Propagating Undergraduate Student Growth through Exposure to Nature, the Outdoors, and Gardening

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Hardship. That's life at extreme altitude. Vision. Views from high places. Stark understanding. Rising above. Seeing nothing higher. Seeing in new ways. This is what makes the hardship both bearable and worth it. Seeing and then coming down having seen. Pushing through. Giving up comfort. Working with my mind. Finding small pockets of fun and absurdity and laughter and connection. Seeing the morning light dance circles. Watching the evening sun drain from the hills. Sinking into a rich rhythm of physical exertion and mental stamina. Learning the lessons that come from days and days of outdoor living, the whispers of the stars, and the drone of the wind.

(Loeffler, 2011, p. 29).



TA Loeffler Ph.D.

- 22 years of teaching and researching at MUN
- Instructing at NOLS
- Guiding & Leading at Woodswomen & Ascent
- Personal Expeditions
- Student of Food Production
- Free Range Childhood

We teach best what we most need to learn -Richard Bach The master in the art of living makes little distinction between her work and her play, her labor and her leisure, her mind and her body, her information and her recreation, her love and her religion.

She hardly knows which is which.

She simply pursues her vision of excellence at whatever she does, leaving others to decide whether she is working or playing.

To her she's always doing both. —James Mitchner





Self Previous Outdoor Experience

Outdoor, Nature, & Gardening Education Culture Education

Other

Place Sense of Place/Place-Based Education

C. F. A.'s

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians

N.B.C.'s

Tourists

Students

Bay Folks

Townies

The Rock Sense of Place Sense of The Place Sense of Ourselves in the Place



When sun rays crown thy pine clad hills,

And summer spreads her hand, When silvern voices tune thy rills, We love thee, smiling land.

We love thee, we love thee, We love thee, smiling land.

When spreads thy cloak of shimmering white,

At winter's stern command, Thro' shortened day, and starlit night, We love thee, frozen land.

We love thee, we love thee We love thee, frozen land.

When blinding storm gusts fret thy shore,

And wild waves lash thy strand, Thro' spindrift swirl, and tempest roar, We love thee windswept land.

We love thee, we love thee We love thee windswept land. Dear land of mountains, woods and snow, Labrador, our Labrador. God's noble gift to us below, Labrador, our Labrador. Thy proud resources waiting still, Their splendid task will soon fulfill, Obedient to thy Maker's will, Labrador, our Labrador

Thy stately forests soon shall ring, Labrador, our Labrador. Responsive to the woodsman's swing, Labrador, our Labrador. And mighty floods that long remained, Their raging fury unrestrained, Shall serve the purpose God ordained, Labrador, our Labrador.

We love to climb thy mountains steep, Labrador, our Labrador. And paddle on thy waters deep, Labrador, our Labrador. Our snowshoes scar thy trackless plains, We seek no city streets nor lanes, We are thy sons while life remains, Labrador, our Labrador.

Ode to Labrador

Townies vs Bay Folks

"What struck me as a 'townie,' as we drove to and from the camp ... was the appreciation the Bay Men have for their beautiful countryside."

Bay folks have traditionally had/been stereotypically thought to have...

- Greater number of outdoor experiences
- Better technical and manual labour skills
- Better environmental awareness skills
- Higher degree of connection with and desire for the outdoor environment
- Higher degree of self-reliance

I neoretical Foundations

- Mindfulness in outdoor education settings (Frauman, 2010)
- Education of attention (Mullens, 2011)
- Photo elicitation/meaning in place (Loeffler, 2004)
- Restorative properties of nature (Kaplan, 1985)
- Preparation of students in/for a rapidly evolving world (Hawkins & Weiss, 2004)
- Adventure education (Ewert, 2000; Quinn, 1990)

Recreation Boot

HKR 3555 (Place)

Contraction of the

and the second of the second o

HKR 2545 (Self)

Introduction to Outdoor Recreation and Education

HKR 3515 (Other)

