

The Paradox of Structured Autonomy: A Critical Ethnography of Challenge-by-Choice and Safe Spaces in Adventure-based Experiential Education

Franklin Vernon
University of Wisconsin-Madison, US

Abstract *Whereas conceptual deconstructions and critiques of safe space pedagogies as subtly oppressive are readily available, little empirical research has systematically explored the manners in which students and educators come up against such curricula. This study focuses on a popular American setting for alternative and progressive learning: an adventure and environmental education center that uses safe space pedagogies in manners historically claimed to maximize student experiences. The author posits that unintended breakdowns in democratic learning appear borne of hierarchically privileging structural norms of individualism in safe space pedagogies. The argument highlights ways in which students and educators are actively—if tacitly—renegotiating alternative educational environments beyond the claims of safe space pedagogy.*

Keywords experiential learning, safe space pedagogy, critical pragmatism, critical ethnography

Introduction

...an individual, whatever else it is or is not, is not just the spatially isolated thing our imagination inclines to take it to be...the human being whom we fasten upon as individual par excellence is moved and regulated by his[her] associations with others; what he[she] does and what the consequences of his[her] behavior are, what his[her] experience consists of, cannot even be described, much less accounted for, in isolation. (Dewey, 1927, pp. 187-188, emphasis in original)

8:30am, April 12, 2012

Valerie¹, just before having the climbing rope clipped onto her harness, was asked by experiential educator Jennifer to articulate for the group where her end-goal on the alpine tower—an elaborate, multi-sided and multi-element 60ft climbing apparatus in an open field on the education center’s property—was. Looking up, Valerie stated that she planned to make it all of the way to the top; then, after checking with Jennifer to make sure that the appropriate safety mechanisms were in place, Valerie began to climb. She negotiated her way up and around various stages of the tower, such as log ramps with bolted on holds and hanging ropes, until she reached a wooden platform about eight feet below the summit. Scared, tired, and cold—it was a frosty morning in April—she stood there, hugging a wooden pole. “I think I’m done!” she called down. Her body appeared rigid, unmoving, and she began to vocalize doubt in her ability to continue. Indeed, she rather clearly articulated the desire to stop, stating in a loud voice that she “[wanted] to come down.”

Immediately, Jennifer, Valerie’s middle-school teacher Mrs. Jameson, and many of Valerie’s peers began to call up to her from some fifty feet below. Some shouted words of encouragement, such as Mrs. Jameson calling to her that she was “almost there, look how close!” Jennifer telling her that she “could do it!” and some of her peers providing specific directions, such as to “reach over to your left and put your hand on that hold, then climb up that pole!” The back-and-forth between Valerie and her teachers and peers continued for three or four minutes, until she consented and began to climb again, reaching the top of the tower to much cheering and applause from her audience. In one sense, as an observer to this exchange, I was thrilled, especially upon seeing the wide grin on Valerie’s face as she posed for a picture despite knowing that her camera—left with a friend on the ground—would barely (if at all) capture her image at that distance. Yet in another way, I was left perplexed, as this exchange appeared to run counter to an explicitly stated programmatic value in maintaining individual choice and autonomy in such circumstances, mentioned often during educator trainings and curriculum as a practice of ‘Challenge-by-Choice’ (CbC) (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Schoel & Maizell, 2002).

Safe Space Pedagogy and Challenge by Choice

The construction and maintenance of “safe” learning environments has been a main feature of progressive and critical pedagogy movements since the late 1970s (Ellsworth, 1989). Safe space pedagogy initially arose as programmatic and prescriptive structuring of social learning spaces in which it would be possible to explore historically unsafe topics, such as race relations (Ellsworth, 1989; Leonardo

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout for anonymity

& Porter, 2010; Stengel, 2010). This was done by establishing norms for interaction thought to enable autonomous maintenance of individual comfort zones, while simultaneously valuing contributions to the group process. While the emergent ideal (Dennis, publishing as Korth, 2007) of safe space pedagogy appears noble, it has unfortunately not always been thought to play out successfully in actual learning environments. Leonardo and Porter (2010, p. 148) contend “the problem with safe space is that it willingly tries to side step the issues, as well as the educative aspects of anger and frustration, necessary for a beneficial and truly liberatory [learning].”

Where “safe spaces” appear to be actualized have been in exclusionary or policed settings, such as clubs or online communities in which specific contributive criteria are moderated in order to welcome some perspectives while purposefully excluding others (e.g., Hackford-Peer, 2010); for example, among a forum for survivors of sexual abuse or, conversely, within a White supremacist group.

Democratic learning, or the destruction and re-construction of experience toward “forever the creation of a freer and more humane existence in which all share and to which all contribute” (Dewey, 1976, p. 230), however, is necessarily violent, unsafe; yet, paradoxically, emancipatory. This issue has been a focus of much work from within both critical theory (Leonardo, 2002; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Stengel, 2010; Tinning, 2002; Weems, 2010) and poststructural scholarship (Britzman & Gilbert, 2004; Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro, 2000). The majority of literature on the conflicts between safe space pedagogy and democratic learning—both in traditional and experiential education (e.g., Carlson & Evans, 2001)—have relied on either personal or theoretical accounts. An empirical exploration of the interactions and meaning-making of students and educators caught within the structure of a safe-space inspired curriculum appears a valuable contribution to this ongoing discussion.

The current theoretical discourses have raised meaningful issues that serve as entry points, however. Assumptions of decontextualized and asocial individual-situation interactions, such as the assumption that any space can be made individually and ubiquitously “safe” by regulating behaviors, often conceals the consequence-laden nature of acting and learning in social environments. That is, safe space practices, by obscuring historicity and social context, may render learning spaces safe primarily for those already in positions of power and privilege, as they are the primary beneficiaries of assuming individual acts may be carried out in a social vacuum (Leonardo, 2002; Stengel, 2010).

To further this discussion, I will focus on empirical data concerning adventure-based experiential education’s (A-EE) use of CbC; the reasons for this are two-fold. First, CbC has been identified as a common fixture in both experiential (Schoel & Maizell, 2002) and traditional (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) educational settings informed by safe space pedagogy, and thus may serve as a boundary object (Wenger, 1999) among the educational communities; and second, CbC has

historical roots as well as wide-ranging institutional encouragement within A-EE (Paniccuci, 2007), and thus the mundane commonality was attractive to me as a critical ethnographer (Engeström, 2001).

