor leadership. In her work, becoming a leader is distinguished from being a leader; she found that becoming a leader primarily involves four personal transformations, each triggered by the act of attempting leadership. These transformations occur in: understanding of leadership, in interpersonal judgment, in self-knowledge, and in coping with the stress of leadership. Through these transformations, emerging leaders begin to be viewed as, and begin to view themselves as, no longer only followers in the group or organization, but in new positions or roles amongst their colleagues or peers. The transformations are not only personal but also social; becoming a leader involves adjustment in the social dynamics of the group as well as personal transformation. Further, even for people who are permanently promoted to a position of leadership (as in Hill's (2003) business context), the transformations occur in multiple steps over time, not as one singular, immediate and complete transformation. New leaders are confronted with gaps in their understanding of leadership, imperfections in interpersonal judgment and self-knowledge, and limitations in their ability to cope with the stresses of the role as these issues arise; they do not arise all at once. The duration of becoming a leader is, arguably, further extended for those whose leader roles are part-time or intermittent. Leadership in outdoor education is often part-time or intermittent because that is often the nature of employment and voluntary service in this field. In this paper, we utilize Hill's (2003) transformations as a conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of becoming a leader in Norwegian friluftsliv (outdoor education) and consider implications for leader education.

Friluftsliv is a contested Scandinavian term for cultural practices of being physically active outdoors. In Norway, friluftsliv is strongly associated with Norwegian national identity, cultural

transmission and an ethic of being close to nature, though it has been interpreted differently in relation to gender, class, geographical location and environmental ethic (Faarlund, 1973; Faarlund, 2009; Odden, 2008; Pedersen, 1999; Tordsson, 2003). Friluftsliv has been associated with cross-country skiing, camping or hiking in forest and mountain areas, non-motorised boating in near-natural inland and coastal waterways, hunting, fishing and berry-picking, and more recently with adventure such as kite-surfing and mountain-biking (Gelter, 2009; Green, Thurston & Vaage, 2014). The role of the leader in Norwegian friluftsliv is imbued with values associated with nature and safe travel (Grimeland, 2009). Arguably, becoming a friluftsliv leader is in part a process of developing a value position and the experiences of becoming an outdoor leader might involve grappling with issues concerning nature- and safety-related values.

Regardless of the context, the beliefs about leadership development that are held by leader educators are likely to influence how those first acts of becoming a leader are experienced. In formal education, these beliefs are expressed in pedagogy and in specific methods of teaching and learning. In this paper, we focus on student experiences of becoming a leader without focusing in depth on the pedagogical context of those experiences. However, we highlight the need for further research into how particular methods of teaching and learning influence the process of becoming an outdoor leader. This paper contributes knowledge to a recognized gap, internationally, in the leadership literature. It expands Hill's (2003) and Haaland and Dale's (2005) work into the outdoor leadership domain, contributing new insights to both outdoor leadership development and first time leadership generally.

The next section of the paper reviews contemporary debates on outdoor leadership, first in Norwegian friluftsliv and then in the international arena. These debates frame the research question and signal the need for an exploratory qualitative design for our study.

Outdoor leadership

The leader role in Norwegian educational friluftsliv, like the concept friluftsliv itself, has been much-debated among the Norwegian friluftsliv scholars, if not necessarily among leader educators and practitioners. There is wide agreement that leadership means being responsible for people and their safety in the outdoors, positively valuing nature, environmental protection and sustainable lifestyles (Bentsen, Andkjær & Ejbye-Ernst, 2009; Grimeland, 2009). Faarlund's (1973; 2009) eco-philosophy continues to be controversially influential and Tordsson's (2005) emphasis on democracy, interpersonal relationships and personal development is adopted by some leaders (Bishoff, 2000; Grimeland, 2009; Gurholt, 2008). As a consequence, it would be reasonable to expect emerging friluftsliv leaders in Norway to adopt a particular ethic of leadership as well as learning the technical organizational and relational skills required for the role.