Inclusive & Therapeutic Recreation in the Outdoors

ADDRESS OF THE SEARCH STRATE

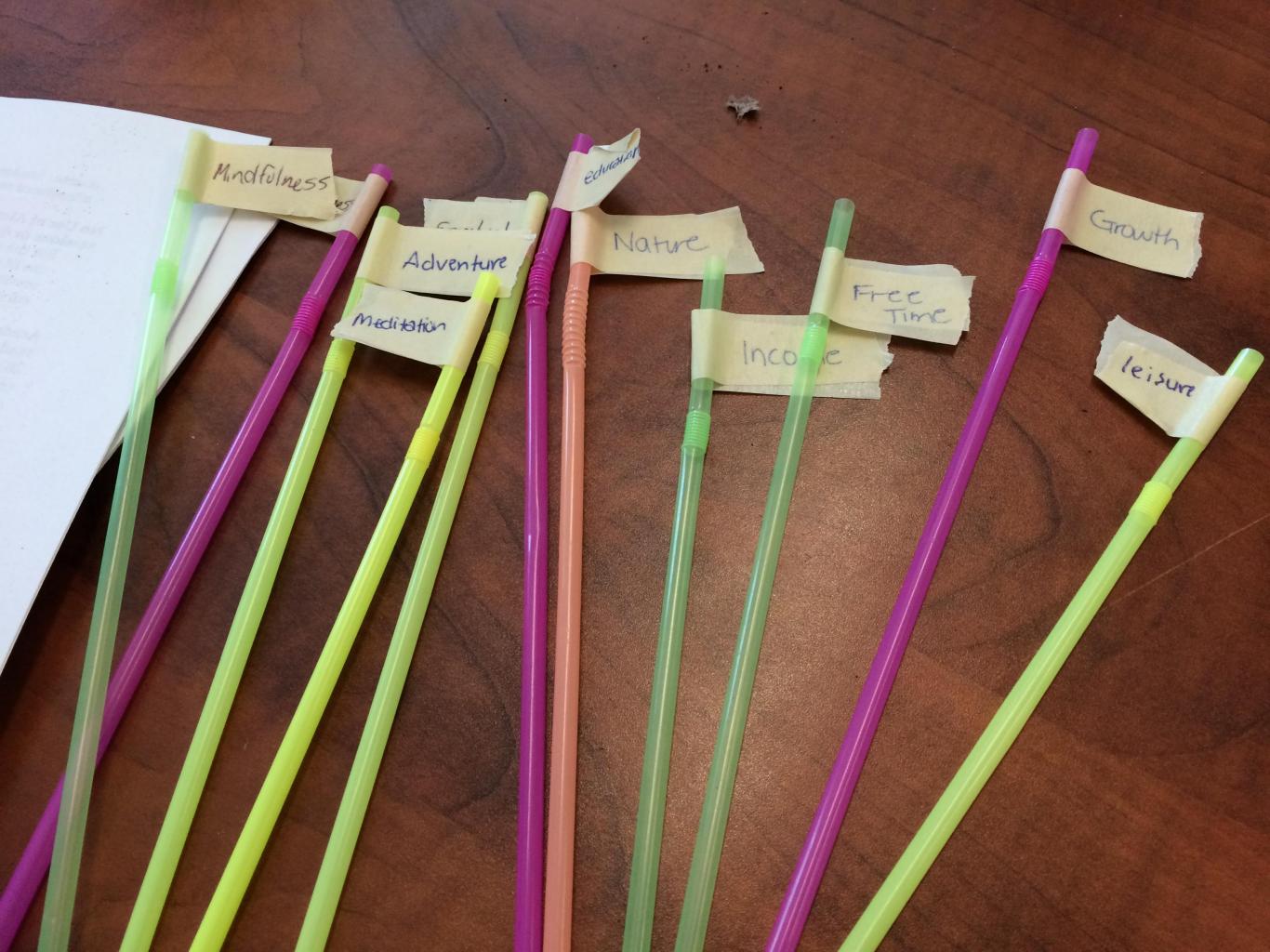
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Metaphoric connections to curricula

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Students Eating "My Homework"

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What are the Meanings of Outdoor Adventure?