Challenge by Choice in Adventure-based Experiential Education

It is possible to trace safe space pedagogy's entrance into the A-EE field's practices (although perhaps not its discourse) to the early 1980s (Rhonke, 2010). It was brought in, at least in part, by the interplay between experiential educators and progressive school groups as the A-EE field sought to develop ongoing programmatic relationships with the public school system of the late 20th century (see also Freeman, 2010). Whereas extended, wilderness-based educational programming, such as within Outward Bound-type courses, enabled individuals like Rhonke (2000, p. 167) to tell "the students what to do, impelling them into experience, and they mostly complied, convinced their survival depended on [his] expertise and their rapid, unquestioning response," the development of short-term, local A-EE rendered this problematic. During the late 1970s's transition to more accessible adventure education sites, similar behaviors on the part of Rhonke "led to an experiential dead end." Thus, the brazenly acknowledged, power-laden interaction of educators and students acting out in some A-EE settings (see also Brown, 2002, Vernon, 2011; 2013) came up against the new "public school persona" (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988, p. 131) of autonomy and choice. Educators began appropriating and constructing safe space pedagogical practices to reconcile this "instructor/student impasse" (Rhonke, 2000, p. 167). What I mean by this is, due to prolonged contact with the post-1960s's progressive classroom and general participation in a shifting Western culture toward pedagogy of self (Armstrong, 1990; Freeman, 2010), the A-EE field tacitly appropriated safe space pedagogy into its own curriculum. Interestingly enough, A-EE literature has remained oddly silent on its role in the use and development of safe space pedagogy.

Thus, during this time the A-EE field took up and/or constructed safe space curricula to ameliorate the psychological, physical, and social discomfort with group work in settings where physical risk is foregrounded. As an example, an influential A-EE organization on the east coast of the United States, Project Adventure, developed a curricular tactic they titled "the full-value contract" (Prouty, 2007; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988). This behavioral/interactional contract consists of three group commitments illustrating ideal situations, by employing various metaphors: a familial commitment to shared pursuits, a self-policing commitment to "safety and group behavior guidelines" (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988, p. 95), and a confrontational-responsive commitment to addressing and changing behaviors. As more A-EE programs have gained voice in the field's discourse, behavioral contracts have become more open-ended and interpretive

(Panicucci, 2007), but are still felt to be an imperative curricular piece to ensure a positive learning environment.

The program I joined for this study employed a “five-finger contract,” wherein each finger on a hand corresponded to a specific behavioral agreement; the thumb represented positivity, the index finger represented refraining from blame or other types of “finger-pointing,” the middle finger represented refraining from derogatory actions toward self and others, the ring finger represented a commitment to the group and its goals, and the little finger represented safety in the form of CbC. Each school group was introduced to this behavioral contract early, and it was often referred back to as a mediating artifact (Engeström, 2001) in conversations among both educators and students to aid in decision-making and interaction.

Of the safe space curricular pieces used in A-EE curriculum, CbC in particular is considered a contributive hallmark (Lissen, 2000; Panicucci, 2007; Prouty, 2007; Rhonke, 2000; Wallia, 2008). The term arose in the early 1980s by happenstance—that is, Rhonke, who coined the phrase, was developing acronyms for curricula as a mental exercise, and liked the sound of “C-B-C” enough to set about identifying word configurations that appeared relevant (Rhonke, 2010). The acronym was employed sporadically and with various utilitarian iterations over several years to remedy moments of “instructor/student impasse” (Rhonke, 2000, p. 167). After almost a decade, the term was co-opted from a place of individual use to programmatic consciousness; was copyrighted, and has since been touted as a necessary curricular piece for all experiential educators (Panicucci, 2007; Rhonke, 2010). CbC, then, in part became an example of consciousness-raising curriculum from this time period (Britzman & Gilbert, 2004). But its roots were also irrational, in that it was haphazardly developed and employed as an aid to educators when negotiating learning spaces with members of the progressive school system, who were becoming familiar with and expecting individualism and safe space pedagogy when grappling with risk-laden learning activities.

CbC, once systematized, was initially described in the “how-to” literature of A-EE as shaping an environment in which students, when presented with an activity that conditioned discomfort or fear, felt supported to choose behaviors concerning action or inaction, including “backing off” from a learning activity with an assurance of “respect for individual ideas and choices” (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988, p. 131). The pedagogical tactic appeared to stem from the idea that learning contexts ideally arise from an individual-physical environment interaction, and are marked by a dualistic and ahistorical view of intention: “CbC address those vulnerable areas where a person honestly feels that he is not able to do something, even if he previously said that he was willing to do it” (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988, p. 132). When engaged in risky activities, such as ascending a climbing tower, students are assumed to be actors able to either desire or not desire, be able or not, and be able to assess and vocalize a singular intention concerning these

states. Thus, in an ideal situation, CbC enables students to make autonomous decisions concerning their actions in a physically and psychologically risk-laden educational environment without social interaction or consequence, and this works where individual–external/physical environment interactions and linear, one-dimensional intentions constitute students’ decision-making schema.

Crystallizing Challenge-by-Choice Within A-EE

Early A-EE critiques of CbC (e.g., Itin, 1996) largely ignored its backgrounded asocial and potentially narcissistic interpretation of self and decision making. Instead, critiques articulated a fear of “professional enabling” (Itin, 1996, p. 2) borne of practices in which students are given freedom of movement prior to developing a freedom of intelligence (Dewey, 1938). That is, there was a concern that CbC would enable some students to abstain from organizationally-desired forms of participation, thus withdrawing into potentially ‘uneducative’ bystander roles. In a field with long-standing educational structures conditioning specific forms of participation and behavior management (Bowridge & Blenkinsop, 2011; Brookes, 2003; Seaman, 2007; Vernon, 2013), CbC troubled an educational prioritization of learning-in-activity, wherein students’ involvement in prescribed activities presupposes desirable learning outcomes. As a follow-up to his original critique, given an outpouring of response from peers, Itin (1997) sought to appropriate CbC—by then seemingly a juggernaut within the A-EE community—through intersecting the concept with already-held educational beliefs. The link was an early individual-cognitivist explanation of experiential learning given by Chickering (1976, p. 63) as changes in “a particular person from living through an event or events,” leading Itin (1997, p. 1) to conclude that “at the core of experiential learning is that the student defines and creates the learning. There is no necessary role for the teacher in the experiential learning process.”

