Chapter 2

Theorising of Outdoor Education: Purpose and Practice
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Many individuals freely opt to take part in outdoor adventure activities. A high proportion of these first encountered such activities as a consequence of a school or youth group initially offering them an introductory 'taster'. This chapter concentrates on facilitated interventions that offer outdoor adventure experiences explicitly for developmental purposes. Like Roberts (2012), the author makes a distinction between 'learning by doing', that is developing skills and knowledge in order to learn a subject or craft, and 'experiential education' that Roberts notes is concerned with the emerging identities of young people, their relations with others and the world around them, and their trajectory as they negotiate a place in the adult world. Whilst learning the skills and knowledge of an outdoor adventure (OA) activity is a necessary and beneficial aspect of outdoor adventure education (OAE) it is the broader purpose these new skills are used for and what this means to young people that lies at the core of OAE.

OAE has long drawn heavily on theories of experiential education. Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1997) in particular is an off cited text notably with regards to his belief that activity does not become experience unless it is purposeful and reflected on. This pragmatic stance has been highly influential within UK outdoor education. A typical example of this usage can be found in the writings of Wojcikiewicz and Mural who apply a Deweyian perspective to the analysis of outdoor experiential education, specifically in their case with regards to sail training. Those writers argue that in order

> *To foster educative experiences, activities must have the following features:*

1. Activities must have the liveliness and purpose associated with informal learning.

2. The learning environment must be knowingly and intentionally shaped.

3. The activity must be undertaken with pedagogical purposes.

4. The activity must be "educative," meaning it must have (a) purpose, in the dual sense of engagement and meaning; (b) intelligent direction with student selection of means to meet ends; (c) discipline, intellectual and social, that is derived from the activity itself; and (d) an open-ended nature, leaving the student willing and able to go on. (2010:110)

The above list raises at least one prime concern for this author. Dewey understood the 'real' world as one of home, community and work where individuals encountered many experiences that had, as noted earlier under the right circumstances, the potential to be educative. However as Wojcikiewicz and Mural demonstrate, whilst sail training and other adventurous activities are purposeful and social, they are also separated from Dewey's 'real' world. Consequently they can be thought of as separated temporally and spatially from everyday life which raises issues for some authors relating to reintegration with this 'real' world (e.g. Allison 2000; Bell 2003; Loynes 2007). Irrespective of this, claims are made for the transfer of learning from the outdoor adventure world to what Dewey thought of as the 'real' world of young people and others. However these assertions have in turn been questioned by, for example, Brookes (2003) and Seaman (2008). The crux of this critique being that the threshold is too high and the two worlds so divergent that what is learnt inevitably becomes compartmentalized.

Outdoor adventure context

We live in restless times. Capitalism appears to be struggling, increasing urbanization is creating new challenges, the knowledge industries, consumerism, the virtual world and individualism are proceeding apace. We may even have reached or gone beyond environmental limits. The availability and nature of work, the distribution of wealth and access to welfare and education are increasingly problematic. These changes are

especially challenging for young people (Bynner et al 2002; Arnett 2004). Whilst OAE is worthwhile as a means to develop young people for its own sake (Quay 2013) this chapter goes further arguing that if it is possible to address within the context of OAE any of the issues cited then we should do so. Similarly if new educational foci such as 'education for sustainability' (Nicol 2000; Rawles 2013) and 'education for resilience' (Ewert and Yoshino 2011) can be incorporated within OAE then again these should be placed on the agenda. Likewise attention should be paid to the possibility of adapting traditional elements of OAE such as the development of self-reliance and adventure, and the arts of co-operation so that they are made more relevant to the new policy agendas. After all it may be the case that the uncertainty of adventure and ways in which that imprecision stimulates a capacity to cope and even flourish, may prove to be a valuable asset whereby OAE can help the citizens of tomorrow deal with a rapidly changing world. Similarly the spirit of collaboration engendered by a group working together to realize their adventurous goals could be an excellent counterpoint to an over-emphasis within society on the need for competition.

This chapter draws upon Kurt Lewin's (1951) notion that there is nothing more practical than a good theory when it comes to helping practitioners reflect on their practice so that they may better develop more future orientated provision. With this in mind what follows explores both the social and environmental contexts in which OAE is situated. Whilst acknowledging OAE is a valued form of non-formal education for adults the focus will be on the benefits to young people. In addition it will review the theories that help secure a better understanding of the design, facilitation and impact of OAE.