 Ewert (1989) Three components: interaction with the natural world, perception of risk, and uncertain outcome

 Quinn (1990) "Adventure lies deep within oneself, within the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual spheres of personhood."

Building Trust through Adventure



Anytime we stopped at a scenic view, or even resting for lunch break, I had to look around and marvel at scenic tranquility. I'm not used to being exposed to such beautiful scenery and I appreciated every second of exposure I had. I also felt being in the city for most of my life, my artistic integrity was off kilter. This is mainly because my sense of visual stimulation has been shades of grey, cityscapes, void of organic life.

I will be the first to admit it took the requirement of me taking this course and participating in the activities to get a true first hand look at the natural beauty of Newfoundland.

I grew to appreciate the landscape and scenery not only from a recreational opportunity perspective, but also the necessity to manage these landscapes so future generations can also appreciate the sheer beauty of them.

My interpretation of this is that we were all in an unfamiliar setting in which we had a foundation for new group experiences which isn't seen nowadays, especially where social networks are reduced to internet text

conversations.



This was possibly the most remarkable experience I ever had for several reasons. I didn't expect it to be such a bonding experience, mainly because we are so used to being in a classroom, where normal interaction is not encouraged. I felt I could see another side of the people around me that I was not familiar with. It is hard to describe, but I felt a sense of belonging.

MUN-HKR

I only wish I was exposed to an experience such as this earlier in my life. The pressures of modern society make it very easy to lose sight on the fundamentals. I realized with every piece of technology, and every futuristic development, we are simply shrouding ourselves in a cocoon of our own creations. The emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual health we strive for is ignored in a cityscape.

The challenge is giving the opportunity to others to experience this for themselves, so that they can see the value of working together, practical life skills, and the value of an organic landscape. I only hope more people are given the opportunity to be exposed to an unstructured landscape where the internal rewards are revelations and personal growth.



I truly believe that everyone should regularly laugh and enjoy nature as much we did in this course, and that to really be in the moment is to be at a campfire with others.

Questions?

Expeditions well lived: Ascertaining the meaning and significance of outdoor expeditions throughout the lifespan using photo-elicitation

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Theories of the "Kodak Moment"

- Cronin (1998) Photographs are an emanation of past reality-a "mooring for the evocation of past memories."
- Collier and Collier (1986) Photographs are charged with psychological and emotional meaning.
 Harper (2992) Photo-elicitation interviews redefine the execution of percent.
 - the essential relationships of research
 - Photo-elicitation interviews are particularly useful for studies of experience (Carlsson, 2001)

Photography on Expeditions

- I used to call my camera "<u>The Memory Machine</u>" because as soon as you see a picture, it's all kinds of things come back. <u>It's not just a picture</u>. It's what got you to the picture <u>sometimes</u>. (Peter)
- Pictures are really important but you'll also hear me, when I see people at certain things, I have an expression that I'll also use and I call it "Be here now." <u>So rather than stand</u> there and take 4,000 pictures of the sunset, take one, put the camera down and enjoy the sunset, right. Be here now, right now. (Marty)

Photography on Expeditions

So that I can remember things. One of the best times, and this was you, your involvement again, one of my first real big adventures was in 2004 in the Grand Canyon, up to the Grand Canyon. I kept a journal. It was to be my last will and testament that time. But what was fabulous was, a few years later, my daughter went with you in a group and did the same trail, kept a journal, and we read them to each other. And boy, are we related. It was just some of the very same words in the very same places. (Linda)

Looking from/to a Perspective of Strength

- Looking to key informants a.k.a. successful negotiators of constraints for answers
- Gaining perspectives of those who still participate in longer outdoor expeditions/experiences
- Aiming to use these perspectives to inform practice now to assist the next generations in development skills and desire to be out

The Study

- Exploratory qualitative study
- Investigated the inner significance of outdoor expeditions over the lifespan
- Used photo-elicitation interviews with subjects' own photographs
- Subjects were all over the age of 50 (ranging from 54 to 71)
- Builds on from the methods and findings used in Loeffler (2004 a,b)

The Questions

- How did participants' lives unfold to support the will, desire, and ability to do extended outdoor expeditions to persist?
- What did participants gain from participating in such expeditions and have these benefits changed over their lifespan?

