Experiential education in a physical education adventure program: Exploring the long-term effects.

by

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of four teenage participants on two similar, but separate five day adventure trips was investigated through participant observation and semi-structured interviewing. Initial reflections from the participants indicated that these programs were effective in producing positive constructs of themselves, others, and their environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the participants' perspective of these new constructs, as well as their long-term impacts (1 ½ and 2 ½ years later).

The narrative case study research process produced the following self-perception themes: novelty, escape, challenge, environment, activities, social interactions, and adult interactions. The participants' collective responses suggest that these seven themes are related to the overall experience of the adventure. Emerging from the relationship between these seven themes are three dominant components: the personal, social, and contextual. The participants suggest that it is the interconnectedness between the components that has made their experience memorable.

The results of the study point to the need to continue to utilize experiential education within the physical education framework.

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What I hear I forget; what I see I remember; what I do I understand.

Chinese Proverb

Experiential education in a physical education adventure program: Exploring the long-term effects

INTRODUCTION

Within the first several weeks of teaching physical education I arrived at the realization that not all of the kids that I was teaching were like me. In fact, the percentage of students like me was so small that I was beginning to wonder where everybody was. In retrospect, my naiveté astounds me. I truly believed that all kids loved physical education. At the time I couldn't begin to fathom how someone could not share in my passion for physical activity.

As an athlete and a coach, I have had many experiences that I now believe have helped shape my lack of understanding. Both as a player and as a coach, sport has been something that has always come natural to me. Growing up, I happily participated, and perhaps even thrived on the opportunity to compete in a myriad of different sporting arenas. For me, competition and winning just seemed logical. I never had any reason to question it. There was never a time that I was not accepted as one of the group; never a time that I was chosen last or ridiculed because I dropped the ball. Sport was easy and it was fun. Why wouldn't I want to participate?

As I began to reflect upon my teaching practice I started to notice just how many students were not willing participants. Many of my students did not appear to share my same love of play and activity. For me, sport and activity are the basis of everything that I do; they're essential. Perhaps, this is because of the experiences that I have had, or more importantly, that I haven't had. Further reflections on my passions, strengths,

failures and achievements have led me to question just what kind of experiences students were having in PE.

For the last several years this question has guided much of what I do in physical education. I have been very active in issues relating to curriculum, program changes, teaching and coaching. I do so because I care about them passionately, and also because I did not want to let my practice petrify with the traditional[1] teachings of PE. My goal was, and still is, to gain insight into ways in which PE can be experienced and enjoyed by all, thus increasing the desire to continue a healthy lifestyle long after students have left school.

Over the last several years, I have worked diligently towards broadening the scope of physical education within our school. Today, thanks to the help of my colleagues, many trials and failures, experiments and experiences, our scope is much broader, our settings are much more diverse, and our potential to help students construct knowledge is even greater. With the addition of experiential education to my PE philosophy, students today actively participate in activities such as cycling, hiking, walking, etc; which are believed to be those activities that will be continued long after the individual has left school. Furthermore, programs such as outdoor education trips, recreation trips, and extensive cycling trips have helped reach many individuals who were not participating in the traditional program.

Today, I believe that the addition of experiential education to my existing program has helped many individuals to stretch holistically: in their entirety as thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual, social beings. My basis for such a belief comes

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[1] "For many students, traditional approaches to games teaching [which has dominated our PE curriculum for years] have not stimulated interest or improved ability to play . . . but have often convinced children that they lack the skills necessary to play . . ."(Griffin, Mitchell, and Oslin, 1997, p. ix).

from my experiences with them throughout the years, but more specifically from the inclusion of adventure education[2] and the use of five-day cycling trips through the Rocky Mountains.

Based upon my initial observations and discussions, the students appear to come away from these cycling trips the better for it. I have heard time and time again from students that they have 'improved self-confidence', 'increased self-knowledge', 'I'm stronger than I thought I was', 'if I can do that then I can do anything'. Repeatedly, anecdotal testimonies like these that I have heard over the last several years tell me that these students were successful in constructing new knowledge about themselves; knowledge that provides them with an awareness of a successful physical experience.

Over the years, I have no doubt that cycling adventures really do work. For years the evidence discussed in outdoor education would support such a claim. Neill and Richards' (1998) review of three separate meta-analyses indicate quite clearly that, yes, outdoor education does work. Overwhelmingly, students who participate in adventure programs are better off than those who do not. Although I do not hesitate in concurring with this statement, I am still left pondering several questions: Do the positive effects gained from such adventures last? What are the actual effects? Do students experience additional growth on returning to their home environments? If so, how long do these effects last after the initial discovery? How are the effects being used? Do these adventure trips help to inform physically sensitive lifestyles? My desire to answer such questions has left me where I am today, searching for answers.

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[2] Adventure Education is the intentional use of challenge or adventure components to serve an educational purpose.

What's the Question?

Physical education is value laden, beginning with the premise that people need to develop an awareness of its importance that then transfers into action. The need for action and involvement rather than merely awareness becomes more important as our fast food, fast-paced society continues to evolve. As participation in daily physical education continues to decline (Wuest and Bucher, 1999), the urgency to develop programs that involve more students increases. Adventure education, a main proponent of experiential education, by the very nature of its programming often overtly produces action for its participants. Recently, as DeLay (1996a) notes, the profusion of adventure education suggests that there is a perceived benefit to this type of programming. Because participants are involved in a myriad of potentially different activities, programmers have come to expect that participation on a wilderness trip inclines the participant towards the development of a 'different self'. Ewert (1989, p. 49) lists a number of benefits of outdoor adventure pursuits, which would also apply to adventure education. DeLay (1996a) notes significant memories from his first experience; likewise I will always remember my first adventure trip. It was a short backpacking trip through the snow just outside of Rocky Mountain House. The memories are vivid and its benefits are still with me today. My recall of that trip, as well as others, often results in feelings of well-being, self-confidence, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1962). Now, as a teacher, I want to know if the inclusion of experiential education and its use of adventure trips within my programs have had long-term benefits for my students. The basic purpose of this project is **to discover and explore the long-term effects of experiential education in a physical education adventure program.**

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE BROADENING OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The scope and focus of physical education and sport have changed tremendously during the past four decades. During this time, many leaders in the field have articulated the goals and objectives of physical education and sport. When we trace the historical development of the goals and objectives of the field, we see a shift from emphasizing education of the physical to a focus on education through the physical; that is, the focus has shifted from exercising the body to enhancing the development of the whole person (Wuest and Bucher, 1999). In the twentieth century, the developmental model, education through the physical, has emerged as the dominant focus.

The contemporary developmental model of physical education is tremendously diverse-ranging from the traditional games teaching approach to wilderness adventures. Experiential education has, in large part, been a major contributor to the expansion of today's physical education programs. The problem, however, is within such diversity; conceptions of 'PE' and 'physical educational experiences' will clearly suggest different notions to different people. In this chapter I will briefly look at some of experiential education's traditional values. I will also investigate some of the literature surrounding adventure education, which may help to inform the connection with physically sensitive lifestyle individuals may hope to develop on an adventure trip. Finally, the chapter will close with an investigation into pedagogical issues in the field of adventure and experiential education.

Tradition Continues

Just as Dewey's ideas influenced the broadening of education with physical education, so too have those same ideas influenced physical education with the broadening of experiential education. According to DeLay (1996a), there are two foundational beliefs of experiential education: 1) that learning is not limited to the classroom, and 2) that helping students make meaning is what learning is all about. Experiential education is based on the assumption that people learn from experience. While this may seem self evident, Delay (1996b) reminds us that not all experience is educative.

The delivery of content or curriculum in experiential education has, unfortunately, continued to follow much of what has dogged physical education for quite some time. According to Goodson (1990) and DeLay (1996b) the prevailing ideology among many curriculum thinkers, planners, and researchers is "curriculum as prescription." Educators using such a behaviorist framework preplan a curriculum by breaking a content area into assumed component parts (skills) and then sequencing these parts into a hierarchy ranging from simple to complex (Fosnot, 1996). Bloom's (1976) mastery learning model is a case in point. This model assumes that wholes can be broken into parts, that skills can be broken into sub skills. Learners are diagnosed in terms of deficiencies, called needs, then taught until mastery is achieved at each level. Thus, this rather narrow view suggests that the teacher is the keeper of all knowledge, the teaching process as one of transmitting knowledge from teacher to learner, and learners as absorbing what the teacher has to offer. The teacher talks, the students repeat the teacher talk, thus, the student learns (Allison & Barrett, 2000). Although few schools today use the mastery-

learning model rigidly, Fosnot (1996) points out that much of the prevalent traditional practice still in place stems from this behaviorist psychology.

DeLay (1996b) suggests that most experiential educators would roundly deny a behaviorist orientation. Yet, as he continues, elements of this stance may be evident in the way many programs are organized or how program leaders describe the expected program outcomes. Furthermore, the same criticisms can also apply to the research in experiential education. I concur with DeLay (1996a) when he states that much of the published research in environmental and adventure education is of limited usefulness for many of the same reasons discussed above: programs broken down into chunks to be given to passive recipients. Fitzsimmons (1997) states that much of the 'outdoor' research during the 1980's to the present has been speculative at best, or purely quantitative. This oversimplification of the study of human behavior does not correspond to my basic assumptions of the nature of human beings and the way we know and learn. If we believe that learners passively receive information then priority in instruction and research should be given to knowledge transmission. If, on the other hand, we believe as I do that learners actively construct knowledge in their attempts to make sense of their world, then learning and research should emphasize the development of meaning and understanding. Constructivist learning theory may provide a more grounded epistemological framework for studying the processes of experiential education (DeLay, 1996b).

Constructivism

In the history of epistemology, the trend has been to move from a static, passive view of knowledge towards a more adaptive and active view (Heylighen, 1993). For

John Dewey education depended on action. Knowledge and ideas emerged only from a situation in which learners had to draw them out of primary experiences that had meaning and importance to them (Dewey, 1966). These situations had to occur in a social context, such as a physical education class, where students joined in manipulating activities and thus created a community of learners who built their knowledge together. Furthermore, Dewey believed in the unity of the mind and the body. Educational activities were viewed as contributing to the development of the total person. The tenets of progressive education lent support to the inclusion of physical education to the curriculum. This philosophy of education through the physical was to become one of the most important influences on twentieth century physical education (Wuest & Bucher, 1999).

Piaget's constructivism is based on his view of the psychological development of children. Although Piaget's early work was in the field of biology, most of his life was devoted to studying the genesis of cognitive structures. In 1970, Piaget wrote, "The subject exists because, to put it briefly, the being of structures consists in their coming to be, that is, their being 'under construction.' . . . There is no structure apart from construction" (p. 140). According to Piaget, this notion had important implications for teachers. Piaget (1973) called for teachers to understand the steps in the development of the child's mind. The fundamental basis of learning, he believed, was discovery: "To understand is to discover, or reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition." He continued to note that to reach an understanding of basic phenomena, children have to go through stages in which they accept ideas they may later see as not truthful. In autonomous activity, children must

discover relationships and ideas in classroom situations that involve activities of interest to them. Understanding is built up step by step through *active involvement*.

Through the contributions of Dewey and Piaget, various forms of constructivism have emerged. Ernest (1995) points out "there are as many varieties of constructivism as there are researchers" (p. 459). Nonetheless, the two forms that have emerged of most interest to experiential educators in recent years are that of *radical* and *social* constructivism (DeLay, 1996a). Psychologist Ernst Von Glasersfeld, whose thinking has been profoundly influenced by the theories of Piaget, is typically associated with radical constructivism. Von Glasersfeld (1984) defines radical constructivism according to the conceptions of knowledge. He suggests that knowledge is not a precise representation of the world. Instead, knowledge is a construction erected to 'fit' with a person's experience of the world. Two people will understand their experience of an event, and the event itself, in different ways. DeLay (1996b) offers a simple example; one person may understand dusk as the absence of light, another as an increase in darkness. Therefore, as Von Glasersfeld continues, the cognizing subject actively constructs his or her own knowledge. Simply stated, cognition is adaptive and allows one to organize the experiential world, not to discover an objective reality.

In contrast to Von Glasersfeld's position, social constructivism has emerged as a more acceptable form of the philosophy. Many authors that identify with social constructivism trace their ideas back to Vygotsky, a pioneering theorist in psychology who focused on the roles that society played in the development of an individual. In his work, "Mind in the Society", Vygotsky's three principal assumptions were: 1) Making Meaning; the community places a central role, 2) Tools for Cognitive Development; the

type and quality of these tools determine the pattern and rate of development, and 3) The Zone of Proximal Development (for a detailed description see Fosnot, 1996, p. 18). Cobb (1994) underlines Vygotsky's work when he examines whether the 'mind' is located in the head or in social action, and argues that both perspectives should be used in concert, as they are each as useful as the other. What is seen from one perspective as reasoning of a collection of individuals mutually adapting to each other's actions can be seen in another as the norms and practices of a community. Heylighen (1993) agrees, as he sees social constructivism as a consensus between different subjects as the ultimate criterion to judge knowledge. 'Truth' or 'reality' will be accorded only to those constructions on which most people of a social group agree" (p. 2). In summary, the social constructivists position holds that learning and development is a social and collaborative activity that cannot be 'taught' to anyone. It is up to the student to construct his or her own understanding in his or her own mind.

Constructivism, as a theory of learning or knowing seems to have considerable practicality. DeLay (1996a) suggests that understanding how people develop their specific conceptualizations would logically have important ramifications to educators. Educators could return teaching to, as Schwab (1973) suggests, an art form, a form that considers multi-sensory participation, discovery, experiencing, and effective modeling. Learners could begin to solve problems holistically in an attempt to better understand the world in which they live.

Constructivism or Obstructivism?

Although constructivism has gained support as an educational approach, I am not naïve enough not to suggest that some criticisms do exist with the constructivist

approach. One critique of constructivism is that it is overly permissive. This critique suggests that constructivist teachers often abandon their curriculums to pursue the whims of their students. If, for example, most of the students in a grade nine PE/health class wished to discuss the relationship between physical exercise and muscle movement rather than pursue the planned lesson, so be it. In classrooms and gyms today, critics are particularly concerned that teachers jettison basic information to permit students to think in overly broad terms (Holloway, 1999).

Another critique of constructivist approaches to education is that it lacks rigor. The concern here suggests that teachers cast aside the information, facts, and basic skills embedded in the curriculum and necessary to pass high-stakes tests in the pursuit of more capricious ideas. Brooks and Brooks (1993), who openly advocate the constructivist approach, warn us that although deep understanding, not imitative behavior, is the goal of constructivism, the downside is that capturing another person's understanding is problematic. They also cite critics who contend that the constructivist approach stimulates learning only around concepts in which the students have a prior interest. Ravn (1991), who has openly criticized constructivist writing as relativist, suggests that educators often make no attempt to draw a line in the spectrum of acceptable constructions. Whose perspective is right? Everyone's? The teachers? The students?

Dick (1992), an instructional designer, shares the same concern about constructivism. He believes that no ultimate, shared reality exists between the student and the teacher; rather, that reality is the outcome of constructive processes. According to Holloway (1999), when two people carry on a discussion, person B is always

concerned about whether person A "really" understands the point being made. They can never be certain that their understandings are identical.

Although cognizant of its potential criticisms, DeLay (1996b) as stated previously, believes that constructivism, as a theory of learning or knowing seems to have considerable practicality for the experiential educator. Brooks and Brooks (1993) tend to agree as they suggest that such criticisms as mentioned above are misdirected and that appropriate intervention can overcome these possible problems. DeLay's solution is to tolerate ideas and roles in proportion to their closeness to an optimal condition. Ravn (1991) suggests that the optimal condition is when "people feel part of the larger whole as well as encouraged to accept others pursuing their own paths in experiencing this larger wholeness" (p. 103). The "good-life" (good-education) is "unity-in-diversity."

Experiential Education

The notion of experiential education, or learning by doing has a long history; its roots can be traced back to education's progressive movement. John Dewey (1916), the progressive movement's most vocal spokesperson, explained his views on experience and thinking in his book Democracy and Education. Within his work, Dewey advocated the learner's centrality in educational effort; that learners are motivated to learn and learn more and better when their experience and individuality are recognized as valid educational events (Knapp, 1992). Today, this is still the core of experiential education (DeLay, 1996a).

It was not until the 1970's that experiential education emerged as a recognized field of education, and in 1977 the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) was established. Since such time, professionals in the field have offered a progression of

definitions for experiential education. The 1994 AEE definition expanded the understanding: "Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences" (AEE, 2002, p.5).

The AEE definition embraces constructivists learning theory as well as the traditional practice of learning by doing. Itin (1999) adds that experiential education requires "the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results" (p. 93). Taken together, as Adkins and Simmons suggest (2002), these definitions propose that experiential education is a *process* or *method* that can be used to teach.

John Dewey (1916) and Carol Joplin (1981) warn us however, that experience alone is insufficient to be called experiential education; it is the reflection process that turns experience into experiential education. According to Knapp (1992), in reflection, the learner is either becoming aware, transforming, analyzing, recapturing, reliving, exploring, or linking the parts of an experience. The goals, products, or ends of reflection are: new understandings or appreciations; commitments; the learning of meaningful and conceptually coherent information; or action. Fundamentally, it is helping people learn how to learn. The aim of reflection, more simply put, is to promote *meaningful experience*. This is what Dewey wanted for education; meaningful experiences so that students could better predict future results, consequently gaining more control over their own lives. He wanted students "to make a backward and forward connection between what to do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence" (1916, p. 164). He encouraged students to learn by linking their minds directly with physical activities.

So *what* is this thing called experiential education, and how does a teacher use experience to promote educational outcomes (DeLay, 1996a)? An immediate note of caution comes to mind. DeLay (1996a) warns us by suggesting that experiential education is not a series of activities *done to* a learner. Nor should simulations and games succeed experience of 'the real thing.' Learning is a process. Teachers must recognize they do not have ultimate control over the outcome. The learner is actively engaged in his or her knowledge construction. Students will not and cannot be merely told what to do. Subject specialists have tried it. Their attempts and failures we know first hand. Students are not assembly line workers and will not behave this way because we so desire. There is no prescription and it is time, as DeLay suggests, that we start giving up the illusion of control so that we may better help learners understand the best present theories in a subject, and develop the flexibility of higher order thinking and knowledge construction.

Knapp (1992, p.36-38) provides an excellent summary of several models. DeLay (1996a) suggests that all the models share a fundamental form that takes after the "What⇒So What⇒Now What?" cycle articulated by Kolb (1976). Included in each model are both an experience or action stage and a reflection (debriefing or processing) stage. The cycles begin with *involvement* in the world (experiencing). The second step, *publishing*, is a sharing of observations, feelings, or other reactions (reflection). The third step, *processing*, is a systematic examination of patterns and dynamics that emerge from the publication step. The next step, *generalizing*, takes the meanings that emerge from the previous step and relates them to real life (the "so what?" of learning). In the final step, *applying*, these implications and principles are put to use to actual situations;

the learner states how he or she will use the new learning behavior. As the learner applies the new knowledge, the cycle begins again as a new experience (Knapp, 1992, p.37).

A final note: Joplin (1981) concluded that experiential educators have two responsibilities in their program design. One, provide a challenging experience for the learner and two, facilitate reflection on that experience. Knapp (1992) adds that teachers who accept any of the common experiential learning models must consider how to incorporate the reflection phase into their instruction and constantly strive to improve their skills in this area.

Adventure Education

The quest for adventure has always played an important role in people's exploration of and relationship with the earth. While often described to as a search for land or wealth, adventure was often the covert reason for exploring faraway lands. For, while adventuring is often a perilous task, who can deny the magical 'pull' of the midnight watch, the next 'lead,' or the rapids around the bend (Ewert, 1989, p.19)?

Slowly, as all the unexplored regions of the search were explored, the reason for adventuring shifted from a necessary by-product of searching for scientific knowledge to reasons related to an individual's own personal desires. Ewert (1989) notes that the latter part of the 1800s and early 1900s brought about an increasing array of events, which addressed this new awareness of the environment, the wilderness, and the emerging "need" for adventure (p. 26). From this "need", the profusion of adventure programming began. Over the years, its challenge activities have been used for a wide diversity of goals and populations.

Adventure education differs from outdoor recreation and even outdoor adventure pursuits. Adventure education is the intentional use of challenge or adventure components to serve an educational purpose. The field falls solidly within the domain of experiential education (DeLay, 1996a). In practice, adventure programs exist on a continuum blending recreation and personal development.

The decision to include an adventure program under the experiential umbrella at our school is based upon this philosophy. Our aim is to try to provide students with the opportunity to experience a variety of different outdoor pursuits, a different venue in which to participate, and the opportunity for personal challenge. In our practice, through careful planning, our hope is that each student takes with them a memorable, albeit perhaps different experience from each adventure.

So what are the effects of adventure education? Are people different after participating in challenging adventure activities? Such questions have attracted lively discussion ever since modern forms of outdoor education started appearing over 50 years ago. In 1957, Morse wrote one of the first "scientific" articles on the therapeutic values of outdoor camping. His points concerning the advantages of outdoor programs include control without institutionalization, real living situations, motor outlets for catharsis, creative learning, and adventures without antisocial behavior (Morse, 1957).

According to Ewert (1989), the 1960s marked the beginning of the social benefits phase of outdoor adventure recreation. The works by Kelly and Baer (1968, 1969, 1971), considered a foundational work in the field, provided some initial and relatively conclusive evidence that adventure-based activities can produce socially desirable

benefits such as reduced recidivism[3]. The 1960s also marked the beginning of a long line of research (Adams, 1970; Wetmore, 1972; Robbins, 1976; Stogner, 1978; and Black, 1983) on the benefits to the individual. The most prevalent claims are in the areas of improved self-concept, self-actualization (Young and Crandall, 1984), modifications of levels of fear (Ewert, 1986), and self-efficacy (McGowan, 1986). Moses and Peterson (1970) provided additional support for the positive effects of outdoor adventure recreation with demonstrated improvements in academic performance.

Ewert (1989) notes that a third area of research could be defined as the wilderness experience. Efforts in this area have involved investigating topics such as motivations (Kaplan, 1984; Ewert, 1985), expected benefits (Driver and Brown, 1987), and levels of satisfaction (Manning, 1986). Inherent in many of these studies is the underlying dimension of participation in some form of outdoor adventure with the participants coming away from the experience the better for it.

Intertwined within all three research areas (social benefits, individual benefits, and wilderness experience) according to Ewert (1989) is the theme that outdoor adventure may serve as a type of therapeutic intervention. Over the last several years there has been a substantial research effort made in an attempt to link outdoor adventure as a form of therapy with goals such as improved self-concept, improved social attitudes and behaviors, improved physical health, and reduced emotional problems (Barcus and Bergeson, 1972; Wright, 1982; Smith, 1982, 1985; Robb and Ewert, 1987).

While Fitzsimmons (1997) has no problem with this nomenclature, he is concerned that many of the claims over the last decade appear to be based on short-term

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[3] Recidivism – according to Webster's International Dictionary it is referred to as a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behaviour often associated with crime.

academic point scoring research. He adds, that much of the field as a whole is struggling to find itself and has begun to exhibit symptoms of 'methodological pre-pubescence'. Symptoms, he suggests, include making grandiose claims without the benefit of experience. Confirmation of his misgivings seem to be confirmed by Barret and Greenaway's (1995) extensive review of the literature which revealed a potted history in regards to the actuality of the findings and rigor of the research methodology. Fitzsimmons (1997) also mentions that during the 1980's there was discontentment from researchers in the field that much of the 'outdoor' research is speculative or purely quantitative (Warner, 1982; Easley, 1986). It would appear that over a decade later very little has changed methodologically and that, as verified by McKenna (1995) and Barret and Greenaway (1995), Warner's conclusions are still relevant (Fitzsimmons, 1997).

DeLay (1996a) suggests that most of the research has been of the pretest/posttest variety measuring short-term changes. The little research that investigates longer term effects are considerably more mixed in demonstrating the staying power of various benefits (Ewert, 1989). In addition, DeLay adds, these designs focused on the group as a statistical unit without appreciation for individual variability or programmatic elements and inform practitioners only marginally.

Summary

The variety in the methods and outcomes of the research has made the task of reviewing the outcome literature rather formidable. At this stage of the research process, I agree with Neill and Richards (1998) that there have been several notable reviews (Barrett & Greenaway, 1995; Devlin, Corbett & Peebles, 1995; Ewert, 1983; Godfrey,

1974; Reddrop, 1997; Richards, 1977; Shore, 1977) however, they have all faced difficulties in presenting a systematic overview of the outcome literature.

According to Ewert (1989), the general view of research conducted in the field of outdoor pursuits, has been reserved, due primarily to the over-reliance on self-selected samples and measures using a self-report format. Despite these reservations, Ewert adds that there have been literally hundreds of studies which have reported positive benefits from participation in outdoor pursuits (Ewert lists these studies in Table 7.2, p.107).

Although I support the findings of today's current research, as a physical educator with over a decade of experience teaching in the field, I concur with DeLay (1996a) that much of the published research is disappointing and of limited usefulness. For me, as with DeLay, the problems boils down to fundamental assumptions about the nature of human beings and the way we learn and know. Most of today's research attempts to bind holistically challenging experiences into statistically significant and predictive results and thus, loses much of its practicality for the field instructor (DeLay, 1996b). Ewert (1989) also notes the over reliance on paper and pencil measures of attitudes and recommends research move beyond description into explanation. "Given the substantial amount of research already done . . .there can be little doubt that participation . . . may provide a variety of benefits for the individual and group . . . Documenting these outcomes often does little in explaining how and why they have occurred," and in what form, if any, that they may stay with the individual (p. 111).