In contrast to the Norwegian debates, the international outdoor leadership literature has drawn on business management theory and focused on leadership effectiveness (Smith, 2011) as well as on value orientations (Graham, 1997; Martin et al, 2006; Priest & Gass, 2005). Theories often utilized for understanding outdoor leadership include style theories of leadership, contingency leadership, situational leadership theory, conditional outdoor leadership theory (COLT) and empirical investigations often focus on core outdoor leadership competences (Smith, 2011). Martin et al. (2006), for example, have refined previous meta-analyses of outdoor leadership

skills into eight core competences: technical ability, safety and risk management, program management, environmental stewardship, teaching and facilitation, decision making and judgment, foundational knowledge, self-awareness and awareness of professional conduct.

Among these competences, judgment and decision-making (JDM) has received a lot of research attention because it influences the way in which every other aspect of leadership is performed (Shooter & Furman, 2011) and is a key indicator of leadership competence overall (Graham, 1997; Martin et al., 2006; Martin, Schmid & Parker, 2009; Priest & Gass, 2005). The differences between the JDM in novice and expert outdoor leaders are quite well understood (Shooter & Furman, 2011) and there is broad agreement that outdoor leader judgment is enhanced through critical reflection on experience and on one's development in all the leadership competences (Ashfeldt, Hvenegaard & Urberg, 2009; Graham, 1997; Smith, 2011). As a case in point, Schumann, Sibthorp & Hacker (2014) investigated the accuracy of self-knowledge held by outdoor leaders in training and found that inaccurate self-assessments can lead to "inaccurate self-efficacy beliefs and inappropriate behaviors in outdoor leadership" performance (p. 103). However, there is currently little understanding of the developmental process involved in the progression from a JDM novice to a JDM expert, and specifically from a non-leader to using JDM outdoors for the first time. We found only one study specifically focusing on this progression (Martin et al., 2009). These authors found five significant contextual variables influencing decision-making by students in an introductory outdoor leadership course, which were: participant readiness, physical safety, environmental impact, group cohesion and educational mindset.

Participant readiness referred to the level of technical skills required for participation in the course, including the student's personal organization of equipment and routines. This variable influenced decision processes primarily through its impact on time management. Physical safety referred to organization for safe travel and finding suitable campsites and it influenced students' decisions about how to organize the group. The variable 'environmental impact' influenced decisions on picking up trash and using established campsites. Group cohesion referred to, and influenced, the complex factors of group dynamics that had to be considered in all decision processes. Finally, educational mindset referred to the effect on novice leaders' decision processes of being in a university class. As students, the interviewees had felt the class context, whether indoors or outdoors, was not a natural situation for leadership. Being in class made it difficult for leaders to maintain focus on the real problems they were trying to solve when the whole class engaged in discussing leadership decisions (Martin et al., 2009).

Relationships between Martin et al.'s (2009) five variables were not reported and the small scale of that study limits generalizability of the findings, however this work signals that contextual factors require careful consideration if outdoor leadership skills, particularly JDM, are to be developed. Further support for the importance of context is found in Ballard, Shellman & Hayashi (2006) who found that much of outdoor leadership course participants' meaning making occurred in the context "of being a member of an intense social learning environment for an extended period of time" (p.18). The present study explores experiences of the process of becoming an outdoor leader in the context of an educational setting.

Becoming a leader

The published research on the process of becoming a leader is very limited. Haaland and Dale's (2005) investigation of leadership education in corporate workplaces concluded that while most organizations offer leader training programs, none of those studied provided pre-leader training. As a consequence, novice leaders initially had to work out for themselves how to be a leader. Hill (2003) had earlier shown that what novice leaders had to work out involved personal transformation. She demonstrated that *becoming* a leader in business management is something different to *being* one and that the four major tasks the new manager must adjust to are: learning what it means to be a leader; developing interpersonal judgment; gaining self-knowledge; and coping with stress and emotion (Hill, 2003).

For Hill's (2003) informants, learning to be a business management leader involved grappling with unforeseen expectations from their team members and superiors. This meant they were discovering the nature of the role while acting in the role. Unforeseen expectations included those of representing the business, and maintaining loyalty to values, regulations and decisions within the organization (Haaland & Dale, 2005). Developing interpersonal judgment involves building relationships, exercising authority, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, being convincing (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005); delegating tasks that empowered the individuals as well as the whole group was also important (Hill, 2003).

