

Traditional adventure activities in outdoor environmental education

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Abstract

Recently, the place of adventure activities in outdoor education has become contentious, particularly in Australia and the United Kingdom. It can be challenging for outdoor leaders to incorporate adventure activities with attempts to foster environmental awareness, understanding and action. Recently, some authors have suggested practitioners eliminate the tension by removing adventure activities from outdoor environmental education programs altogether. This paper presents the findings of an ongoing action research project exploring ways to resolve the tension between using adventure activities and helping participants to learn about particular regions, communities, and their histories. The research described in this paper utilised thematic analysis of data collected through a professional journal, focus groups, and student writing. The emerging themes included: the need to capitalise on teachable moments; the importance of managing the technical nature of adventure activities; the importance of deliberate planning and facilitation; and the need for careful consideration of the impact of program length or duration.

The greening of outdoor education

Personal and social benefits are often identified as chief outcomes in outdoor education programs. However, because they are not unique to outdoor education, they provide only weak support for the place of outdoor education in a crowded school curriculum. Nicol (2002b) laments the paucity of academic writing clarifying the potential contribution of outdoor education. Some authors have sought to raise the profile of outdoor education by shifting the focus away from personal and social benefits and forging stronger ties with environmental education. In 1993, Brookes developed the notion of a deep outdoor education and he challenged outdoor educators to become better equipped to understand and articulate the role of outdoor education in the broader school curriculum. For Brookes, deep outdoor education develops "alternative understandings of the nature of knowledge, the role of science, the ways in which nature should be valued, the relationships between individual and the wider community" (p. 16). Brookes was critical of weak justifications for outdoor education and he encouraged outdoor educators to provide a critical rationale for their programs and to be clearer on why other forms of traditional education do not provide the same opportunities for learning.

Martin (1998, 1999) coined the term critical outdoor education to describe a similar form of outdoor education based on critical theory. Critical theory originated from the work of Kant, Hegel, and Marx and was further developed by Habermas and his predecessors in the Frankfurt School (Rasmussen, 1996). Critical theory seeks to expose the operation of power and to bring about social justice by redressing inequalities, and promoting individual freedoms within a democratic society (Habermas, 1984, 1991).

From Martin's (1999) perspective, critical outdoor education "goes to the bush, not just to recreate and have fun, but to look back with a critical perspective at the contexts left behind, particularly to those sets of beliefs which help shape human-nature relationships" (p. 465). Ideally, participants are also encouraged to be agents of change in those "left behind" contexts, upon their return.

Cooper (1991, 1994, 1997, 1998) was an advocate for a greener outdoor education through the 1990s and he argued that outdoor education could make an important contribution to educating for sustainability. After an extensive historical review of outdoor education in the UK, Nicol (2002a, 2002b, 2003) argued that outdoor education can contribute to sustainability education, sustainable living and environmental education. However, to achieve this outcome he called for some major transformations to the traditional outdoor education commonly practised in the UK. He encouraged outdoor education leaders to develop programs that: challenge existing social norms; address relationships between ourselves and the world we inhabit; and produce an aesthetic, cognitive, and action response.

A number of authors have called for a more critical consideration of outdoor education theory and practice, particularly in the light of this shift towards a greener outdoor education. Brookes (2002, 2003) called for outdoor education to be more responsive to local situations and to pay careful attention to particular regions, communities, and their histories. He was critical of approaches to outdoor education theory, in Australia at least, which try to eliminate or discount differences between societies and communities, cultural differences, and geographical differences. Likewise, Stewart (2004) was critical of some outdoor

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education practices that seek to develop human-nature relationships or connect with nature. He contended that,

While the idea is commendable, without consideration or acknowledgement of the place, culture, context or situation of an experience it could be argued that this is another form of colonialism, or neo-colonialism perhaps. (p. 3)

Stewart's (2004) concern was that despite the good intentions of some authors (see Martin, 1999; Martin & Thomas, 2000; Thomas & Thomas, 2000) the approaches they describe to help participants to connect with nature, may actually end up subjugating nature. This debate is beyond the scope of this paper, but discussion about environmental content in this paper is understood to refer to non-colonialist approaches to learning about particular regions, communities, and their histories.