• How can the life paths of these participants inform outdoor education practice?

The Participants

- Criterion-based sampling (50 years and older, having completed a 7 day outdoor trip within the last year)
- 10 interviews: 4 women, 7 men, (one interview had two participants i.e. married couple)

Data Collection and Analysis

- During interviews used photographs as basis for discussion, rapport was quickly established
- Interviews were audio recorded
- Images were captured by photography or download then imported into Adobe Lightroom for analysis
- Interviews were transcribed and uploaded into N-Vivo for coding and analysis

Emergent Themes of the Study

- Gaining skills
- Getting away
- Spiritual connections
- Developing friendships
- Gaining perspective
- Self-discovery & life lessons

Gaining Skills

When Did You Start?

I did them [expeditions] when I was a wee, tiny kid. Because we spend all summer, the day school went out, we'd all pack ourselves in the car. . .We took blankets, pots and pans, and we'd go to the summer, they call them cabins here. Pretty, humble house but it did have running water, odd, iron-flavored, yellow, but we did have water. I was in between ages so I really had only myself to play with. I didn't take me very long before our part of the forest wasn't near big enough. So I used to sneak my Dad's hatchet, probably I was about 8, and my expeditions would be to cross the dirt road and go into the forest on the other side to the edge of the swamp. The swamp was filled with spooky things. Eventually, the big expedition across the swamp and down to the house. Anyway, that was my first expedition and I was probably <u>8 or 9.</u> (Linda)

Free Range Childhoods

- Ever since I was 10, when I was growing up in Rocky Harbour, the most exciting thing we could do for play would be to go on things we called "rambles." <u>We're going</u> for a ramble, that's what we used to call it. In those days too, parents didn't worry where you were. (Kyle)
- <u>I think what's really important, we grew up on a lake</u> in New Hampshire. My sister and I didn't grow up together but we are so much alike because of that lake. So that was a huge influence in our life. (Stacey)
- I find that I tend to be a little fearful, a little anxious, and <u>I</u> think if I had started earlier, I would've gotten rid of that. (Linda)

Early Facilitators

So we spent all our time out behind our house in what we called the woods and spent time there and over out catching tadpoles and out where the hospital is now. And during summers, I mean sometimes, we'd spend our time on top of the hill or riding our bikes out to Sunshine Camp going fishing, going chasing eels in ponds and stuff like that, you know. It's just people end up growing up but we were outdoors. You were always out. (Peter)

It's Farther Removed from Them

I mean I take, every year, I do a Duke of E. trip, a 5-day trip, you know, with teenagers and stuff like that. But of course, <u>most of them will never do it again</u>. You know, they're doing it for, you know, to get their gold medal type of thing. I mean, and what I'm finding these days more and more is that <u>it's</u> become more foreign to them, right. I mean <u>this nature deficit</u> disorder that people talk about it's very real, very, very real. And so, yeah, it's farther and farther removed from them. (Kyle)

Keep Doing It

Looking around, today's youth is that they are not prepared for it, and even later in life, they're not sort of mentally and physically able to handle these things because they've never in their entire, whole stuff of this, you know. They never sweat it enough, you know. So suddenly, when you're 50, you decide to go and climb Cotopaxi, it's probably going to kill you, you know, sort of thing because you're a hundred pounds overweight and you've got no muscles and you've got no lungs and you've got no, your heart's not in good shape. <u>So a lot of</u> people who do it are people who keep doing it, right.(Kyle)

Without Early Contact? Richard Louv's Last Child in the Woods

and Nature Deficit Disorder

A recent British three-year study found that only 21% of children aged 8-12 were connected to nature

What are the roles for structured and unstructured outdoor experience?