Now What-The Questions of the Study

My review of the literature shows a limited amount of research on the subjective experience of adventure trip participants. Furthermore, I concur with DeLay (1996a) that

there is even less research on how the participants use their experience when they return to everyday life. Most of the research in adventure education has been deterministic, focused on how the experience affects short-term change in the individual. Given the understanding that constructivist learning theory proposes the learners are the actors in the knowledge-making process; experiential programs, like an adventure trip, should produce valuable experiences of long-term magnitude.

Acknowledging that *something* is happening inside participants from participation in adventure pursuits, we can now begin to define the research project. After my initial research, what has become most apparent is just how little attention has been given to the perspectives of the participants. What has the experience meant to them? Has the experience had a lasting impression? If so, how?

The basic purpose of this project is to explore the long-term effects on participants from an adventure trip. The project will address the following questions:

1. What are the long-term effects on students who have participated in an adventure trip?
2. How do different types of students who have participated in an adventure trip report their understandings of the effect of this trip?

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY-THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE

In order to investigate the questions outlined at the end of the previous chapter, a qualitative methodology under a constructivist paradigm was selected to be the best suited approach. The goal of constructivist research is to reach a deeper understanding of the details of particular experience, rather than a broader and more general overview of a subject.

Social Science

The methodology of the constructivist is very different from the conventional inquirer. According to Fitzsimmons (1997), it is iterative, interactive, hermeneutic and, at times, intuitive and certainly open. Its purpose is to reach a deeper understanding of the details of particular experience, rather than a broad and more general overview. "The methods chosen can give voice to the complexity and power of experience in the natural world" (DeLay, 1996a, p.39).

To the experiential educator, efforts to set rigorous and statistically significant research designs around a holistic experience, simply places the experience into concrete, but isolated, dimensions. Studies that view experiential programs like a 'medical treatment' simply ignore the learner's role and make him or her a passive recipient of program delivery (DeLay, 1996a). According to some experiential educators (Knapp, 1992; DeLay, 1996a; Fitzsimmons, 1997) what is needed is more of a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any *phenomenon about which little is yet known. They can also be used to gain new* perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth

information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Thus, Strauss and Corbin continue, qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where one needs to first identify the variables that might later be tested quantitatively, or where the researcher, as in my case, has determined that quantitative measure cannot adequately describe or interpret a situation such as an 'adventure trip.'

Case Study

The particular design of a qualitative study depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what information will be most useful, and what information will have the most credibility. Based upon our understanding of constructivism and experiential education, case studies, a predominant form of qualitative research, provide a viable design for several reasons. Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (Merriam, 1991). Unlike quantitative methods of research, like the survey, which focus on the questions of who, what, where, how much, and how many, and archival analysis, which often situates the participant in some historical context, case studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are asked. Likewise, as Merriam (1991) suggests, they are the preferred method when the researcher has little control over the events, and when there is a contemporary focus within a real life context. Lastly, unlike more specifically directed experiments, case studies require a problem that seeks a holistic understanding of the event or situation in question, as its overall goal is to offer new variables and questions for further research.

Case study research, for this project, seemed appropriate as I hoped to reach a deeper understanding of the details of adventure experiences, rather than a broader and

more general overview of the subject. As researcher, I wish to study a number of individuals that participated on several different trips in an attempt to understand how and why their constructions came to be held and if they are still being held today after a considerable amount of time has passed. From these cases, I will compare the subtle differences and underlying themes that may emerge. The proposed research question is holistic and seeking, and therefore case study methods would best suit these needs as they seek to make sense out of the participant's experiences whilst on their wilderness trips (Covey, 2002).

Narrative Inquiry

According to Hopper (2002), the qualitative research design must be fluid and emergent, but must also allow room for other disciplinary orientations. Hopper (2002) adds that within any experience of case studies, a researcher will always encounter narratives. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "life as we come to it and as it comes to others-is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (p. 17). For social scientists, consequently constructivists and experiential educators, experience is a key term. Clandinin and Connelly add that narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what narrative inquirers study, and they study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it.

For centuries, human beings have been learning from experience, and recounting that experience through story. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, people lead storied lives and tell stories about those lives. Ochberg (1994) supports this as he adds

that meaning is attributed to our lives through stories. Seeing our lives from the narrative perspective provides a means for rendering otherwise chaotic, shapeless events into a coherent whole filled with meaning (Cassidy, 2001). Narrative is a heuristic device, a metaphor useful for understanding experience.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the brain organizes itself in a storied format. Narrative helps us to interpret the world while also providing a unit of meaning that stores and permits retrieval of experiences within that world (Cassidy, 2001). In doing so, the narrative perspective can help the researcher and the participant enhance the process of understanding and construction. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also suggest that narrative helps to illustrate why the experience must be processed from personally meaningful context and emotion to integrate into participants' life stories. Lastly, as Cassidy (2001) adds, narrative also helps participants to weave their own life story in, and back out of, the adventure experience.

Overview of Methods

This study involves two phases. In the first phase, as a participant-observer-leader I accompanied two distinctly different adventure trips for grade 9 students aged 13 to 14 years as part of their grade 9 leadership class. The second portion of the study was to interview the participants 1 ½ and 2 ½ years respectively after their trip.

The Leadership class being offered at Rocky Mountain Junior High falls directly under the umbrella of experiential education. The philosophy behind the program is to immerse the students in activities and reflection within their class, school, and community in order to further develop the understanding of effective leadership. As a culminating activity, an opportunity to perhaps further synthesize the year's activities,

five-day adventure programs were organized. On both occasions being reviewed for this study, 24 students, aged thirteen to fourteen years old, participated on the trips. Just as the students chose to sign up for the class as an option, the students chose to participate and paid a minimal amount for their trip (each of the two trips was approximately $350.00 all inclusive).

These trips were selected for several reasons. First, the five-day length was long enough to allow for a challenging experience to occur. Also, the length of the trip provided the opportunity for significant social interactions. Second, I was able to meet with the lead guide beforehand and play a significant role in program development. Third, with prior experience on similar trips that we were now offering the students, I was aware of the potential challenges that some students might face. Fourth, the participants on the trips originated from their respective leadership classes, thus the opportunity to meet in order to plan and prepare for their trips was available beforehand. Fifth, as mentioned previously, the students had chosen to participate in their trip. They had not been forced or required. Finally, as this was a school-based program, I assumed that the teachers, guide staff, and students had an interest in the educational character of the trip.

The second section of the study followed up selected participants with interviews 1 ½ and 2 ½ years respectively after their trip. Initially, each participant returned home from their adventure with positive anecdotal testimonies as outlined briefly in the introduction. The purpose of the interviews 1 ½ and 2 ½ years after their trip was to explore the long-term effects of such adventures. Moreover, to perhaps further explore their continuing constructions of themselves, their environment, and their participation in

outdoor activities in the time since their trip. The focus of the interviews conducted was to reflect on their trip as well as the present reality of the participants' lives.

Methods

Merriam (1998) suggests that data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. They can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure, as in feelings. Whether or not a bit of information becomes data in a research study depends solely on the interest and perspective of the investigator. Merriam (1998) warns the researcher, however, that data are not simply 'out there' waiting collection. For a start, they have to be noticed by the researcher, and treated as data for the purposes of his or her research. The data collection techniques used, as well as the specific information considered to be "data" in a study, are determined by the researcher's theoretical orientation, by the problem and purpose of the study, and by the sample selected (Merriam, 1998).

Through exploration of the case study, the researcher will be able to collect data on the informants' language, discover information about domains, and how they identify the basic units of the informants' cultural knowledge (Covey, 2002). The researcher discovers how the informants have organized their knowledge and discovers what the informant means by the various terms used in their native language. For the purpose of this case study, as researcher, I was able to do so through the methods of participant observation and interviewing.

Participant Observation

The assumption of field research is that the researcher can share in the subject's world. An observational method places more emphasis on context and results in inferred

interpretations of the student's knowledge in action (Robertson, 1994). DeLay (1996a) notes that if curriculum studies are to be of use, they must begin with observation, theory growing from an understanding of curriculum that is actually produced. My stance during the participants' trips was as an active participant, thus sharing an experience. Through active participation, additional questions related to the experience were expected to arise.

Participant observation is particularly adept at understanding the effect of personal interaction within a social milieu (DeLay, 1996a). Researchers investigating wilderness adventures in the past have used it repeatedly. As detailed by Ewert (1989) it is a method appropriate in uncovering the character of what is often a very unbounded experience for participants.

My role on these trips was primarily to be a leader. The original intent was to take students on these adventure trips as their lead teacher, which was how my role was described to them. However, shortly into the beginning of the first trip being reviewed, I became more of a researcher than I had expected. My students, whom I had been teaching all year, were behaving and reacting to their adventure in ways that I had not anticipated. It was from that point on that I became part observer (photographer and note taker-in journal form) and participant (constantly asking students questions as I worked along side of them).

Merriam (2001) states that what is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a case study's findings eventually emerge. She asks, however, how much can be recorded during an observation? The answer depends on the researcher's role and the extent to which he or

she is a participant in the activity. Because of the unsuspecting role as researcher at the time, and my recognition of the limitations of my memory, I endeavored to make data collection as simple as possible. As an active participant within the group, the practicality of taking photographs and keeping a personal journal seemed much more logical and viable forms of documenting the actions and events of the participants. Care was taken, however, to represent the participants in their own words and actions.

Interviewing

Patton (1990) suggests that we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe . . . We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. Merriam (1998) notes that it is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate such as a specific 'adventure experience.'

As an active participant on the adventure trips, little time was left to conduct formal interviews. Instead, informal interviewing occurred with regularity. According to Spradley (1980, p. 123) "Informal interviewing occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant observation." Through the on-going discussions followed by continuing analysis, themes began to emerge that could later be followed up with the participants. Initially, my intent was to formally interview the participants upon returning home, however, after several group debriefing periods, what began to emerge was much of the same anecdotal testimony as I had read previously from the current research. Although I was ecstatic to hear and read their exclamations, I began to wonder how they might feel about their achievements and failures at a later date. Similarly, their

experience was mirrored by another group of participants a year later. Once again, I was left to wonder how they might construct their experiences in the time to come.

Unlike the other types of qualitative research, Merriam (2001) suggests that two levels of sampling are usually necessary in qualitative case studies. First, you must select "the case" to be studied. Then, unless you plan to interview, observe, or analyze all the people, activities, or documents within the case, you will need to do some sampling within the case. Merriam (2001) adds further that within every case there exist numerous sites that could be visited, events or activities that could be observed, people who could be interviewed, documents that could be read. A sample within the case needs to be selected either before the data collection begins or while the data are being gathered as in the case of this research.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, analysis of data was on ongoing process. This continued analysis helped to select "the case" to be studied (Henderson, 1991). As Stake (1995) points out, sometimes selecting a case turns out "to be no 'choice' at all . . . The case is given" (p.3). Emerging from the participants as well as from the research that I had completed was the notion of exploring the long-term effects of these adventure trips. Moreover, what began to emerge more clearly was the notion of how different types of students who have participated in an adventure trip report their understandings of the long-term effects. Thus, the decision to select a purposeful sample evolved.

I spoke with each of the four selected participants 1 ½ and 2 ½ years after their respective trip. The group consisted of two males and two females (1 of each gender being categorized as able to meet the challenges of their respected trip based upon past experiences or able to meet the challenges of their respected trip despite personal

physical challenges based upon past experiences) whom I believed would be representative of others, but that will be up to the reader or those who respond to this research to determine. These young people were all people that I knew already as I was an observing participant and their teacher, as stated previously, on the adventure trips that they participated in. Patton (1990) argues that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research" (p. 169). My desire to select these four participants was purposeful as they all had stories that needed to be shared. The anonymity of the participants and the school was guarded by pseudo names and all information was treated with complete confidentiality.

Two formal interviews were conducted over a five-month period. Although I asked specific questions about their experiences, this was not the focus of the interviews. Instead, my aim with the questions that were asked, as well as the probes that were used was to allow for free or spontaneous conversation to occur. Clandinin (2002) suggested that greater equality among participants might occur if a less structured conversation, rather than an interview, was used. Greater insights and more useful information were likely to result. Conversations were designed (basic open ended questions about their experience) to help these young people bring to the surface stories that reflected their experiences of their adventure trip. Two conversations were conducted because I believed that their stories would flow more naturally as they became more comfortable with the interview format. As their stories continued to emerge during the two interviews, I sought ways to bring them together in an attempt to highlight their

experience. From the two conversations I decided to create narratives based on the stories and voice of the participants. A third interview was used to help check and verify that the voice of the narratives was theirs and not mine. Also, the third interview was used to ask one last time what their trip means to each of them now. From this last interview a final narrative was created, checked, and then presented.

Just as with DeLay's (1996a) research, the interviews became part of the trip experience. Even after considerable time had passed since their trips, the participants commented that knowing the interview was coming up, they thought about the trip, or that the interview questions got them to reflect more deeply on the experience. Since these additional reflections were their own thoughts this is fully appropriate as a means of data collection. Not only did the interviews provide richer data but also it extended the educational value of the trip for these youth and made it more meaningful, as per good experiential learning theory (DeLay, 1996a).

All of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants. Some questions and probes were prepared ahead of time, however the concentration of the interviews took the form of conversations, allowing for stories to emerge. Some participants felt more comfortable than others at first, however during the last meeting all participants felt comfortable enough to allow for their stories to be told. All interviews were audio taped using a micro cassette recorder. Verbatim transcripts were prepared and given to each participant prior to the next meeting. All participants reported reading a least some of their previous interview with a couple of them reporting that it was rather "intriguing" to see what they had said on paper. Within each successive interview emerging themes were checked, discussed, and clarified.

Analysis of Data

As stated previously throughout this chapter, analysis of data was an ongoing process. What began with participation led to observation and eventually to the selection of the particular case study. A case study design was employed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for all those involved. Merriam (2001) advocates a case study design if the interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights assembled from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research.

The use of a case study design was also viable because it can and does accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Narrative inquiry was also employed because it is narrative that allowed me, as researcher to learn: to learn about the experiences that each participant had and shared (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through the narratives of the participants I was able to communicate with them through their stories enabling me to discover more about who these young people really are and the long-term effects of their adventure experiences.

Efforts to improve the credibility of the data included writing on-going notes as soon as possible, conducting a series of interviews, which included notable discussions with participants on the emerging themes, as well as the decision to include the use of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis program. According to Richards & Richards (1991) using software in the data analysis process has been thought by many to add rigor to qualitative research. All notes and interviews were then transcribed and transferred into the NUD*IST Nvivo software program. Following the guidance of Bazeley and Richards (2000) data was entered, coded in nodes (categories) and mapped, searched,

modeled, synthesized and analyzed. The software program allowed for a large sum of data to be integrated and offered evidence of recurring patterns of experience and insight from the participants. It is important to note, as Merriam (1998) suggests, that software programs offer real advantages in terms of speed and support for the research process, but they may also shape it in unanticipated ways. I attempted to be cognizant of this throughout the entire analysis process.

"Regardless of the type of research one is doing, reliability and validity are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (Merriam, 2000, p. 199). Henderson (1991) asserts it is the researcher's responsibility to communicate the credibility of the data. "A study is credible if the reader gets involved in the description, understands how the researcher came to the conclusions, and sees the explicitness of important interpretations" (Henderson, 1991, p.41). Lincoln and Guba (1985) add that in this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that this genre of research "relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizabilty" (p. 7) and that these criteria are "under development in the research community" (p.7). They add, "each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work;" (p. 7) they go on to propose "apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability as possible criteria" (p. 7). Merriam (2000, p. 204) proposes six basic strategies to enhance internal validity: 1) triangulation, 2) member checks, 3) long-term

observation, 4) peer examination, 5) participatory and collaborative modes of research, and 6) researcher's biases. Although this research followed these strategies to a large extent, I tended to seek validity in what Wolcott (1994, p. 364) defines as "something else." For Wolcott the "something else" is understanding: an understanding of the questions, the participants, the trips, and an understanding of a sense of having been there.

Writing the data is not just a means of communicating the conclusions to another, it is part of the process of analysis itself (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As I began to write this paper, I wanted, on the one hand, to create a text that represented the complex narratives of the experiences of the participants. However, feeling the tension of saying something generalizable, I wanted, on the other hand, to write a research text that created themes that cut across the four narratives of experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As the writing continued, I attempted to seek a balance between both the desire to honor the experiences of the participants and the desire to describe the emerging themes. As such, the writing of this text is an interpretation of the experiences of the participants, it can be considered, as Denzin (1978, p. 54) describes, an "imaginative creation." As a trip participant, albeit in a different role and with dramatically different previous experience, I hope that this text conveys the sense of the trips and resonates with the participants' experiences (DeLay, 1996a).

CHAPTER FOUR
THE TRIPS

This chapter will provide a context for the description of the participants' experiences of their adventure trips. The chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the program being offered within the Leadership class at Rocky Mountain Junior High. It is followed by a detailed account of the trips that the students participated in to help the reader develop an understanding of the activities, to evoke a sense of having been there. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a brief description of the participants, as well as their initial testimonies upon returning home from their adventure.

The Purpose for the Trips

As stated previously, the Leadership class being offered at Rocky Mountain Junior High falls directly under the umbrella of experiential education. The original philosophy behind the program was to add a specific leadership component to the existing PE program with hopes of developing leaders that could encourage others to participate in a socially, physically active lifestyle. Its aim was to immerse students in activities and reflection within their class, school, and community in order to further develop the understanding of effective leadership. As a culminating activity, an opportunity to perhaps further synthesize the year's activities, five-day adventure programs were organized. My intent behind the program was to try to provide students with the opportunity to experience a variety of different outdoor pursuits, a different venue in which to participate, and the opportunity for personal challenge. Through careful planning, my hope was that each student would take with them a memorable, albeit perhaps unique experience from each adventure.

In practice, adventure programs exist on a continuum, blending recreation and personal development. It is this philosophy within the Leadership class to which I attempted to adhere throughout the same two years that the trips took place. My goal along this continuum was to try and locate the appropriate balance between personal development and recreation that was suitable for the students. Understanding that activities which are described as too easy by students would lead to boredom, as well as understanding that activities that are described as too difficult would lead to frustration, the process to find the right adventure was on-going. This process began early in the school year by providing students with opportunities such as organizing and running interactive sport camps for younger aged children, a survivor challenge series[4], youth toastmasters, and numerous other activities that I hoped would challenge the students educationally and actively. Not surprisingly, the trips were organized around this framework that was established throughout the year. Furthermore, I believed that any trip that was to be planned should naturally be active, perhaps different than what was being currently offered in school programs (an emphasis on lifestyle sports was desired), and challenging enough so that the opportunity to perhaps *stretch* students holistically might occur.

Throughout the planning stages of the trips, several of the trip leaders had the opportunity to express their opinions, desires, and/or suggestions to me. Lance, the school counselor and one of the participant leaders, summed up the opinions of the leader's group by suggesting this purpose for the trip.

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[4] The survivor challenge series is an adapted version of the popular CBS television program in which groups participate in a series of athletically challenging activities, however, at no time is anyone voted off.

> "The Leadership class is about the examination of self through individual and group challenge activities. A better understanding of self is one of the first steps to becoming an effective leader. An adventure trip-is this not the best way to involve the students in something new, exciting, and challenging." (Pre-trip meeting notes, September, 1999.)

Getting Ready

Once the format of the trips was decided, I began to use class time (approximately 6 weeks of classes with classes being offered 3 days out of every 6) in an attempt to try and prepare the students for what was to come. Understanding that very few students on either trip had ever spent any significant time in the mountains and understanding how difficult it can be physically to deal with that environment, I outlined a possible training schedule that the students could follow. The program, which they could have started immediately after receiving it, did not need any specialized equipment as the main focus was on walking, running, and cycling, all activities prominent in their upcoming trip. Several short day trips with these activities were also planned and used in order to begin an understanding of what was to come.

In addition to the physical component, I also spent a significant amount of time on goal setting in an attempt to personalize their experience prior to going. Along with teaching several different goal setting techniques, I also took the opportunity to talk about the notion of reflection as I made the participants aware of the fact that at the end of each day there would be group reflection time, as well as individual reflection time.

Lastly, I also took the opportunity to share with them some of the many experiences that I have faced throughout my adventures, both as a teacher and as a participant. This seemed to spawn a multitude of questions ranging from what they may expect to what to bring. Without hesitation I took the time to answer all of their inquiries as clearly as I could with hopes of trying to bring some understanding of what we were about to do.

The Trips' Itineraries

Although the two trips that are soon to be described were different in term of activities, both of them still adhered to the principles of adventure education. Overall, both trips provided a very good experience for the participants. Upon returning home, most students referred to the trips with very positive anecdotal testimonies.

For the reader's later referral, Figure 1 shows a collection of trip photographs.

TRIP ONE-May 2000

Physical Objective-To cycle between Jasper and Lake Louise-230 km

Day One-The trip began by boarding a heavily packed school bus at 2:00 in the afternoon just after the end of our annual May track meet. The five-hour drive from Edmonton to Jasper had us arriving at The Jasper International Hostel (Figure 1.1) shortly after seven. Exhausted yet excited, the students (24 of them) quickly exited the bus to go and claim one of the 30 bunk beds of a possible 80 (Figure 1.2) that were available to us for the evening. Taking advantage of the luxuries that this hostel provided, the students decided upon warm showers followed by warm soup before gathering for our community meeting. Sitting around the brilliant fire, we discussed the next day's plan. Sensing a bit of apprehension from the group, Mike, our lead guide, offered some inspirational words

and a few bizarre stories. Some of the participants stuck around for the tales, while a large portion of the group were more interested in sitting inside the common area listening to the adventures of two German hikers that were sharing our quarters with us for the evening.

Day Two-After a restless sleep in a very noisy dormitory, the group emerged to make breakfast. While most groups relied on cereals, either warm or cold, some groups found the energy and desire to cook themselves steak and eggs. At 9:00 am we departed from the hostel and met at the base of its road for a riding clinic. Surprisingly, very few of the students actually understood the workings of their bike although most of them had claimed to have had riding experience. Most of the day consisted of riding with frequent stops to hydrate, eat, and take in some of the natural beauty (Figure 1.3 and 1.4). Two of the stops that were said to be the most memorable were the Athabasca Falls and the Sunwapta Falls. By mid-day, a large number of students were beginning to show serious signs of fatigue. After nine-hours of riding and 86 kilometers later, the group arrived at Beauty Creek Hostel (Figure 1.5). Although this particular hostel did not share the same luxuries as the previous one, the students appeared more pleased to see it. After a quick dinner was prepared without the aid of electricity, and a brief meeting around another dazzling fire, the exhausted group retired for the night.

Day Three- Day three began with a challenging 3-kilometer climb up to the Sunwapta Pass (Figure 1.6 and 1.7). At the top, the group took the opportunity to rest, whine and complain about how difficult that section was to complete. Just around the corner, a mere three and a half hours later, the students arrived at the Columbia Icefields in the midst of snow and sleet. Here they would stop for lunch and discuss in amazement

their ascent of the Icefields (Figure 1.8). Several participants described having lunch beside the glacier at 2000 feet as a "cool thing," The afternoon continued with a 12-kilometer hydroplaning descent of the pass that led us directly into the Rampart Creek Hostel. Arriving here somewhat earlier than expected, the students found some time on their hands to dry out their gear, bath in the frigid creek, sit in the old style sauna, or just hang out around the fire (Figure 1.9). After our community meeting to discuss the day's events was over, some students found enough energy to play Frisbee, while most decided to sit and chat before retiring for the evening.

Day Four-This day's riding began earlier than the two previous days because of the remaining distance and our hostel check in time at Lake Louise. The mood that began the day was much more subdued than previous days. Complaints of sore muscles and aching joints were common as the group assembled for breakfast. The morning found us riding on a gradual ascent to the top of the Icefields highest point-The Bow Pass. By mid-day we had arrived at the Bow where we took the opportunity to bask in the sunshine and have lunch (Figure 1.10). After hours of climbing, it was finally nice to have the opportunity to sit down in the snow that lined the side of the highway and refuel. The afternoon gave way to a rapid descent of the pass, past Peyto Lake and the Crowfoot Glacier. As breath taking as they were, the group found more enjoyment in continuing their high speed cruising that lead us directly into Lake Louise. Once at the hostel, each member to arrive was greeted with warm wishes and hugs from their classmates. The entire group remained outside until all members had arrived safely. After a brief congratulatory speech from their leaders and a brief discussion about the day's highs and

lows, the group was sent off to prepare their meals and to have some well earned "down time."

Day Five-After some much deserved rest in what turned out to be a five star hostel, the group had a leisurely breakfast. Mid-morning found the group on the road again, however, this time on foot. We walked from the town site up to Lake Louise (Figure 1.11) a distance of approximately 6 kilometers. Once there, the group had a chance to take photographs of all nature's splendor, mingle amongst the tourists, and visit The Chateau. Goodies found inside of the hotel were purchased at an alarming rate as though they had not seen sweets before. Before boarding the bus, which had met us at the lake to go home, the students had the opportunity to share with their classmates their highlights of the trip. The bus ride home was amazingly quiet, unusual for a group this age. Back in Sherwood Park, parents were waiting in the parking lot. All of the gear was quickly unloaded and the group disbanded.