Since this early critique, and subsequent alignment with pedagogy of self (Freeman, 2010), much literature has focused on how to “do it right” (e.g., Wallia, 2008), such as how to encourage participation while simultaneously maintaining autonomy (Schoel & Maizell, 2002), or whose definition is most accurate (e.g., Rhonke, 2000), but it has remained intact as a purportedly valued, if not essential (Panicucci, 2007) aspect of A-EE curriculum. However, the meta-theoretical assumptions of the traditionally relied on individual-cognitivist claims to learning have of late been foci of deconstruction in broader experiential learning literature (Brown, 2009; 2010; Fenwick, 2001; Roberts, 2008; Seaman, 2007; 2008), and some work has been done to call into question specific pedagogical tactics informed by such learning theories (Brown, 2002; Vernon, 2011; 2013). Still, little empirical research has addressed the manners in which students and educators come up against practices informed by these theories, and how learning environments

unexplainable within the historically dominant discourses are being decentered or renegotiated by changes in participation.

Research Method

Critical Pragmatism, Poststructuralism, and Experience

The conceptual framework for this paper draws on intersecting critical pragmatism (e.g., Biesta, 1994) and poststructuralism (e.g., Britzman & Gilbert, 2004) through critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996) and a critical theory of experience. Due to A-EE utilizing the rather nebulous term “experience” as an aspect of curriculum (see also Seaman & Nelson, 2011), it would appear worthwhile to flesh out how I will be discussing it within this paper in order to avoid mis-interpretation or confusion. For example, conflicts associated with the use of “experience” and meanings assigned to the word have been historically interpreted to negate harmonious discourse between critical and poststructural communities (Britzman & Gilbert, 2004). Britzman and Gilbert organize their position by contrasting critical and poststructural as diverging on the interplay between experience and meaning-making:

Poststructural theories approach experience as secondary, as an after-effect of representation, and as subjected to condensations of linguistic, social and historical conventions. Experiences do not make meanings; rather, meaning, as a sort of warning device, sets off the alarm of experience. (Britzman & Gilbert, 2004, p. 82)

That is, some poststructuralists have organized experience as an historically labeled, temporally bracketed reference to meaning-making among individuals and groups who are actively—and oftentimes tacitly—choosing how to represent meaning and self in relation to an experience. This does appear in conflict with common references to the primacy of experience in shaping meaning and learning, insofar as experience is referenced in similar, bracketed manners (e.g., Kolb, 1984). However, I do not think critical theorists and poststructuralists are at as great of odds as some scholars may believe; this is because criticalists—and especially critical pragmatists (Biesta, 1994; Kaldec, 2007; Vernon, 2013)—draw upon two distinct conceptualizations of experience (see also Strauss, 1993).

First, and certainly most common, are temporally bracketed lived moments used as a reference point to represent—or narrate—meaning and change; this is generally referred to as an experience (Dewey, 1938; Strauss, 1993). Second, and of interest here, is the larger concept of experience as the sometimes incoherent, pervasive, and always-ongoing historical, temporal, and future interactions with a complex world always in the process of becoming (Dewey, 1916; 1922; Fenwick, 2001; Kaldec, 2007). This second use of the term experience is not, I think, at odds with a

poststructuralist approach to educational discourse (although there are certainly other locations wherein conflict can be identified, most notably concerning the potential for knowledge, representation, and validity). Moreover, I am unsatisfied with the interpretive confusion resulting from the homonymic and polysemic use of experience—it should be noted that late in life, Dewey gave up using the word experience in favor of “culture” (Dewey, n.d./1981; see also Seaman & Nelsen, 2011). Likewise, within this paper I will use the term educational episode when referencing specific, meaning-generating interactive sequences.

I define and will reference experience, then, as the constellated and concerted complexity of our ongoing interaction with a world still and always in the process of becoming, and experiential education as the purposeful exploration of the expansive potential of experience for educative means-ends. A-EE thus uses the cultural-historical concept of adventure (Nerlich, 1987) to construct risk-laden and oftentimes physically demanding sites and settings to condition individual and social interaction and meaning-making, wherein experience is not made up of specific activities, but rather the historic, temporal, and potential future; this is important to keep in mind, as it indelibly shapes how my analyses and discussion developed.

Research Site and Setting

As I alluded to earlier, the conceptual tools are available to take a safe space pedagogical tactic like CbC and theoretically dismantle it, but that is not my intention here. Instead this article investigates the manners in which students and educators come up against these claims, and the consequences of the educational practices they inform, in an A-EE center operating within a major university in the Midwestern United States. I joined the center in February of 2012 in an ethnographic role as observer and peripheral participant (Carspecken, 1996). My early interactions were with a cohort of 23 educators who had just been employed for the upcoming nine-month season, and were to spend the following five weeks in training for the center’s adventure and environmental curricula. Over the following four months, I was at the center spending time with educators, observing and conducting interviews, and joining with middle school groups’ classes. My intent was initially to investigate teacher training and subsequent school programming in experiential settings as a way to better understand a system of education that unproblematically labels experience as curriculum (Seaman & Nelsen, 2011) while potentially relying on diverse and often conflicting conceptualizations of experience and their interplay with pedagogy (cf. Brown, 2009; Seaman & Nelsen, 2011). Safe space pedagogy was, at the time, a tangential interest. I was familiar with this educational field’s use of safe spaces through my theoretical work in feedback as an educational tool (Vernon, 2013), and I suspected specific practices like CbC might arise in the study. But I was surprised to find, as I interacted with the center, a

distinct story of safe space pedagogy taking shape in my analyses and as worth telling.

Critical Ethnography

The data production and analytic methods of my ethnographic study were primarily informed by critical theory (Carspecken, 1996), and involved observations, conversations, formal/semi-structured and informal interviews, photographs, and field notes taken over a four-month period with experiential educators, middle school students, parents, and middle school teachers. My analyses of the data were marked by dialogic interplay between the (potential) knowledge claims constructed during the study and the (potential) knowledge claims I brought to bear from my own meaning making. The meta-theoretical foundations upon which I make use of data analysis are informed by critical pragmatism (Biesta, 1994; Kaldec, 2007) and, more specifically, the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984), pragmatic horizon theory (Carspecken, 1996), and Dewey's (1916; 1922; 1938) theory of experience (cf., Kaldec, 2007; Seaman & Nelsen, 2011).