A place for adventure in outdoor environmental education?

Nicol (2002b) argued that the rationale for much outdoor education in the UK had grown out of accepted practice and often lacked a clearly articulated philosophical foundation. He found that debate about the content and process of outdoor education often "proceeds in defence of what has always been done," reinforcing the status quo and limiting the possibility of creating a "visionary pedagogical endeavour" (p. 90). Nicol (2002b) explains that the traditional, adventurous, outdoor pursuits represent one of the two main traditions in outdoor education and that, "in the absence of stated philosophical underpinnings and empirical evidence it is clear that outdoor education has developed, to some extent, as a series of practical activities" (p. 89). In a discussion about outdoor education in New Zealand, Zink (2003) suggested "there are a number of things working to privilege pursuits based activities over other forms of outdoor education experiences" (p. 61). These influences include the high profile of adventure, the emphasis placed on personal outcomes, and the increased focus on risk and safety management. Zink encouraged a more critical consideration of outdoor education content.

As long as we keep asking questions about the outcomes of outdoor education associated with personal development, challenge, risk and safety we will continue to get information that confirms and supports . . . a pursuits focus of outdoor education. (Zink, 2003, p. 60)

Brookes (2002) observed that the UK traditions of activity based outdoor pursuits have influenced and shaped outdoor education practice in Australia even though some of the pursuits are not obvious responses to local landscapes. Lugg (2004) concurred that Australian outdoor education programs have been shaped by northern hemisphere traditions and that there is an absence of robust educational rationales for conducting some activities. She encouraged practitioners to question whether adventure activities can be framed and taught primarily for environmental education goals and whether some educational activities are more appropriate for environmental education purposes than others. Payne (2002) also argued that the adventure pursuits, central to much outdoor education practice in Australia, have not received due critique in relation to their appropriateness within critical outdoor environmental education. Preston (2004) expressed concerns that adventure activities such as rock climbing and white-water paddling allow the environment to become the backdrop to the activity encouraging students to focus their attention on the activity and themselves rather than the place.

Some authors have made genuine attempts to resolve the apparent tension between adventure activities and outdoor environmental education, and in the process, addressing the dichotomy that some have created. In the early 1990s, Cooper (1991) encouraged outdoor centres to question the importance they place on activities and to consider whether they are an end in themselves or whether they are a vehicle for other learning. However, Cooper (1994) also suggested that "direct contact with the environment, particularly in challenging situations, can be inspirational and lead to feelings of belonging or oneness with the earth" (p. 12). Thomas and Thomas (2000) provided some suggestions on how moving water paddling could be redefined as a way of: exploring specific riverine environments; knowing nature; and developing human-nature relationships. Cooper (1997) also provided a summary of activities which have potential to contribute to certain learning outcomes in outdoor education, but the claims are not grounded in any empirical research.

There have been two empirical studies that considered the place of outdoor activities in environmental education. The first study (Hanna, 1995) explored the similarities and differences in wilderness knowledge, attitudes and behaviour for participants in adventure programs and participants in an ecology education program. The quasi-experimental, longitudinal study used a pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test with a self-selected sample from four programs. It found that the ecology education programs demonstrated more positive changes over time in the participants' basic ecological knowledge, minimal impact knowledge, wilderness issue attitude,

and wilderness intentions and behaviour than did adventure programs. The study recommended that the leaders of adventure education trips include "explanations of the history and philosophy of wilderness and discussions of current environmental issues relevant to that environment" (p. 31). Hanna also recommended that outdoor leaders develop stronger knowledge of ecological concepts and wilderness philosophies and environmental issues, and that they be trained in effective and efficient processes for teaching about these concepts and issues. The second study (Palmborg & Kuru, 2000), conducted in Finland used qualitative methods to explore how participation in outdoor activities effected the relationships with nature of the 36 participants, aged between 11 and 12. The study found that "experiences in outdoor activities offer great possibilities for the development of a strong empathic relationship to nature" (p. 36).