Three contexts

This section explores three contexts for OAE that are attracting increasing attention. First from a social perspective is the shift of responsibility from society to the individual in relation to young people steering a course through adolescence. This shift forms a backdrop to much OAE and yet the approaches so far adopted have

failed to be inclusive. Second from an environmental point of view the construction of the outdoors, and so nature, as remote and hostile or as local and homely underlies a growing debate about the use of unfamiliar settings. Finally the adoption of place based approaches in a time of environmental crisis.

Social issues

The balance of responsibility for navigating the journey from youth to adulthood and employment has since the 1980s increasingly shifted from wider society to the individual young person (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Allen and Ainley 2010). Despite this re-alignment the UK has retained an education system overwhelmingly designed to produce conforming workers rather than participating citizens (Bernstein 1996). Even though many observers would claim that, as a nation, we have no idea what the future structure of the labour market is likely to be (see for example White 1997).

Despite sustained efforts over many years to encourage the engagement of marginalised groups - young women, the disabled, the working classes and ethnic groups – with the 'outdoors' the advances, despite some notable exceptions, have been meager (see, for example, Cook 2001; Aitchison 2003; Anderson and Harris 2003; Allin and West 2013). Explanations offered for this relative failure include strong competition from other aspects of youth culture such as the consumption of music and fashion, social media and computer gaming; a lack of trained leaders from the groups concerned; and culturally inappropriate traditions and practices. OAE is no exception. White middle class males still dominate most spheres of outdoor recreation and education which may alienate a number of potential users from those groupings (Allin 2000). Another reason progress may have been so limited is that in recent years society has become increasingly risk averse, so that young people and others deemed vulnerable have become over-supervised and restricted in their access to free play and movement out-of-doors (for example see Furedi; 2006, Louv; 2009 and Griffiths; 2013). These writers and others hold this development responsible for a range of social and health problems such as declining levels of trust

within and between generations, increasingly poor judgment as to the levels of physical and social risks, reduced ability to socialize, growth in obesity rates and a higher incidence of mental health problems. Within this context both youth work and OAE have struggled to maintain forms of provision that respond to and reflect the expressed needs of young people. Instead new funding sources have obliged agencies operating in both sectors to deliver specific targeted programmes designed to compliment mainstream education, prepare people for work, re-engage young people with their communities, reduce teenage pregnancy, tackle discrete health 'problems' or divert the 'at risk' from deviance (Brookes 2003). These programmatic targeted forms of intervention are far removed from the Hahnian approaches Brookes uses as a benchmark for the values of outdoor education and citizenship. Equally they have little in common with the Deweyian perspective discussed by Wojcikiewicz and Mural.

Unfamiliar landscapes

OAE places a high value on providing access to and encounters with unfamiliar landscapes or wilderness. In doing so it is an heir to the Romantic tradition of seeking sublime and transformative experiences in rugged and wild places. Mortlock (1984) developed the concept of adventure education from these roots stressing the inherent value such encounters can have for all young people. Adventure, for him, was about developing the outdoor activity skills needed to explore wild places, especially self-reliance, which made it possible to minimize direct adult supervision and input. For Mortlock and those who shared his views the landscape to be explored was not only the outer landscape of wild country but also the unexplored inner landscape of the emerging adult. Many have presented empirical evidence that tells of the value placed by participants on being offered the chance to independently explore both unfamiliar and wild landscapes. Amongst the benefits cited are the acquisition of insight and acumen alongside heightened well-being regarding areas of human flourishing such as the spiritual (Heintzman 2009), moral (Allison et al 2012), physical (Humberstone 2011), mental health (Gustafsson et al 2012) and overall development (Louv 2009; Becker 2008). Outdoor youth 'work'