My intention throughout the analytic stage was to reconstruct and explicate plausible meanings of communicative acts accessible to the participants of the acts in situ (Carspecken, 1996), and further, in a recursive process (Korth, 2003), to engage in a dialog with potential claims that aid in orienting these educational episodes in experience and also expanding across lifeworlds to the systemic. In other words, in early stages of the research process participants should be able to identify—even if they disagree—with my analyses, and they were involved in this process both at the data production stage and as I constructed textual treatments of my preliminary analyses. In later stages, I worked to link the lifeworld interactions cataloged during the study with systemic and theoretical discourses regarding safe space pedagogy. Of the various analyses used in critical qualitative work, I will foreground here a subset of Carspecken's (1996) reconstructive horizon analysis, in which normative claims in interactive sequences are explicated.

The remainder of this article will be constructed as follows: first, I wish to return to where I began—Valerie and her turn on the alpine tower. This will mark my entrance back into the A-EE center and my time there. After fleshing out her and her community's interactions with the educational episode, I will turn to another research participant's interactions with safe space pedagogy, in which I will articulate unique structural contradictions (Engeström, 2001). Throughout I intend to highlight the actions in which diverse participants in the learning community overtly and tacitly call CbC and safe space pedagogy into question, and employ various alternate techniques to reconstruct an educative environment. Finally, I will return to critical pragmatism to expand the discourse concerning learning spaces, safety, and choice in education.

Encountering Safe Space Pedagogy in Experiential Education

Valerie was kneeling at the top of the platform, peering over the edge: “How do I get down?” Her voice seemed quizzical and nervous. Jennifer rather quickly and naturally stepped in to change the interactive sequence. An interaction where earlier it was Valerie’s responsibility to decipher potential actions transitioned to one in which Jennifer directed what behaviors would yield desired goals. She shifted her weight into an athletic stance, with her right foot in front of her left, and with knees bent, called up to Valerie: “All right, if you want to get down right now, just take a seat on the platform. Now put your... hang your legs over the edge.”

Though peers were calling up other suggestions, such as to “Just close your eyes and swing!” or to “Sing ‘*I’m Flying*’, —referencing Valerie’s recent involvement with a school musical—Valerie herself was silent as she shifted herself into a sitting position and, with her hands planted to either side of her legs on the platform, slid her legs off the side. “Scoot as close to it as you can, and then count to three, and on three you just shimmy right off the edge, ok?,” called up Jennifer, as she tightened up the last bit of slack in the rope connecting her and Valerie. Valerie’s response was simply to recite back “one, two, three,” and, eyes closed, push forward with her hands.

Once at the ground, and after many congratulations from Jennifer, Mrs. Jameson, and her peers—as well as requests for her to share her strategies, and directions from Mrs. Jameson that she “Now [had] to coach! Now [she had] to coach them to get up,” I maneuvered so that I was standing next to a visibly tired, yet excited Valerie, still working to catch her breath. Her left arm was linked with a classmate. “Nicely done!,” I said. “Thank you,” she exclaimed, with a large grin. I was curious as to how she interpreted the back-and-forth with her peers, teacher, and experiential educator while on the lower platform. “So you got up to...” “I got all the way up,” she corrected. “You got up right below that, and said you were gonna stop; why’d you keep going after that?” I replied. “I didn’t want to stop, my...” said Valerie. But I interjected, “You said you were gonna stop, though?” She became animated—not in a way that I interpreted as defensive, but as if re-telling a dramatic scene: “No; I know! But, there’s too... I felt like it’d... I don’t know. It kind of ruined my self-esteem, like I had a goal to do it and I wanted to finish.” I asked, “So saying that you were going to stop ruined your self-esteem?” Valerie said: “Yeah. Well, no... if I had stopped, it wouldn’t have been the same, and have to try it again—it wouldn’t have been the same.” She put her hands in her pockets, and looked up at the tower—the intended “finish” clearly marked as the top platform—as her friend Alex climbed the route she had herself just been on. I was curious: “So why did you say it, then? Was it just kind of a reaction to being up there, or something else?” Still watching Alex, she agreed: “Yeah, being up there—it all kind of happened so quickly. And so when I was up there and everyone was down here... that’s just instinct, to not go any higher.” As we both watched Alex

worked toward the same lower platform, I prodded: “Ok, all right. So people, a lot of people down here were saying, ‘No, keep going.’ Did that help you?” Valerie replied, “Yeah, that helped—having people down here, and knowing I wasn’t going to fall.”

Valerie’s response to being in an overwhelming space—the height, the cold, the physical and psychological effort, while simultaneously aware of both social and physical support, desired goals and potential alternatives to achieve them (such as stopping and returning for a later attempt)—was one in which she was split between multiple, conflicting claims about the situation. The lower platform appeared something of a liminal space, wherein her vocalization to stop climbing was not a marker of a decision made, but actually a bid for a decision-making process in which her class was invited to take part. It also appeared that her class’s interpretation and response to her bid as a call for interaction, as opposed to treating it as a manifestation of an unproblematic truth claim, benefited Valerie’s educational episode rather than detracting from it.

This was of particular note, as a foregrounded normative claim of safe space pedagogy, and in particular CbC, systemically arising in my analyses: individuals should have autonomous control over their comfort zones; they should be able to autonomously choose how to act in a risk-laden setting, to meet their individually arrived-at goals; but should not opt out of all forms of action. Furthermore, others in the setting should act as onlookers, and respect and applaud an actor’s choice of how to interact with an activity. It was, in my analyses, when these normative claims were challenged or troubled by alternatives arising in interactions that safe space pedagogy was primarily problematized. In Valerie and her community’s interactive sequence, this conflict was resolved by drawing upon pre-existing intersubjective norms as she, her classmates, and her teacher attempted to maintain continuity through various learning environments.

I walked over to Mrs. Jameson, who was standing a few feet further back and asked: “So, when Valerie got up there, to that ‘Crow’s Nest’ area?” “Mmmhmm,” she responded, with a knowing grin. I continued; “she said, ‘I want to stop!’, and everyone said ‘no, keep going!’...how do you know to say ‘keep going?’” Mrs. Jameson laughed, “I would always say keep going! It’s just – no you’re not!; we don’t give up, you gotta keep going.”