TRIP TWO-MAY 2001

Physical Objective-To utilize a series of different physical activities, cycling, mountain biking, and hiking/scrambling to cover a distance of approximately 150 kilometers in three days. Trip two was planned differently than trip one simply because of the unavailability of accommodations that were utilized the previous year.

Day One-At 3:30 in the afternoon immediately following our annual track meet, we loaded the bus and headed west towards Jasper. Francois, the bus driver, did an amazing job packing the bus solidly with enough gear to cross the Himalayas. After a brief rest stop in Edson, we continued driving for another two hours until finally reaching

the hostel. Buzzing with excitement, all 24 students rushed towards the front of the bus only to be told to sit back down. Unfortunately for everyone, a large black bear (Figure 1.12) and her two cubs had decided to meander about the parking lot and the adjacent meadow. After holding our evening's community meeting (to discuss the following day's plan) on the bus and also ensuring that the bear was now gone, we dismissed the students who then hurried inside the hostel to claim their bunk. Everyone quickly settled into our new home, some showering and some snacking, before the 11:00 pm curfew.

Day Two-Unfortunately this morning, the majority of the group woke up to someone else's alarm. Their attempt to try and go back to sleep was unsuccessful and at 6:00 am the group decided to rise and begin preparing breakfast. The adult leaders on the trip commented that it had been the first time that they had seen a group of teenagers milling about a kitchen so early in the morning. After a long breakfast period, the group boarded the bus and drove to Maligne Canyon. The ride there was filled with both excitement and anxiety; they were about to embark on an 86-kilometer rode ride through the Rocky Mountains. By mid-morning everyone had been assigned a bike, gone through a safety orientation, and had started the ride on Maligne Lake Road (Figure 1.13). As with any cycling adventure the students found the initial portion of the ride difficult and unfamiliar as they began their gradual ascent through the canyon. After several brief rest stops, the group decided that a picnic adjacent to Medicine Lake would be the best spot to eat, rest, and to take in some of the "awe-inspiring beauty" (Figure 1.14). Although the weather on this day was mostly overcast, our time spent at the Lake was under a sunburst, which gave way to some amazing views of the surrounding mountains. Shortly after 3:00 pm the group arrived at Maligne Lake and while the adult leaders and a few interested

students sat down to take in its beauty, the majority of the students found their comfort inside the quaint gift shop, which happened to be selling junk food. Anticipating the ride back through the canyon to be much quicker because of the gradual descent and also the prevailing winds at our backs, we allowed the students a much longer break than originally planned. Shortly into our ride back, however, the direction of the wind suddenly changed and was now blowing briskly against us (very unusual for the wind to be blowing in this direction). Its strength quickly frustrated many of the students. Persevering through the hardships of the afternoon, the group arrived safely back at the hostel at approximately 8:00 pm. Supper, showers, and a quick meeting ensued before hanging out around the fire for the remainder of the evening.

Day Three-6:00 am and that alarm went off again. Outside rain was falling and the temperature was much cooler than expected. Today the group was facing a 40-kilometer mountain bike ride that included logging roads, ranger roads, as well as trail switchbacks. After a brief refresher course on mountain bike techniques, the group decided to take a couple of group photos before heading out on their "quest"-to get to Celestine Lake. Most of the morning found the group riding on logging roads, which were, unfortunately for us, recently groomed with fresh gravel. Our ascent to the Lake continued, as did the rising temperature. The morning coolness gave way to the piercing sun requiring us to make frequent stops for water. During one of the later stops, Mike, our lead guide, warned the group about a very slick bridge that was just around the corner (Figure 1.15). He strongly suggested either walking their bike across or if they were to ride, to do so slowly and cautiously. Several students decided to not heed this advice and quickly found themselves skidding across the bridge face down. Forced into a first aid

situation to care for minor cuts and bruises, the group decided that it would be a good time to stop for lunch. The afternoon continued with the group riding hard towards their goal of reaching the lake. At approximately 4:30 that afternoon, the time in which we assumed that we would be heading back, the leaders decided to have the group turn around, as we were still an hour from our original destination. Frequent stops due to the weather, accidents, and dehydration left the group well behind schedule. Fearing for the safety of the group, we turned around much to the dismay of the students. Later that evening during our community meeting, many of the students could not understand why we did not continue towards the lake. After several attempts in trying to explain the decision to head back, the students agreed to disagree with the leaders. Some of the students suggested that if you didn't make it to the lake then you weren't successful in what you set out to do.

Day Four-Fortunately this morning that alarm that had been haunting the group the two subsequent mornings did not go off and as a result the group had a much deserved rest after two difficult days of riding. After a long breakfast the group began to pack up as we were moving to another hostel after the day's activity. Today, we were to climb the Sulfur Skyline-a moderate climb with a distance of approximately 30-kilometers. The mood this morning was still rather solemn from the day before and the rain outside was not helping to improve the overall attitude of the group. Donned in rain gear, we began our ascent of the skyline by mid-morning. Other climbers were on the trail, including several individuals that the group had met at the hostel. This meeting, as well as the 'Banana Crew' (several students dressed in their yellow rain gear) seemed to have a positive effect on the group. Shortly after lunch, the students reached the alpine

zone (above the tree line), which was reported as being "really cool" (Figure 1.16, 1.17, and 1.18). Soon after, we reached the top. Once there, students were given the opportunity to look around, take photographs, and discuss what they had just accomplished. Most of the comments relayed to the group leaders can best be summed up by the word "Wow." Our descent down the mountain was energetic and vibrant. Sore aching muscles and feet were quickly forgotten as the students rushed down to the Miette Hot Springs. After several hours in the pool, we boarded the bus and headed towards the Athabasca Hostel (Figure 1.19). Arriving at the hostel, the students were delighted by the fact that we had the accommodations to ourselves for the evening, our own cabins. "How cool is that!" they commented. Our day ended with a brief meeting and a few scary stories told around the fire.

Day Five-Seeing that this was our last morning together, everyone took the opportunity to cook and share a spectacular breakfast. After an efficient cleanup of our own stuff as well as that left behind by others, the group walked a short distance to the Athabasca Falls. Once there, groups were assigned with each one of them having to erect an inukshuk that represented the individuals within the group as well as their feelings towards the trip (Figure 1.20). Each group had the opportunity to relay their message to everyone. Photographs and well wishes followed as we said goodbye to our guides and boarded the bus for Sherwood Park. A rather subdued bus ride home ended at approximately 5:00 pm as we arrived back at the school. Greeted warmly by their parents, the group quickly gathered their things and headed on their way.

Figure 1. Trip photographs

Figure 1.1. Jasper International Hostel.

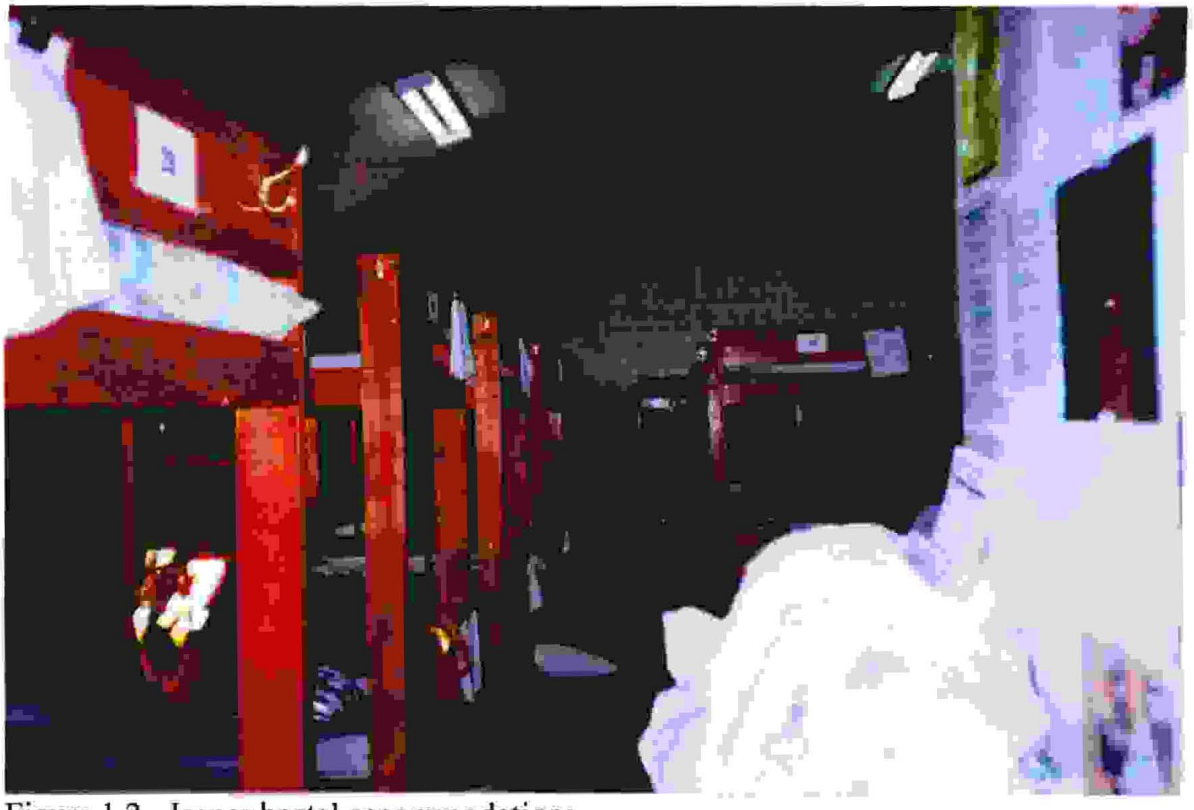

Figure 1.2. Jasper hostel accommodations.

Figure 1.3. Roadside pit stop.

Figure1.4. Taking time to look around.

Figure 1.5. Beauty Creek Hostel.

Figure 1.6. Sunwapta Pass.

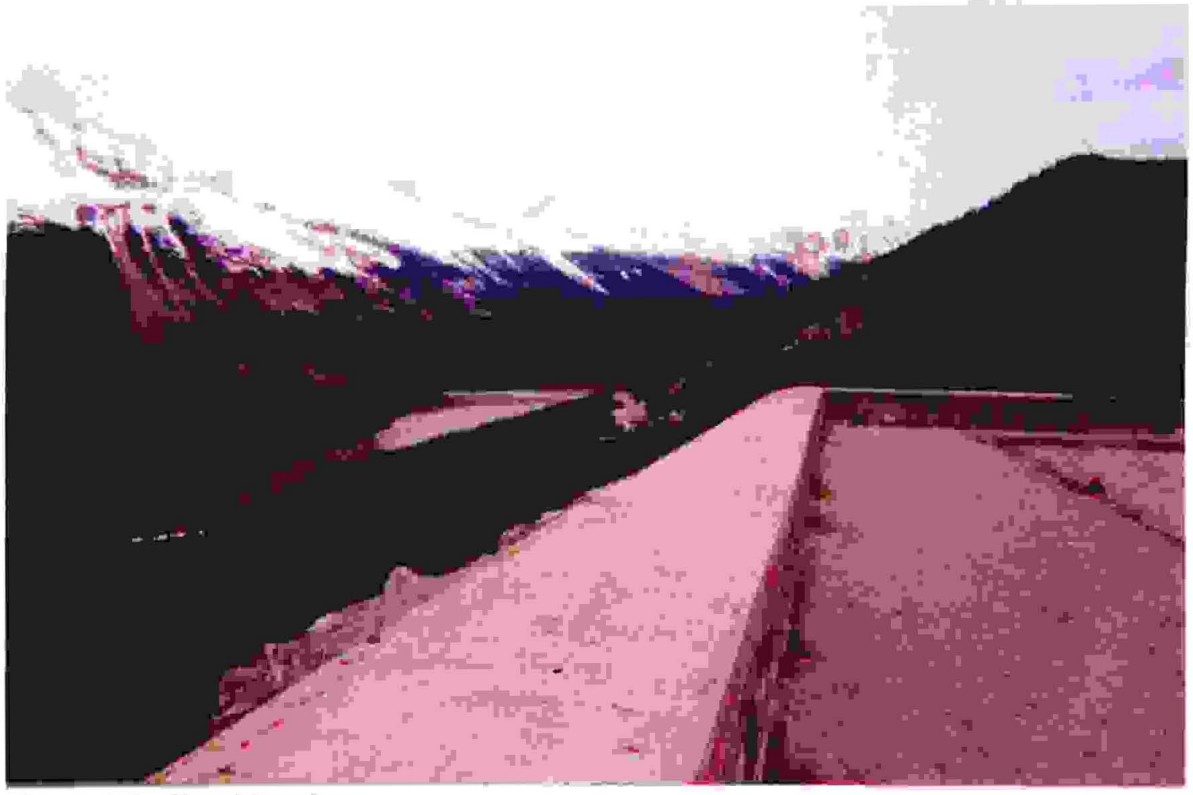

Figure 1.7. Reaching the top.

Figure 1.8. Columbia Ice Fields.

Figure 1.9. Drying out at Rampart Creek.

Figure 1.10. Hanging out.

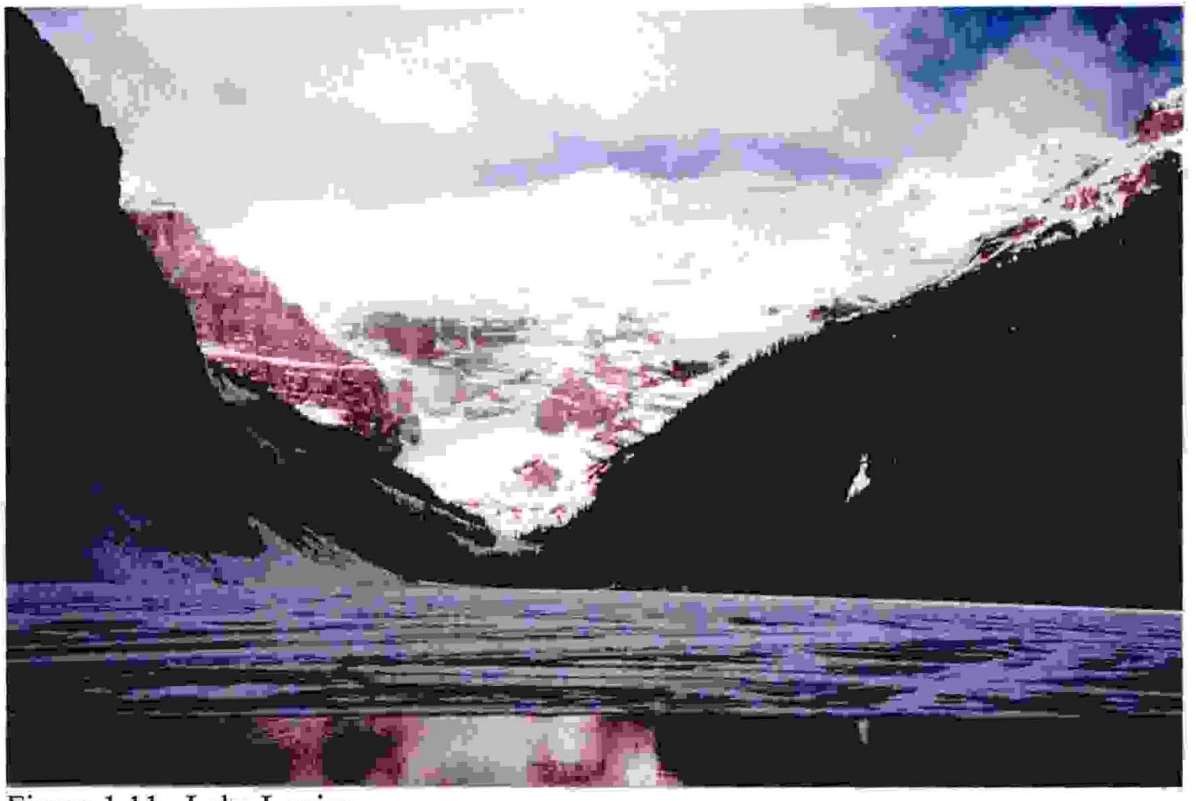

Figure 1.11. Lake Louise.

Figure 1.12. The wildlife.

Figure 1.13. Maligne Lake road.

Figure 1.14. Medicine Lake.

Figure 1.15. Crossing the bridge.

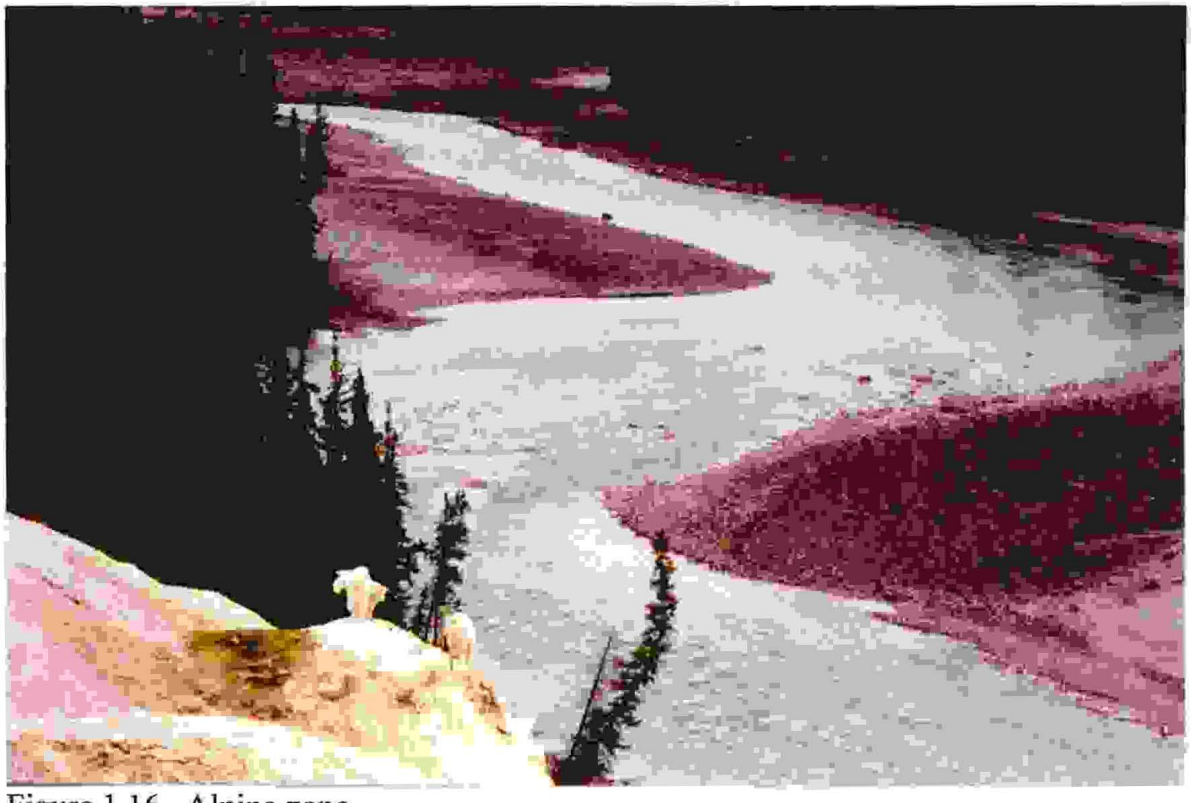

Figure 1.16. Alpine zone.

Figure 1.17. Above the trees.

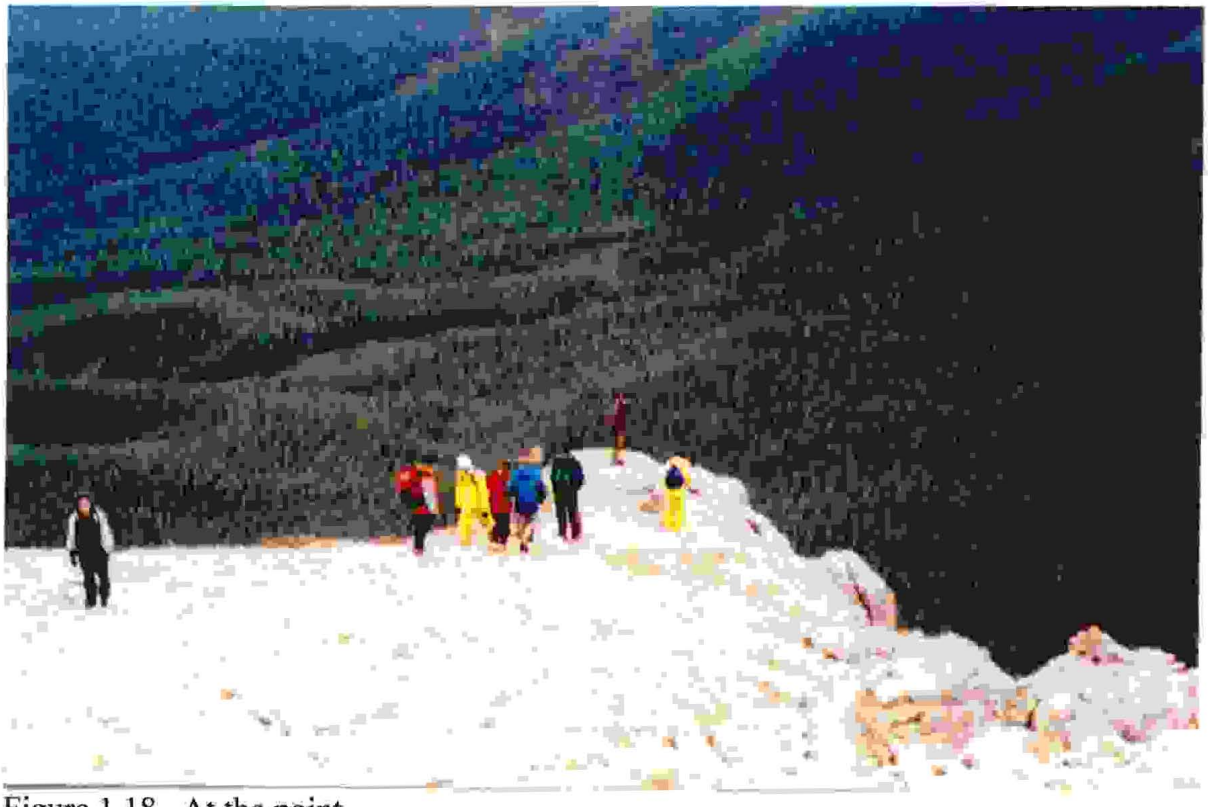

Figure 1.18. At the point.

Figure 1.19. Athabasca Hostel.

Figure 1.20. Inukshuks.

The Participants

Overall, my impression of the participants, as both an experienced teacher and as a trip participant, was that they were two 'ordinary' groups of grade nine students. Each group of 24, age 14-15 years (11 boys and 13 girls on trip 1, 10 girls and 12 boys on trip two) had their share of 'jocks', 'honor kids', and 'artsies'[5]. Each participant had his or her own interests, difficulties and ways of dealing with people, life, and trip circumstances. Each one of them came with a variety of prior experiences, expectations and motivations. Each group had such diversity, yet each group also shared some distinct similarities.

A brief description of the participants selected for this study follows. As stated previously, the participants selected to participate within this study consisted of two males and two females. From trip 1, one female classified as able to meet trip challenges and one male classified as able to meet trip challenges despite personal physical challenges based upon past experiences were used. From trip 2, one male classified as able to meet trip challenges and one female classified as able to meet trip challenges despite personal physical challenges based upon past experiences were used. In both cases, the participants were selected because I believed that they would be representative of others. Each description contains several parts including my impression of the participants based upon my observations and interactions with them at school, on their trip, and also their initial testimonies from post-trip reflection notes that they completed in class after their adventure.

For the reader's later referral, Figure 2 lists photographs of the participants.

[5] I use these particular slang terms because they are the names of groups given to me most frequently from the participants themselves.

Figure 2. Photographs of participants.

Figure 2.1. Meg.