Skill Development

- In the beginning, the people that mentored me were really important, right. I think that is extremely important now, you know, that people do that (Kyle)
- We were doing things at an adventurous rate from way back. We put in there in a canoe, with our parents taking us out and dropping us off, putting us in a canoe and paddling across that lake and there's a cove over there called Sleepy Cove, which has islands on it, and we camped out there for 2 or 3 nights. <u>I think parents would be</u> going to jail today, if they let their kids do that. (Marty)

Early Misadventures

Looking at my early trips...3 nights in the winter and dying. Everything failed, gear failures. Everybody went back with rubber boots that were burnt, because they were soaking wet and your feet are frozen and you had your feet so close to a fire that you're burning your feet. And then you go, well there's got to be a better way. So that's what led me to more expeditions. (Marty)

Reading Outdoor Literature

I've always been an avid reader. I went to university when I was 16 and I went down to the Gosling Library. I went looking for some books. I always enjoyed outdoor books, wildlife books and stuff. And I found a book there and it was an original copy. It was written in 1904, it was called Newfoundland and its Untrodded Ways (Kyle)

Uncovering Forgotten History

Linda and I read the same books. <u>We always read</u> <u>adventure books</u>. Other people read science fiction or mystery. <u>No. We're always reading</u> <u>about Victorian women going off and this kind</u> <u>of stuff</u>. (Stacey)

Reading As/Leads to Adventure(s)

So much of my travel is very much guided by what I've read and been reading and read as a little kid and always thought and this goes right back to it, but I want to see it with my own eyes. And that's really, that's why I'm going in a few weeks to stand with my own two feet on the Sahara Desert. I want to. I want to see it. And what's really neat is one of my all-time favorite movies, and what an adventure and expedition it was, Lawrence of Arabia, I was shocked that it was filmed in some of the same areas I'm going to go to and see with my own eyes. So, I think for me, reading has really, really guided what the adventures I take. (Linda)

Reading How to Do to Why to Do

I'm reading now more of the philosophy of why you do these things, like why, like you know. And at that time, that was less as important as how do you do this. How do you go out there and, you know, how do you do it? (Marty)

Getting Away

Leaving the Road Behind

- We had to go past the first portage. Once you pick up your boat and just move it a few hundred feet, you've left the masses behind. That what it was all about...getting clear of the thing. (Marty)
- I never spoke to another human being for 17 days. We never wore a watch. We never brought a radio...we were gone for quite a while into the abyss. (Marty)

Tolerance to Adversity You just get used to being outdoors and get used to the weather conditions; hot, cold, wet, flies, whatever, you know. See a moose and stuff like that and not worry about them. You know, you just, a lot of it is challenging. (Marty)

Away From All That

Let's get out of the city. Let's get away from all that. And when you all come home, everybody knows what turning on a tap feels like and what a shower and stuff like that. So, and we think we need to be reminded sometimes. You get further back in comfort, basically, and you're just more alone, You're out there in the open air, you know, you're sitting there in a tent, you take care of your own stuff, you're cooking, you're doing whatever and you're just on your own. And that's a lot of the lure, actually, is doing that and just being in the back, being away from computers and televisions and everything else of that, just away from it. (Marty)

The Excitement of Isolation

It was far more interesting than any of the kids around and it was the sounds and the smells. And I used to stay, and especially on the edge of the swamp, I felt I could almost hear the heat of the sun, which I guess was really the whirring of the insects and things like that. There would be little rustlings that you didn't know about. . . it was related to the all in all the sounds and the smells of heat and the colors of green and the fact that the ferns were so tall. If I would just lie down, no one would see me. I mean it was kind of the excitement of isolation and just this little, and maybe this is part of what makes an expedition, it's just this little tiny edge of fear. I'm not into a lot of fear, but <u>a tiny edge of fear just livens up the</u> senses and you see better, hear better, that sort of thing. (Linda)

Expeditions vs Day Trips It's absolutely different and every time you do a longer one, you actually come back and say I've got to do a longer one again. Things never get tweaked until day 4 or 5. You never know where everything is. <u>Your life sort of</u> starts to settle down and then you've got more time to enjoy rather than fiddling around. I really like it when it gets into that sort of a steady state. Everything gets a rhythm. (Marty)

