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# Routes to positive action for sustainability in outdoor sports



Professor Heather Prince

Why is this relevant for outdoor sports participants?



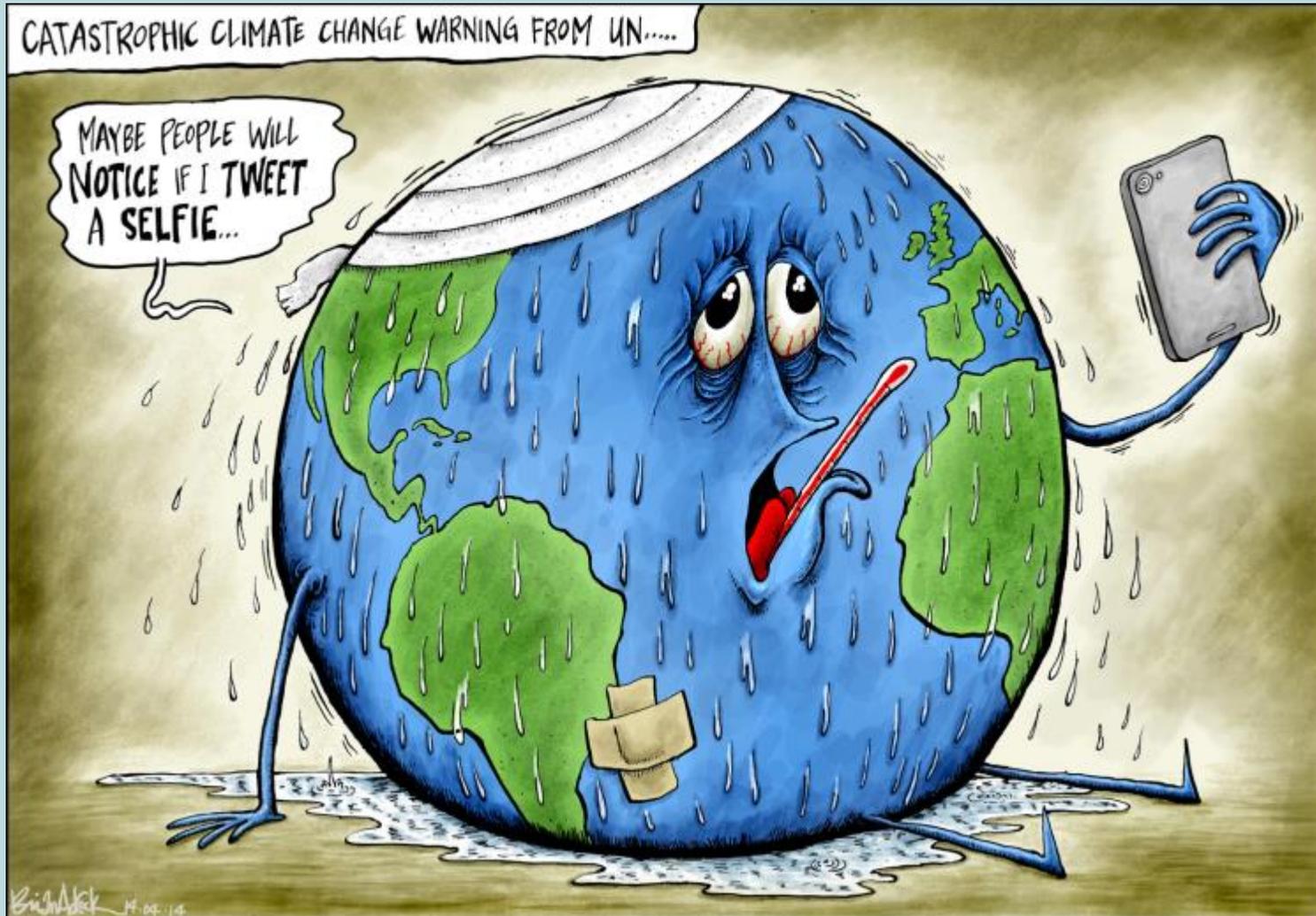
- We have an embodied, emotional connection with nature
- We have a greater propensity towards action to sustain and preserve it?

Why should we be concerned as outdoor sports participants?



- Concern about the viability of our spaces, locations and affordances for our outdoor sports

# Action



- Can individuals and groups contribute to positive action for sustainability in outdoor sports?
- Is incremental change sufficient for positive action?