“There’s no need to stop?” I questioned, and she clarified: “No need to stop. Because, look how far you are! You’re almost there, and we’ve had kids that get that far and they don’t go on, but we just have to give those words of encouragement, because you don’t want to give up.” She went on to talk about how her students “are competitive with everything,” but not among one another—“they’re always cheering each other on.” Her classes’s in-school norms are that students should be competitive in whatever they do, and should not want to give up,

and should support one another to achieve the highest potential goal in any activity or challenge; it's "a climate [they] try to build in [their] program."

While the historical intersection between the A-EE and traditional educational communities rendered CbC porous (e.g., Leonardo & Porter, 2010), the manner in which it became a self-affirming programmatic necessity removed it from its educational-historical context within critical pedagogy. Thus, it was perhaps inevitable to identify potential conflicts when educational communities who construct meaning while drawing from alternate or more contemporary pedagogical ideals attempted to maintain a continuity of practice in an A-EE setting. Valerie's class has intersubjective norms coordinating how peers are to respond to one another with acts of care and encouragement when in challenging situations (Matusov, 2001); furthermore, the class appeared to embody Mrs. Jameson's overarching educational goal of "You don't want to give up." In this context, Valerie had good reason to anticipate how her speech act would unfold, or how, as a legitimate participant in her class, "giving up" would be consequential ("wouldn't be the same"), regardless of lip service to CbC.

Common A-EE practice among educators, however, was to introduce CbC and other behavioral/interactional guidelines early on (often within the first half-hour of groups arriving), encouraging students to coordinate interaction within an A-EE approved structure. If safe space pedagogy did not result in the sort of unintended consequences that were observed in this study and elsewhere (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989), or if communities like Valerie's class lacked the necessary resources to meaningfully engage with the A-EE setting, then its use would perhaps seem a more reasonable curricular choice. However, an assumption that groups entering this type of educational site lack the resources to appropriately interact with the activities from within their own historical traditions may make it more difficult for experiential educators attempting to make sense of their groups's interactions. Valerie's teacher implicitly rejected the basic premise of CbC in favor of what she might describe as healthy, supportive competition and expectations of resilience in a collaborative social space. The students in the class used this to coordinate interaction in what appeared to be a beneficial and educative manner. That is, students's contributions in the A-EE setting often were interdependent and socially constituted, and the absence of CbC in their activities was not seen as an oppressive burden.

Troubling CbC from Within A-EE

More troubling was the manner in which valuing autonomy as independent and asocial goal setting and action may actually have set the conditions for, rather than minimized, problematic and oppressive interactions. As an exemplar, I will reference an episode from early on in the study, during the A-EE educators's training, which was marked by engagement in a constellation of classroom sessions,

technical and risk management training, evaluations, peer and administration-led facilitations, and campus life; including shared housing, meals, and leisure. Toward the end of the third week of training, during a full day of peer-led A-EE activities, the group of educators was standing in a large parking lot adjacent to a patch of woods containing a low-ropes “challenge course.” Two educators, Jonathan and Mirabelle, were having their peers engage in a brief, “warm-up” activity before entering the challenge course. The activity was straightforward in premise: participants were asked to “mingle” in the parking lot, walking around freely and chatting with one another. Then, seemingly at random, either Jonathan or Mirabelle would call out a number, and participants were to quickly collect in groups of that number—participants unable to secure a position in a group were then “out” of the activity and stood by the two facilitators to watch until two participants remained as the winners.

About three minutes into the activity, with a little over half of the participants now standing on the sidelines as observers, Jonathan called out “Two!” At the time, Brian was walking past Elizabeth, who had her right shoulder and back to him. He quickly turned, wrapping both arms around her and pulling their bodies tightly together as a look of fright came over her face, and as she tried to push his right arm off of her chest. The interaction lasted for just a couple of seconds, and as he let go grinning, sure that he had successfully interacted with the activity (and, when relying upon the assumptions of safe space pedagogy, he had), Elizabeth quickly stepped away, shoulders pulled up and forward, with a frown on her face. During the next call-out of a number, she purposefully withheld from joining a group and walked over to the sideline with the rest of the educators, who were acting as observers. She silently stood there for the remainder of the time. At the conclusion of the activity, all educators were offered the opportunity to pick from a stack of laminated cards with an assortment of pictures on them as a way to initiate a reflective discussion on each person’s individual interaction with the activity. After a brief inspection of the available cards, Elizabeth chose one of a girl making a face of surprise and disgust:



Figure 1: A picture of Elizabeth’s Card.

To initiate the group debrief of the activity, Brian showed his card of Mount Everest, and Elizabeth asked, “Can I go after Brian?” She held up the card, stating, “This is how I felt when he attacked me.” The group began to laugh. “Ugh,” she scrunched up her face and stuck out her tongue, mimicking disgust, and the group laughed again, as if not taking what she had to say seriously or unsure of how to react. “It’s a pretty accurate picture, huh?” One of her peers turned to her, asking, “Is that right after you got hugged by him?” “Yes,” she replied, rather matter-of-factly. “Ok,” Jonathan interjected, “anybody else?” Brian was shifting back and forth on his feet, looking confused and uncomfortable, and Jonathan appeared to be requesting a quick transition to another topic. The conversation was redirected to other educators’s cards and interactions with the activity; no one else brought up a specific interaction with another, but instead spoke in vague generalizations about the activity and the group’s ability to goal set and work together.

Three months later, toward the end of the study with the center, Elizabeth and I sat down in my office for a chance to touch base on how her work as an experiential educator was going. We talked for a bit about training and the transition to school programming, the various roles she took up in the organization, and what living in close quarters in a remote location with a group of transient educational staff was like. After a bit, we began to talk about her interactions with CbC as both a participant and educator, and after some discussion on the topic I turned to her interaction with Brian. Bringing up the photo of her “reflection card” on my computer, I let her take a look. She took a long breath in, as if remembering, and said slowly, in a whisper: “Ooooooh yeah... Brian. That was with Brian, wasn’t it?” I said, “Yeah. I was wondering if you could walk me through that.” “Yeah,” she responded, becoming louder, “I totally forgot about that...he...totally just man-handled me. Yeah, that was not a challenge-by-choice moment at all.” “What happened there?” I asked; and she offered, “I think a lot of what happened there was due to my past experiences, like past relationships [that involved abuse], and him,” she sighed, “him doing that to me – I just immediately shut down.” I interrogated further: “Yeah?” “I just shut down. I became angry immediately. I just didn’t know what to do with myself, and I was just...frozen. At least, in my head that’s what it felt like. And I was really uncomfortable,” she said, laughing nervously. “I don’t remember what I did afterwards, but I can see myself staying away from the group at that point. I think I called him out on it, but I think I was just so uncomfortable with the whole situation that I didn’t say too much about it.” “Yeah,” I added, “I remember watching it happen, and...” “None of the experiential education people took note of it”, she remembered. “And when I said something about it, I remember people laughing about it, and I was like ‘Ugh, but it’s not funny, I’m uncomfortable! I’m not happy!’ I just had a bad experience, and they’re laughing.”