Gaining self-knowledge was the most surprising new task for Hill's (2003) new business management leaders. They found themselves in situations where they could not rely on their previous expertise, questioned their own motives, and were confronted with their lack of knowledge and skills for leadership. In effect, these new leaders are forced to develop a personal theory of leadership, become more self-aware and improve their ability to self-regulate actions and behavior in relation to others (Haaland & Dale, 2005). The fourth major task, coping with

stress and emotion, relates to role strain: learning to work with the burden of leadership responsibility and one's own imperfections (Hill, 2003). Coping with the loneliness of leadership, being responsible for managing risk, being a role model and being responsible for people's lives were significant stressors (Hill, 2003). In the present study, we examine whether or not Hill's (2003) four major tasks are relevant to becoming an outdoor leader.

Consistent with Hill's conclusions, Haaland & Dale (2005) describe the process of becoming a leader as a learning process and argue that continued focus on learning is a distinct characteristic of good leaders. Hill's (2003) finding that new managers could only "grasp their role and identity through action "and contemplation on action, rather than on "contemplation" alone (p. 230). She aligns contemplation with book-based study and action (including contemplation on action) with in-role learning. Her finding suggests that mentored experience might be a more suitable method of leader education than a formalized leader induction program. Further, her conclusion that novice managers had to learn how to "think, feel, and value as managers instead of individual contributors" (p. 230) suggests that self-reflection on the cognitive, emotional and ethical aspects of leadership might be important for understanding the experiences of becoming a leader, including those of outdoor leadership.

In a business management settings, it is typical for individuals to change their position from being an individual, skilled contributor in a team to becoming the leader responsible for the same team (Hill, 2003). By contrast, in contemporary outdoor education and friluftsliv settings, it is more common for first time leadership to be experienced in a formal educational context prior to professional practice. Educational pedagogy, therefore, might be an important consideration for first time outdoor leadership success. In the next section, we describe the educational context for

the current study, before stating our research question and setting out our research design and methods.

Education context for current study

In Norway, friluftsliv leadership education – known as 'friluftslivsfag' - is provided by many organizations, including higher education institutions. This paper reports an investigation of adults' experiences of becoming a friluftsliv leader. The research participants had all voluntarily entered a part-time university-level friluftsliv program at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (NSSS) in Oslo, Norway. This program primarily attracts people employed within the education, health, and tourism sectors or in voluntary organizations, who seek specialized education for friluftsliv leadership (NSSS, 2014), hence the students were considered to be in the process of becoming outdoor leaders, even if they were not all absolute beginners in this process. The program consists of two parts, each of 30 ECTS (equivalent to two half-years of study) and the whole program takes two years to complete (NSSS, 2014). Program staff utilize experiential pedagogies which, among other things, engage students in writing learning journals to record and reflect upon their learning experiences (Høyem, 2004; NSSS, 2014).

In our exploratory study, the research question was deliberately broad: how do friluftsliv students experience transformation into outdoor leadership?

Design and Methods

An interpretive, hermeneutic methodology was adopted in this exploratory study in order to allow different understandings of first time leadership to emerge (Thagaard, 2009). Retrospective, in-depth interviews (Repstad, 2007) gave access to individual students' recollections of first time

friluftsliv leadership. Interviews were conducted by the lead author, who had taught the friluftsliv students during the 2012-13 academic year and therefore within the period that students were experiencing leadership development. Interviewing began seven months after the interviewees completed their program and all assessment had been finalised; this time gap mitigated against any response bias (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) arising from the teacher-student relationship. The second author had no contact with the students.