Research and evidence perspective drawing from a range of outdoor sports



Psychological connection to,  
and emotional attachment  
with the environment

‘The landscape is embraced not simply because of what it offers outwardly and contemplatively but because of what it offers inwardly from an embodied and active participation within it’  
(Spinney, 2006. p. 727)

Fostering time in the natural world is a precursor to an emotional commitment, altering behaviours to care for the environment (Schultz, 2002)



## Heightened:

‘ecological sensibilities’ (Olive, 2016)

‘eco-centricity’ (Brymer & Gray, 2010)

‘more-than-human’ (Thorpe et al.,  
2021)

‘If people feel psychologically connected to the natural world, they willingly make sacrifices to engage in sustainable practices’ (Brymer et al., 2009, p. 197)



More **biocentric** approach (nature valued for its own sake) than **anthropocentric** approach (use of natural resources and valuing nature based on value for humans) amongst outdoor recreation participants (Larson, Whiting & Green, 2011)

Bourdieu's 'Logic of Practice'

Shaped by the meeting of individual embodied dispositions (*habitus*) and the meaning of an activity for the individual in certain situations



Heightened awareness and concern

All of the time? For all outdoor sports participants, leaders, providers?

Depends on objectives (and counter objectives)



## Mitigating objectives?

- For performance and elite athletes, the training landscape should present the best possible conditions (focus on achievement)
- Norms in sport, personal financial loss, not having top quality material/equipment, inequality amongst competitors
- Cost, convenience and effort

- Career dependence on the environment (e.g. winter conditions)



Research has shown that pro-environmental behaviour in the home is not translated to travel (Chapman, 2007)

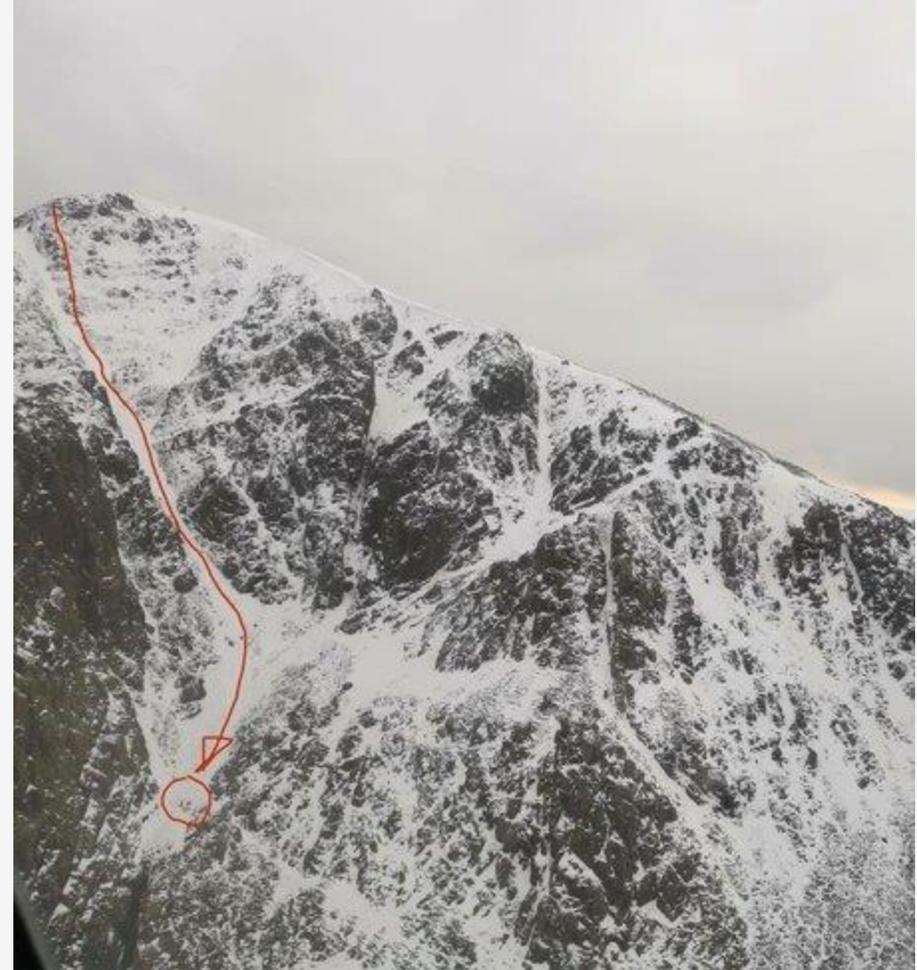
‘It’s very contradictory to push for environmental stuff on one hand, while at the same time you fly round the world to get to these places’ (Athlete, outdoor sport World Cup & Olympics) (Backman & Svensson, 2022. p. 9)

There are other agendas to pro-environmental behaviour and identities e.g. frugality, ethics, health and wellbeing (Prince, 2016)