Shedding into the Flow

I read a piece in Canoe And Kayak magazine where the average length in canoe trips now is dwindled from 11 days to 3. People that don't get the time, it seems, anymore, right. But what I found over the years is that it really takes me a week before I really get into the flow. Before I shed everything, and I'm now, I'm into it. And again, I don't, I've recognized it on my trips and I can't describe very much, but it's just kind of a sense of, and maybe it's just because we get organized after a while. At the beginning, you're at the normal routine. You're up late and sleeping in late. But eventually, you kind of start going with the sun, which I think is a reversion to what's natural, get the thing right, and yeah, it's just. Yeah, so yeah, to me, after about a week, I become more at one with just being out there. Right, so yeah. (Kyle)

Spiritual Connections



• <u>There's nobody out there</u>. So it's just you and the moose and the caribou and the geese and whatever else you happen to see out there. You know, so that's again, you come back to this, part of the reason, why you do things...You see the natural environment. I mean look at the color of the water and the color of the sky. (Peter)



Soul Connecting Activity

 It's a soul connecting activity. It's been part of me since I was a kid because we lived in the woods...there's something about being in the presence of tall rees that is uplifting. And I can't describe it. Something calming, we use the term cleansing. (Kyle)

It's Good for my Soul

Enormous personal satisfaction. I'm always proud and pleased with myself if I achieve a physical goal that I may not even have necessarily been aware of setting. So, and I'm always happiest, I think I can say that and mean it, I'm always happiest in the tent, in the sleeping bag. I just love it. If my 2 grown up kids were here, I know what she's going to say. It's good for my soul. It's good for my soul. I'm a better person. I grow. I'm just better. Pretty short answer. Nothing fancy. There's no adjectives. (Linda)

Advice From the Elders

From Linda...

Do it every chance you get and make your choices so you're guaranteed lots of them. That's what I would do. Just do it. I do think it's better to be prepared just because if you feel, and this was one of the best parts of the trek into Kilimanjaro, physically, I knew I was more than ready. Physically, nothing was going to stop me. And that just gives you room to experience all sorts of other things, if you don't have to worry about that. So that is one piece of advice I would give is to try and be physically ready for whatever it is you're going into. But try everything.

From Kyle...

Don't compare your expeditions to others. Don't, like whatever's good for you is good, right, whatever works out right. You don't have to follow or try to beat someone or go around and do it fast or slow or whatever you want to do or go higher, like you know.

From Marty...

Well, I say you should make it part of your life. This should be part of your life. You should plan on that and you don't need a pile of cash. You don't need to do that. You can create your own bits of unknown and find out what their, find what you like as your excuse to be outdoors, right. That means if you like walking around with a gun in your hands, go ahead. Walk around with a gun in your hands. I don't care. Like if that's what you like to do, but I think you'll learn a lot about a lot of things by getting out there.

You have to have a curiosity. And if you don't have curiosity, you have to develop it because you will never understand your life or anybody's life. And the other one is you have to travel in order to develop yourself and who you are and to understand how the world works so that you can understand when things are happening in other places. So it's about being other directed, as opposed to being receiving, just watching television and receiving. It's about being out there and, ou know, it's receiving and interacting but it's being beyond your little, your <u>narrow scope</u>. But curiosity is critical.

From Stacey...

Some Thoughts to Leave

• Early time in nature is important including unstructured exploration/play Reading is a gateway to desire and knowledge Expeditions provide a "further away" space than day excursions Expeditions provide "soul activity" through immersion and deep experience of being away

In the Future

- Using the subjects' photographs aided in building rapport, provided a secondary data source, and provided an image-based reflexive opportunity.
- Prosser (1998) Image based research has been undervalued and under-applied.
- Ewert (2000) suggests that researchers explore new ways of capturing experiences other than traditional pen and paper tests
- Photo-elicitation is a powerful methodology that can be used to address many research questions

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Questions?