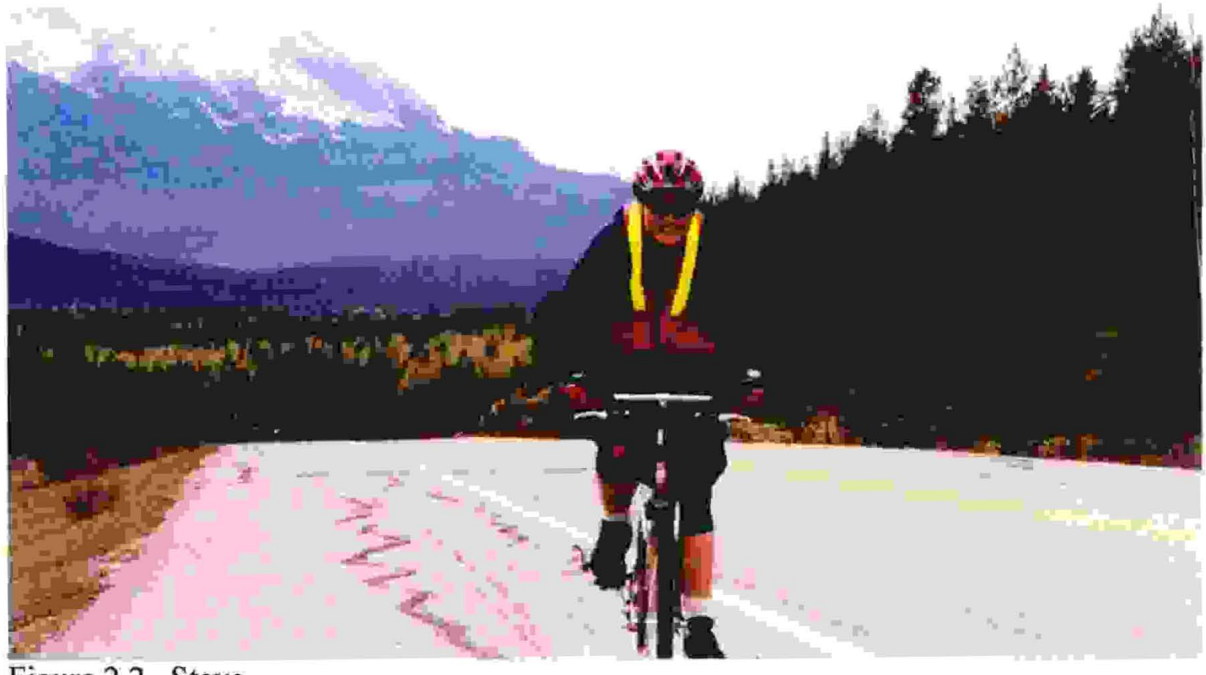

Figure 2.2. Steve.

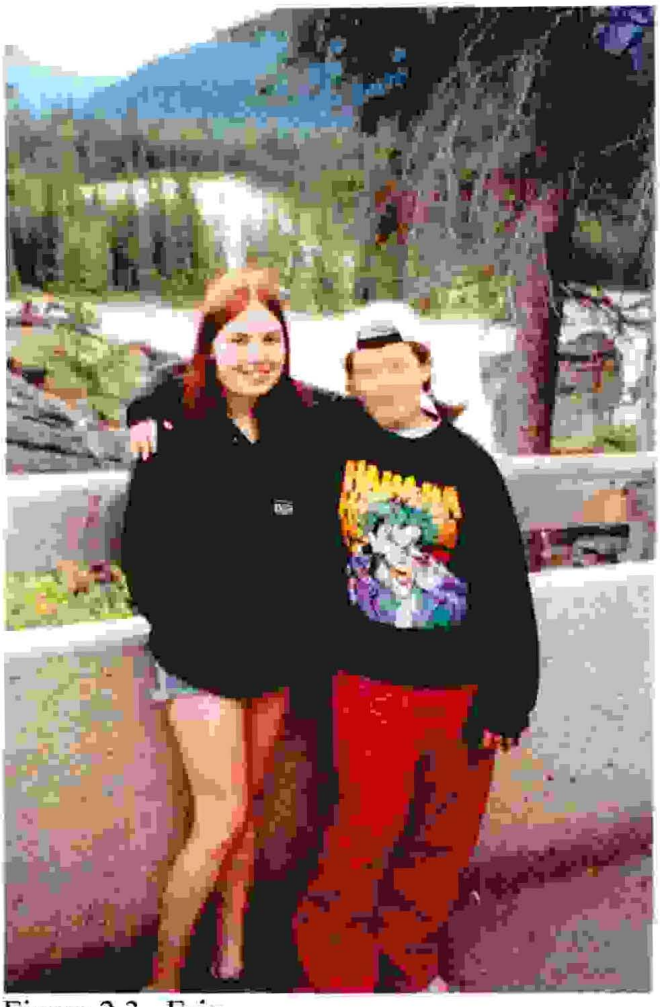

Figure 2.3. Erin.

Figure 2.4. Mario.

MEG: The strong, silent type or so I thought! (Figure 2.1) May 2000.

Meg joined the Leadership class primarily for the opportunity to partake in the outdoor adventure. On more than one occasion Meg contemplated dropping the class, however, the "lure of the adventure" kept her from doing so; "Volunteering and stuff was just not my thing, I wanted to participate on the trip." Meg was quiet and quite reserved throughout the school year. Although she always involved herself in the work that was to be done, rarely did she take on a leadership role. Instead, she remained quite content to sit back, help out when needed, and occasionally offer some sound advice. Although her classmates knew just how intelligent and insightful she was, she still preferred to keep to herself inside of the classroom. Outside of class, however, Meg felt much more at ease and had no problem involving herself in several physical activities, including competitive swimming and track. Around school, this young, active, averaged sized girl was known as an athletic force.

On her trip, Meg was among the hardiest of the group, pushing herself to reach any ascent, rest stop or finish line with the main group of riders. Considered by her classmates to be the strongest female on the trip, Meg reveled in the opportunity to push herself physically and mentally. While doing so, Meg was found to be cheerful, enthusiastic, and at times considerably loud. Along with one of her classmates, Meg could be heard several miles away singing one of the many songs that the two girls had spontaneously made up. During the trip, Meg quickly emerged as a motivator, particularly for the girls. It was not uncommon to hear her saying "let's get going guys, like come on you can do this, like I'm done come on!"

During the trip, I found Meg to be very insightful and reflective. She liked to tell me about the many places she and her family had lived in around the world. New Zealand was a particular topic that emerged several times as the surrounding mountains and the events of the last several days brought back many fond memories.

Prior to going on the trip, Meg had had numerous and various successful physical experiences in a variety of different activities both inside and outside of school. Her view of the upcoming adventure was merely another opportunity to test her physical and mental conditioning. Upon returning home from her adventure, Meg was quick to point out just how she was tested. "I did it! Although it was hard, I did it! Now, I feel sort of proud that I finished all of it. I always knew that I could do it physically, but mentally I found out a lot of things about myself. I can communicate! No, seriously, I found out that I am able to talk to anyone. Simply, I wasn't as shy. I also found out how much I really need to be around people. If I hadn't had [people] to sing with and to talk to I would've gone crazy. I found out that it's hard to be positive but that it gets easier as you go on" (post trip reflective notes).

STEVE: Smiley (Figure 2.2). May 2000.

Steve joined the Leadership class so that he could involve himself in a variety of school activities. Steve was fun loving, enthusiastic and rarely lacked a smile. Within the first several weeks of the school year, Steve quickly emerged as the class clown.

Average in height and stocky in build, his rather heavy stature tended to limit his full participation in physical education. More interested in what he called "the non-mainstream sports," Steve did not involve himself in any school sports or community sport programs. Instead, he could be found riding his mountain bike extensively around

the neighborhood, as well as to and from school. Steve was a likeable young man who wished to participate on the trip because everyone else was going and he thought that it might be fun.

Prior to going on the trip, Steve and I had had several extensive conversations. On one occasion his mother was included in our conversation, as she had contacted me about some of Steve's concerns. At the heart of Steve's apprehension was that of his ability, or lack thereof. He wanted to know what were his chances of being successful on this type of trip as he was quick to remind me of his lack of athletic prowess.

During the trip, Steve was much quieter and much more focused than I had ever witnessed at school. Although the smile never left his face, he still appeared rather reserved, different than his usual boisterous self. Steve found the ascents of the two major passes very strenuous and tiring. To him, they were "unlike the riding that I was used to!" The evenings found Steve to be equally as quiet as during the day. On one occasion, at Rampart Creek, after having successfully scaled a rock face (see Figure 1.18), Steve came bounding down to describe his tale, however, his excitement quickly dissipated as though something was preventing him from talking about it.

Upon returning home from his adventure, Steve couldn't wait to talk about his personal insights. Enthusiastically and loudly, he shared with his classmates that "before going on the trip I would have bet a hundred dollars that I couldn't do it. In fact, I had to be talked into it! Now, I realize that I can do anything if I try, but more importantly, I feel that I will try anything (post trip reflective notes)!"

ERIN: The gothic princess (Figure 2.3). June 2001.

Similarly to Steve, Erin had decided to enroll in the Leadership class for the opportunity to involve herself in various school activities. Describing herself as somewhat 'different' (not a "jock") than her classmates, she felt as though she could offer a unique perspective on things.

Erin was known for her 'different' choice of clothes: dark hoodie, baggie black jeans, boots, collars, pins, skulls and cross bones all of which helped to cover up this bright young woman. Concealed by her clothing was a rather small and fragile frame. Described as 'frail' by some of her classmates, Erin did not resemble an individual who liked to participate in physical activity. By her own admission, physical activity was best described as "rather boring." Nonetheless, Erin's participation within the class was excellent. True to her word of "wanting to be involved," Erin participated in all class activities with enthusiasm, determination, and a wonderful smile.

Erin's desire to participate on the adventure was twofold: First, "I saw it as another opportunity to be involved, to do something with the class," and second, "I wanted to prove to my parents and friends that I could do it!" Prior to going on the trip, Erin tended to sit back and remain rather quiet during our class planning sessions. Although I was aware of how intently she was listening, rarely did she share her thoughts at this point. Instead, Erin would often look for an opportunity to catch me in the halls to frequently ask me about what *she might expect* during the trip.

The trip was arduous for Erin. Physically she found the adventure very demanding which in turn had a reciprocal effect on her mentally. On day one of the road ride I had an opportunity to ride alongside Erin for quite sometime. During one of our

frequent rest stops, Erin shared with me just how she was feeling. "I feel exhausted. I am so tired. I keep thinking about my soft, comfortable life back home. Oh, how I want to be there, but at the same time I don't! I know that this trip is important to me but right now I just can't see how!"

Once back home from the adventure, an understanding of what she had just accomplished slowly began to emerge for Erin. Although her trip was marred by exhaustion, accidents, and injuries, she continued to have the fortitude necessary to complete the trip. "When I came home, actually, for some reason I was like all proud of myself. The first day when we got back, I came home and I couldn't wait to tell my parents that I'd done something I'd never done before and probably never do again" (post trip reflective notes).

MARIO: The prankster (Figure 2.4). June 2001.

Mario joined the leadership class because, as he described, "it was a natural fit for me." Throughout the year, Mario involved himself in all class activities and was, without question, one of the class leaders. Loud, cheerful, and enthusiastic, Mario's attitude was often found to be contagious.

Strong and athletic, Mario played a variety of school sports. Similar to the Leadership class, on the court he relished the opportunity to be one of the team leaders. Often found encouraging his teammates, Mario took every opportunity he could to create a positive atmosphere for himself and those around him. His desire to go on the trip revolved around this attitude. "I was excited, cause of what I had heard about the year before. And that's one of the reasons that I chose to go in Leadership, because of the big trip. I was excited. I had friends in the class, so I thought it would be a great trip to go on

with friends, have a couple of days off school, have some fun, and something to challenge you a little bit."

On the trip, Mario quickly emerged as one of the strong leaders. With him, he brought energy, enthusiasm, and laughter that were shared unselfishly with everyone. Equal to his attitude was also his physical endurance as he proved to be one of the stronger individuals participating on the trip. After long, difficult days he was always quick to help get things organized whether it was meals, meetings, or equipment maintenance. In addition to helping out, he still managed to find the time and energy for the occasional prank: covering several bikes in mud, short sheeting someone's bed, hiding behind rocks and trees only to jump out and scare the wits out of someone, etc.

Upon returning home from the adventure Mario was eager to share his personal insights with the class. Surprising to many of his classmates was just how hard he had described the trip to be after he had made the task appear so simple. "I never thought that I could push myself as hard as I did. I have more will, desire, and determination than I ever thought possible. This trip requires maximum attention and effort, which is what I did. I should be doing that with everything that I do" (post trip reflective notes).

Initial Assessment

Although the trip was more difficult for some than others, similar to much of the published research (Ewert, 1989; DeLay, 1996a; Garst, Scheider, & Baker, 2001) the four participants were unmistakably positive in their initial assessment of the trip. Every one of the participants stated that the trip was rewarding in some way. "You better believe it! I would give anything to do that again," said Mario. "Yes it was," claimed Steve, "but I

would go farther next time!" Similarly, Erin and Meg both shared the same sentiment, "although it was hard, I did it! I am so proud of myself!"

While it is quite clear that the participants all agreed that their trip had a positive impact on them, collectively they were not fond of the same things. Originating from post-trip class discussions and reflection notes, the four participants gave these initial reasons for the positive experience that they had:

- The activities - different than anything they had done before;
- Social aspect - meeting people outside of the school experience;
- The mountains - a challenging natural setting;
- Challenge;
- Opportunity to miss school and be away from home;
- Personal growth.

Prior to leaving for their adventure, each of the four participants had in some way or another a slightly different reason for wanting to participate on the trip. Collectively, all of them shared the social aspect as one of their main reasons for wanting to go. Not surprisingly, once home each of them agreed that the social aspect was a major draw to the trip. What was surprising, however, was what they had discovered. Erin, in her reflective notes, talked about seeing people, friends, classmates, and herself much differently than before. "I kind of discovered people for the first time. I saw them as they really were. I saw their true nature. A lot came out and I also saw the true nature in myself. Like I saw good in more people than I really expected to and I also saw in myself something that I didn't think that I had." Similarly, each of participants echoed

Erin's comments by stating that people were really different than they had expected and for the most part that was a good thing.

The four participants also frequently mentioned the natural setting as an important aspect of the trip. The demanding backdrop added to the challenge of the adventure, as well as to the intensity of the activities. Meg suggested, "the spectacular mountains added a definite degree of difficulty. Because I mean you have these huge mountains that you have to go over, and when you do, you feel like you have conquered something. Where if you go from here [Edmonton] to Calgary then it's flat, it is kind of boring, there is nothing to look at. Where as there [in the mountains] we didn't know the route so you don't know what is around the next corner or you don't know what is at the bottom or top of the next hill-something new everywhere."

Similar to DeLay's (1996a) research, the four participants also mentioned that the opportunity to be away from home and to challenge themselves was a major highlight of their adventure. The participants saw the trip as their opportunity to seek the stimuli of new experiences and dramatically different environments and events, and to escape the everyday routine of home and family. "I did something I wouldn't normally do. I did something that was out of my comfort zone. You know, it wasn't something that I would take on without being motivated somehow." To the teens, that somehow translated into independence, an opportunity to do something on their own.

For these major reasons, as well as many other individual highlights, the four teens all described their trip as a "positive, memorable experience." Each of them described themselves as 'different' than they were before having shared difficult physical

challenges, humorous events, and new knowledge with people that they now refer to as 'comrades.'

CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT DID THE TRIP MEAN?

The participant's self-perception was an important part of the trip experience. Their self-perception influenced the experience, as well as their understandings of the effect of their trip. Selected themes of self-perception impacts will be described in this chapter. These themes emerged from the participants' narratives of experience as I kept in mind my primary interest in this study: what has the experience meant to the participants and has the experience had a lasting impression. The first section of this chapter will describe these themes and the second section will discuss their relation to one another. For the readers referral appendix A outlines the selected themes within a brief narrative summary of the participant's experience as discussed during the interviews. It is recommended that reference to appendix A is made throughout this chapter.

SELF-PERCEPTION THEMES

According to Harter (1988) adolescents can discriminate among different competence or adequacy domains and can make global judgments about their self-worth, which is defined as "the global perception of their worth as a person" (Harter, 1988, p.4). In addition, she suggests that self-perception is strongly associated with eight different domains: scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical appearance, social acceptance, behavioral conduct, job competence, close friendship, and romantic appeal. Based upon Harter's work, my own observations as a participant, student's trip journals, and participant's collective responses from a series of interviews conducted 1 ½ and 2 ½ years after their respective trip, seven themes of self-perception impacts emerged from the qualitative data analysis. These themes include: escape, novelty, challenge, nature,

activities, social interactions, and adult interactions. Similar to the work conducted by Garst, Scheider, and Baker (2001) participant's collective responses suggest that these seven themes are related to the overall experience of the adventure (Figure 3). Emerging from these seven themes are three dominant components based upon these relationships. The *personal* component includes escape, novelty, and challenge. The *social* component includes social interactions as well as adult interactions and shares the challenge theme. Lastly, the *contextual* component includes nature, activities, and shares the challenge theme with the personal component.

Away from the familiar (see appendix A)

According to Ewert (1989) young people decide to participate in an outdoor adventure experience for a variety of reasons. Some, for example, may well see the experience as a way of testing their physical endurance or their emotional resolve. Others may choose to participate because a best friend is going and they want to share the experience. "Still others may see it as an opportunity to take in the pristine beauty or simply go because mom and dad thought that it would be a good idea" (p.40). While all the above reasons stated may have evolved for the participants of this study, each one of them began their adventure trip with a desire to get away from something, or to experience an expanded sense of freedom.

The onset of our conversations began with the simple question: "Why did you want to go?" Although it had been some time since the introduction to their trip, without hesitation, each of the four participants confirmed post trip reflections by highlighting the importance of "escaping" their home environment as their first and foremost reason for participating on their trip. Their home environment, however, was expressed in a number

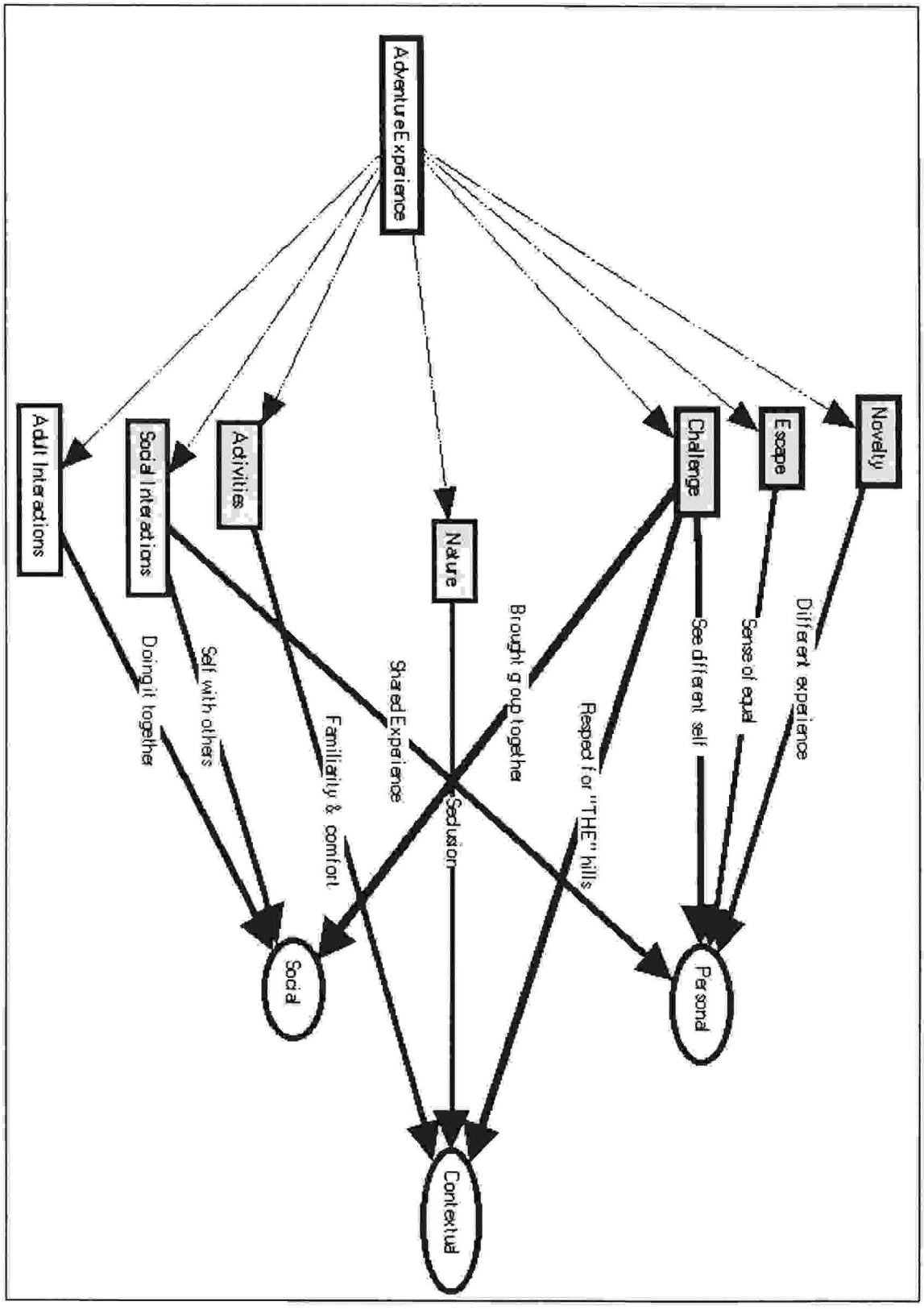

Figure 3. Relationship model of adventure trip self-perception themes.

of different ways. "Because I knew that I could get out of school," said Meg. Steve expressed a similar statement, "Yeah, anytime you can get time off school, take it!" Erin also expressed a similar sentiment yet was also quick to add another desire in which she wanted to "escape."

> Erin: Because I was in the leadership class, logically I should go on the leadership trip. That was pretty much my whole motivation for going on the trip and plus you get off of school for three days.
>
> GEF: Get away from school?
>
> Erin: And the house, like my brother and my parents.
>
> GEF: So a chance to escape?
>
> Erin: Yes!
>
> GEF: Escape what?
>
> Erin: Like getting away from school.
>
> GEF: Why is that though?
>
> Erin: Well, because most kids don't like school. Just because we have to go and it is kind of boring sometimes. (Interview one)

Throughout our conversations Erin mentioned being away from home a number of times. The greatest thing about the trip, she said, was "the opportunity to do something away from here [home] because as a family we don't do that very much." The other participants echoed Erin's comments about the opportunity to get away from family. Meg went as far as describing the opportunity of being away from her family for five days as "a luxury."

The participants also identified the trip as a chance to get away from home, friends, as well as worries, stress, everyday stuff, and even civilization. A portion of the appeal was also the feeling of freedom and personal choice. Mario brought up this feeling several times during our conversations as getting away for him wasn't so much about school as it was about exploring a sense of freedom.

> Mario: I thought not only to get away from school but also to go and have some fun. You know ride the bike; I love doing sports, being outdoors, being away, being with friends. I just thought it would be a good experience to be away. Like I mean a lot of kids say, "Yah, I get to miss school." To me school is no big deal, school is school, I like school. It's not that, oh, obviously not going to school is nice but it's not a big deal. Just the fact that you are going to go with your friends on a five-day trip riding bikes in the mountains and you're away from home. (Interview one)

Mario continued to explain that being away from home on a trip such as this helped him explore a sense of independence. Although the trip consisted of 23 other participants, the openness of the environment provided an opportunity to do, what he wanted to do.

> Mario: I don't know, but it was good. It seemed as though I did whatever I wanted to do. Um, almost like I didn't have to worry about impressing my friends, um, talking to the cutest girl, or hanging out with the hockey boys. You just got back from a grueling trek and everyone was unwinding. I know myself I was talking to everyone. I had fun with everyone. Even if I didn't hang out with them back at school, I was laughing and joking with them. I guess I surprised

myself too. Also, the setting, I guess. Like I said, you're secluded, you're not near the city, you're not with familiar places, you are kind of left you alone. (Interview one)

The teens also said that being left alone to plan their meals, when to have them how to prepare, as well as being involved in planning activities throughout the trip added to the sense of ownership. Mario specifically stated that once again this added to the aspect of independence. Steve concurred with him as "it was kind of cool being able to make so many decisions without anybody standing over your shoulder."

Getting away from routine, someone standing over your shoulder, and into nature was also repeated numerous times by the participants. Meg suggested that the relaxed feel of nature helped her to escape many of the things that "bother her about home." Erin and Steve added that escaping into nature allowed them the opportunity to put things into better perspective. Steve commented that the "vastness of his surroundings" made him realize that many of the things that were bothering him at home were really quite insignificant. Erin echoed Steve's comments while adding that by taking it all in [nature] that it allowed her to get "farther away."

All of the participants mentioned that this sense of freedom seemed to grow stronger as the trip grew longer. In fact, there was a strong reluctance by some of the participants to go home.

Meg: I was kind of disappointed cause I didn't want it to end. If I could have done that for another month, I would have hurt, but it would have been fun because I was outside, I was in the mountains, and it was more relaxed. Everything was so

laid back out there. It was great and I loved that so I was a little disappointed when it ended. (Interview one)

Erin: Everybody was talking on the way back but it wasn't with the same exuberance as on the way there. Personally, I didn't find it very enthusiastic and I didn't like it too much because I liked it better when we were going. On the way there we were going somewhere important, but on the way back we were going home. Starting out, its like, oh we're ok, going to Jasper. We get to miss school and we get to do all this stuff. We were going to go bike riding, hang out, and stuff. On the way back, it's like, oh it's done, I'm going to go home to sleep. (Interview one)

"Somewhere different . . .to be different" (see appendix A)

Second to the desire of wanting to "escape" their home environment was the desire to try something new, something different. This notion became quite evident on the very first trip that was organized. In fact, it was so evident that I made a personal note of it.

I introduced the trip to the students and their excitement was comforting. I wasn't sure what to expect as only a few of them have ever spent any time in the mountains, while none of them have ever been on a trip such as this before. Amazingly, within two days of handing out the initial permission letter, I have 24 of a possible 26 letters. As any teacher will tell you, remarkable to say the least. The reason behind the excitement many of them tell me is as simple as not having

done anything like it before. I can't help wondering if they really know what they have just signed up for. (Trip one journal)

During our conversations the participants and I talked about this notion of understanding what is was that they had signed up for. Similar to the "escape" theme, the participants identified the "novelty" of the experience in a number of different ways. For Steve the trip provided an opportunity to go somewhere different in order to be different.