Elizabeth and I shared some thoughts on the assumed innocence of social interaction in these sorts of learning activities; we were struck by the notion that,

where participants are encouraged to construct their actions based on individual goals in a physical environment without social influence or consequence, there is little need for perspective-taking, and there are few resources available to educators and students to grapple with the inevitable and disturbing space wherein one individual's means-ends are in direct conflict with another individual's, or, even worse, are violent and harmful to the other person or persons. Elizabeth had become a means to an end for Brian—a situation she knew better than anyone should. Given the manner in which CbC affords a reconciliation of autonomy and structure by removing social consequence in lieu of a kind of radical individualism, Elizabeth and the group had no recourse to address the situation without contradicting their community's underlying normative structure. Brian was “playing by the rules,” and her critique during the debrief of the activity was re-interpreted as “hugging,” made nonsense through laughter, and avoided; this highlights a structural contradiction (Engeström, 2001) conditioned within safe space pedagogy discourse. It was no fault of Brian's that the rules benefited his participation while marginalizing Elizabeth's. Leonardo and Porter insightfully describe this catch-22 for non-privileged groups in safe space pedagogy:

Either they must observe the safety of [privileged groups] and be denied a space that promotes [marginalized groups's] growth and development or insist on a space of integrity and put themselves further at risk not only of violence, but also risk of being conceived of as illogical or irrational. (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 140)

An adherence to the belief that CbC offers an accurate description of action and interaction in the public sphere renders irrelevant or nonsense the experiences of those who know the consequences borne of such decision-making, and for Elizabeth, this was an unacceptable potential in the educational environments she later helped negotiate. She had concluded, “No matter how well you know somebody, you don't know their history and their past, and what will affect them, as that obviously affected me.” As such, she had chosen not to run activities like the one she had been subjected to in training, which I otherwise found to be common practice among other educators, “because [she] feels that personal space is [the student's], and [she] wants to be respectful of that.” Both students and educators, then, troubled safe space pedagogy and brought alternative perspectives to bear, thus making A-EE educational episodes settings of struggle for a more emancipatory and democratic curriculum. Elizabeth's own interactions with CbC in activities, which are necessarily socially interactive no matter the site, led her to conclude that such educational value claims failed to take social interaction into account, and worse, encouraged people to construct acts while ignoring how their behaviors affected others; in fact, CbC in some activities may organize conditions

for individuals to either use others for their own gain, or assume that all share the same goals and methods of meeting them. Her conclusion was to remove activities from her own courses that relied on ahistorical assumptions of social innocence for participation. Leonardo and Porter (2010) contend that safe space pedagogy privileges first the safety of those already in positions of power, such as Whites; Elizabeth's interaction with Brian brought to light one manner in which CbC activities provide safety primarily to those who have the privilege to be ignorant of social consequence.

Discussion

I have brought up these two examples because they display multiple entrances through which both educators and students called safe space pedagogy into question, while renegotiating learning environments outside of its explanatory potential. Valerie's complex interaction with her class when on the alpine tower challenged the one-dimensional and linear assumptions of decision-making and simplistic interpretation of speech acts that would allow for CbC to be marked by an onlooker. The episode also highlighted how the educational-historical traditions and intersubjective norms of a class disrupted this sort of safe space pedagogy, wherein experiential programs may otherwise rely on the abilities of groups to take up foreign patterns of behavior.

This happens when there is an uncritical assumption that a visiting educational community will lack existing resources or be otherwise unable to negotiate healthy patterns of interaction if drawing upon their pre-existing repertoires of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, safe space pedagogy has remained historically intact within this educational community—at least within the organizational discourse, if not among specific educators's labor—while critical perspectives have since brought more complexity to the learning environment, such as the educational potential of care acts (see also Korth, 2003). These call into question earlier traditions of holding autonomy and victimization as interactive binaries (e.g., Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988). Elizabeth and Brian's interaction, and the response from their peers—such as Jonathan's, whose position of power in the activity was used to avoid, rather than respond to Elizabeth's vulnerable show of pain, thus continuing the extension of safety to Brian—highlighted the manners in which valuing individualistic means-ends failed to resource educators with appropriate ways to handle the tragic social consequences of those acts (see also Mitten & Dutton, 1993).

To summarize, the structures of safe space pedagogy failed in both its constraining and resourcing of social organization and interaction. Participants's interactivities called up four primary critiques of safe space pedagogy resulting in the de- and re-construction of educational spaces with varying levels of success: 1) The interactivities within A-EE settings necessitated social coordination, influence,

and consequence for beneficial resolution; 2) Continuities of educational-historical intersubjectivity coordinated interaction beyond the scope of safe space pedagogy; 3) Safe space pedagogy was found to primarily privilege community members who benefited from being ignorant of social consequence, such as those in positions of organizational power or cultural privilege; and 4) Safe space pedagogy was sometimes in conflict with more backgrounded, institutionally-preferred patterns of participation. Where these contradictions arose, educators found ways to condition desired behaviors from participants while paying lip service to safe space pedagogy—the portmanteau “facipulation” was sometimes used by educators to reference this sort of group behavior management.