There has also been some research conducted exploring the effects of participation in recreational outdoor adventure activities on the level of environmental awareness, concern and action developed by people (Palmer, 1993). Palmer found that participation in outdoor recreational activities (as a child and an adult) was reported as a major influence on the level of environmental concern that developed for the environmental educators in the United Kingdom that participated in the study. Despite its potential relevance to this line of inquiry the environmental effects of participation in recreational outdoor activities are beyond the scope of this paper.

Removing adventure from outdoor environmental education?

In response to concerns about the negative impact of adventure activities on environmental outcomes in outdoor education some authors have recently provided descriptions of alternate approaches which de-emphasise traditional, activity-focused, outdoor education (Lugg, 2004; Payne, 2002; Preston, 2004). Lugg (2004) suggested,

It may also be necessary to be prepared at times to "let go" of those activities with which we are most comfortable and familiar and to use completely different outdoor activities in order to educate in a more inclusive and responsive manner. (p. 8)

Some caution may be required here. First, there is limited empirical research supporting the efficacy of these alternate, low adventure approaches to produce stronger environmental outcomes. Secondly, the alternate pedagogies presented by the above authors were trialed with a limited range of participants, and using less adventurous outdoor activities may simply create different pedagogical problems, particularly

with younger adolescents. Some recent research (Martin, 2002) has described some unintended consequences associated with removing adventure and challenge from outdoor education programs. After conducting a naturalistic inquiry into human-nature relationships with tertiary outdoor education students, Martin warns that removing adventure activities from outdoor environmental education may have some unanticipated consequences.

The risk is that as the modified outdoor activity, content and context of green outdoor education slides in, adventure, fun and a love of the bush with body and soul are squeezed out . . . [and] . . . well-meaning academics and practitioners are potentially leaving out the very essence of what makes outdoor education so effective as a way of building profound relationships between people and nature. (Martin, 2004, p. 20)

Martin (2004) found that even for an ideal group of learners, the de-emphasis on skill learning caused some of them considerable frustration and resentment.

[These students] felt unable to enjoy the outdoors as a place to play, they felt forced to comply with particular ways of being in nature that were neither comfortable nor enjoyable for them. As a consequence, their relationship with nature suffered. (p. 26)

One conclusion from Martin's (2002) research was that increasing the environmental focus of outdoor education and de-emphasising skills could lead to some students hating their experience with nature. He explains, that without the challenge and fun which accompanied these adventure experiences in the natural environment, it is possible that the desire to develop connections with places would be reduced. He maintains that for some participants in his study,

adventurous activities enabled students to enjoy and be motivated to spend time in nature, but there was a growing sense that the balance between adventure and environmental appreciation is a fine one and for some students it had already been compromised to the detriment of their relationship with the outdoors. (Martin, 2004, p. 26)

Martin found that outdoor activities not only provide an initial excuse to visit natural places but they can also provide the continued motivation to develop deeper, ongoing personal relationships with nature.

Adventure activities are a powerful medium to elicit emotional connections to the natural world. Adventure induces an emotional response, but also draws people to wild places that play their own role in eliciting emotional reactions from participants. Deskillling outdoor education . . . carries an inherent risk of destabilizing the longstanding attractiveness of outdoor education processes for some students, and may even work against improved relationships with the natural world. (Martin, 2004, pp. 27-28)

It is important to recognize that Martin's research does not suggest that adventure activities are essential for all participants to develop relationships with nature or connections with place, and it may well be that some participants would more effectively develop such relationships with less focus on traditional, adventure activities. However, it is also clear from Martin's research that adventure activities may be important for some other participants to develop their relationships with nature and the removal of adventure activities may be detrimental to those students realising environmental outcomes.