traditions, offering these benefits, emerged in many countries influenced by the Romantic Movement - in particular Norway, Germany, the UK and the Czech Republic. In each of these the forms of practice were partially influenced by the landscape, for example, skiing on the snows of Norway, hiking in the forests of Germany and in Britain hill walking on the uplands and sailing on the surrounding seas (Becker; 1998). Each tradition offered differing ways of understanding the 'landscape' of OAE ('s*cape*' derives from the French for cloaking; that is to 'cloak' a place in cultural meaning and story). The *development* of outdoor youth work therefore took variable paths in different countries for cultural and environmental reasons. The historic axiom of OAE in the UK has been to take young people into new and unfamiliar situations. Situations that require them to learn ways of coping and within which they are given the opportunity to make a meaningful journey that will help them to negotiate a successful transition to adulthood. However in each of those nations there were assorted, even competing, traditions In the UK for example Baden-Powell first noticed what he perceived to be the benefits for young people of exploring unfamiliar, even hostile, terrain when observing the rapid development of self-reliance and other traits amongst the young army scouts he commanded during the Boer War (Jeal 1989). Ernest Thompson Seton, founder of the Woodcraft Indians in 1902 and who with Baden-Powell played a prominent role in the launch of the Boy Scouts in both the United States and Canada was by way of contrast inspired by a romanticized view of the life of the plains Indians. A viewpoint that led him to develop programmes within which the environment was perceived as 'home' rather than a hostile terrain (see Wadland 1978; Rosenthal 1986). Baden-Powell and Seton were not alone in creating youth movements that provided informal OAE for young people in Britain and the North America. Others followed their lead and adapted their founding principles. This resulted in the formation of single-sex organizations such as the Girl Guides and Camp Fire Girls and mixed movements such as the Woodcraft Folk and Youth Hostel Association (Ogilvie 2012).

Space not place

Baden-Powell and Seton respectively constructed the landscape as simultaneously

hostile and homely. This dichotomy continues as various outdoor educators use the landscape for diverse purposes. For example the Forest Schools movement celebrates and makes familiar local woods to young people and their families (Knight 2009). The John Muir Award encourages groups to discover, explore, do something for and report on natural places both close to home and far away. Meanwhile World Challenge takes young people to exotic, far flung and challenging destinations to find adventure and to give service. Increasingly leaders are encouraged to take a place-based approach (Wattchow and Brown 2011). The argument for this is that it fosters a relationship with places as part of the emerging identity of the young person. This in turn leads onto knowledge about and sense of responsibility for the environment that may cultivate pro-environmental behaviours whilst encouraging positive attitudes towards a healthy outdoor lifestyle and a deepening sense of community. The ability to form healthy relationships with places has gradually become an important aspect of youth development. Whilst some (Backman et al 2014) support this focus on local places others still opt to advocate visiting unfamiliar spaces in order to help young people better appreciate diversity and subsequently perceive their own neighbourhoods in new ways (Beames 2010). Wild places have traditionally been exploited by OAE as 'spaces' rather than places, that is landscapes which are unfamiliar to the young person and can therefore be explored adventurously as a rite of passage or hero's journey (Loynes 2008). Within this construction the young 'hero' learns to deal with the new situation by gaining knowledge, allies, tools and skills to cope before embarking on a quest from which lessons are learned which can be 'taken back home'. This is the archetypal landscape of personal development regarded by some anthropologists and psychologists (for example Campbell 1968; Maddern 1990; Norris 2011; Bell et al 2012) as critical to a healthy transition to adulthood. In this 'landscape' the historical, cultural and natural histories are of interest only in so far as they support engagement with the unfolding narrative of the hero; the exploits of past adventurers; finding a way in the wild; understanding weather lore; and acquiring the skills to travel and camp in potentially hostile environments.

Programmes

To some degree the notions of place and space in our experiences of the landscape can appear to be in tension one with the other. In their extremes it is difficult to imagine how one can exist alongside the other. One is a blank map on which to write a personal narrative. The other is an already composed story of past and present cultures ready to be told and with which the young person joins in writing the 'next chapter'. However arguably this is a false dichotomy, for both contribute to important elements within the process of youth development. Perhaps the key message here is that aspects of place and space are different elements of outdoor education programmes. They should be made available but not necessarily at the same time. There is some merit therefore in seeing the conflict of space and place as a productive tension between familiarity and divergence or difference; one which the educator needs to balance and creatively exploit within the context of the outdoor educational experience.

Robin Hodgkin (1916 - 2003) mountain guide, head teacher of Abbotsholme and Oxford academic illustrates this when he describes the role of the teacher as one of accompanying young people whilst they explored the intriguing ideas, landscapes and experiences placed before them by an artful facilitator (Perrin 2003). This approach resonates with the concepts of facilitation held by a number of youth work theorists (for example Jeffs and Smith 1999; Young 1999; Ord 2016). Hodgkin suggests that what he calls a 'semiotic devise' is a potentially meaningful experience which should be strange enough to intrigue the young person thereby rousing them to curiosity but not so unfamiliar that they might avoid exploring it. This approach demands that a balance of power operates between the facilitator and the participant that allows for the autonomous and critical development of the latter (Hodgkin 1976).