All 23 students who had completed the friluftsliv program in 2013 were invited to an interview by email sent from NSSS' Study Department. Given the exploratory nature of this study, we considered it prudent to invest limited research resources, on the grounds that the study results would influence further investment. This meant that only the first five individuals (22% of class) to respond were selected for interview: three women and two men. We considered that, using the methodology described, data relevant to our research questions would likely be found in interviews with this proportion of the student cohort. Further, we considered that a range of views would likely be found in this number of interviews. The in-depth, face-to-face interviews focused on recollected first-time experiences of leadership in friluftsliv. The interviews were semi-structured with one main research question and prompts for follow-up questions. As is common in outdoor leadership education programs, students have a variety of prior experiences with both outdoor practice and with leadership. For informants in this study, the process of becoming an outdoor leader had begun between two and seven years before the interview. During the interviews they mainly focused on the first-time leadership experiences that occurred during the study-program but, because many studied part-time and had current or past involvements with other outdoor organizations (e.g. Scouts, Norwegian Trekking Association), some of the experiences they related came from outside the study program. As Hill (2003) points out,

becoming a leader involves first experiences in the multiple dimensions of leadership that occur over a period of time. In this study, some interviewees related first experiences of different dimensions of leadership that occurred months or years apart and in different circumstances. A limitation of this study is that information about the context in which first experiences of leadership occurred is limited to the study program. However, the source of the experiences was not as crucial to the study as veracity of memory recall. Two strategies were used to reduce the effects of memory 'filters', that is, the process of memory being re-worked in light of more recent knowledge and experience (Repstad, 2007). First, interviewees were asked 'do you remember …' and 'how did you think…' to encourage them to think back to their initial awareness of becoming an outdoor leader. Second, with permission, the interviewees' learning journals were examined for references to concrete examples that could trigger memories of first time outdoor leadership (Repstad, 2007). These journals had been written while interviewees were students in the program and were made available by the institution.

Data analysis

The interviews were recorded to digital media before transcription into Norwegian standard language (bokmaal) to avoid identification from dialectic language use. After analysis, selected quotations were further translated by the bi-lingual first author into English, keeping the interviewees' meanings as close as possible to the original.

The interviewer-researcher manually coded and categorized the data and a second researcher provided critical review. An iterative process of reading and coding the data condensed the meanings expressed by interviewees in sentences and paragraphs into a set of codes and categories that represented all the meanings relating to first time outdoor leadership in the

transcripts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Codes that referred to one another were grouped under one category; sections of text coded 'people skills', 'motivation' and 'expectations', for example, all related to statements about discovering an aspect of the leader role for the first time, therefore these were clustered under the category 'awareness of what leadership means'. Coded text could be associated with several categories; statements coded 'people skills', for example, were also categorized 'self-awareness' because the realization of not knowing about an aspect of leadership is also a reflection on oneself as a leader. The codes and categories were not predefined, but emerged from the process of interviewing, transcribing, reading and interpreting the data in light of the theoretical literature. However, the emergent language of coding and categorizing often matched relevant language in the literature, thus enhancing validity of the findings, because it was also the language used by the interviewees. This language alignment is not surprising since the interviewees were studying outdoor leadership. Statements indicating aspects of judgment and decision making, for example, were coded 'JDM' and categorized as one of the attributes in 'transformation of knowledge of leadership'. To preserve anonymity, extracts from the transcripts refer to interviewees by a code number (I1 – I5).

Findings and discussion

The categories that emerged from the data analysis aligned most closely with the first three of Hills' (2003) four transformations for first time leaders, lending support to that framework for understanding first time leadership. Hill's fourth category, coping with stress and emotion, is a minor theme that appears only in one interview and so we do not focus on it but discuss it briefly in the implications below.

An additional category related to the educational context in which interviewees' experienced first time leadership; this category reinforces the importance of contextual factors to the process of becoming a leader, as Martin et al. (2009) and Ballard et al. (2006) found. Many of these topics interact with one another in complex ways, as we show in the sections that follow. We report and discuss the detailed findings under the four headings indicated above. We then draw out the implications from this study for first time outdoor leadership, and for outdoor leadership education, and conclude with a summary of indications for further research.

Transformation in knowledge of leadership

All interviewees had some knowledge of leadership before attempting outdoor leadership for the first time. This knowledge had come from either their employment, or other organizational roles, or from the lectures on leadership in the friluftsliv program. Their experiences of first time outdoor leadership *sharpened their existing knowledge*, bringing into clearer focus the multiple tasks and responsibilities required by leaders in this particular field. This finding lends some support to Hill's (2003) conclusion that leadership is learned in action. At the same time, this finding also recognizes that leadership training, prior to first time leadership experience, has a role in knowledge development. Further to this, the interviewees spoke more about leadership developing with experience than about leadership knowledge developing through academic study.