Resolving the tension through specific program design and facilitation.

Cooper (1997) warns critics to be careful when judging the educational potential of activities "as the educational potential lies not in activity per se but in the way it is introduced and facilitated" (p. 27). Thomas and Thomas (2000) maintain that, for example, moving water paddling can make a significant contribution to outdoor environmental education but,

the responsibility for the quality of that contribution lies firmly with the teachers and leaders . . . [and] . . . the richness of that contribution will be determined by the way the moving water paddling experiences are designed, framed, and facilitated. (p. 53)

Martin also suggests that "a passion for spending time with nature, easily promoted through adventure activities, blended with reflective moments may well be the greatest gift we can give our students to take with them into the future of the world" (2004, pp. 27-28). It is the contention of this paper that outdoor environmental education can use traditional adventure activities provided they are facilitated in a way that explores place, culture, and context in a situation specific manner. The action research described in the next section of this paper explores some of the implications of such an approach.

An action research methodology

Following the traditions of action research, the project described in this paper is "an enquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate, and then to change, in order to improve some educational practice" (Bassey, 1998, p. 93). The research reports on the way a number of my colleagues and I, and our students, have modified our practice as a result of our engagement with the issues raised earlier. I have tried to avoid slipping into the trap of providing a self-interested, justification for my practice. As indicated by Brookes (2002), inquiry into outdoor education curriculum is complicated.

Passions for particular forms of recreation, commitment to certain programmes or forms of programme, and professional and personal identities are at stake. It is clear from the literature that outdoor education adherents frequently link their practice with strongly held personal beliefs and values. (p. 422)

It is hoped that this paper is not read as a defense of personal and/or professional "territory." Yes, my beliefs and values define who I am, how I teach, and how I encourage others to learn to teach. But hopefully, the influence of my beliefs and values in this research has been tempered with a suitable level of critical reflexivity.

Data were collected through a number of channels: a professional journal; formal and informal student writing over the last five years; and more recently through a series of focus group discussions with staff and students in the Bachelor of Arts (Outdoor Education) program at La Trobe University in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia. The focus group discussions, and excerpts from my professional journal and student writing were transcribed and coded using the Nvivo Qualitative Analysis software program. The process of theme exploration, outlined by Rubin & Rubin (1995), was used to examine the smaller themes to see what ties them together, if anything at all. This involved looking for: explanatory concepts by picking out the words that participants frequently use that sound different from normal vocabulary; nouns or noun phrases that are repeated frequently and seem to be expressing an important idea; and pairs or mates for existing terms. These processes provided a deeper level of familiarity with the data which enhances the quality of the thematic analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

All names used in this paper are pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of participants. Some of the limitations of the study included the fact that many of the participants were students that I taught and they may have felt pressure to provide certain answers,

perhaps even subconsciously. Data derived from student writing may not be an accurate depiction of the participants' experiences, thoughts or feelings as the responses provided may have been given to satisfy assessment criteria.

The questions that guided this research included:

- How do the activities of climbing and paddling enhance or detract from learning about rock or river environments and students' ability to develop connections with places?
- What is it about climbing and paddling experiences that shapes the nature of learning for students and/or their sense of connection with the place?
- How can adventure activities be facilitated to enhance their potential contribution to outdoor environmental education?

Results and discussion

In light of the research questions, four themes emerged: (a) the importance of capitalising on opportunities for learning as they present themselves; (b) the need to manage challenges associated with the technical/gear/skill intensive nature of adventure activities; (c) the importance of deliberate facilitation and careful planning for the successful inclusion of environmental content in adventure activities; and (d) rethinking the inclusion of adventure activities which require high levels of skill development in shorter programs. These themes and their implications for practice will now be discussed in more detail.

Capitalising on opportunities for environmental learning.