By way of contrast some designers of OAE have developed targeted and systematic approaches, for example those youth organisations that have adopted outdoor development training as an approach (Everard 1993; Dybeck 1996). This requires that the corrective, restorative or developmental needs of the young people are

identified prior to the formulation of the given programmes which are then designed to achieve specific outcomes. In particular these are constructed for groups deemed to have special 'needs' such as, for example, the disaffected, unemployed, excluded or disabled. This development has pre-eminently been funding-driven a consequence of a desire on the part of governments and some charities to deal with current 'moral panics' and entrenched social problems (see Brookes 2003; Stuart 2010).

An intensive one off 'big experience' – the expedition, long stay residential, gap year or overseas outing – has been and remains a common approach to OAE. However in order to ensure effective interventions many youth work organisations have integrated OAE with other strategies operating in the community over longer periods of time (Festou and Humberstone 2006). Certainly this latter method may better address long expressed concerns over transference. A key claim of those who advocate this longitudinal approach is that this format engages young people with their peers and leaders in a way that makes it possible to build relationships and trust around shared experiences and understandings not least because the programmes have a grounding in the participants' communities (Mannion et al 2010), what was earlier referred to as their 'real world'.

How long OAE programmes should be is a topic constantly revisited. Initially the Outward Bound Movement offered courses lasting 29 days. This was because many of the early participants were merchant seamen who had to return home to receive their monthly pay (Arnold-Brown 1962). Arnold-Brown points out Kurt Hahn advocated a longer time span having been convinced by his experiences at Gordonstoun School that they had to be of a sufficient length for young people to find pleasure, rather than hardship in their new physical abilities and fitness. Certainly case study research that has attempted to replicate the outcomes of three week and ten day programmes that were compressed into a briefer time span found they were far less effective. Evidence points to young people needing extended continuity as well as specific interventions that allow for the 'space-based' intensive approach to personal development to be integrated with longer term 'place based'

engagement in the community (Mannion et al 2010).

One recent theory has labeled these approaches as respectively 'wayfaring' and 'dwelling' (Ingold 2011). According to this model 'wayfaring' equates with such concepts as movement, dynamic engagement, change, transformation, exploring and adventure occurring in unfamiliar 'spaces'. Whilst 'dwelling' sits with establishing, settling, belonging and participating in everyday 'places'. A German youth work theory proposes a similar duality this time between 'crisis' and 'routine' (Becker 2008). Here 'crisis' refers to situations where a person does not have to hand a known response based on previous experience, that is where the individual is obligated to formulate new coping strategies. 'Routine' refers to those that are known and where a response has already been devised. Within this model 'transfer' of learning necessitates taking new responses conceived in novel situations and applying these to 'everyday' life or new emerging possibilities that become new routines. For example, new ways of relating to others are acquired in a novel situation such as a residential or expedition involving a group of strangers. Upon completion these previously unfamiliar ways of relating, acquired during the course of these experiences, are then applied to existing relationships located within the context of the social networks to which participants return. Becker argues people need a balance in life between crisis and routine in order for them to more effectively engage with the dynamic nature of existence. Young people, according to this analysis, disproportionately need 'crises' to help then make a successful transition from youth to adult and that OAE is an ideal way of providing these. The work of Becker and Ingold usefully extend Mortlock's (1984) analysis of Adventure Education by taking into account the everyday context from which participants depart and to which they subsequently return. Collectively they provide a theoretical analysis which deepens Bacon's (1983) concept of 'Outward Bound' as a conscious metaphor for life.

Body, Group and Activity

Writings about OAE tend to explore the relationship between the person, the group and the environment, all mediated by the outdoor activity, a model of OAE that emerged in the 1960's (Ogilvie 2012). Programme aims also tend to centre around one or more of these domains as the intended outcome, for example the acquisition of outdoor skills, personal and social development or environmental awareness. Equally, programme planners consider these as the key elements of the mix with which they orchestrate experiences (Beard and Wilson 2002). This section explores recent theoretical discussions concerning the possibilities of the body, the group and the activity for OAE.

The body

Widely neglected in formal education, the body is the central means by which a young person engages with an outdoor adventure. Providing experiences that support the development of physical abilities and the diverse use of all the senses is a vital contribution of OAE to youth development (Humberstone; 2014). Learning to perceive landscapes and the elements mediated by different activities; developing the capacity of the body to act skillfully; experiencing the feelings that arise from physical effort; performance and success; learning what it feels like to be fitter and healthier; becoming dexterous and skilful; are important contributions that OAE can make. The feeling of engagement, aliveness and agency that come with being able to master skills and overcome physical challenges build self esteem and foster positive 'can do' attitudes are key all strategies for empowerment. Physical achievements are some of the first ways in which young people can express power in the world constructively and, properly facilitated, it can lead to further meaningful pursuits and projects with increasing degrees of self-reliance (Richards 2003; Leather 2013).