Steve: For me, it was a chance to be in a different school atmosphere, it's still in school, but it's a different atmosphere away from certain parts of being at school.

GEF: Was that important to you?

Steve: It was, it was just a different experience because people are a little bit different when they're outside of the school atmosphere.

GEF: How so?

Steve: They do different things; they talk to different people I guess. It's not as restricting when you're away.

GEF: Are you different outside of school? Were you different on the trip?

Steve: I am and I'm sure I was. I talked to more people. I talked to different people. (Interview two)

The "novelty" of the experience also provided an opportunity to break up what the teens referred to as their *boring everyday lives.* Although all of the participants were involved in numerous activities both in an out of school, the notion of boring, being bored with who they are and what they do became more and more apparent. Mario went as far as suggesting that being anywhere and doing anything different will naturally lead to some type of personal impact.

Mario: I don't think that it matters where you are just as long as it's not close to your everyday living. If it looks or appears similar to what you see everyday, then it's not that big of an impact on you, the whole aspect of the trip. If you're anywhere else, anywhere with sand or whatever, something that you don't see everyday, anything you don't experience everyday, it will have an impact on you.

GEF: Why does it have to be different?

Mario: Because people get in routines. The routine that, when I drive to the end of the street there will be a big rock on my right, there's this, there's that. When I know that when I get just outside of my town there's going to be a field, it's expected. You're not expecting anything new when you are presented with the environment that we are in everyday. [On the trip] you don't see that everyday, seeing the mountains, it's something new, something fresh from your so-called boring everyday life.

GEF: What about school?

Mario: For sure school is everyday environment. Everyday, you sit in this desk first period, you sit in that desk second period, and you do everything the same. You open up your books, teacher does attendance, the announcements are read, you do your work sheet, you check your work. It's the same routine, you get in a routine. You wake up at a certain time, you usually get out of the shower by the same time, you eat, you catch the bus, everything's a set routine. It gets to a point where it's quite boring. There's nothing fresh, nothing new to excite your mind, to stimulate your mind, so to speak. (Interview two)

Erin agreed that it was about breaking routines, however, to her it was much more

of a personal thing. "It was about stepping out of my comfort zone. Doing something different than I had ever done before." When asked why she picked the trip to do something so "radical", surprisingly she answered by stating that "the opportunity just presented itself, I wasn't really looking for it to begin with. It was there, it was different, and I thought why not." (Interview one)

Meg also shared personal reasons for wanting to do something different. For Meg, however, it wasn't as much about being out of her comfort zone as it was about being in a different type of comfort zone. As a competitive swimmer, Meg has spent countless hours in the pool with little time to do anything else as she admits. Several months before the trip was presented to her, Meg had the opportunity to read a story of this couple that had traveled across Europe on bicycles. Although amazed by their accomplishment, Meg was far more impressed by the novelty of the activity. "Riding your bike in the mountains, up and down those massive hills, how hard would that be." "When I heard what we were going to do on our trip I thought immediately sign me up!" "I looked at it as a jumping off point, you know like do this now and later cycle Europe and then eventually cycle the whole world that would be my kind of dream." (Interview one)

All four of the participants indicated throughout our conversations that they tend to look for different things to do on a regular basis. All of them suggested that this was a natural thing to do for teenagers. "Even the busiest of all teens would call their life boring if they weren't doing new stuff all of the time," commented Mario. "Teenagers want to do different stuff, it adds to our independence," suggested Meg.

"Been riding . . .but not like this" (see appendix A)

Inherent in most all adventure programs is the notion of challenge. This notion is embedded in the very activities associated with adventure experiences, backpacking, hiking, climbing, and mountain biking. As such, our adventure experiences certainly invited, and frequently demanded, high levels of challenge and/or risk. Ewert (1989) suggests that often participants who choose to take part in an adventure outing may or may not anticipate the amount of physical and mental energy that they will be required to expend if they are to experience success. However, once the adventure begins they are soon confronted with this realization, as was the case with the participants of this study.

Years ago, I began planning adventure experiences under the impression that the very choice of each teen to participate in a program such as the ones we were offering indicated at least some desire for challenging social and physical activities in the outdoors. The in-class preparation done by the students always seemed to support this notion. During our interviews, however, I quickly learned that although this notion of challenge was important to them, they really had no idea what to expect. This became particularly evident by several comments made beginning with Mario. "I didn't realize it until we did it. But I really didn't think it would be that hard I guess. In my mind, I knew my body size could take it but I learned that it was much different. No, really, I just thought it would be a couple of days off school and to go out and have fun." Erin added, as mentioned previously, "even on the way there I had no idea what kind of challenge this trip was going to be."

All of the participants agreed that their realization occurred during that first morning. "The first thing that hit me was the physical aspect," commented Steve. "I had

been riding my mountain bike in preparation for our trip but not like this." Throughout our conversations Meg mentioned what great physical shape she was in but noted that on that first morning "I was pushed to the max!" Erin agreed with being pushed hard but was more much explicit in her description as was Mario.

> Erin: Um, that first morning, well, I was [feeling] pretty optimistic when we first got our bikes. We were riding around in the parking lot [and I figured] oh this is going to be great. This will be fine; I'll be great. And then, we actually left. We got to that first really big hill and I was like, oh my goodness, this is not going to be anywhere near as easy as I thought it would be. I kept thinking, oh my gosh, this hurts. After that first hill, I think I pretty much lost my optimism. After that, it was like; this is going to be tough. (Interview one)

> Mario: Everyone was having fun. [We] didn't know what to expect. On the way up to the lake the first day, about half way, I was truly thinking in my mind; I'm not coming down. This is so hard for me. I'm so surprised . . .They can go . . . I'm dog-tired. I'm not [going] back down. (Interview one)

Along with the physical realization of that morning, the participants also discussed the mental or emotional challenge that occurred as a result. Steve's comments during interview two seems to best describe the attitude held by the four participants.

> "Mentally, it was a difficult challenge to keep going that first morning cause you knew how much was still ahead of you knowing that you had just started. At the beginning you felt as though you [were] getting yourself deeper and deeper . . .

> Mentally cause you know you are just starting the challenge it's not even close to over yet.

It was suggested by the participant's, individually, that everyone dealt with this challenge throughout his or her trip. Mario commented, "Thinking that much, it just wares you down." Worrying about self-confidence, accidents, injury, friends, what others may be thinking, and finishing were all highlighted by the participants. On top of that, they suggested further, you had to keep moving when every muscle in your body was aching. "To this day, I am not sure which one was more difficult, the physical or the mental challenge, or the both of them together." (Mario, interview two)

From the testimonies mentioned above one might think that this theme of challenge held a negative connotation to the students, however, this was not the case. The importance of challenge to the participants was featured by its prominent role in the plot line of the stories, which they told their classmates and me. No, not all stories included a challenge, but the re-occurrence of events in which the participants had to overcome this or that was evident. Stories, even during the interviews, of "how I had to deal with or overcome that," underline the importance the participants felt towards this notion of challenge.

As DeLay (1996a) suggests in his research, challenge implies something that is hard. It also implies some success. Without some sort of accomplishment there was not a sense that a challenge had been well met. The four participants considered their challenge a highlight of the trip. All four expressed a sense of "pride" for having completed their adventure.

Meg: I was slightly surprised. I [thought] wow you cycled 240 km. I think that's amazing . . .I was kind of wishing I could do it again just cause you were on that high that you have done it . . .I didn't really want to go back because that meant school but I was happy to go home and [tell] my friends and everything like that but at the same time I could have stayed, it was great out there. (Interview two)

Steve: Before the trip I had just started getting into mountain biking and things like that and [the trip] that just kind of boosted it, boosted it up to a level where I now know what I can do . . .looking back on that nothing else really compares to it and it's not as big of a challenge, so I just shrug it off and do it. Pretty happy with myself that I had done that and like I said looking forward to the next test. (Interview two)

Erin: I did something I wouldn't normally do. I did something that was out of my comfort zone. You know, it wasn't something that I would take on without being motivated somehow. It wasn't something I would do just for the fun of it. But I still did it, and that does something to me like I accomplished something that more people thought that I wouldn't do or couldn't do. (Interview one)

Mario: [It was a] once in a lifetime opportunity. I couldn't wait to tell my friends that you should have been there. We had an absolute blast. Um, saying how tough it was, saying how nice it was sitting in the hot springs-everything I did. I did some good things! (Interview one)

The relationship between challenge, accomplishment, and the highlights the participants recalled indicates the importance of challenge to the overall adventure experience. In fact, all of the participants agreed that it had to be difficult in order for it to be effective by their account. Also, Meg, Mario, and Steve suggested that it should be "tougher" the next time and that they were ready to go.

Familiarity with and comfort doing (see appendix A)

Synonymous with adventure experiences are the activities that are often used. Backpacking, rock climbing, caving, cycling, white water rafting, etc., have frequently been mentioned by participants as one of the draws or highlights of their adventure experience. The participants of this study would agree that the activities were a major draw for them, however, not because of their novelty but rather because of the familiarity.

All of the participants mentioned during their interviews that they were very comfortable with the activities (cycling and hiking) slated for their adventure. Meg mentioned a couple of times how she was looking forward to riding a bike again, something she had done a lot of when she was younger but hadn't been on one for quite sometime. Erin agreed that the bike was going to be fun and added that she was really looking forward to the hiking and climbing portion of her trip because it was something that she did "all the time and I'm good at it."

Both Steve and Mario, on the other hand, mentioned that they both had spent a great deal of time riding and were looking forward to taking it to the next level on their trip. Comfortable with their previous level of riding proficiency, the boys saw the

activities as something that would help them over come the challenge as opposed to being a major part of it. "An adventure trip was something new to me, but riding was not. I think that it made it easier for me," commented Mario. "Before the trip I had started mountain biking and things like that so I think that having some experience was good. It definitely helped in my decision to go knowing that I could do it," said Steve.

Although there were several stories passed on to me during our conversations that included highlights of riding up this hill and climbing up that rock face, for the most part the activities were seen as an important aspect before leaving for their adventure and not so much during. The comforting activities soon became part of the adventure challenge. A couple of the participants suggested that the activities, similar to the environment discussed in the next section, became kind of like the adversary as they grew physically tired and sore. On one hand it was about liking the activities, and on the other it was a growing disdain for them. All of the participants did agree that the contempt they felt for that short time during their trip did not come home with them and that "it was just when my butt hurt," suggested Meg.

The hills, the seclusion (see appendix A)

I believe that it is safe to suggest that when any adventure programmer prepares a student-based trip in the natural world, he or she would hope that a developing sense of the environment might occur. By environment I mean the natural world, caring for it, appreciating it, using it to develop a connection between self and the land on which one lives. This hope, however, may prove to be difficult as Ewert (1989) and Delay (1996a) suggest the importance attached to the physical challenges of adventure pursuits and the

mediation of challenge by perceived accomplishment may influence the participants' perceptions and the relationship with the natural world. As Delay adds, "The land may be relegated to the background, the stage upon which the activities occur. Furthermore, the land might be seen as the adversary against which the participant might be testing him or herself" (p.74).

To the participants of this study the environment, the mountain park, was seen as a beautiful place in which they had to exert themselves mentally and physically. When asked to discuss what they remembered about the environment of the trip, unanimously they were all quick to answer "the hills." Mario went as far to suggest that the hills were all consuming.

> The hills. I remember the hills. The point when you're looking up and you're seeing how much hill you have left. You're legs are already burning, you're breathing heavy and your arms are aching. Your butt got sore after a while, you know you kind of had to stand up. No, it was physical for your whole body; they made it just an overall workout, exhaustion. (Interview one)

Meg agreed that the hills were all consuming and that it affected the number of opportunities that she had to share in some of the natural beauty.

> There, it was really pretty. But, I kind of regret things. There were key points that I remember, it was gorgeous, it was beautiful and it was all the different colors, but for the most part I was just looking at the road in front of me. I mean going up the hill, looking up the hill, looking ahead and then going down the hill you have to keep your eye on the road so you don't fall off. I kind of regret that I didn't see as much as I would have liked to. (Interview one)

Mario felt exactly the same as Meg as he added further, "It was beautiful, just seeing the mountains, looking at the green grass, and the thick woods. But, most of the time, I had my head buried and I was going [riding]. When Erin and Steve were asked to comment on the hills, their replies were as simple as "The hills killed me!"

The evenings proved to be slightly different for the participants as it was then that they said they had more of an opportunity to take in some of the natural beauty. Given the chance to sit down and relax, some of the participants agreed that they began to notice more things [environment] around them. "I saw squirrels and some deer," commented Erin. "Yah, the sun setting on the mountains was cool [surreal], it looked like some kind of painting" added Steve. Mario and Meg, on the other hand, simply commented that they didn't pay much attention to it then, as they were just busy hanging out with everyone.

As difficult as the environment proved to be for the participants it was also agreed unanimously that the mountain environment was an important backdrop for their trip. For each of them the background meant something slightly different, nonetheless, important to each one of them.

> Erin: No, it mattered that we were in the mountains because it helped. Sure [other places] would be much flatter, be way easier to do. But, the fact that it was so secluded, it was just more peaceful. I know that it made it more real. (Interview one)
>
> Steve: It just wouldn't have been the same without the mountains. You wouldn't have had the vastness of it how big it was around you. Here, you are always here,

nothing changes around here when you get into the mountains it is totally different than anywhere else. (Interview one)

Meg: Yes, it was important. It added a definite degree of difficulty cause I mean you have these huge mountains that you have to go over. You feel like you have just conquered something. You don't know what is around the next corner or you don't know what is at the bottom or top of the next hill, something new everywhere. (Interview one)

Mario: I liked it because you're secluded, you're in new territory, and it was almost like you were left alone. Someone could be two feet ahead of you pedaling his or her ass off but you were alone. You looked up, you saw them but you were alone. The environment was wonderful; it was great just looking at the background and everything. It is important to express the fact that you are quite alone, and how small you are compared to everything around you. (Interview one)

Sharing, doing it together (see appendix A)

The theme of adult interactions is somewhat of an anomaly when compared to that of the others. This theme did not emerge as prominently as the rest; rather it evolved slowly over the course of our conversations. As the participants continued to share their stories of their adventure, more and more noticeably the names of the adult leaders began to be mentioned.

Steve shared a story about spending sometime with Mrs. Baxter and how she was "even cooler on the trip than she was at school."

> Mrs. Adams, I can remember riding along side her one time when she was walking for awhile and it was fun having a chat with her because she was really supportive of me cause she was talking about the things that she was going through, her challenges so I could relate to mine better too. (Interview two)

Meg remembered chatting with me on several different occasions and how "it was more than we had the opportunity to talk all year." She was happy to tell me about the numerous trips her family took, her swim competitions, and even what school life was like for her. I can remember thinking, "Wow, who is this kid? She is not the same shy kid that sat in my class all year." And while I was thinking how glad I was for those opportunities, during our interviews Meg thanked me for the same thing.

As the theme became more evident to Mario he was quick to add several more stories of positive adult interactions. Of his favorites was the opportunity for him and me to ride back in search of one of his classmate's glasses. After a long grueling day of riding, Mario was still quick to offer to go with me simply for the opportunity to ride together.

> You and I hadn't had much time on the trip to hang out together. As teacher and student I always felt like we were kind of friends. To me this was a great way to do something together. (Interview two)

As with the other participants, Erin was appreciative of the work done by the leaders. Moreover, she said that she appreciated them on a much different level than she ever had at school.

> Erin: Yes, I did, because it means they are not being complete hypocrites about the whole thing. Sometimes, I'm not saying any of the gym teachers that are at

> our school, but you know you see on TV this big fat old gym teacher that doesn't do anything, if he walked five blocks he'd have a heart attack or something, and he's getting you to do all this stuff, - it's hypocritical. It's like why should I have to if you can't? But you guys were doing it . . .The fact that they [the leaders] were there for us, and we thought, you know, they are doing the same thing as we are. It made you see them more as here [equal] rather than a teacher. It's like we were on more equal terms.
>
> GEF: That's a good thing?
>
> Erin: Yes definitely, I totally think that it should be more like that.
>
> GEF: Do you think it changed the learning environment?
>
> Erin: It does, definitely. I've had teachers that are you know, all 'high and mighty' and 'I'm better that you because I'm older'. And you kind of resent them and you don't want to do what they're asking. You don't because why should you if they're going to be a big ass about it kind of thing. Whereas, if a teacher treats you like a person, and actually legitimately thinks, answers your questions, and legitimately thinks about your ideas and that. It makes you feel more valued, and it makes you want to try harder. (Interview two)

In addition to being appreciative of their leaders during their trip, the participants were also grateful for another positive adult interaction, the opportunity to be involved in the research process. All of the participants agreed that the interviews were seen as a chance to think about, talk about, and remember a very positive moment in their lives with someone who was there. "The interviews allowed me to remember so many of the little things that I had forgotten," said Mario. Moreover, the interviews allowed me to the

opportunity to recall the accomplishment that I achieved, which was huge," stated Steve. Lastly, Erin believed that being involved in the interview process gave more meaning to the experience. "I feel more valued by being involved. I think the fact that you chose me for this says you appreciate what I did and how I struggled. My opinion has value above anything else."

Support: New perceptions of self with others (see appendix A)

The social group was an important part of the trip experience. The interactions of the participants with each other influenced their adventure experience both on and following their trip. Hanging out with friends, meeting new friends, and becoming better friends were recalled as highlights during our conversations. Although the participants recounted numerous stories of their adventure activities, it was the interactions within the social group that were most important in valuing the experience.

Looking back at their adventure, the participants all remembered how difficult that first morning was and how quickly they turned to others for emotional support. Meg recalled riding with a rather large group for most of the first morning until she hooked up with Katrina. "I found Katrina on that first morning and that was it, we hung together for the entire trip." She continued to add, "Before the trip we were friends, but we weren't really that close. On that first morning we quickly found out that we needed each other for different reasons and that was that." Similarly, Steve and Erin described how they turned to others as well.

Erin: She [Trina] was in the back with me and we started to get along really well. We were talking and walking a lot of the times. We were talking and we got

> really close in that little while and so naturally we spent a lot more time together after that. I don't know she was just helping me out a lot like, just being there and having someone to talk to . . . She was around and you know, it was better for me to have someone around and she was really sympathetic. I just needed someone to talk to cause I didn't really feel like being by myself. (Interview one)

> Steve: After we started hanging out, lots of times we were together, most of the time, me, Khaleel and Morgan . . . it was important [and] it was easier sometimes cause you had them there for support and all of us kind of got along with each other.
>
> GEF: What kind of support did you need?
>
> Steve: Just mental, the fact that they were there with me and they were not going to go way up ahead and leave me behind. Also, I didn't want to slow them down so it also pushed me even more.

Mario also found a need for support on that first morning, however, as he suggests it was more about working together as a larger group than it was finding any one person.

> That first morning was tough and for us it was teamwork. We decided to start drafting a lot of the time. Everyone was working together. When you got into that lead position where it was much harder than when you were [in] back, you felt that you had responsibility to ride as hard as you could for your time, then you got to relax while it was the next persons time. Everyone did [his or her] share to make it, I guess, enjoyable; make it a little easier for everyone. (Interview one)

This notion of "making it easier for everyone" as mentioned by Mario, emerged as a social-sub theme. According to the participants, people who were on the trip acted in ways that they would not act at home, "they were nicer," suggested Mario. Steve added:

> "They definitely showed more respect towards each other. Everyone was more generous then ever. Everyone was, "Ya, I'll get this," "No, I'll get it," or "No, I'll do that for you, and so on." Everyone was willing to do things, even though everyone was exhausted. Everyone was looking forward to pitching in and doing their share." (Interview one)

Erin added, "Kids were less worried about impressing each other." "The trip became more about helping each other than it was about competition." "I know for me," suggested Meg, "I was trying to help Katrina. If I wanted to keep up to the leaders I could have, but it wasn't about that." Mario agreed that it wasn't about that, or at least that's how it became.

> At first, it was a competition. I wanted to see where I would finish. But, the more time I spent riding with different people the cooler that became. Pretty soon it was much more about hanging out than where you finished. Sure, maybe some of the guys bugged each other about not being first, but it was nothing like back home. It was really about helping people out like Vanessa and Michelle. (Interview one)

Several days into their trips, the participants noted that a kind of closeness, a "bond" if you will, was beginning to form. Whether it was because of needing each other, wanting to be nice to each other, or simply because they were just one big group,

the social structures that the participants were used to at school were slowly beginning to dissolve. Steve was quick to add in his first interview that this was a good thing.

> Steve: It was a lot friendlier atmosphere than at school because there weren't the big clicks. There was usually just one big, one big click I guess, and it was just all together. You kind of hung out with different people because there weren't the separations between the groups . . . Socially things were much more different on the trip than at school.
>
> GEF: In your opinion for the good or for the bad?
>
> Steve: For the good for me. I enjoyed it a lot more
>
> GEF: Why?
>
> Steve: I think it was better because we were more of a group, we were a tighter group and like I said we were closer because we were able to get out outside of the clicks and just talk as people and that made it seem a little bit friendlier I guess.

During his interviews, Mario agreed whole-heartedly with Steve, but made sure to add that this big group meant everyone including different people and genders.

> Mario: Boys, girls, everyone hung out with everyone, so I mean it was all one big group.
>
> GEF: Did that sort of create some type of bond?
>
> Mario: It did. The fact that people I don't normally talk to, I was talking to, so it had to be doing something I guess. I guess that's all I can say, I was talking to people I don't normally hang out with . . . But it wasn't a conscious thought, "Hey we're doing the same here so all of a sudden you're okay, you're kind of cool. "

> I guess people, even myself, you don't say, "Oh that person's a nerd." But you know that they may not be so called "cool" so to speak. When you are on the trip and even though they may not be so "cool". Who care? Why does it matter? I had just as much fun with the people who were not "cool" as the people who were "cool" in everyone's eyes. We're not all that diverse from each other. (Interview one)

While Meg agreed with Steve and Mario that on the trips participants willingly started to dissolve existing school social structures, Erin pointed out that this was not necessarily the whole truth.

> GEF: So, on the trip, what did you think of the social groups?
>
> Erin: There was less, but it was still there like, to some extent. A lot of people were kind of blending, but there were a few that weren't. They wouldn't blend with you, but there was a lot that would.
>
> GEF: Why the change?
>
> Erin: Well, the school environment, kind of, cultures that kind of quirkiness. Whereas, just being out there, well, its only [24] kids and they all have something in common cause we're all on this trip. It wasn't so much clicky, as I said, there still was but it wasn't too bad.
>
> GEF: On the trip. . .
>
> Erin: I found friends in a lot of people that I wouldn't have expected. I became friends with a lot of people. Some of my friends, well, acquaintances more, I saw them in a different light. It totally made me realize that they didn't really care about me, it was more about them. Like, for instance, the people that I became

friends with, they were sticking with me. They were helping me, and I was helping them. We were all kind of in the same boat. The people that [were] not in the same boat, they were having a difficult time as well. They weren't taking it very well. They were being mean and spiteful. Like blaming everyone but himself or herself for their own problems kind of thing. (Interview one)

Although Erin disagreed to the degree in which the group came together, she did, nonetheless, see a significant difference between the social structures on the trip and at school. "The group did come together, but maybe [long pause] more so for the boys than the girls." One of the big differences that she suggested was the difference between how the girls acted in comparison to the guys. Both Meg and Erin agreed that the girls tended to be much more difficult to get along with than their counterparts. Meg's comments in interview one clearly highlight this notion.

GEF: What was the difference?

Meg: Boys are just boys, I don't know they had their steak and their eggs, I don't know they were lax and laid back like the girls should have been.

GEF: Why?

Meg: Cause they didn't have to deal with the whole, I'm not saying that I was a part of it, but I mean guys get along a lot easier than girls do. I would rather hang out with guys than girls cause the girls are so, everything means something you know and everything has a symbol or subtext or something some underlying meaning to everything, whereas with guys it's what you say is what you get. I mean they are going to take it at face value . . . [The] girls; the whole meaning of the trip was shadowed by some conflict or something that was going on. With the

guys they were in it, they were living it. Whereas the girls, its like what's she doing, where is she, keep track on whose where and who is talking to whom. When this notion was presented to both Mario and Steve, both of them displayed the kind of lax and laid back reaction that Meg had described earlier. Both of the boys reported having seen no difference between boys or girls on the trip. In fact, Mario's comment was "Didn't everyone just have fun?"

To this day the social interactions of their trip remain as the main highlight of their adventure experience. Not unlike any other group, the participants did mention that at times there was tension and fighting, however, the overall closeness of everyone was still seen as a highlight. Once home, the participants commented that although the bonds created on the trip still existed and exist to this day, the opportunity to share in them has all but disappeared.

The Relationships

Up to this point in the chapter the discussion of self-perception themes has been mainly descriptive with a focus on reporting participants' interpretations. This has been done purposefully as my aim was to present the themes as perceived by the participants. As each theme emerged from within the stories that the participants were telling me and were subsequently discussed, relationships between them became more evident. The participants' collective responses from our conversations support this notion. Based upon these relationships, three components; the personal, the social, and the contextual, as outlined in figure 3 (p.70), have been identified as sharing an interconnectedness. From interpretations made from our conversations, the following section will attempt to describe these relationships.