It can be challenging to make environmental content relevant and appealing to students in adventure based outdoor education. If a program has been framed primarily in terms of personal development outcomes, the inclusion of environmental content material can feel contrived and not pertinent to student needs or interests at the time. As one of my student leaders observed, "at times I find these [environmental] activities a little contrived and perhaps it would be better to simply allow people to absorb the place in their own way" (James, 2001). Another student leader espoused the value of

allowing the river to teach and provide its own ideas for you to merely interpret. I have found that these moments while on the river provide the greatest learning experiences for students. I guess you could

say not having contrived educational teachings, but waiting for the student's interest to spark. (Tim, 2002)

These excerpts from my students' teaching evaluations highlight the fine balance between making environmental content a priority and feature in outdoor education programs, yet also making the learning relevant to students by capitalising on their interests. Reflecting on my own practice, a serendipitous teaching strategy necessitates a high level of local knowledge and perhaps even planning. This creates an interesting paradox as my students realised that sometimes you need to plan for teachable moments, "Perhaps more forethought could however, have been given to planning for 'teachable moments' as they arise along the river" (James, 2001). In my teaching, with students who already have a level of environmental knowledge, it is probably easier for me to adopt a serendipitous approach to learning about the local environmental, culture and history because they are receptive to the teachable moments that may arise. This makes the process less contrived but this approach to teaching environmental content has risks, as my students found when they tried to use it themselves with their own participants.

There was not enough local knowledge among our teaching group to bring out the uniqueness of the place . . . to teach in this way would entail knowing an area like the back of your hand, all of it. What's in it, what's around it, when did that happen etc. Because you never can know what the river will provide you with on any given day. (Harry, 2003)

These student realisations are congruent with Brookes' (2002) assertion that "outdoor education curriculum requires of teachers a capacity to shape and interpret experiences in response to particular circumstances, and in accordance with a deep understanding of local curriculum imperatives" (2002, p. 422). Certainly, as I have become more familiar with the places that I teach, and my local knowledge increases, I know with some confidence that certain teachable moments will arise regularly and predictably. Therefore, it almost becomes possible to predict when students are likely to respond to the promptings of these teachable moments.

In summary, this theme highlights three issues for practitioners. First, serendipitous teaching strategies require extensive knowledge of the local environmental, culture and history. Second, in the absence of this local knowledge it is risky to rely solely on the arrival of teachable moments to teach environmental content. Finally, serendipitous teaching strategies alone may not give environmental content the profile or status fitting for an outdoor environmental education program.

The technical/gear/skill intensive nature of adventure activities.

Some adventure activities, such as rockclimbing and moving water paddling, involve a strong focus on skills and equipment in order to allow students to participate safely. This can become a deterrent to the successful inclusion of environmental content in such activities. I responded to this concern in 2001 by introducing inflatable rafts to the university flotilla, which previously was made up of "hard boats" (i.e., canoes and kayaks). This change had a significant impact on the experience of my students who were teaching others in river environments using moving water paddling, as the following excerpts from my student leaders' teaching evaluations indicate.

The raft became a great opportunity for me to talk about other aspects of river environments. Students were able to sit there and take in the surroundings without worrying about what was coming up ahead or what their boat was doing. In this respect the raft was invaluable for teaching about Big River geology, flora, fauna, and impacts. All the important things that I really want people to know about river environments. (Barb, 2001)

With this in mind, rafts are definitely the preferred craft for achieving this environmental/skills balance to learn. (Jonno, 2003)

If I were to do it again, I would do away with all the fuss of teaching them skills in hard boats and use more of the rafts to facilitate a friendly platform for learning. (Neil, 2003)

Using rafts to journey down rivers, rather than hard boats, made it significantly easier for my student leaders to introduce their participants to river environments, especially in programs of shorter duration. The following comments about the use of hard boats indicate this.