The group

Recent research suggests that developing relationships, especially in terms of enhancing trust confidence and engagement, is the single most valued outcome of OAE (Williams 2013; Zink 2010). It is argued that it underpins enhanced attainment

in school; better relationships between child and parent at home; and more positive rapport with peers. The ability to sustain social networks is widely seen as key to a successful transition to adulthood and predictor of social mobility, OAE is widely seen as a way of helping this to occur (Williamson 1997). It is for this reason many leaders use the deliberate construction of the group to help them better tackle social issues around gender, ethnicity, class and disability.

Many commentators have highlighted the vocational (for example Lewis; 2005) and community (for example Mannion et al 2010) benefits accruing to young people as a result of their learning to function in a group. Predictably therefore the terminology of social psychology is frequently encountered in relation to OAE especially in the context of the management of group dynamics, the cultivation of social and group development, and the formulation of group roles (for example see Beard and Wilson 2002; Priest and Gass 1997). Frequently this 'language' is shared with the participants in order to enable them to explore and reflect on their social experiences more effectively.

Some writers such as Zink (2010) and McCulloch (2013) highlight the importance within the context of OAE of teaching about the other, especially in terms of learning to appreciate, tolerate, support, share and live with others via group residential and adventure experiences. These encounters offer the added benefit of seeing yourself through the eyes of others. There are a number of studies that highlight the importance of the feeling of *communitas* that extended and intensive OAE can bring (e.g. Zink; 2010). Sharing achievements is also recognised as an important aspect of building an identity in a peer group. Letting others know who you were and what you did while you are away makes a significant contribution to maintaining the emerging identities of young people and others after an activity or a trip away. These experiences can help peer groups develop, much as they lead to the challenging and confirmation of social norms that are unfamiliar or undeveloped in participants. For young people the opportunity to do this away from the social networks of childhood and to encounter new adult role models is also an important aspect of this process (Loynes 2003). Lastly, knowing that working with others can sometimes achieve

more than can be done alone builds an appreciation of community.

The Activity

It seems a simple matter to choose an activity such as setting off on a camping trip through the mountains or a sailing voyage yet as McCulloch (2004) points out the demands of any given one will present differing opportunities for learning and development. McCulloch examined the contrasting experiences afforded by tall ships versus modern sloops and concluded that these provided divergent social experiences in relation to hierarchy and power; and therefore different experiences with regards to the levels of agency afforded the young person. As mentioned earlier Wojcikiewicz and Mural (2010) suggest that experiential education draws on the potential of the activity to shape the experiences of the participants, which confirms the importance of making the appropriate choices as to what to offer the group. Elsewhere (Loynes 2004) this author argues that outdoor activities are imbued with a set of values that were associated with them when they originated. For example he describes how navigation techniques refined by army scouts in the Boer War were subsequently developed as a skill by the civilian Scout Movement in ways that intentionally reflected the values of self-reliance and control of movement in unfamiliar space. Furthermore whilst these may still be considered desirable values, it is important that they are understood in relation to their 'origins'. For, as I explain, using the map and compass approach to navigation supports certain values but suppresses others possessing equal educational worth; notably those more relational to being 'in nature', for example utilizing the 'natural' signs and symbols of the environment, such as the growth of moss on trees and drystone walls, to indicate a northerly direction (Gatty 1958; Huth 2013).

Some OAE organisations have developed the selection process for particular activities into a fine art. For example the employment of low and high rope work and problem solving tasks that are suited to specific personal or social developmental outcomes (e.g. Rohnke and Butler, 1995). These are typically sequenced to support group development and individual learning as well as being targeted to maximize the

possibility of achieving the pre-ordained outcomes of the programme. For example 'building reliance on others' by requiring the participants on a high ropes course to put their trust in their partner who holds the rope as they take a 'leap of faith' from the top of a pole high in the air (Priest and Gass1997). Such 'Macdonaldisation' of OAE is almost always counterproductive (Roberts 2012). For despite the financial pressures to operate in this specific pre-planned way it is unlikely that these activities in themselves will meet the Deweyian criteria for an 'educative experience' which requires a more organic, person-centred, complex, open-ended and longer-term encounter such as camps, hikes, voyages and expeditions wherein experiences can develop and participants can flourish.