For the interviewees in this study, as in the literature, leadership is understood in terms of *broadness* and *complexity* (Faarlund, 1973; Graham, 1997; Martin et al., 2006; Priest & Gass, 2005; Smith, 2011; Tordsson, 2005). Broadness related to the wide range of skills, tasks and

qualities required of the outdoor leader. Complexity referred to the need for leaders to take multiple factors into account at the same time when making decisions.

The data analysis identified eight major attributes of outdoor leaders. Some of the attributes relate also to transformations other than the transformation in knowledge of leadership and are discussed in the sections that follow. The most important attributes were the responsibilities of relating to people, and of exercising authority, and the quality of flexibility in leadership style. These three attributes relate to Hills' (2003) transformation in interpersonal judgment and are discussed under that heading below; however, we note here that there were differences between interviewees in their knowledge of leadership style. They all understood leadership style as flexible and context-specific, but one person also considered democratic leadership to be "lazy" and "not proper" (I4) leadership because the designated leader does not make decisions alone. This person's view might illustrate that they are in transformation to more complete knowledge of the power and authority of democratic leadership and are not yet able to express their knowledge in a consistent way. Alternatively, they might just prefer direct leadership.

The fourth most significant leadership attribute identified by the interviews was responsibility for judgment and decision-making. First time experiences of outdoor leadership were situations in which our interviewees first gained knowledge of the extent to which they would be individually responsible for using good judgment in making and communicating their decisions. They also realized that in order to develop good judgment, it is necessary to actually be in the leader position and that the particular nature of outdoor activities can impact on their leadership. An example of the latter is a situation in which the interviewee's struggle with a decision in difficult outdoor (weather and terrain) conditions had made that person realize that they not only had to

make the decision but also had to do so in a way that maintained the group's confidence and trust in them "... in a serious situation ... in a way you have to put up an appearance, or a mask, that says that you are calm and know what to do to get the group out of a bad situation" (I5). Acting in a leader role came to have two meanings for this interviewee – being the designated leader, and behaving as others expect a leader to behave (i.e. as though in control of the situation). This interviewee also struggled with the possibility of setting up 'false trust' by group members in his leadership abilities, thus indicating the complex interplay of knowledge, judgment, decision communication and self-awareness experienced during this leadership event.

Our interviewees experienced making and communicating decisions as stressful because they lacked clarity about what was expected of them as leaders; they had incomplete knowledge of what leadership entails, and felt they had too little time to prepare for their leader roles. One person stated that they "did not relax", "constantly had to check and double check everything" and "was thinking of everything that could go wrong" (I2). For this person, being responsible for peoples' lives felt strange and "dramatic" (I2) while, at the same time, it felt "safe because the teachers [were] there, and the others [(students) were] actually capable of taking care of themselves (laughter) if something happens!" (I2). The educational context of first time outdoor leadership allowed this interviewee to try out being a leader despite having insufficient knowledge of the role. According to Haaland & Dale (2005), stress reduces as understanding of the role increases, though this remains to be tested in outdoor leadership contexts. Our data indicate that support from others and low-stakes leadership experiences appear to facilitate leadership development. Potentially, opportunities for repeated leadership practice in similar situations can increase the experiences of predictability and control that motivate people to seek further leadership experience (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

The remaining four major attributes of leaders identified by the interviewees were: responsibility for planning and preparation for group activity; and the qualities of having the technical skills required for the activity, maintaining one's self-confidence in being a leader, and maintaining a leadership identity. Interviewees considered the first two of these as prerequisites to leadership rather than as features that confront first time leaders. However, interactions between technical or logistic matters and the relational tasks of leadership added to the complexity interviewees had faced when in leader roles and we discuss these interactions in relation to interpersonal judgment. The latter two attributes align with Hill's (2003) transformation in self-knowledge and are addressed under that heading.