Using kayaks on this trip for students was one of the biggest inhibitors to achieving all our aims. (Jonno, 2003)

Indeed, some students were so focused on their paddling while in a kayak; they could barely lift their eyes off the water and look at their surroundings when being shown a rock or a wombat hole. (Julian, 2003)

However, not all my student leaders, found the experience of teaching using hard boats completely negative, nor was the experience of using rafts completely positive.

With all participants in guided rafts it was easy to communicate, as the group was easy to get together. However, I also noted that guided rafts allowed the participants to 'escape' the setting by having discussions about places elsewhere, they often ended up not paddling and all facing each other in the centre of the raft. I noted participants paddling on some flat sections and talking about cricket or things back at school. The rafts and ease of paddling seemed to create a setting where participants could feel at ease (safe) and free to hold discussions of things elsewhere. I felt that the rafts led to less being learnt and felt about the environment. (Bert, 2001)

Another student actually described how the focus on skills positively influenced the connection they developed with cliff environments. He explained, "The reason I think developing a love for lead climbing was so different from other loves for me is due to how slow I develop skills . . . the longer it takes to develop a skill the deeper the connection you gain" (Bill, 2004).

A potential disadvantage of guided rafting experiences is that participants are not required to pay much attention to the environment, because most of the decision-making is done for them, and they are less likely to make connections with the place. This finding is congruent with Raffan's (1993) idea of dependence. Raffan explained that not all experiences in a particular environment lead to a growing sense of attachment, particularly if participants are not compelled to attend to the specifics of the environment being visited. When my students were more directly compelled to attend (e.g., self guided rafts, hard boating, lead climbing) they made some interesting observations. For example,

When you are doing trad climbing, because you have to place gear you get closer to the rock, in order to place good protection, or to get a good foothold, that way you get a close relationship with the rock, - once in a while you see a familiar hold and you think, "Oh you again." It is different to gym climbing, a big difference. (George, 2004)

Martin (2002) addressed the issue of dependence and argued that adventure activities could potentially "serve a parallel purpose by fostering connection through an activity that demands, for the sake of

personal wellbeing, close attention to the characteristics of nature" (p. 96). Martin also suggested that decreasing our reliance on technology and equipment could create a stronger sense of dependence. This strategy could well conflict with an outdoor leader's requirement to optimise participant safety, but it's an interesting question worthy of more discussion and thought. Certainly, there is considerable anecdotal support for the power of "low tech" trips to help participants to generate stronger connections to places (for an example see Payne, 2002).

Suffice to say, the need for technical equipment, technology and the corresponding requirement for skill development to use it, creates issues for some adventure activities that simpler activities like bushwalking do not have to contend with. Practitioners would do well to carefully consider the impacts that equipment, technology and skill development have on their participants' experience of place. The resolution of some of these issues may be linked to the discussion in the next theme.

Deliberate facilitation and careful planning.

A consistent comment in my student leaders' teaching evaluations is that they believe they didn't prepare enough for the environmental content of their teaching experiences. If a particular program is intended to help participants to learn about the cultural, historical, or environmental aspects of places being visited, then these foci should be reflected in the planning, organisation, and facilitation of the experience. Some students found this out the hard way, as reflected in the following excerpts from some of the students' teaching evaluations.

It is true that they may learn a lot about themselves and develop as an individual or a group but overall the educational benefits may be limited. To include purposeful educational benefits like any other outdoor education program it needs to be programmed, otherwise it will too easily become all about the excitement and adrenaline of white water paddling. (Susan, 2002)

The obvious solution to the problem is to plan particular activities into the program so there are times throughout the trip when you are focused on the environmental aspects of the river. (Jamie, 2001)

We also ensured that skill development did not dominate over the experience of the place by breaking up each session with environmental activities. (Harry, 2002)

Lynch and Moore (2004) explain that adventure can present an unavoidable paradox. It can simultaneously function to entrench existing social order or it can provide opportunities for new interpretations of personal and social reality. Many of my student leaders were successful in deconstructing typical perceptions of moving water paddling that participants brought with them. The examples provided below illustrate how they successfully reconceptualised moving water paddling as environmentally responsive journeys.