Facilitation and the outdoor adventure experience

This chapter has emphasized the importance of an intentional approach to leadership and facilitation. Informal education when combined with OAE may appear to be at odds with the apparently more didactic stance usually association with instruction linked to the acquisition of activity skills. Simplistically the 'instructor' can be contrasted with the more laissez faire 'youth worker'. In reality OAE relies on a wide range of informal and formal educational techniques. Ringer and Gillis (1995) suggest a model that contains three units or sets relevant to informal education practices within OAE. The first are those of the instructor or coach employed to teach the skills required by participants so that they might engage safely and productively with the outdoor experience and wider recreational milieu. Second are the skills needed to transmit knowledge concerning such matters as place, weather and the overall environment. Finally, there are those associated with personal development that will function to help participants understand how experiences in the outer landscape can develop the inner landscape of the mind. This is a rich set of skills that take time to develop in one person. Some programmes opt to divide up the responsibilities by using specialists with different skill-sets to deal with discrete elements. Richards et al (2001), for example, describes using an outdoor instructor, group facilitator and therapist in a programme working with people with eating disorders.

OAE generally places the informal educator in a complex relationship with those they are working with. Heron (1992) models this in his theory of facilitation suggesting his own three 'levels' of facilitation - content, process and learning - with all three simultaneously in play although at any given time the emphasis may be placed on one at the expense of the others. Likewise this will also be the case for the outdoor educators. The desire to give experiences of agency and autonomy to participants is essential in order to achieve a worthwhile educational experience. However doing so can appear to be at odds with the need to ensure the safety of the group; especially when some or all of the group members lack the skill, knowledge or experience, that say a facilitator of a self-guided mountain walk would need to balance the benefits accruing from the freedom devolved to the group to navigate across rough terrain with the self-evident dangers associated with them making navigational errors. In shorter and intensive programmes a careful choice of activity can avoid an overly long expert-novice relationship and undue usage of directive modes of leadership. For example utilizing bouldering (low level climbing, with minimal danger) to introduce novice participants to the experience of climbing as opposed to roped climbing, which requires greater levels of instruction and expert guidance. Some youth work programmes, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes, have addressed this issue by developing progressive models in relation to social service as well as outdoor activities. The Duke of Edinburgh expeditions typically begin with intensive instruction in skills and the teaching of knowledge before proceeding to a self-reliant journey planned and led by the young people (Duke of Edinburgh's Award; 2012).

Ringer and Gillis (1995) also offer a model relating specifically to psychological depth to help facilitators with decisions regarding the appropriate approach. In their view personal development work in the outdoors should focus on five out of the eight levels and therefore implementation requires, on the part of the educator, a range of complex skills and judgment. The first level involves ritual and shallow exchanges with limited meaning. The next, and the first relevant to OAE, is task focused. Facilitation here entails choosing the right task and supporting the group to

complete it. This is followed by the encounter level which relates to the social world of the group and is focused upon helping members relate to each other in constructive ways through the medium of activities. The fourth, the contextual level, involves linking member's experiences with the lives they share with family, friends, colleagues at work, school or college, and their community. Then we encountyer the level at which the facilitator intentionally works with group members to explore and develop their identities. Here choice of activity, reflective questioning and conversation are all-important. Finally we have the historical/cultural level in which the current experience helps participants address past issues and change current contexts. This requires great care and judgment if it is to avoid straying into the realms of therapy, especially when the group comprises marginalised and troubled young people. The remaining two levels comprise therapeutic interventions beyond the realms of youth work. The value of the Ringer and Gillis model is that it helps the facilitator decide on the level at which they feel competent to work.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed OAE through some of the theoretical lens used to understand and appraise the field. Whilst OAE is of value for its own sake (Quay 2013) it is the pragmatic outcomes of personal and social development and, increasingly, environmental relations that are most widely valued. The attribution error that Brookes (2003) claims questions the efficacy of the transfer of learning from the 'escape to the hills' to the 'real world' has been overturned by local, recurring and place based approaches that are complimenting the one off big experiences of the wilderness challenge so useful in the transformation of personal narratives in the transition from young person to adult and from marginalization to inclusion (Loynes 2010). Well-designed and facilitated OAE offers much potential in supporting young people and others in the social and environmental challenges of the future.

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