Early calls for a change in teacher-student interactions in A-EE as the field transitioned from its militaristic and hegemonic roots (e.g., Hahn, 1934) to more progressive interactions with the traditional education system in the 1970s and 1980s are both understandable and noble. Interestingly, though, the manner in which what was at one time considered a critical, emancipatory approach to education has become a by-and-large unquestioned, if not “sacred” and ideological practice (see also Roberts, 2008). Thus safe space pedagogical tactics have been largely removed from a hermeneutics of suspicion (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) necessary for continuous growth within critical pedagogy.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of empirical research investigating CbC and safe space pedagogy in A-EE programming from which to launch dialectical discourse, and as such, little evidence for the benefits of such practices exists outside of the value claims of administrators and textbook writers (e.g., Panicucci, 2007; Schoel & Maizell, 2002) or personal accounts (e.g., Carlson & Evans, 2001). I don’t want to assert that these authors lack reason to value such practices, as I am sure they draw from their own interactions in educational settings to construct such values (e.g., Rhonke, 2000). I am concerned, however, that maintenance of safe space pedagogical tactics which root them as steadfast staples of A-EE come from those in positions of power among programs who use these tactics (see also Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Experiential educators may not realize the manners in which their positions of privilege make them the primary beneficiaries of such practices. This happens by rendering their role in the social milieu of a learning environment unproblematic, and by oversimplifying and decontextualizing the interactions which give rise to learning, save where educators find themselves in a marginalized position which allows them to feel the consequences of such practices.

I am unconvinced, however, that to be in a position of privilege inherently creates and continuously maintains “epistemic blind spots” (Bailey, 2007) only identifiable from a position of marginalization. Leonardo (2002) speaks with a great deal more eloquence and intelligence on the struggles, costs, and necessity of individuals in positions of privilege coming to recognize their location in the public sphere—and as a sort of symbolically violent act, to disrupt the mechanisms that

otherwise maintain the stability of locations – than I can. Suffice to say, he and I are in agreement that educators should be engaged in a practice of interrogating their positions of privilege in an ongoing struggle. I hope readers seek out his work on “a critical pedagogy of whiteness” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 29) for a more thorough discussion on the topic.

What was apparent through my work at the A-EE center were the manners in which educators and students acted, oftentimes tacitly, to deconstruct the claims of safe space pedagogy and, more specifically, CbC as an educational tactic. These educational spaces, with relatively crystalized structures, remain settings of struggle. I highlighted some of the manners here in order to bring “recognition and appreciation to work that usually goes unnoticed” (Engeström, 1999, p. 63) as opposed to providing insight into where control can be re-asserted over students’s learning opportunities. These acts could be explained away as evidence that CbC was somehow not being “done right” (e.g., Wallia, 2008) in the program, thus creating space for alternative patterns of behavior. My argument is that the normative claims of safe space pedagogy are inconsistent with democratic social interaction (e.g., Dewey, 1922). Thus, it isn’t possible to “do challenge-by-choice right” and simultaneously attend to the consequences of its use without contradicting oneself or harming others.

All of this is to, in no way, give the impression that A-EE programs are themselves fundamentally flawed. They are deserving of their popularity as a site for nontraditional education programming; as already pointed out, A-EE is not the sole community utilizing safe space pedagogy nor CbC. These programs do seem to provide opportunities to construct meaning in complex social, psychical, and kinesthetic manners which we are only beginning to understand in similarly complex ways (see also Seaman, 2007; Stan, 2009). Likewise, experiential educators, based on my own interactions with them, are by-and-large committed, caring individuals. I would argue this is in part why safe space pedagogy became and has remained a default educational practice and curricular hallmark. Such practices, however, must be disrupted if this field—and those utilizing safe space pedagogy more broadly—is to continue to claim itself a setting for work in social justice (e.g., Warren, 2005) and emancipatory (Humberstone, 1995) pedagogy. Indeed, as discussed here, disruption is a common aspect of these programs already, albeit oftentimes occurring outside organizational assent.

Elizabeth’s example of simply removing learning activities that rely on assumptions of safe space was one of the few options available to educators who wished to challenge the normative status quo (as opposed to removing students who are deemed “unsafe”—see also Stengel, 2010). I consider this unfortunate because the educational “space” is, in my mind, the product of purposeful activity and interaction between system, educators, and students—the work of the system and educators alone does not create a learning space, in that the absence of students

presupposes the absence of interaction and educational episode. Students, educators, and the system can (potentially) collaborate to construct and continuously reconstruct the learning space; alternative perspectives's regulation to the periphery of influence enables the other members of the community to remain ignorant of how the interactions occurring on the periphery of programmatic discourse indelibly shapes learning (see also Ellsworth, 1989). Learning spaces, then, while abstracted prior to all participating members enacting temporary, although potentially meaningful, relationships, have been imagined for the members (see also Stengel, 2010).

The disruption I am advocating as a critical theorist, then, is to embrace and draw on ongoing struggles in relation to safe space pedagogy from the periphery to a place of centrality in academic and educational discourse. It appears, then, worthwhile to trouble idealized prerequisites for membership in a learning community, such as CbC (and safe space pedagogy more generally), especially when those idealizations have not been shown to adequately resource the members who attempt to take up the patterns of the community. Such a curricular deconstruction should be done in favor of more democratic, open participation and meaningful contribution to the continuous re-creation of the educational space. Therein, educators and students would be able to critically examine and, where necessary, simultaneously look beyond the potentially oppressive framework of safe space pedagogy. They would be able to negotiate and continuously co-construct learning environments that de-center safety from privilege and power, while re-positioning interaction and empathetic consequence from the periphery.

References

- Armstrong, C.F. (1990). On the making of good men: Character-building in the New England boarding schools. In P. Kingston & L. Lewis (Eds.) *The high-status track: Studies of elite schools and stratification* (pp. 3-24). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Bailey, A. (2007). Strategic ignorance. In S. Sullivan & N. Tuana (Eds.), *Race and epistemologies of ignorance* (pp. 77-94). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Biesta, G.J.J. (1994). Education as practical intersubjectivity: Towards a critical-pragmatic understanding of education. *Educational Theory*, 44(3), 299-317.
- Bowridge, M., & Blenkinsop, S. (2011). Michel Foucault goes outside: Discipline and control in the practice of outdoor education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2), 149-163.
- Britzman, D.P., & Gilbert, J. (2004). What will have been said about gayness in teacher education. *Teaching Education*, 15(1), 81-96.
- Brookes, A. (2003). A critique of neo-Hahnian outdoor education theory. Part one: Challenges to the concept of 'character building'. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 3(1), 49-62.
- Brown, M. (2002). The facilitator as gatekeeper: A critical analysis of social order in facilitation sessions. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 2(2), 101-112.
- Brown, M. (2009). Reconceptualising outdoor adventure education: Activity in search of an appropriate theory. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 13(2), 3-13.
- Brown, M. (2010). Transfer: Outdoor adventure education's Achilles heel? Changing participation as a viable option. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 14(1), 13-22.
- Carlson, J.A., & Evans, K. (2001). Whose choice is it? Contemplating challenge-by-choice and diverse-abilities. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 24(1), 58-63.
- Carspecken, P.F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Chickering, A. (1976). Developmental change as a major outcome. In M. Keeton (ed.), *Experiential Learning* (pp. 62-107). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Free Press.
- Dewey, J. (1922). *Human nature and conduct: An introduction to social psychology*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.