The interviewees did not refer to leadership in overtly ethical terms. This contrasts with the picture of friluftsliv leadership that emerges from the Norwegian literature and suggests either a gap between philosophy and contemporary practice, or a limitation in the research method (i.e. one or more questions about leadership ethics might be required in order to elicit that information), or both.

Transformation in interpersonal judgment

The interviewees in this study all viewed the ability to interact positively with people and to create good relations within the group as a significant skill for outdoor leaders: "You have to be a nice person, be able to talk to people, that is the first ground-rule. If you can't talk to people, you can't be a leader!" (I1).

These views coincide with Graham's (1997) descriptions of caring leadership, Tordsson's (2005) notion of "personal, democratic leadership" (p. 110) and the "soft skills" described by Priest & Gass (2005). Further, the interviewees discovered that technical skills had to become integrated with interpersonal judgment so that participants feel confident that the leader can handle any hazard or risky situation that may occur. Technical skills were considered to be "all the skills you need to cope in the outdoors ... travel, weather and wind and food and all that it takes" (I2) and leaders are expected to "know what to do, you need to have the gear ready in your backpack, no matter what situation that may occur, you'll have to handle it" (I1). At the same time, interviewees realized that leaders must ensure that their approach to leadership matches the needs within the group as well as the environmental conditions. One interviewee pointed out that a technically-skilled authoritarian leader might not be able to facilitate others to have positive experiences and gain mastery in the outdoors. Leaders have to be "very aware and open" (I2) to the group and "not too controlling" (I2) yet sufficiently "controlling … in a very diplomatic way where people feel like they are being taken care of... "(I2).

Interviewees also spoke about the context for developing interpersonal judgment, where context means the educational setting of first time outdoor leadership. In this, they focused on exercising authority as leaders; specifically, the role of being in charge of planning and organizing sub-groups, deciding routes, selecting the travelling pace and location of campsites when the group of participants is your fellow students, was perceived by some of the interviewees as awkward and strange. Because of their lack of experience and skills, these interviewees did not see themselves as qualified to be leaders. They avoided situations where they had to make decisions, in part because they disliked the feeling of being evaluated and inspected by the others. In addition, leadership was experienced as not for real: "...it was difficult, everyone was there and to take on

the responsibility did not seem relevant" (I3). One interviewee recalled an exception to this when challenging weather conditions "did something to me. Instead of being a spectator, I became much more interested, more switched on, more present" (I3) and motivated to lead. These findings suggest that the extent to which leadership situations are perceived as 'real' influences students' willingness to exercise authority as leaders: at least some students will lead when the situation demands it, but until then, most students hesitate to 'pull rank' on their peers.

First time outdoor leadership is experienced as demanding by students who have less experience and confidence. At the same time, they recognize that gaining field experience and practicing decision making strengthens their confidence in judgment and decision making: "It is related to experience. If I have done this several times, I'm confident in what I'm doing, but not if [this] is the first time..." (I3). One interviewee connected confidence with mindset: "... you have to be confident that you are a person that can actually be a leader. Several people don't think like that. And there are a lot of people who think that 'a lot of other people have more competences and skills than I have, so therefore I can't make a decision" (I5). Interviewee 4 echoed this view, saying that "you can't really consider what the others may think of you all the time, like I sometimes do: 'God, what I said last night, did they perceive it the right way?'. You have to trust yourself!" (I4).

Hill (2003) and Haaland & Dale (2005) view learning to exercise authority and making decisions as a part of the transformation in interpersonal judgment that new leaders go through. This transformation is particularly challenging if the new leader is leading the team that they used to be a part of (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005), such as in the situations described by these interviewees. Taking on the leader role means taking responsibility for managing, controlling and

delegating in order to create structure for the group's work (Haaland & Dale, 2005; Tordsson, 2005). To be able to do this the leader has to be confident and clear in the role, in order to avoid uncertainty in the group (Tordsson, 2005). Thus, first time outdoor leaders must distinguish themselves from their classmates, behave differently to their peers when they are in the leader role. As Haaland & Dale (2005) concluded, a significant part of the learning process for the first-time leader is learning to re-negotiate relationships with colleagues and dealing with expectations related to the new role (Haaland & Dale, 2005). In our study, the awkwardness, lack of confidence and 'not for real' feelings expressed by some interviewees may be explained by lack of re-negotiations of relations and unclear expectations of how to execute leadership in the group of fellow students. Another explanation might be found in Martin et al.'s (2009) educational mindset; that is, students might have different aims and motivations for entering the program and these influence the extent to which they seek opportunities to learn leadership. We discuss educational mindset in more detail in a later section.