The Relationships Among Components

From the collection of stories that I heard throughout their interviews, the participants seem to suggest that while on their adventure the personal and social components of their experience were impacted greatly by the contextual component. The contextual component (challenge, environment, and activities) provided the structure through which everything else occurred. There is, however, a relationship worth mentioning that starts as immediate as the trip begins.

Mere moments into my conversations with the participants it was more than evident that the catalyst for self-perception change occurred as a result of novelty and escape. Garst, Scheider, and Baker (2001) suggest from their work that the novel outdoor context introduces a sense of participant equality and I agree, but for a different reason. In their work, although participants came from various ethnic, socioeconomic, and neighborhood social groups, they were placed into a situation where everyone was essentially equal during the trip. While my participants also came from these various groups, they did, however, all come from the same school. Being so, a social structure and its norms previously existed, thus placing participants into a sense of order based upon their school experience. Nonetheless, equality did result as participants suggested that because of the novel experience and the opportunity to escape the confines of their home environment, unlike at school, they all shared the same desire- they all had the same goal in mind. It is this goal that allowed a sense of equality to occur thus creating interplay between the personal and social component almost on departure for their adventure.

The challenge of their trip, the duration and intensity of it, without a doubt influenced behavior change. The sheer demands placed on them physically, to cover great distances in adverse conditions, seems to have made the participants more responsible for themselves and more dependent upon one another. By relying on each other so strongly throughout each day to overcome a wide variety of physical and emotional stresses, the participants began to develop strong peer relationships that did not exist prior to their trip even though they were classmates. These newfound relationships were most evident at the end of each day's activities as participants continued to spend time together, talking, laughing, and simply being within close proximity to each other at all times. By socially interacting on an almost constant basis for five days in a variety of novel situations, all of the participants agreed that it helped enhance peer appreciation, respect, and teamwork. My journals and interview transcripts are filled with many examples of how each of them developed closer relationships with people because they had to the opportunity to see a different side of them.

The structure of their trips also provided the opportunity for the participants to see a different side to themselves. With the incorporation of small groups (chosen at random during class time) for many of the challenges that the participants faced, a further sense of group dependency occurred. Equality and interdependency appeared to impact the participants' socialization and the degree to which they felt peer acceptance. On their trip everyone was responsible for their share of the work, whether it was a physical activity or a camp responsibility, and at no time was anyone treated more importantly than anyone else including the trip leaders. As a result, participants appeared to place more importance on the groups' needs rather than their own needs and became much more

tolerant of each other's differences. Overall, the group became the focus as people were seen as sharing an experience rather than just having one.

This sharing of an experience spawned a constant interplay between the two components, the personal and the social, relevant to the needs of the participant. Each participant of this study suggested that it was a personal choice for wanting to go; the personal choice brought them together as a group, the group helped them discover much more about themselves and each other, and the context made all of it possible. Unanimously, the participants agreed that the relationship among the three components was in part responsible for the impact that their trip had on them.

What Their Trip Means Now!

By identifying and exploring the qualities of the adventure experience that impact self-perception, my aim was to develop an understanding of what the experience might have meant to each participant. Clearly, each participant returned home different than before his or her adventure experience. All participants indicated that their trip was seen as having a positive impact on them.

Upon returning home, each participant brought back with them a different construction of him or herself. Their trip had an impact on them, but what was it? Furthermore, does this impact still remain today? Is it as prominent as it was upon their return? Or, has it all been forgotten? In the next chapter I would like to explore further the impacts of their experience and what it all means to them now.

CHAPTER SIX
WHAT THE EXPERIENCE MEANS NOW-COMING HOME

For years I have been taking young people on outdoor adventure experiences with hopes of helping them see a different side to physical education, as well as, themselves. My aim started off as simple as wanting to provide a different venue in which to participate physically, however, it has evolved into a much more holistic event. Each time that I take students out on an adventure trip I see and hear them testify to being stretched in their entirety as thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social beings. Coming home they are different, better for the experience, but what happens next?

This question of whether or not program impacts transfer to the participant's home environment has contributed to the uncertainty of outdoor adventure program evaluation for quite some time. Changes that occur during outdoor adventure program participation might not be sustained when the individual returns to his or her home environment (Pommier & Witt, 1995). Davis, Ray, and Sayles (1995) suggest, "The nature of the [adventure] experience, although impactful, is a small intervention in the course of a young person's life, and does not necessarily translate into measurable differences and concrete behaviors" (p.447). The participants of this study, however, along with the likes of others (Garst, Scheider, and Baker, 2001; Neill and Richards, 1998; DeLay 1996a; Ewert, 1989) including myself would strongly suggest otherwise. Each participant of this study has indicated that to some degree the impacts that they received from their adventure experience still continue today. The degree, in which the impacts remain, according to the participants, depends as much on the individual as it does their home environment.

I began this study hoping to explore the long-term effects of adventure experiences. As the project evolved I became much more fascinated by how the participants were constructing new knowledge of themselves, others, and their environment and how this new knowledge might then influence or effect them at home. This chapter will begin with their voices. Then this chapter will discuss the development of this "different self" as suggested by the participants. Next, it will summarize what the trip has since meant to them. Lastly, it will conclude with a discussion of adventure programming with recommendations aimed toward promoting effective programs that can be included within a physical education curriculum.

The Participants' Perception Of What Their Trip Means Now!

What follows are the final four narratives from the participants perspective on the impacts from their adventure experience.

Meg:

As I have said throughout this interview process, the trip was a memorable experience for me. I went there [to the mountains] with strong personal goals of challenging myself physically and instead I came home with many strong friendships. Hanging out with Katrina and the others became more important than anything else. The people on the trip became so important to me; they are what made the experience so memorable.

Today, I am much more comfortable with people than I ever have been. Now, I'm sure that some of it has to do with maturity, but I know that a lot of it [the change] started with the bike trip. I would say that on a scale of one to a hundred, I still keep to

myself 80% percent of the time, but to me that 20% is huge. I am much more open to meeting new people, hanging out with different people, and going places that I might not know anyone than ever before.

The trip taught me that people are different than I thought. I remember that for 5 days we did absolutely everything together and at no time did I feel uncomfortable. We laughed, sang, and constantly joked around. To this day, I can still remember the disappointment I felt when it was time to come home. I could have stayed out there forever. (Interview three)

Steve:

For me the trip was about confidence. It just gives me confidence when I look at all of the big challenges that I overcame. I can remember starting out afraid of wanting to go; I didn't think that I could do it. But, as the trip went on and I continued to do it, along with the help from my friends, I could feel myself growing more confident each day. As I arrived home, I was totally pumped with excitement. I couldn't wait to tell everyone what I had just accomplished.

Today, I still use the trip to help me out. Since going there has been a lot of different times but the one that stands out the most is when I went to Mexico with friends and that was a big task, I wasn't sure I could do it. But, I looked at other things I had done since [including] the bike trip and decided to go and represent my church. Yah, it was kind of weird leaving everything here to go to live in a tent in Mexico for 3 weeks, paint a church, and basically do anything and everything with the same guys day in and day out, but I knew that I could get through it. I purposefully thought about the trip and

thought about the different challenges that I had done on the trip and that [Mexico] didn't seem as big of deal when comparing the two.

I learned a whole bunch of things [from the trip] but mostly the strength [confidence] because it made me feel better about myself. Also, it was fun times. I remember some of the fun experiences with friends on the trip and some of the challenges that we went through. We stuck in there and kept on going and that has become our motto. Today, we go snowboarding, biking, and do tons of other challenging things always trying to push ourselves like we did before. All of us have come so far [Steve and his immediate friends]! (Interview two & three)

Erin:

For me the trip was never about the physical aspect, I simply went because everyone else was going and it was a good chance to get away. In fact, if I had understood that the trip was to be as difficult as it was, I probably wouldn't have done it in the first place. Having gone, [however], I really learned that I am far more capable physically than I ever thought possible. When I look back, it is still hard for me to believe that I did all that. Although I haven't looked for a similar experience since the trip, I have started exercising regularly. Is it because of the trip, I don't know for sure? I can say that it did give me the confidence to get started, thinking that if I can do that trip, I can definitely do this.

As far as taking anything else positive from the trip that's difficult for me to say. So much of the trip was lost for me the second that I got home. I can remember walking in the door so proud of myself, excited by what I had just done. I couldn't wait to tell my

parents. But, as I did I could see that they didn't get it. Sure, they gave me the usual stuff like, "oh honey, we are proud of you!" But, they didn't mean it or if they did they didn't know what they were talking about. As I have gotten older, I guess I understand a little better that it would be hard for anyone to understand what I had gone through unless they themselves had done it. I guess I was just mad that no one was getting me. My friends at the time were the same way. They were like, "oh, sounds cool!" Cool, do they how hard it was, of course they couldn't.

Since the trip I have stayed friends with a few of the other [participants]. Really, it was the people that made everything worthwhile. As we have talked about it during our interviews, people on the trip were really different than at home. I miss that. Everyone got along so well, well almost everyone. There were a few who really showed their true colors. I can still remember how surprised everyone was when the two girls (no need to name names) really started wigging out. Everyone else though was great, especially T. J. Recently, him and I have started going out. It's amazing how much we have talked about the trip over the last little while. I told him that you and I were doing these interviews and he was very curious about it all. It has really helped me to talk about the trip with him. (Interview three)

Mario:

This trip was a blast, amazing, I had such a wonderful time, and it was such a positive experience for me. Today, I am still able to remember so many things because I kind of, I grasped everything. Do you understand? That I like… So many things happened yet the fact that I'm able to remember them is because it was such a good time.

It just stands out because it was different, I don't know how to explain it; I had such a good time that it just stands out.

If I had to narrow it down for you, I think that what I learned was perseverance. How you have to push; you have to have goals throughout your whole life and to reach those goals builds your confidence so you can reach that next goal. I actually learned how to do that, to work hard, how to adapt, and how to get along better with people. I always thought that I was good with like that stuff yet I learned more. For example, people that we might think are different aren't really different from us. We're not all that diverse from each other.

Looking back, I never knew how rewarding it was going to be and how it was going to help me along the way but it has. I think that it has helped me the most with my physical activities. I know that I use it with hockey a lot. Whenever we are training or in a difficult situation I tend to look back at the trip for help. It was so tough that it makes a lot of other things seem much easier. For example, I thought about it when I was bike riding with my buddy. We rode down to Sunridge from here [home, approximately 20 km]. And when I was riding from here, once again, all that went through my head was the leadership trip. I was thinking, "Come on this isn't as tough as what you've gone through before!" So, I kind of think about it a lot and I'm sure that it will stay with me forever. I'm sure that I'll feed off of it my whole life. (Interview two & three)

<u>I'm Different Now!</u>

The participants of this study came home from their adventure experience different than before having gone. Now, this may seem a rather obvious understanding that with any educational program something will be taught and something will be

learned, and it is important to state at the outset that the participants came home with an improved (more positive) self-perception of themselves. Obviously, these changes in self-perception occurred differently for each participant as their trip represented something unique to each of them. Nevertheless, each participant agreed that they came home with a different worldview. This view now includes the notion that they are different, others are different, and the environment in which they live is different.

In the last chapter, self-perception themes were addressed. Much of what was talked about was how the participants felt different because that place (their trip) allowed them to be different. There, it was new; it was a chance to get away. It was a place to be free, yet challenged. People were seen as being nicer, friendlier, even the adults. Most of all, it was a place that was unfamiliar, different from what they were used to. As such, Ewert (1989) and DeLay (1996a) suggest that because that place was unfamiliar it had attraction; it provided to each of them the comfort in which to explore.

Throughout the last chapter the teens tended to explore this place (their trip) relative to what things were like at home. Each participant tended to say that particular aspects of this place were *better*. According to constructivist understandings of the way people know and learn, individuals categorize new experience in the light of prior experience (Vygotsky, 1978; Robertson, 1994; Von Glasserfeld, 1995; DeLay, 1996a). Home, meaning the more than just their residence, was constantly compared to where they were. The differences between the two environments were now obvious to the participants as they ultimately developed a different "sense of place."

Sense of Place

Without question, the desire to "get away" was equally strong among each participant. This need or desire, I am sure, has been felt by all teenagers at some point or another as adolescents are consumed with trying to find out who they are and where they fit in (Harter, 2001). In essence, what they are searching for is what Kaplan and Kaplan (1982) refer to as their own "sense of place." Raffan (1992) characterized sense of "place" as "meaning a quality of space that lives in the minds and emotions of people who live there" (p. 21). Porteous (1990) asserts that an individual's goal is to experience and understand the world, not just gather facts about it. Surveying the research on environmental planning he concludes that instead of the over-constructed and safe playgrounds so popular now in city parks children need "loose parts" that they can modify and explore. Gallagher (1993) adds that being involved and wanting to explore an environment requires that it have complexity, containing enough variety to make it worth learning about, and mystery, the prospect of gaining more information about an environment.

To the teens of this study, as well as countless others that I have had the privilege of taking on adventure experiences, the novelty of these trips provides a wonderful opportunity for them to seek out a "sense of place" that may help them to define themselves. According to Kaplan and Kaplan (1982) humans need a relationship or affective bond with the land; it is something that is innate in all of us. Perhaps, this is the reason that students offer to go willingly because it is an opportunity to "get away" into the unknown and back to what is known. For the participants it was an opportunity to be free. To be doing, as they refer to as "something on my own and different than I

normally do." This alone was the first attraction to the experience, the desire to explore. This is the core of the notion of sense of place.

DeLay (1996a) states "sense of place is connected with a sense of self" (p.14). Beringer (1990) suggests that youth need to establish a sense of being, based in a sense of place that encompasses both their location in the social scheme of things as well as a connection with particular places. On their adventure experience the opportunity to explore, according to the participants, occurred as a result of not what this different environment was, but rather what is was not. The four of them repeatedly said that "this place" (their trip) was not like at home. Here, on their trip, they were not constrained by the same structures that they face on a daily basis. Particular attention during our interviews was given to that of school. On their trip the participants appreciated being away from what Dewey (1938) refers to as "patterns of organization" (p.18). Not having to deal with time-schedules, schemes of classification, of examination and promotion, of rules of order, and not to mention the social chaos that link the school halls together, was seen as a relief, a sense of freedom. Here, the environment seemed to be meant just for them. Learning and behaving was seen as being within their grasp. The entire environment was seen as one big school that they were actively involved in.

Meaningful Learning

One of the biggest changes in the participants' self-perception came as a result of learning through experience (experiential education) within this place. Opposite to what they often experience at home, passively receiving information in hopes of one day applying what was just given to them, the participants appreciated being fully engaged in

their learning. Gone was the notion of *static learning*[6], as the participants appreciated being involved in what was being taught. As mentioned earlier, outdoor adventure experiences almost always invite, and frequently demand, high levels of student engagement. Participants who choose to take part in an adventure experience may or may not anticipate the amount of physical and mental energy that they will be required to expend if they are to experience success. However, as in the case of these participants, once they were on their experience they were soon confronted with what the constructivists describe as "new knowledge" (Vygotsky, 1978), skills, and attitudes, which they had to quickly process and practice if they were to avoid failure. As in the participants' case, the newly acquired information had to be applied immediately to real-life situations, which to some degree involved a certain level of real or perceived risk.

As Ewert (1989) explains, "confronted with the real possibility of success and failure, the learning experience often takes on an element of excitement or what has been referred to as optimal arousal" (Fowler, 1966; Ellis, 1973) (p. 43). Students are engaged in the learning process because it is perceived to have real meaning. This was particularly true of Steve and Erin who had little prior experience with athletic success. For both of the teens doing this novel activity and having some immediate success provided a state, as they describe, of "euphoria that is hard to put into words." As Erin described during interview two, "for the first time I was doing a physical activity and was quite proud of myself. I was completing the events just like everyone else. That was fun!"

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[6] *Static Learning*-Dewey (1938) describes static learning as what is already incorporated in books and in the heads of elders. It is essentially static and it is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will occur in the future.

For Mario and Meg, both highly successful athletes in their own right, the real possibility of success and failure had a slightly different meaning. For both of them, there was little doubt in my mind that each of them would be able to handle their tasks physically, however, as Ewert (1989) suggests, "learning new skills, or applying old skills to new situations, almost always involves some degree of dissonance. And it is normal for the level of dissonance to increase as the degree of risk increases" (p. 43). Back home each of them was highly regarded, but what about here? Both Mario and Meg mentioned during their interviews the question about how they were going to do relative to everyone else was always on their mind. It is what they have grown accustomed to. During the trip, Mario remembered having thoughts like, "will I be able to find the strength to get up that next hill, will I do as well as I normally do, and what if I can't do it at all." Meg also echoed these same thoughts for a short time as she contemplated her "standing" within the group. These fears, and many others, real and perceived, are part of the adventure experience. As Ewert (1989) adds, they are the source of dissonance, anxiety, and doubt. But, beaten, they hold the promise of pride, satisfaction, and a renewed or expanded sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Just as in Erin and Steve's case, the feedback that they received from their adventure experience was perceived as real, valued, but more importantly it was the same. All four participants came away from each day sharing similar feelings of accomplishment.

Shared Learning

At the end of each day, any leader who practices group reflection and/or sets up his or her trip to include opportunities for trip participants to share their day's experiences

will tell you, I'm sure, that it is the highlight of their adventure. On our adventure experiences it is this time that I enjoy the most. More importantly, it is also during this time that I begin to observe the emergence of another underlying theme in this study, the notion that not only am I different, but so too are others.

As talked about previously, young people decide to participate in an adventure experience for a variety of reasons. Regardless of what they may be, it does preclude the possibility that they may arrive at a common understanding of that experience. According to DeLay (1996a) the very nature of adventure experiences is such that it can, and often does, have a kind of bonding effect on the participants. Meg, Erin, Steve, and Mario agreed that this became true as they continued to share their feelings of accomplishments, physical challenges, and humorous events. All of them agreed that by the end of their trip, their group had developed a shared understanding of their experience. Moreover, they began to develop a different understanding of each other.

This new understanding of others was not achieved by the sharing of experiences alone, but also emerged as a result of shared learning. Also known as cooperative learning, this behavior played a major role in the construction of new meanings for the participants.

When the teens began their adventure experience, each one of them brought with them an attitude that defined the way in which they expected to behave in and amongst their group. In the 1940's, Morton Deutsch, working with Lewin's theory of motivation, identified three possible behaviors: *competitive, individualistic,* and *cooperative.* According to Ewert (1989) this framework seems to accurately define the range of behaviors that could be expected in groups of young people on adventure experiences

who are given the opportunity to demonstrate their superior strength, knowledge, or skill. The first group sees the experience as a race. To them, the trip will produce winners and losers. The second group views the opportunity to accomplish personal goals that are in no way related to other members of their group. This person has no vision of needing to interact with group members other than perhaps their initial friends.

From my experiences with the four participants, I can say without hesitation that they too fell into these categories. Both Meg and Mario began their trip with the attitude that they would probably finish first. When we discussed this notion during our interviews together, both of them simply stated that they didn't know any different. "That's they way I always do things" (Meg, interview one; Mario, interview one & two).

For Erin and Steve, the trip was individualistic as each wanted to simply achieve some personal goals that they had outlined prior to going. "I never thought about finishing first, I simply wanted to not have to get off my bike if we were supposed to be riding," stated Steve during interview one. Likewise, Erin commented, "I never even thought about competing. Me, against some of them, no way, no thanks! "For me, it was just about getting finished."

Prior to going on their adventure experience, what the teens did not comprehend, although there were many attempts to explain it to them, was that adventure experiences also demands that they consider the *value of cooperative efforts.* On their trip, when each of them discovered, and each one did, the value of learning and working together, the whole dynamics of their trip changed for each one of them. All of them quickly discovered that people aren't always the way that you think they are. When some of the *"jocks"* helped Steve cook supper after a long day's ride, he discovered that they were

"pretty cool guys!" When Mario offered to ride back to find someone's glasses that were left behind, others took notice that he was giving up top spot to help someone. When Meg dragged Katrina up that hill they had an opportunity to make up that silly song that became the entire group's melody for the remaining days. When Erin stopped to help someone who was struggling, the entire group talked about it in awe as Erin barely had the strength to take care of herself, never mind helping someone else.

These few anecdotes are only the start of a long list of examples in which the participants found themselves working and learning together. With each passing experience their perception of others began to change drastically. As Erin pointed out in interview number one, "the trip has a tendency to bring out people's true nature and for the most part that's a good thing." All of the participants agreed that seeing people differently and being pleased with what they saw helped bring the group and their efforts closer together much more quickly. All of the participants echoed the idea that it can actually feel good to know that you are a part of a group of people that care about each other, that celebrates its collective achievements while allowing room for individual successes and failures.

Ewert (1989) adds in more straightforward terms, groups that develop strong cooperative spirits are groups that usually have the best possible experience. These groups also appear to be hungrier for new knowledge and skills, and demonstrate an ability to master them more easily (Johnson, Johnson, and Tauer, 1979). The individual members of such groups tend to feel better about themselves and their experience (Johnson and Johnson, 1983; Ewert, 1989). For the members of this study this was

exactly the case; they felt better about themselves because they realized that they were different than they thought, but so too were others.

A Different Perception of the Outdoors

The participants' initial reaction to the environment upon returning home from their adventure experience was that it was "a great place to do things" (Mario, post-trip reflective notes). To them, nature seemed to have been primarily a setting for their trip, the activities, and the social interaction. Mainly, its role was that of facilitator.

Their perception of nature, however, began to change during the interview process as we continued to discuss nature as a place to explore, challenge oneself, learn one's limits, and seek the unfamiliar. What eventually emerged from the participants was that nature was now thought of differently than before. While it was still considered picturesque, it was also thought of as a place for challenge, yet without the notion of conquering. What it became for the participants was one of individual challenge against him or herself rather than challenging nature itself.

During our interviews, the participants spoke frequently about the many challenges that they faced: the personal, social, physical, however, none was more often mentioned than that of the environment. What initially started out as a love for the outdoors (the birds, trees, animals, etc.) as mentioned by all of the participants, quickly transformed into feelings of disdain. All of the participants agreed that during the activities of the first day there was little time to appreciate the beautiful outdoors when all you could do was to bury your head and ride. During interview one, Erin underlined this

notion when she stated, "By the end of the first day, if I had to climb one more hill or hear one more bird chirp, I think I would have lost it!"

At the start of the second day, and most definitely by the end of it, what began to emerge for the participants was more of a dualistic love/hate relationship. Perhaps it was because of the accomplishments of the first day, the sharing of them at night, the developing spirit of cooperation, or a combination of all these factors, each participant began to take notice of their environment. Mario suggested that during the second day he really took notice of this love/hate relationship on that last hill.

> I couldn't believe that the last 5 kilometers from the hostel were straight up hill and with each pedal I got madder and madder. I thought that it was never going to end. I remember that there were only three of us who were able to keep going and we worked hard together. Although, what I remember the most is when we finally got up to the top, all of us got off our bikes and kissed the ground. The dirt got in my mouth but it was great. I had never been so happy to be somewhere.

That evening Mario suggested to me that he was "so pumped about what he had accomplished." Similarly, during the interviews the remaining participants mentioned the same thing. All of them spent the evening talking with others about their accomplishments. What changed from the previous night, however, was that the environment was now spoken about in terms of respect.

As Hopper (2003) suggests, the participants were coming to terms with their task; that the hatred or the vindictiveness with the environment that they felt previously was disappearing and was being replaced by a new relationship. As the participants suggested to me during our interviews, it was a relationship that saw them working with the

environment to accomplish their goals. "Each day I felt stronger and stronger about where I was and what I was doing... It was almost as though I was thankful for all of the hills as it was because of them, and other things, that I was feeling so good about myself" (Steve, interview two). Similarly, Erin echoed Steve's comment during interview two as she suggested that the hills were helping her to become tougher, a better rider, and generally feel good about what she was doing. She also suggested that a thank you was in order as "the outside [environment] helped me to see inside."

This new relationship was particularly evident to the two athletes Meg and Mario, who were beginning to see this place, this experience as a non-competitive atmosphere. "It wasn't about beating the mountains," Meg commented, "because, really that's impossible." Mario added, "We really are quite insignificant when compared to out here. Here [the mountains], they are in control and we can only hope to achieve what we set out to do." Meg and Mario also commented on how tough things really are and how everyone needs to work together to be successful. "Most of the group members are faced with the same problems and challenges, with no one being [exempt] from the conditions (Mario, interview one). Mario continued to suggest that the outdoors makes sure that everyone will get a chance to perform according to his or her own ability and what this does is to quickly show everyone that they need the support of the group if they are going to survive this place. "Nobody can beat this place and so you learn to respect it."

Throughout their trip, as well as, the interview process, all four of the participants definitely reached and therefore constructed a new understanding of the outdoors. For each of them, it is no longer merely a place to admire, but has become a place in which to adore and respect. Moreover, it has become a place where they fit; where they feel better

about themselves, understand themselves and others. As DeLay commented previously, "A sense of place is connected to a sense of self." And while this can be agreed upon, the participants of this study would also like to suggest, a sense of self can also be connected to a sense of place (Mario, interview three).

The Construction of Self

The Social Structure Was Different

In examining the development of the self, it has become increasingly more evident that the self is both a cognitive and a social construction (Harter, 1999). Constructivist epistemologies propose that learners use prior experience coupled with new experiences to produce knowledge. This is a process of building an understanding of the world that is meaningful to the person within their sociohistorical context.