- Dewey, J. (1976). Creative democracy: The task before us. In J. Boydston (Ed.), *John Dewey, The later works 1925-1953: Vol 14*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University.
- Dewey, J. (n.d./1981). Experience and nature: A re-introduction. In J. Ratner (Ed.), *John Dewey, The later works 1925-1953 volume 1* (pp. 330-361). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(3), 297-324.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Expansive visibilization of work: An activity-theoretical perspective. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 8(1), 63-93.
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-156.
- Fenwick, T.J. (2001). *Experiential learning: A theoretical critique from five perspectives*. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education.
- Freeman, M. (2010). From "character training" to "personal growth": The early history of Outward Bound 1941-1965. *History of Education*, 40(1), 21-43.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hackford-Peer, K. (2010). In the name of safety: Discursive positions of queer youth. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 29(6), 541-556.
- Hahn, K. (1934). The practical child and the bookworm. *The Listener* (November 28, 1934), 39-41.
- Humberstone, B. (1995). Bringing outdoor adventure into the physical education agenda: Gender identities and social change. *Quest*, 47(1), 144-157.
- Itin, C. (1996). CbC as professional enabling. *Rocky: Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Association for Experiential Education*, 6(2), 2.
- Itin, C. (1997). The impelling principle in CbC. *Rocky: Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Association for Experiential Education*, 7(1), 1-2.
- Kaldec, A. (2007). *Dewey's critical pragmatism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Korth, B. (2003). A critical reconstruction of care-in-action. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(3), 487-512.
- Korth, B. (2007). The leaps of faith in social science: Study of the imagined in the discourse of the real. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 6(1), 69-94.
- Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of white folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1), 29-50.
- Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R.K. (2010). Pedagogy of fear: toward a Fanonian theory of “safety” in race dialog. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 13(2), 139-157.
- Lissen, B. (2000). Is there choice in CbC? *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 12(4), 20.
- Matusov, E. (2001). Intersubjectivity as a way of informing teaching design for a community of learners classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(4), 383-402.
- Mitten, D., & Dutton, R. (1993). Outdoor leadership considerations with women survivors of sexual abuse. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 16(1), 7-13.
- Nerlich, M. (1987). *Ideology of adventure: Studies in modern consciousness 1100-1750*, Volumes 1 & 2. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Panicucci, J. (2007). Cornerstones of adventure education. In D. Prouty, J. Panicucci, & R. Collinson (Eds.), *Adventure education: Theory and applications* (pp. 33-48). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Prouty, D. (2007). Introduction to adventure education. In D. Prouty, J. Panicucci & R. Collinson (Eds.), *Adventure education: Theory and applications* (pp. 3-17). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Roberts, J. (2008). From experience to neo-experiential education: Variations on a theme. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(1), 19-35.
- Rogoff, B., & Angelillo, C. (2002). Investigating the coordinated functioning of multifaceted cultural practices in human development. *Human Development*, 45(1), 211-225.
- Rhonke, K.E. (2000). Kurt Hahn address: 2000 AEE International Conference. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 23(3), 166-169.
- Rhonke, K. (2010). CbC: The real story. *The Ripple Effect*, 33(1), 2-3.
- Schoel, J., Prouty, D., & Radcliffe, P. (1988). *Islands of healing: A guide to adventure-based counseling*. Beverly, MA: Project Adventure.
- Schoel, J., & Maizell, R.S. (2002). *Exploring islands of healing: New perspectives on adventure-based counseling*. Beverly, MA: Project Adventure.
- Seaman, J. (2007). Taking things into account: Learning as kinaesthetically-mediated collaboration. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 7(1), 3-20.
- Seaman, J. (2008). Experience, reflect, critique: The end of the “learning cycles” era. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(1), 3-18.
- Seaman, J., & Nelsen, P.J. (2011). An overburdened term: Dewey’s concept of experience as curriculum theory. *Journal of Education and Culture*, 27(1), Article 4. Available at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/eandc/vol27/iss1/art4>

- Stan, I. (2009). Recontextualizing the role of the facilitator in group interaction in the outdoor classroom. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 9(1), 23-43.
- Stengel, B.S. (2010). The complex case of fear and safe space. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 29(1), 523-540.
- Strauss, A.L. (1993). *Continual permutations of action*. Hawthorne, NY: Walter de Gruyter.
- Tinning, R. (2002). Toward a “modest pedagogy”: Reflections on the problematics of critical pedagogy. *Quest*, 54(1), 224-240.
- Vernon, F. (2011). *Whose responsibility is it? The hierarchical contract in co-instruction*. Proceedings from the Symposium on Experiential Education Research (39th, Jacksonville, FL, November 2011).
- Vernon, F. (2013). Structured feedback in outdoor adventure education: What are we accomplishing? In S. Taylor, P. Varley, & T. Johnson (Eds.), *Adventure tourism: Meaning, experience and education* (pp. 134-137). Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Wallia, S.S. (2008). CbC: A sojourn at the intersection of challenge and choice. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 12(2), 39-51.
- Warren, K. (2005). A path worth taking: The development of social justice in outdoor experiential education. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 38(1), 89-99.
- Weems, L. (2010). From “home” to “camp”: Theorizing the space of safety. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 29(1), 557-568.
- Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the research participants who so graciously invited me into their communities throughout this study, and the scholars whose comments and discussion sharpened this end result – particularly the invaluable commentary of Drs. Barbara Dennis and Donna Eder as well as discussants at the 2013 Oxford Ethnography and Education Conference, where an earlier version of this paper was presented.

Author Details

Franklin Vernon is a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, US. Contact address: A0400 – 1000 Bascom Mall, Madison, WI USA, 53706. Email: fvernon2@wisc.edu.



This work by Franklin Vernon is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)