Transformation in self-knowledge

Gaining self-knowledge is Hill's (2003) third transformation. Our data show that self-knowledge changed when students tried out leadership for the first time; one interviewee, for example, gained insights into

> ...how I act in stressful situations, if I'm able to think straight or things like that, then I
> have to practice and work on my weaker skills. And that I know my stronger skills, so I
> can delegate responsibility and know what kind of trips I can take, and what kind of
> people I can bring on the trips, that I don't do things that will contribute to a bad
> experience for the participants. (I3)

The interviewees' insights include the awareness of the need for more leadership experience and a growing awareness of the range and depth of responsibility that outdoor leadership demands. Interviewees became very aware that the role of leader is distinct from that of individual contributors; in one interviewee's words, "people have to understand that they are in a different position when they are leaders" (I1). These findings are consistent with Hill's (2003) conceptualization of transformation in self-knowledge as a process of identity change, that the role of leader is distinct from that of individual contributor. Identity change appears to be impelled, at least in part, by awareness of motivation for becoming an outdoor leader. One interviewee described their motivation as being "about bringing people into nature, right, but it is so much more than that..." (I3), and includes facilitating social values, participants' mastery of outdoor skills and positive experiences in activities that the interviewee enjoys and wants to share. This interviewee also stated that as a leader, you "are not doing the trip for your own pleasure" (I3), but for the people participating. In addition, responding to the challenges of leadership, and dealing with the unexpected (Graham, 1997) were motivating for one interviewee who viewed unforeseen challenges as "a bit of hell when you're in it, but it is what really triggers you, because it is a bit fun as well!" (I1).

Awareness of their motivations also gave participants insights into their beliefs about what friluftsliv is and, as a consequence, the purpose of their leadership. Interestingly, the purposes mentioned did not include engaging people in environmental thinking, in contrast to what the Norwegian friluftsliv leadership literature suggests (Faarlund, 1973; Tordsson, 2005). It is beyond the scope of this study to explain the apparent gap between philosophy and practice and

we leave it to future studies of friluftsliv leadership to explore leaders' perceptions of leadership purpose.

Self-knowledge and role-awareness are discussed in the broad leadership literature but are largely absent from the outdoor leadership literature (Thomas, 2011). Graham (1997) is notable for including self-awareness, role awareness and awareness of motivation for taking on leadership as vital qualities of outdoor leadership. There is wide scope for further research into the transformation in self-knowledge during first time outdoor leadership and into development of self-knowledge as outdoor leadership experience grows.

The educational context for first time leadership

The fourth and final major finding in our study is that the educational context appears to influence experiences of first time outdoor leadership. This is consistent with Martin et al.'s (2009) general conclusion that context influences development of judgment and decision-making in emerging leaders. In our study, the aspect of the education context that interviewees talked about was the organization of students into peer groups. Individuals took turns to provide leadership for their group of peers during outdoor trips of 4-5 days duration. The influence of, and interaction with, fellow students were clearly significant factors for the quality of first time outdoor leadership experiences. Communication between students with more outdoor experience and those with less outdoor experience sometimes produced tensions that could impede learning for all, such as when attempts to lead created frustration for the more experienced students: "...ok, so they [more experienced] are supposed to step back, but in a way they cannot do this because they are so annoyed because things are not done the way he or she thinks is the best way" (I3).

On the other hand, when the student group was more homogenous in terms of outdoor experience, they could develop a co-operative educational climate and gain very positive leadership experiences.