Both Vygotsky and Dewey agree that the human condition is based in social interactions. Humans are initially social beings who slowly develop their individual selves through their relationships (in experiences) with others. Dewey (1916) makes the argument that humans are only human through their social interconnectedness with each other (and actually suggests that helplessness is, in some ways, a positive attribute because it helps to foster this interconnectedness). The essential questions that need to be asked involve how these extraordinary connections come about, and how the individual begins to take control of them (Dewey, 1925). Vygotsky (1997) suggests that it is the ability to develop cooperative activity through complex social relationships that separates

mature humans from all other animals. Humans are best understood as products of these complex relationships (Glassman, 2001).

Notice how similar this sounds to the trips that the students participated on. Each of them came into their trip with prior physical experiences and culturally constrained understandings. On their trip, however, they experienced what Dewey (1934) refers to as "secondary experiences[7]." These experiences as he suggests allowed for a more natural flow between the personal and social component and thus appeared to be seamless. These experiences helped produce an evolved sense of self. As Dewey continues, it is this evolved sense that makes an experience compelling for the individual, which would allow the experience to continue over extended periods of time. Thus, it would be reasonable to suggest that the participants have come home from their adventure with the constructions that they are now different, others may now be different, and so to is the environment.

Glassman (2001) suggests that Dewey and Vygotsky's share similar ideas concerning the relationship of activity and learning/development, especially the roles everyday activities and social environment play in the educational process. Their emphasis is on the importance of shared everyday activities. As we have seen, in building their construction of a different self, the teens relied heavily on the experiences and the environment of their trip. To each of them, the *context* meant everything. For five days each of them shared both physical and social activities. Aside from sleeping and personal reflection time, all of the participants surrounded themselves with each

[7] Secondary experiences are experiences that Dewey defines as being out of ordinary life experiences, which usually cause the individual to think more deeply about what has happened by comparing it to ordinary experiences.

other for the majority of their experience. Together they formed new constructions of themselves and together they came home with them as well.

Once home, however, all of the participants agreed that things were not like they were on the trip. Upon arrival, each participant noticed how quickly the group disbanded from the parking lot. Left alone to share the experience with their families, all of the participants commented that it just wasn't the same. On the trip, they commented, that when we would talk about what we did or were doing, everyone could relate. "Back home," Meg suggested, "although my parents were nodding and shaking their head in agreement, they just didn't get it. I think that they were proud and stuff, but how could they know what we had gone through, they weren't there." All of the participants echoed similar comments about how difficult it was to parlay the experience to their families. Erin commented, "It was as though I was speaking another language."

According to Vygotsky (1978) in essence the participants were speaking another language. He continues by suggesting that each time an experience occurs, human beings create what is referred to as "new knowledge" or more specifically "new language." Furthermore, this new language "is the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development . . . it occurs when [language] and practical activity, two completely independent lines of development, converge" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.24). This convergence, Harter (1999) suggests, is one of the main elements in the construction of a different self; a self that the participants quickly discovered was hard to describe.

Back at school, the four participants have faced a similar *roadblock*. After repeated attempts by all of them to try and describe their experiences to their friends, they commented that they felt the same lack of success as with their families. "I remember my

friends being excited for me, but they didn't have a clue," said Mario. "One of my friends said that it sounded *cool*. Cool, ya it was, but it was so much more than that," stated Erin. "No, my friends couldn't really get it either, but they wanted to," commented Steve. "It is probably one of the main reasons that we do the adventure stuff that we do now."

Each of the four participants suggested that the Leadership class took on so much more meaning after returning home from their adventure. To them, it became one of the only places that they could share their experience. "It was nice to get a chance to have everyone together again. The class was so much more comfortable with each other, I know I was" (Meg, interview two). "It was great to have a chance to *debrief* as you call it, but for us it was more like *re-living* the experience," suggested Mario. "The only problem was that as soon as the class was over the same thing happened like in the parking lot when everyone got home." All of the participants shared this view as they repeatedly mentioned the lack of opportunity for people to actually to do things together at school. Mario was adamant in his description of how school is set up to be what he called "the individual program." "Everyday we sit in our desks, asked to be quiet, told to get to work, and wonder what we are doing. Then there is the odd time that we are asked to work in a group, but we know we're not." All of the participants agreed that there was just a different mindset at home. Although there was a strong desire to share what they had experienced, each participant whether at school or at home realized that there was just not enough people out there that have had similar experiences. Unlike on their trip, sharing at home was seen as a challenge that was to be an unsuccessful exercise.

Although a significant amount of time has passed since their adventure (1 ½ and 2 ½ years later) the participants still agree that there was a major *social* letdown when they arrived back home. Each of the four participants greatly appreciated the social structure that was established on their adventure but quickly remembered and still remember that it just not that way at home. All of them agreed that it has not been forgotten; bringing it home, however, was just not possible. Mario was able to summarize all of the participants' comments when he suggested:

> At home, to try and change the way things are is impossible. It's just too big for one group of kids. There are just too many distractions. There are just too many things, people, pulling you to keep things the way that they are. I still remember how we are not all that different from each other, but who cares. Although we now know different, it doesn't mean we're able to act different. (Interview one)

On the trip, the social experience was probably the most important aspect of the trip for the teens. The importance of the group seemed to be a stabilizing force in the new and unfamiliar reality of the environment; to a large degree it is what made the experience so memorable. Back home, however, that familiarity returned and so too did the existing social structures. Even in light of this new knowledge, the four participants quickly returned to their familiar groups and still remain with them today.

I Have Remained Strong . . .

While it may be disappointing to look at how things have been constructed socially since the time of their trip, each of the four participants unanimously agreed that the personal impacts felt on the trip have remained intact today (for the readers referral

appendix B outlines these impacts). The positive experience that they had produced a variety of personal benefits that centered around psychological, sociological, educational, and physical dimensions. The exact benefits that each participant received are as unique as the individual themselves. Common amongst each one, however, is the psychological perspective of self-efficacy.

All four of the participants reported coming home with a renewed or higher sense of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977) self-efficacy refers to personal judgments of how well one can perform actions in specific situations that may contain ambiguous, unpredictable, and stressful features. He adds that it is concerned with people's perception of their efficacy to exercise influence over the events that affect their lives and how this affects their psychological functioning. It is believed that people's beliefs about their efficacy affect the sorts of choices they make in very significant ways. By accomplishing what each one did on their adventure thus maintaining or raising their perceived level of efficacy, the participants have in turn continued to construct a different self since the time of their trip. All of the participants agreed that they have gone on to do things since such time that have direct correlation to their adventure.

For example, Meg has gone on to involve herself in social situations that she would have not dared previously. Steve has increased his cycling tenfold, but more interestingly he has also begun to ski, snowboard, run, etc., all things that he thought that he could never do before. Mario believes that his potential to push himself harder in all areas of his life is now possible. Lastly, Erin whose disdain for exercise has been well mentioned within this work, has begun an exercise program that she now believes she can accomplish. Moreover, what the participants underlined to me is that they now have a

higher personal standard or as Vygotsky (1978) describes as a *new normal*. The notion that *if I can do this, I can do anything* was shared by all of the participants.

According to Bandura (1997) this heightened new normal enables the individual the capacity for *self-directedness* and *forethought*. With them, people plan courses of action, anticipate their likely consequences, and set goals and challenges for themselves to motivate, guide, and regulate their activities. In essence, they do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self-worth, and refrain from actions that evoke self-devaluative reactions. All of the participants have come away from their experience with the belief that they are now capable of things that they never thought possible. By being able to recall the events of their experience, they now see more future goals as being attainable. Meg is contemplating going to university abroad without anyone that she knows. Steve has completed one missionary trip and has plans for several more along with his continued adventures to the mountains. Mario is looking into the possibility of becoming an adventure leader. Erin, although not interested in repeating the trip, is interested in doing some other type of adventure experience.

The participants of this study have come away from their adventure experience with positive personal benefits. These impacts have been maintained because they were thought of as something the teens had control over. As Erin suggested, "Personally, I have control over what I do and think, but I don't over others. The trip benefited me specifically in certain ways and I have continued to think about them." Mario was quick to add, "I have also benefited from that trip and I'm sure that I always will!

Moving Towards Effective Programs

With an understanding of some of the social and personal constructions involved in an adventure experience, attention can now be turned towards developing programs that might effectively convey a care for self, others, and the environment. The accent of this section will be on adventure trips such as the ones in this study that I believe can be included into a number of different educational classes such leadership, outdoor education, and physical education.

Educational Philosophy

While it seems that adventure programs have a major impact on the lives of the participants, often there are problems with implementation. According to DeLay (1996a) first and foremost, adventure based programs usually state what participants will learn. Adventure leaders must know and implement appropriate educational principles. A body of knowledge of experiential education and research does exist as discussed in this work (Ewert, 1989; Knapp, 1992; DeLay, 1996a). Unfortunately, many teachers and outdoor practitioners don't know it. Or, if they do, the educational opportunities are often underestimated. Focus is quite often directed simply at the environment, the physical, or the social aspect of the trip. Moreover, based upon my own experiences as both a beginning leader and teacher, students are then left alone to construct some type of meaning from their adventure. The trips talked about within this work are case in point. Although the participants came away with long-term impacts, much of this was achieved because of the context and original structure of the trip and not necessarily by the aimed educational principles. Students were granted the freedom to explore and then asked to

reflect upon it. This type of format may not always produce the desired long-term results.

The problem with freedom to explore, according to Dewey (1938) is that it is often identified with freedom of movement, or with the physical side of activity. He adds that it is important to understand that an increased measure of freedom of outer movement is a *means*, not an *end*. The educational problem is not solved when this aspect of freedom is obtained. "Everything then depends, so far as education is concerned, upon what is done with this added liberty" (p. 61). What is needed, he suggests, are brief intervals of quiet reflection time provided to even the youngest students. "But, they are periods of genuine reflection only when they follow after times of more overt action and are used to organize what has been gained in periods of activity" (p. 63).

As an example, the participants on an adventure trip might have extensive physical and social experiences, talk about them, generalize about them, consider them at home, and then experience home with the constructed ideas. On our trips many opportunities were missed to help participants think about the experiences that they were having. Aside from some brief social interactions with leaders during the day, the only opportunity the participants had to talk about what they were experiencing was in the evening when we would sit in common areas that had striking resemblances to our classrooms. Left until the end of the day, I am quite certain that many potential personal, social, and environmental constructions were lost.

Trip leaders should be clear that when they organize events, the experience is not the final result. True to the nature of experiential education, time must be organized to

allow for opportunities for the participant to use in constructing new knowledge. What all trip leaders must understand is that by being given the opportunity to explore, students willingly want to share what they have discovered. It is because of this freedom that leaders/teachers can possibly gain knowledge of the individuals with whom they are traveling. In school, "Enforced quiet and acquiescence prevent [participants] from disclosing their real natures" (Dewey, 1938, p. 62). On trips, leaders should understand that they have willing participants and that it is up to them to provide the most effective reflective techniques to facilitate the learning process for the learner.

A good example from the participants of this study may have been when Erin had climbed that first big hill. If one of the leaders had taken the time to sit down with her, talk to her, help her begin the reflective process right there and then, and help her to look ahead in the trip and at home, perhaps the remainder of that first day may have been more enjoyable. Perhaps, she wouldn't have had to wait to begin building her self-efficacy; it could have been more immediate.

In addition to the process of reflection, adventure leaders/teachers have many other aspects to consider, including but not limited to inter- and intra-personal relationships, safety, technical ability to lead activities, individual needs assessment, daily operation of the trip (DeLay, 1996a). Unfortunately, many leaders/teachers lack the necessary training to ensure not only a safe experience but an educative one as well. As Ewert (1989) explains there is tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of those who plan wilderness adventures. Yet, little effort is being made to reach the leaders/teachers at the trip level. Often, those who are planning the adventures are merely those who have had outdoor experience with little educational experience, or those who have had

educational experience with little or no outdoor experience. The research is available, as I have discovered throughout this process, however, I had completed many trips before being exposed to it.

In the end, process is not all. Content does matter (Dewey, 1938). Something will be taught and learned and much of that relies on the leaders/teachers. Trip leaders must remember that youth have a natural desire to explore which in effect constitutes the starting point. But, there is no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some remaking of the knowledge that they discover. New knowledge will only remain with them if a connectedness is developed between what was known and what was learned. Therefore, leaders must have a clear understanding of their own knowledge and intent of their programs, as it is essential to ensure a positive educational experience for the participants.

Addressing The Personal Component

The personal impacts from adventure education have long been taken for granted. In recent years studies such as Hattie et al.'s (1997) review suggest as many as 40 different outcomes, ranging from leadership to improved self-concept have been identified. While as impressive as this may be, programs that are not designed to help participants construct new knowledge of themselves are leaving to chance that the program impacts will have a lasting impression.

Some suggestions:

- Participants involved in adventure-learning programs need to be completely immersed in their experiences. Meaning that they need to be provided with *novel* situations in which they are given some room to *explore*.
- Prior to going on their adventure within the planning process, participants need to begin the reflective process as outlined by Kolb (1976). By beginning to address *what* this trip may mean, leaders would have a better understanding of how to help the individual with their constructions.
- On their trip, participants must be provided the opportunity for personal reflection after overt physical activity. Reflection, however, must be made more personal for the individual in order for it to be effective in helping renew or develop higher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy implies a personal appraisal and weighing of both ability and nonability factors. Bandura (1997) suggests the following questions will help renew or encourage a higher self-efficacy. These questions should be used as a frame to word appropriate questions for students.
    - What was your perceived ability for the activity?
    - Did you exceed that perceived level?
    - How much effort did you need?
    - Was it more or less than you thought?
    - How difficult did you perceive the task to be?
    - Did you exceed that perceived level?
    - Did you think that you would require assistance with the task?
    - How much assistance did you receive?
    - What were you previous patterns of success or nonsuccess?
- Create for the participants successful situations where the most powerful efficacy source, performance accomplishment, can come into play, situations that are based on personal mastery and individual perceived competence.

Ewert (1989) suggests that in the outdoor educational setting, self-efficacy theory is often applied through the use of rewards and goals. Rewarding experiences inform and motivate while goal setting establishes standards by which one's actions can be focused. Rewarding experiences, however, depending on how they are developed may help to reinforce the school based reward system thus robbing the participants of some of the novelty of the experience. Instead:

- Help participants consider personal rewards of actual accomplishment, encouraging pride in ownership.
- Help participants to set goals that are personal, social, short-term, and attainable. Make sure that once goals are accomplished, that acknowledgement of success ensues.

For many participants, self-efficacy is a cornerstone of adventure programs (Ewert, 1989). Addressing it formally may help participants emerge from their trip with feelings of competence and higher perceived levels of skill. In the long run this may prove to be of great value as participants are more likely to continue in some form of physical activity, and, hopefully, be more willing to participate in lifestyle pursuits.

Addressing The Social Component

Recent studies (DeLay, 1996a; Garst, Scheider, and Baker, 2001) have indicated that the social group was a major component of the adventure experience. In time, the participants will naturally develop a social group as they seek out the familiar in the midst of the unfamiliar. Leaders, however, can help encourage the group formation, especially in the initial stages. The formation of a strong group can encourage the

emergence of shared meaning and help individuals to accomplish what perhaps they thought was impossible. Progen (1979) suggests that in adventure experiences, together, two, three or four can do what is impossible for one to accomplish. For example:

- Organize and encourage the formation of a variety of different groups. Activity groups, clean-up groups, cooking groups, etc.
- Change groups often.
- Plan large group activities.
- Set aside time for group reflection as well as individual reflection. This is an important time for the entire group to get caught up on experiences that occurred during the day that individual or small groups might have missed.

On the adventure trips, the participants experienced the pull of the group as they continued to share meaning through their activities and accomplishments. To recognize that the phenomena of shared meaning is one that must evolve over time and as a result of shared experience is a critical first step (Ewert, 1989). The leader that begins the trip by imposing what the experience will mean for the group fails to understand the important role that only time can play. Instead:

- Seize opportunities to promote group discussion and interpretation of shared experience.
- Take time to allow for individuals to feel comfortable enough to share personal experiences as they do much to help build shared meaning.

In the social situations of adventure experiences, leaders must be aware that participants are still going to develop smaller groups within the context of the larger.

Leaders should respect the participants' choices while always trying to develop the unity of the entire group.

The lack of similar perceived social situations at home had a detrimental long-term effect on the participants. Each of the participants came home with new knowledge of how a group can work together, laugh together, fail and succeed together. Unfortunately, for all of the participants the familiarity of home was seen as being more dominant than what they had just gained. It is my belief that more opportunities need to be created for participants to continue to share their experience. It has been my experience in the past that once participants return home from an adventure, after a transitory debriefing period, they are left alone to continue their constructions on their own. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests a mentor is key to the continuing constructions of new knowledge. Therefore, leaders could:

- Help participants consider their new knowledge at home. Make aware of situations that they may use what they now know.
- Focus debriefing sessions on more than just reliving the experience. Help bring to life the experience now that it is home. By helping to connect what was learned on the trip to their home environment will ensure continued construction.

Addressing The Contextual Component

Much to the displeasure of outdoor leaders such as DeLay (1996a), my adventure trips have been a set of activities using the wilderness as a setting. Still, the activities, as well as the setting were a motivation for the participants on the trip. Although my intent was to never ignore the natural environment, my preoccupation with the development of

the self has steered me in that direction. My belief has always been that through an understanding of self comes an understanding of place. Nonetheless, developing sensitivity to the natural world is important, thus leaders should plan program elements within the activity framework to promote the connection of the participant and the natural world.

- Teach and practice sensitivity to the natural world.
- Provide opportunities for reflection and observation of the natural world. Examples may include nature hikes, eco-discussions, nature identification, etc.
- Discuss ethical issues regarding care of self, others, and the environment. How does one respect the earth?

As mentioned earlier, the activities were seen as a major draw to the experience. All of the participants noted that it was because of their familiarity with the activities, which made them appealing on these trips. Because there were so many novel aspects to their trip, the participants took comfort in knowing or believing that they would be successful with the scheduled activities. Recognizing and understanding this notion is important when creating a teaching and learning adventure based environment. What is needed is a balance between the newly acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the real-life challenges against which they are tested. When there is a balance between boredom and anxiety, and the challenges confronted are real and appropriate to their skills, Czikszentmihalyi (1975) suggests a kind of "flow" takes place.

- Choose activities that are appropriate to the age and skill level of the participants.
- Discuss potential activities with participants. Their feedback will help shape the experience for everyone involved.

- Create active situations that are challenging, yet successful.

Choosing familiar activities in novel situations can be as stimulating as choosing new activities in unfamiliar settings. The participants of this study reported having some prior experience with the activities as it helped to offset the demands placed upon them by the environment. Furthermore, by having some prior success with the activities, it made it much easier for them to recognize their accomplishments. All of the participants were successful in creating "new physical normals".

Experiential Education and P.E.

Their adventure trip helped to inform the participants of a new physical education experience. For all of them thus far, it has helped to create or encourage a physically sensitive lifestyle. It did not, unfortunately, have any correlation to their existing physical education program. Common from all of the participants was the notion that PE class is nothing like their trip. The participants offered these ways that PE could be more like their adventure experience.

- Continue to use lifestyle sports within the program. "Not everyone likes volleyball seven years or seven weeks in a row."
- Personal reflection might be a better way to assess than to be testing skills.
- Develop a goal-setting program that helps people improve individually. Continuous reassessment of goals as to ensure growth.
- Add other novel programs such as TGFU.[8]

[8] TGFU-Teaching Games For Understanding according to Thorpe, Bunker, & Almond (1986) is a method, which enables the student to achieve a new level of skilful performance by playing modified or simplified games. In this approach, the teacher uses a series of guided discovery questions to help the student

- Encourage the social aspect of PE. It doesn't always have to be about competing. People enjoy doing physical activity together.
- PE is also about fitness. Use different ways to encourage fitness within the environment. It doesn't have to be about fitness testing.
- Use PE time for sharing experiences. Positive physical accomplishments of others may encourage some people to try something new.

I still believe that physical education programs have the potential to help inform physically sensitive lifestyles. With the addition of experiential education and a constructivist approach to learning, participants have the potential to extend PE into meaningful learning and activity. The participants of this study suggested that it was the way that the activities were done that made their impact so meaningful. All of them stated that it wasn't just about the cycling, hiking, climbing, canoeing, or any other physical activity, but rather it was about the relationships of the three components (personal, social, and contextual). Physical education programs need to go beyond the traditional programs of skill acquisition and move towards helping participants construct long-term physical lifestyle goals. Moreover, they need to continue to move outside of some of the typical constraints that the four walls of the gymnasium offer and venture out into the natural environment to help facilitate the learning of cognitive, motor, and social skills. This study would suggest that PE programs could benefit by offering more opportunities to be part of a group setting, more opportunities for participants to receive feedback on their efficacy from teachers and students, and more opportunities for problem solving tasks that are typical of outdoor education.

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understand strategy (way of playing), tactics (way of playing the opponent), and technique (way of moving) within a game.

Constructivism in Physical Education

While there have been remarks made within this work that would suggest serious criticisms aimed towards traditional educational practices, there is no desire on my part to completely abolish today's current physical education programs. Wortham (2001) suggests that all practices construct the world in their own way, carry values of certain sorts and lend themselves to certain futures at the expense of others. What I hoped to propose by doing this work is an addition to traditional PE programs, one that opens new possibilities for practice.

Within this work we have discussed the ways in which the participants related to and constructed their impacts from their experience. Constructivism assumes that construction is an ongoing process. According to DeLay (1996a), however, new constructions are a result of being dissatisfied with the old ones. If this were the case, the participants of this study must have been in search of new ways to be physically active. Perhaps disgruntled with the past, the participants were embracing the shift from subject and child centered modes of practice to more of a focus on relationships. In outdoor education this emphasis is not new. The relationships among the personal, social, and contextual component play a significant role in helping to make memorable experiences.

The participants of this study recognized early on that there was something special about how all the components fit together. All of them agreed that the context meant everything. For the constructivist, then, this suggests that educational dialogues should be wedded as closely as possible to the circumstances of application (Wortham, 2001). Bruner (1996) refers to this as knowing by doing as opposed to trying to know by repeating as suggested by the participants. To this end he argues, that on "the basis of

what we have learned in recent years about human learning, [we do best] when it is participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative, and given to constructing meanings rather than receiving them" (p. 84). Throughout the interview process all of the participants suggested that this is not what PE is perceived to be. It is my understanding that they were trying to tell me that it is not about construction, but rather execution.

What Does It All Mean?

After writing the two previous sections above I was left contemplating the impact that adventure education has had on my PE program. Ultimately, this has guided me back to my original goal for this work: to explore the long-term effects of experiential education in a physical education adventure program. What has the experience meant to the participants and has it produced any long-term effects?

Without hesitation I can say that the results from this study are a positive endorsement for the inclusion of adventure programs within a physical education framework. Moreover, experiential education definitely has something to offer. A particular impressive strength would be its circular motion of reflection, action, and then further reflection. Coupled with adventure education, the two of them seem to trigger in participants an ongoing cycle of personal growth, as evidence by the positive long-term findings within this work. Changes in self-perception that occurred on their trip have continued to their home environment. The notion that "if I can do this, I can do anything," remains strong in each of the participants. Overall this confirms that the effects from their trip have lasted well beyond the immediate buzz of their experience. Neill and Richards (1998) indicate that with most forms of intervention and training there

is a steady loss of benefits once the program has finished. This makes the findings from this study particularly exciting. Educational methodologies, which produce long-lasting positive changes in self-perceptions, are needed.

The participants of this study, although different in many ways, still continue to share similar constructions of their experience even though a significant amount of time has passed since their trip. Each one of them reported returning home from their adventure different than they were before. This belief still holds true today. Unanimously, they all agreed to having an improved self-concept as a result of their experience. Changes in how they view themselves, others, and their environment continue to exist for each one of them. And while the depth of the changes is as individual as the individuals themselves, the fact that they share so many similar constructions is testimony to the potential effect that these programs have on a variety of different people.

Individually, yes there are some significant differences in the constructions that each participant has made since their trip. Meg, the highly competitive female, continues to explore the social understandings that she gained from the experience. Steve, who had very few positive physical experiences prior to going, continues to expand his repertoire of physical activity. Erin, who struggled physically through out her entire trip, now sees exercise as a sense of well-being, but more importantly, also sees it as a sense of empowerment. Lastly, Mario, whose only goal was to finish first, has realized that there is so much more to physical activity than just winning.

These individual differences have provided key insights into how different types of students report their understandings of the effect of their trip. Both Meg and Mario,

classified as the competitive adventure type (Ewert, 1989), have somewhat changed their view of PE. Both of them entered their trip with their heart set on first place only to discover that it wasn't about that. Likewise, Erin and Steve, classified as the individual adventure type (Ewert, 1989), have both changed their attitude towards PE. Now, they feel that perhaps they are more capable of athletic success than they previously thought. While leaders must be cognizant of individual differences, what I have taken from these understandings is that once again they are testimony to the potential effect that these programs have on a variety of different people.

In addition to confirming that adventure education really does work, the participants of this study have also provided insight into how the ongoing positive benefits are achieved. Changes in self-perception occurred as a result of an interconnectedness between the three dominant components from the self-perception themes. The interplay between the components: the personal, social, and contextual helped to create, according to the participants, an overall context that allowed a sense of freedom to explore the experience. What they were able to discover were three more components that made the experience more meaningful: meaningful learning, shared learning, and a connection to the environment. All together, the participants suggested, the components worked in unison to produce a significant novel experience that they hope to see in future educational experiences.