We used the river journey on day two as a tool for explaining geological river features, river health issues, impacts from human and recreational activities, and drew upon discussions concerning language use on rivers and names of rapids. (Nigel, 2003)

In programming an ecological curriculum framework we decided to use a river journey as the program theme, since a journey unfolds like a story, which we perceived would be conducive to teaching skills and environmental interpretation in a cohesive and holistic manner. (Simon, 2003)

Reflections on my own teaching experience, and the feedback from my students, suggest that program design and facilitation can greatly impact my potential to realise environmental objectives. Some of the important issues that emerged included the need for: careful consideration of small group composition; appropriate sequencing and progression; the inclusion of enough reflective opportunities; and the incorporation of all program objectives to create a cohesive, holistic approach. Sometimes good program design and sequencing can produce results, which surprise everyone.

As well as my newfound enthusiasm for climbing, I have developed a sense of connectedness with the places that have hosted my climbing experiences . . . an ethic of care for these environments seems to have crept its way into my conscience, without me realising it. (Jordan, 2004)

Appropriate programming for the allocated time frame.

The final theme to emerge from the data suggests that if an outdoor education program seeks to achieve environmental outcomes, but the program is only short, or not part of an extended or ongoing program, some forms of adventure activities may not be suitable for the realisation of these environmental outcomes. In these cases, it may be inappropriate to use activities that require participants to develop a high level of independent skill (e.g., paddling a kayak in moving

water). On shorter trips, my research has indicated that it may be better to use alternate modes of travel or exploration (eg guided rafting or guided climbing) to prevent skills development from dominating the focus of the program.

Using kayaks was the greatest problem in trying to equip students with the necessary skills needed to experience moving water and satisfy one of our other aims of enhancing environmental knowledge whilst on and off the river . . . in the time frame we were given for this trip I think it is unrealistic to achieve both of these aims using kayaks as a type of craft. (John, 2003)

I think skill acquisition in hard boats can lead to an intimate knowledge and feeling of belonging to the river environment but this takes time and resources. (Marg, 2003)

In programs of longer duration, or extended sequences, the requirement for participants to develop skills may have less impact on the participants' ability to develop connections with places in the long term.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the tension that exists between the use of adventure activities in outdoor environmental education and to address the dichotomisation produced by some authors. The activities of whitewater paddling and rockclimbing have been the focus of this paper because they are the activities currently used in subjects I teach. These activities are provided as case studies and it is not the intent of this paper to argue that moving water paddling or rockclimbing have universal value in outdoor environmental education. I am also not suggesting other activities are less important or lacking in adventure. The reader will need to decide how the issues explored in this paper relate to other activities, if at all.

For some academics, the strategies and approaches described in this paper will not be radical enough to justify the acclaimed title of critical outdoor education. Others, from a curriculum theory perspective (see Brookes, 2002, 2004), may perhaps challenge the need to use adventure activities in an outdoor environmental education program at all. However, I suspect that many outdoor leaders are unlikely to heed calls for a shift away from adventure activities in outdoor education. Other outdoor leaders, contracted only for program delivery and not involved at the curriculum design process, may not even have the option of removing adventure activities from the programs they work in. Some empirical research into the consequences

(intended and unintended) of removing adventure activities from outdoor environmental education programs would also be helpful before we assume low adventure approaches will more effectively facilitate environmental learning.

This paper has taken a different tack, and has sought to engage outdoor leaders in reflection and discussion on the tension between adventure activities and outdoor environmental education. The ongoing research described in this paper has found that adventure activities can be used to explore particular regions, communities, and their histories. Without a doubt, teaching in this way is challenging, and it requires a shift in the way adventure activities are conceived and facilitated. It also requires a change in the types of knowledge, experience and skills outdoor leaders may be required to develop.

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