In addition to communication, differences between students in their willingness to try out leadership roles could cause tensions in the peer groups. As noted earlier, some of our interviewees referred to feelings of discomfort when in a leadership role with peers and one expressed regret at not trying harder despite the discomfort: "I should have taken, sometimes more responsibility. Both for myself and my group, just taken leadership actually..." (I4). These individuals had wanted to avoid leadership, while others recognized the discomfort as a signal of a learning opportunity. Interviewee 5, for example, stated that it is "...extremely important that people actually train and try out leadership when you are outside!" (I5) and "...of course it feels a bit strange, it is an educational setting, it will always be a bit strange, but you have to use the situation to learn" (I5). The tension between this interviewee's "educational mindset" (Martin et al, 2009, p. 46) and the avoidance mindset of some of his peers is evident in their view that it is important for first time outdoor leaders to learn to trust themselves, and maybe even be pushed to make their own decisions and not always ask someone more experienced.

Part of the challenge of peer leadership in educational settings such as in our study, is that students have to think of themselves as both leader and team member at the same time. Our interviewees commented on the multiple opportunities they had to be leaders during the program. In any one 4-7 days trip, for example, they had to negotiate the social terrain of moving from being a member of a group of peers to being the leader of the same group for a relatively short period (2-12 hours). While our interviewees did not say so directly, it seems probable that they

were aware that, while in the leader role, they must lead in a way that allows them to be accepted as a peer again after their leadership period. An example is given by one interviewee who related a stressful leadership situation that went from bad to worse because the leader was too considerate of what the others may think and feel. As noted above, the education setting in which our interviewees were learning outdoor leadership differs to Hill's (2003) context in which new managers think of themselves as no longer part of the collegial team. Our study indicates that, while the leadership research from business settings has much of value for outdoor leadership educators, there is a need for better understanding of the particular contexts in which first time outdoor leadership occurs.

Implications

As our results have shown, first time outdoor leadership appears to involve two major foci: interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. First time leaders must learn to work with people at the same time as they are learning what leadership requires of them as a person. This implies that a highly experiential pedagogy is appropriate in at least the early stages of outdoor leadership development. It also implies that the most important material for introductory outdoor leadership programs to focus on is the individual's self-development. A further implication is that teaching and learning materials for first time outdoor leadership need to focus on intra-personal and inter-personal development more than on the full suite of leadership competences that is common in outdoor leadership textbooks.

In this study, first time leadership was experienced as transformational: uncomfortable, insecure, challenging, and, at the same time, affording learning opportunities. This implies that experiences of learning during introductory outdoor leadership programs can be enhanced if they

are acknowledged as transformational 'spaces' in which it is legitimate for all students to feel uncomfortable about leading, but to try anyway. Following on from this point, the curriculum for learning leadership needs to explicitly pay attention to the nature of transformational experience and support learning from that experience. In educational settings, paying attention to the transformational nature of the learning experience includes overt acknowledgement of the peer learning environment – with iterative movement into and out of leadership roles - and the need to encourage students to adopt educational mindsets.

Finally, as this study has shown in several different ways, first time leaders discover that leadership itself involves learning. One implication of this is that pedagogies for leadership are effectively pedagogies for learning and, further, outdoor leadership education might be most effective when it engages students in deep learning processes that engage their curiosity and willingness to experiment.

This study did not focus on the stress and coping with the burdens of leadership dimension. These factors feature in Hill's (2003) study of first time leadership in a business setting, where leaders remain in a leadership position. Our study of first time leadership consisted of short periods of leadership followed by a return to a student role. Arguably, stress and coping are more relevant to ongoing leadership contexts than to educational contexts such as the one described in this study.

This study investigated first time outdoor leadership, a focus hitherto neglected in the field. It is exploratory in nature, limited in scope and the results were not tested against a larger data source. Further research is, therefore, needed to understand first time outdoor leadership in the context studied and other contexts. In particular, future studies can focus on refining understanding of

the nature of the transformations found in this study. Further research is needed on how students experience these transformations. Are all students in transformation to leadership all of the time? Do they make progress in becoming leaders only when in a leader role, or also when they are group members, and do the rates of progress differ? How can leader educators maximize the potential for students to remain in the transformation to leadership throughout the trip or program? Is the transformation to outdoor leadership made longer or more complicated by the educational model for leader development, and what other models might provide better outdoor leadership development?

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