Lastly, I believe that this study has also had an impact on the participants. It may be in a small way, but the use of ethnographic-narrative inquiry has helped the participants further their constructions from their trip experience. Each one of them has indicated to me that the interview process has allowed them to re-live the experience.

More importantly, by being able to discuss the experience once again with somebody who was also a participant has provided them the opportunity to view their trip from perhaps a different perspective. As Mario often said, "I never thought of it that way!" It was also suggested by Erin that the interview process allowed her the opportunity to look further at herself, "it's as though I am kind of doing some of the research!" This sense of ownership went a long way in keeping the participants actively involved in the process of this study. Often, it was not uncommon for me to receive telephone calls from the participants to ask of my progress and when the next opportunity to converse would occur. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest:

> It is certainly possible to coerce people into compliance, but it is impossible to coerce them into excellence – by anyone's definition. Only empowerment can invest people with a sense of self-efficacy, which enables them to act in productive ways. Only empowerment can encourage risk-taking, unleash energy, stimulate creativity, instill pride, build commitment, prompt the taking of responsibility, and evoke a sense of investment and ownership. (p. 226-227).

As such, this study has also made a difference to me. Similar to the reaction that Lauzon's (2002) research had on her, I have also discovered that research can profoundly change your life as a person. This inquiry has helped to reinforce my use of adventure education within a physical education framework. Furthermore, it has encouraged me to actively pass this information along to other physical education teachers with hopes of broadening the overall concept of PE.

Recommendations For Further Research

Although the impacts of their experience have been discussed within this research, we still don't know much about the degree to which they are felt. Moving beyond description and into explanation will prove to be as difficult as it is necessary. Ewert (1989) suggests that this will require a more in depth understanding of the related fields of psychology, sociology, and education.

More participatory research should be another area of consideration in this field. As highlighted by this research, the participants appreciated being involved in the process. As each of them mentioned, it helped them to relive the experience as they perceived it, but also helped them to form new constructions of the experience based upon the discussions that we were engaged in. All of them suggested that the interview process generated new thoughts, ideas, and memories that they perhaps had forgotten or never considered previously. The research process, in essence, provided a sense of ownership for each participant.

One area of research that has received considerable attention is that of the psychological perspective. This perspective includes the behavior of the individual as well as his or her attitudes, feelings, etc. What has not been considered is how this relates to the leaders and their training and development. As discussed in this research, often leaders are not properly educated to deal with the incredible educational potential of adventure experiences.

More research into the experiences of the group should be done. What needs to be considered is not only the formation of the group while on the experience but also

what can be done to further preserve the group experience once the participants have returned home.

In light of the knowledge that I have gained from DeLay's (1996a) research, I would like to see more research on interaction with the natural world. Investigations into the forms of attachment that people have with their places, as well as with places in which they visit for a short time. Also worth considering is the impact outdoor programs have on a natural area over a period of time.

Much of what the participants talked about in this research was the impact that their experience had on their self-efficacy. I would be interested to know if this translated to higher self-efficacy in all their behaviors or whether it applied more specifically to their physical component as they have suggested.

Lastly, this research should be replicated to understand if other adventure based programs produce similar impacts for the participants. None of the conclusions in this research are particularly surprising; rather they merely support similar research that has been based upon shorter time periods. More long-term studies are needed to fully understand the participants' experiences. The more understanding that we have, the better we are able to plan adventures that allow participants to form improved construction of themselves, others, and their environment.

CONCLUSION

In recent years we have come to know the effects of current lifestyles on the human condition. These include impacts such as declining participation in daily physical education, rising obesity rates, laziness, increased mechanical aids, and the continued evolvement of our fast food, fast-paced society. The urgency to develop programs that would involve more people in physically active lifestyles increases. More importantly, given the ever-increasing unhealthy state of society, it is essential that such programs produce long-term effects so that more physically sensitive lifestyles will be passed on from one generation to the next.

For these reasons, the traditional PE programs that the students have come to know and expect must be broadened with programs that not only develop awareness, but also allows for the transference of that awareness into action. The need for action and involvement has always been important, and yet there are so many programs within today's educational system that continue to pacify learners who are pleading with teachers to lead them. Merely changing a program, however, is only one aspect to resolution of the participation problem. What needs to occur is a change in PE philosophy. One that does not simply place emphasis on participation or skills, but rather provides students the opportunity to learn new skills, experience more natural areas, challenge themselves and others to work together to enhance the health and self-confidence necessary to expand human potential. By meeting new challenges together and surpassing their own preconceived limitations, students could gain confidence that long-term changes could occur. This study suggests that the participants began to

understand this philosophy only to return home to face the ever-present entrenched societal norms.

The participants of this study all returned home from their adventure with a construction that they were now different. Their new self-perception of themselves included that they were stronger, nicer, and more capable of things than they originally thought. Likewise, their perception of others had changed. Other students and teachers were nicer and far more interesting on the trip. Also, the environment was not just undisturbed, without people, it became a place of life, which promoted a sense of freedom. Most of all, it was different and defined in contrast to home. For the participants of this study home most often meant school. Unfortunately, the teens perceive little or no freedom at home. The experiences that they had on their trip emphasized working together, learning together, and all the while challenging oneself. These are all of the things that they feel are missing at home. Even so, there is hope that their personal long-term impacts will remain intact.

Experiential adventure programs offer the potential for helping participants develop an improved sense of self, which consciously links relationships with others, places, and the earth. By adding programs such as these to existing PE frameworks, new philosophies could be developed that would enhance participation, curiosity, wonder and experiment that has been absent from existing programs in recent years. Adventure programming united with other innovative programs such as TGFU, physical education could move into the purview of physical lifestyle education that promotes a holistic understanding of activity.

Despite the potential that experiential adventure programs offer, fear of litigation is pushing youth work professionals away from becoming more involved. Teaching unions continue to advise against further school trips. In the near future discussions about the gains to be made from outdoor adventure programs and other extra mural learning may well be academic. Young people are going to miss out on what it means to be truly physically active unless there is some form of organized resistance to this trend. More needs to be done!

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Appendix A

Participant's Reflective Look At The Experience

Meg:

Basically, the trip was the reason that I stayed in leadership. I didn't exactly enjoy the whole volunteering thing but I wanted to do the trip just cause my grandpa bikes and I wanted to be able to say you know that I carried on the tradition, you know the flame of the torch and all that stuff. It sounded interesting and physically I knew I could do it, so I thought why not take it right. I mean, I could get out of school, go somewhere, do something, and be away from my parents for like you know 5 days; what a luxury.

Looking back, I was kind of nervous before we left. I didn't exactly know most of the people or I did, but you know distantly. I thought it would be awkward and that was the only thing that kind of held me back because I don't deal well with social awkward situations. Like you know, the movies in the 80's where the heroin just does something stupid. I can't watch them, I can't watch them cause it is just so awkward and so painful. I don't know, I was worried about the awkward painful situations cause I tend to attract that kind of awkwardness to myself.

Physically, on the other hand, I was ready. I mean that was the year I won Western Canadians so I was the fastest from BC to Manitoba. I was the best! I wasn't worried about the physical part of the trip at all. I knew that I was, if not in the best shape, than one of the best in the class. In fact, on day one of the trip, I kind of held back for the first half hour to stay with my group but then they were going too slow and I got slightly annoyed, I just left and proceeded toward the front group. On the way, I found Katrina and dragged her up there with me and that's where we stayed.

Katrina and I rode together throughout the entire trip. I think that it was on day two that we started to become real close. Before the trip we were friends kind of, but the events definitely brought us closer together. I remember the hill right before the glacier cause that hill just never ended. I was with Katrina and I didn't want her to stop. We promised each other that we wouldn't stop on that hill and so going up I was promising her ice crème cake if she made it to the top. I kept saying that we are going to have ice crème cake when we get to the top; it's going to be great, we are beating all the other girls; oh, we are the best, and things like that. Speaking of that hill, I also remember going down it. I was so cold, I don't enjoy the cold, and so I decided to make up a song. Thinking back, that song became one of the highlights of the trip. Considering that I am not the best singer, I was totally singing about how cold I was and how I couldn't feel my fingers and how I couldn't feel my toes and there's rocks and there's dirt and it's cold and it's snowing. Mr. Killback and Katrina were right behind me and they heard me singing and I was kind of embarrassed. But, before long they started singing as well. I don't know how long we sang, but we made up this huge song. I think it had 6 stanzas or something like that and it all rhymed and it was all interlocking. It was about rocks and trees cause there is a song by Arrogant Worms with rocks and trees and trees and rocks and so that was the theme music for that day and it just kept going. Without that song I think that I might have gone crazy.

For me, going on the trip was such a personal thing. I wanted to complete the trip because it was challenging and different. I think that I am not a group-oriented person. Swimming is an individual sport, I don't like teams. Being in groups, that was fine you know cause it was better to share the cost of food and every once in while it was good to

talk to people, but I knew that once this whole thing got started it would be pretty much a singular kind of thing. I mean, you are not riding on tandem bikes or anything; it is you out there by yourself so I didn't actually pay attention to the group at all. I mean I was pretty much in my own little space.

On the trip, I think that I was just in my comfort zone physically. Socially, I have always felt like I had to be in a pool to be completely like me. I had to be at a swim meet with my friends and stuff like that to be in my total comfort zone. I don't know I just take a long time to get to know people. So, usually I just don't bother. I suppose that is kind of negative, but I didn't feel like I had anything in common with the group aside from this whole experience. You know you can have the same teachers, go to the same school, but that's not the same thing as having things in common. You don't have the same sport background or lifestyle background. So, even if you are having the same experience and everything you still have that group. I mean a lot of those people; they'd all gone to elementary and junior high together. The trip, it wasn't enough of an experience that it broke, broke through the bonds. Maybe if the trip was longer?

Then again, maybe I am wrong about the social stuff. Yes, it was still awkward for me, yet it is what I remember the most. In fact, the more that I think about it and the more that we talk about it, the truer it becomes. I can still hear that crazy song in my head. I can remember singing it, sharing it with people, and more importantly talking with people. Did I come out of my comfort zone as much as I could have-No, but I remember that the people on the trip were more important to me than I had originally suggested.

I also remember that when we got back to school that I was much more involved, comfortable in class. Perhaps, it's because we all knew each other a little better. I mean I still can't believe that Riley knew my name. Or, maybe it's because we had a chance to talk about the trip together. In class, I remember everyone talking about the mountains and how difficult they were. The hills, they just made everything hurt; yet it wouldn't have been the same without them.

Overall, the trip was a good experience and that's the way that I look at it. It was another adventure you know and it's over so what's the next one. I am just looking forward to what is after this. It's kind of like it's done, it was amazing, I have done this now, I have to do something else!

Steve:

In class, as we began to plan for the trip, I was so excited; I couldn't wait to go. But, as the trip drew closer, I became more and more scared. I remember you and my Mom talking about the trip about a week before we went. The both of you reassured me that the trip was going to be great, but I still didn't know what to think. I was still so nervous and frightened. I wasn't sure if I could make it. I didn't want to go because I didn't want to fail at it, but I kind of forced myself to and kind of got forced by other people as well. My parents kept reminding me how good this trip would be for me and also that they had already paid for it so I better go.

Personally, I wanted to go because I thought that it would be fun. Even though I was nervous about maybe not being able to do it, I was also interested in seeing if I could. I started biking a short time ago so I had a small, very small idea about how hard it might

be. I kept thinking "wouldn't it be great if I went and was able to finish it!" that would prove something to my parents.

On the trip so many things stood out and it all started with that first morning. Maybe it was because we didn't know what was ahead of us or maybe it was because I don't know, but me and the boys decided to cook steak and eggs. We had steak and eggs before going out and riding 92 kilometers. To this day, Khaleel and I still talk about that lump of food sitting in our bellies as we rode through the mountains.

Man, that first morning was tough. None of us expected the riding to be that hard. The hills, I mean mountains, made riding so difficult. The nice thing about it though was that it kept everyone together. Me and the boys rode together all morning and that was important, as we needed each other for support. None of us wanted to slow down and our support of each other helped to keep us in the middle of the pack. Staying there, I remember was so important as none of us wanted to be left behind; we were scared of what the others might say. That first morning was so difficult because the longer you rode, the more you started to realize just how far was left to go.

The afternoon on that first day actually got easier. No, the riding was still difficult, but my goal of not getting off my bike unless it was a scheduled stop was working. I just kept riding when so many others would stop and walk their bike for a while. That made no sense to me, but maybe they had their reasons. By the end of the first day I was really happy with myself, proud of myself cause I had made it so far and had the chance to take in some great scenery. The vastness of the mountains was incredible; it is so different there. Different than anywhere else and I was doing it, I was

starting to change my thinking. At first, I was thinking that I couldn't do it, but slowly I started to think that I could.

Day 2 was about that climb. I woke up thinking about how difficult it was going to be. All morning I kept waiting for it to start; was it around this corner, that one, etc. The next thing I knew was that we were on it and it was tough. Throughout the climb I tried to focus on my goal and not think about the pains in my body. My knees were really starting to hurt and I was so glad that the distance was much shorter on the second day. Also, getting to Rampart Creek by late afternoon allowed us to hang out a little more with everybody. That was cool because I had the chance to talk with people that I don't normally do. Everyone seemed so much nicer on the trip than at school. You didn't have to deal with all the clicks.

At the start of the third day I was still somewhat scared. I wanted to finish really badly and I kept thinking about it. One minute I thought I could, the next I couldn't. At some point I was riding alone when I met, I don't think you were in the van, I think it was just Mr. Fras and Mrs. Baxter that were in the van, coming back I talked to them and they said it's just a little further. So I just gave it all I had and I went hard. Basically, that whole day I was alone, I was in between the two groups and I was catching up with the first group as I went on. I got there I think 10 minutes after them or 5 minutes after them or something I can't remember how long, but I was catching up to them so I was pretty happy with that. Day 3 was a little different than the other two and that was all right because I could go as fast as I needed to go or if I needed to slow down and take a little rest I could. Also, I just had time to look around and reflect on where I was and what I was doing.

Once home I was pretty happy with myself and was already ready for the next test. I remember talking to my parents for quite a long while, showed them all my pictures, and you know talked to them, told them about everyday. I think I went through absolutely every thing I did the whole 3 days and yah they were pretty proud of me I think. All I know was that I was pretty proud of myself and I still am today.

Erin:

Originally, I went on the trip because everyone else was going on the trip, it was a big leadership thing, that it was part of being in the leadership class that you went on the leadership trip. Also, I was looking forward to getting off school for a few days, just spending time with a bunch of people that I don't generally spend time with a whole lot and getting away from Sherwood Park, going somewhere else. Finding out things, looking at different things, seeing different things, that kind of thing.

Looking back to the beginning of the trip I was not really sure what to expect, I wasn't sure what was going to happen, or how hard it was going to be. I kept saying to myself that I had to train or something, but to actually getting around to it, I was procrastinating big time. It just didn't really seem real to me, it didn't click in with me at all. I knew it was going to happen, like um, logically, I knew it was going to happen but emotionally, I wasn't there yet. You know, I didn't really think that anything was really going to happen. I thought it was like another day or something.

On the first day I was feeling pretty optimistic when we first got our bikes. We were riding around in the parking lot and I figured, oh this is going to be fine, I'll be great. And then, we actually left, we got to that first really big hill and I was like, oh my

goodness, this is not going to be near as easy as I thought it would be. At that point I pretty much lost my optimism. After that, it was like this is going to be tough, umm; I actually have to try now. Throughout that first day I grew increasingly madder because of the pain that I was in and I was just generally stressed out. My poor body was taking on this pressure that it wasn't used to taking which made me cry in the neighborhood of 50 times that morning. So, to start with I was just a big bundle of negative emotions.

I was so happy that the first day was done. The afternoon proved to be as difficult as the morning. After our break at Maligne Lake, I was so sore that I didn't want to ride. Having no choice in the matter, I got back on my bike and spent the next four hours trying to get some water back into me and trying to go forward the best that I could. I should have drunk more along the way, and then again I should done a lot of things differently to get ready for this trip. I never expected to be in the front because I wasn't an athlete, but I didn't want to be so far back either. I don't think that some of the others wanted us back there as well.

I was so happy to be finished and to arrive back at the hostel. I remember seeing everyone and offering, "good job you guys-really good." I was kind of surprised when they said it back, but at the same time I'm not sure if they meant it as much as we did. But, it really didn't matter as long as they weren't really saying anything bad. Now, I think most of them were pretty good spirited, most of them were pretty understanding. There was just the odd person that was a bit caddy, but most of them were really good about it.

At the start of the second day I thought it was going to be a lot shorter than the first one. The distance looked a lot shorter so I didn't think it was going to be too bad.

That morning I was actually pretty calm; I was pretty good about it, you know. We had looked at the lake on the map, it looked tiny compared to what we had done the day before. Yeah, I was in a pretty good mood, like for the first half an hour until I crashed. After that, everything just sunk.

I was actually doing pretty well until then, and what happened was, I slowed down around that hairpin turn. It was hard to get a grip on it and I spun out there. I kind of flipped and I almost went over the side. I skinned my knees and elbow really, really bad. A couple of people who were up above in a car, sight seeing, came down with their first aid kit and helped me until you and Mike came back to help. Then that was ok, right, I wasn't doing too bad then, but when I decided it was time for me to get back on the bike, my knees just ached horribly. At that point I was still thinking, "Oh, I'll be able to get back up on my bike eventually," but I wasn't so sure. It was then that I think you were debating whether or not you should send me back, but you decided that you should walk me forward. We started passing by people; we got to the next checkpoint and everything. There, I took a drink of water and everybody seemed to be ok, except for a few people who were kind of giving us looks. I didn't actually hear anything except that I've heard they were saying things like "Why are they back there, they're being such wimps" and stuff like that. Thank goodness for Trina, who never left my side that day. I really appreciated it because I didn't want to be walking/riding around alone and she was great to talk with. I never knew that she was so funny and positive. She was great!

On the third day I was tired and everything, but I was thinking, we are almost done, you know, we are almost at the hot springs and it's going to be pretty easy, it's not going to be anywhere near as hard. In fact, driving up to the Sulfur Lake where we were

going to start from, I actually had a chance to look at the scenery a lot more than I was before and I was noticing things looked really nice. Suddenly, I found myself taking in as much of the view as I could. I really appreciated it more than I did when I was riding. I appreciated the scenery a lot. I felt like I finally had time to look around including down to what I was wearing. I remember it was just really wet when we got there so I had all this gear on. It was this horrible green suit that just looked wretched.

Climbing up was fine. It was difficult at times, but nothing like we had just gone through. Walking down on the other hand, that was fun. I remember I was walking down with some of the leaders and Tina. We were talking about weird things such as when you're dehydrated; your pee is more yellow than when you are not. I still can't believe we were talking about that, but the atmosphere was so casual even with the adults. Then somewhere on the way down, we met up with Sean. Him and I started talking about Ireland and family and stuff like that. We had a good talk. I was pretty happy after that, like everything was done. I'd done all the physical part and we could go to the hot springs and talk some more. That's what I was looking forward to just hanging out. It didn't really faze me that I had just climbed a mountain, instead I was thinking that now I can go warm up, have fun, and sit down for a while you know.

The last part of the trip was really cool. Everyone was just hanging out and chatting it up. It was different there than when we are at school. School tends to culture a certain kind of quirkiness. By the end of this short trip everybody was really excited to be with each other. Everybody was talking on the way back, hanging out, until we reached some strange point on the road. Suddenly, it wasn't like the same exuberance. It

was though everyone realized that we were going home to do the same stuff as before-sleep.

Shortly after arriving home I became very proud of myself. I had just done something that to this day I have a hard time fathoming what I actually accomplished. My parents, on the other hand, were like, oh, whatever, you're back. You know, they didn't understand at all what I'd gone through. Although I tried to explain, for whatever reason, they just didn't get it. The same thing happened with my friends, they didn't get it either. It wasn't long before I started not getting it!

Mario:

Going on the trip was simple for me. Some of my friends had gone the year before and had told me that it was something worth doing. So, I just thought, not only could I get away from school for a few days, but also I get to go and have some fun. You know ride the bike; I love doing sports, being outdoors, whatever. I just thought it would be a good experience to have.

Looking back to that first day I remember being surprised by a lot of things. First, I was surprised by the challenge. Having been an athlete, a hockey player, my entire life, I was used to being challenged, but not like this. I think what was different was the duration. I mean, it wasn't just a game or practice where you knew that after a certain time things were going to be over. Instead, there were times when I thought the riding was never going to stop. I think it was about half way up to Maligne Lake that I started thinking that I'm not going back down. It was so hard for me; I was so surprised that I was just sitting there thinking, "they can go, I'm sitting up here. I'm dog-tired. I'm not

going back down." Just the fact that you had to get up and down those hills and knowing how much you had left was difficult. The distances that you place in your mind that seems so large at the time and the fact that you were told that the ride will take eight hours and yet you're only on your first half hour or your first hour and you know that you have that much left to go is scary. Knowing how hard the previous hour was to you; it all begins to ware you down. How you're constantly thinking I have to keep pushing, cause I have to keep going, I have to keep going. It wares you down when you think that much.

Surprisingly, once we got started, going back down wasn't that bad. Yah it was still tough, but nothing like the morning. I think it was about a half an hour into the ride down when I was surprised again. I couldn't believe how well some people were doing. People that I had never expected to be there were right there riding beside me. You see, before the trip began I thought that I should be in the lead group. Personally, I wanted to make sure that I was in the lead group, lead the rat pack. Not only did I want to be in the lead group, but also I wanted to be leading the pack I guess you could say. I wanted to be the guy at the head, pushing, and everyone trying to catch up. Being the guy that everyone looks up to and says, 'Wow, he's going like I need to keep going!' I guess I kinda wanted to motivate other people. But in a sense, I didn't want to lose to anyone either because I just felt that I might have been, like I said, one of the top athletes in the class so that's how I felt.

Now that I think about it, I quite enjoyed being challenged that way. It was a push for me, especially mentally, like I said seeing kids that I thought might not have been able to do it, right there beside me. I mean, to me it looked like they had tons of energy. Maybe inside they were feeling exactly like me, tired, sore, etc., but they just kept

working, therefore, so did I. What was really cool about that whole ride was that I gained a new kind of respect for them. That night around the fire, it was kinda cool hanging out with people that I hadn't known very well until that afternoon.

Day two wasn't as much about challenge as it was about helping people. This in itself is kind of a surprise. No, not because I don't like helping people, in fact I do. Rather, I abandoned any need that I had to be up in the front in order to help one of my friends. When Vanessa was struggling with her injuries, I decided to hang back and help keep her going. At the time it was a no brainer, my friend needed help and I was there. Looking back now I guess it was a bigger deal than I gave myself credit for. Knowing myself as the competitor that I am I guess it was a good thing to do. I guess you could say the same thing when we helped Michelle that day. Going back for her lost glasses was cool for a couple of reasons. First, again it was a chance to help someone out and second, for a more selfish reason was an opportunity to ride hard with you. Going back, we rode hard, had a chance to chat, and just hang out like a couple of guys away on a cool trip. Not too many guys get to that with one of their teachers.

At the start of day three I thought that it was going to be quite easy, and so did everyone I think. We thought walking, walking compared to what we had just done. We didn't think it wasn't going to be a big deal whatsoever. Well, it turned out to be another challenge. Although it wasn't as hard as the two previous days, it still proved to be very difficult because of the incredible incline that we faced, as well the altitude made it hard to breath. Also, from being worn out from the riding some people seemed to struggle as much with the climb as they did the ride. They great part about the climb, however, was that everyone seemed more relaxed. Everyone got the opportunity to hang out with

everyone. Some people got to see some friends that they hadn't seen during the first few days, while others took advantage of the opportunity to hang out with some new friends. Either way, the walking seemed to bring people closer together. Maybe it was because people tended to view walking as an everyday activity, or maybe it was something else, in any case, I think that a lot of the competitiveness disappeared on day 3. Or, at least it did for me. It was a great day!

On the way home I felt just awesome. Although I was disappointed in having to leave, I felt as though I had just had a once in a lifetime opportunity. I couldn't wait to get home and tell my friends that you should have been there; you should have got in that class. We had an absolute blast; it was tough, it was fun, and it helped changed the way that I looked at some things. At first, I thought that the trip was about competition, a chance to prove how good I was by being one of the top guys. I remember thinking like this until one of my friends got hurt. Then, I didn't worry whatsoever about making sure that I caught up to the lead group or whatever. That in a sense was good for me. No, I'm not glad that she got hurt, but that incident did help me. It helped me realize that who cares sometimes. In life, you're not going to always be number one and if you can help someone just finish, get through that day, get through ordinary life when they might be struggling with something, it's ah, better than you can imagine.

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Fiddes, G. (2002). An experiment with games teaching: When to play a game? Runner, 39, (1), 55-58.

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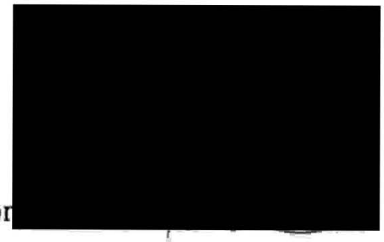
Author 

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