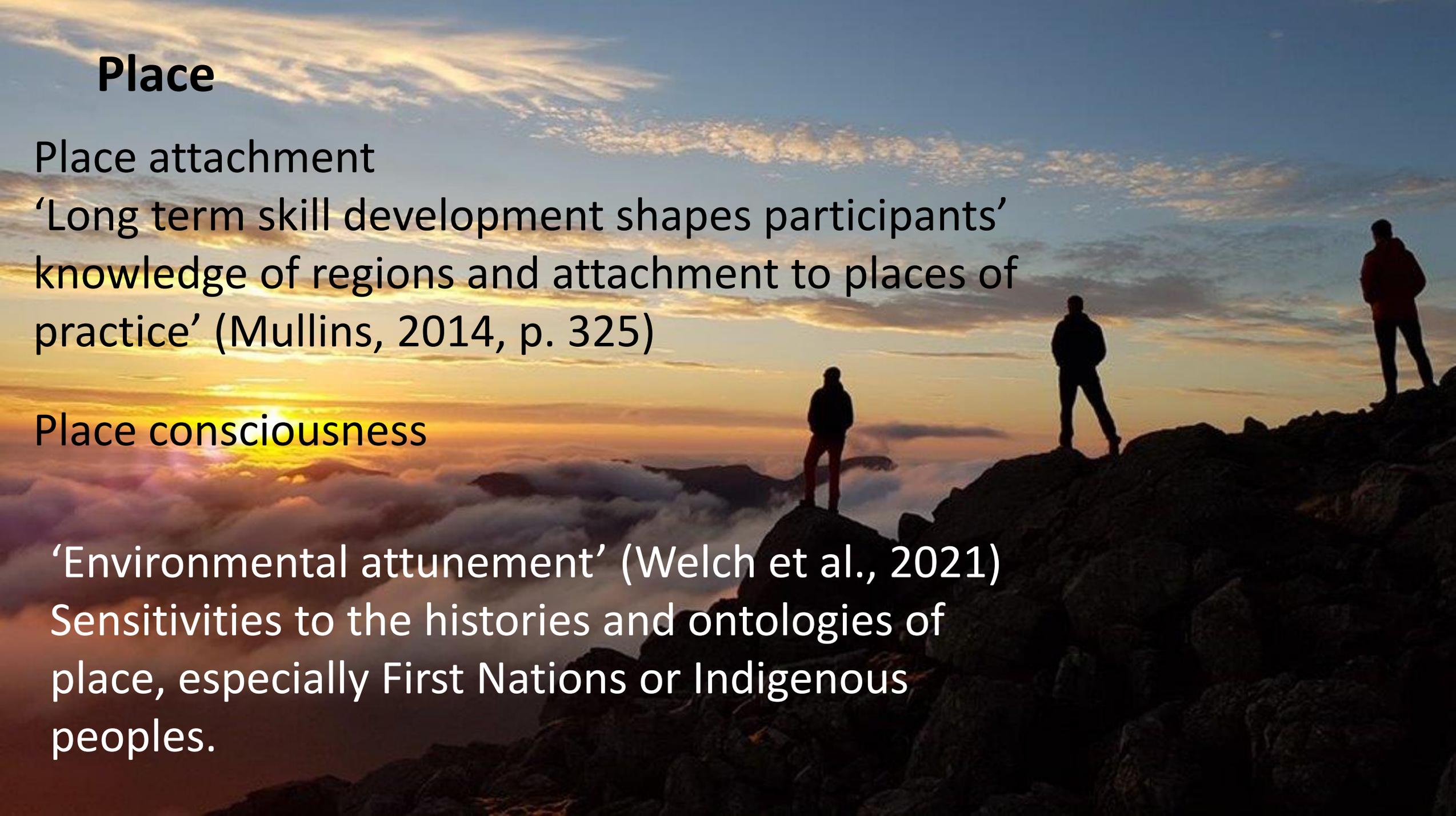
## Individuals' choices, motivations and behaviours determine the environmental impact of sport

Motivations might be:

- Experiencing nature (Backman & Svensson, 2022), 'more than human'
- Nature does not care about human successes (Brymer & Gray, 2009)
- Recognition of the power of nature and ability to be in tune or connected to the natural environment



# Place

The background of the slide is a photograph of three people standing on a rocky mountain peak at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is filled with wispy clouds, and the ground is covered in a sea of clouds. The people are silhouetted against the bright sky.

Place attachment

‘Long term skill development shapes participants’ knowledge of regions and attachment to places of practice’ (Mullins, 2014, p. 325)

Place consciousness

‘Environmental attunement’ (Welch et al., 2021)

Sensitivities to the histories and ontologies of place, especially First Nations or Indigenous peoples.

There are individual, societal and structural approaches to environmental issues

It's not just about individuals



Routes to positive action

What can we do?

Structural changes

e.g. ski races – time penalties for littering

Limit/ban use of fluoride-based ski waxes in skiing



## Routes to positive action

What can we do?

Individuals and groups: Incremental or gradual change

‘Net positive’ theoretical framework (Birkeland, 2003; Romm, 1999): Practices that put back more into society, the environment and the global economy than they takes out.



Routes to positive action

What can we do?

Different ways of moving, being and exploring the outdoors?

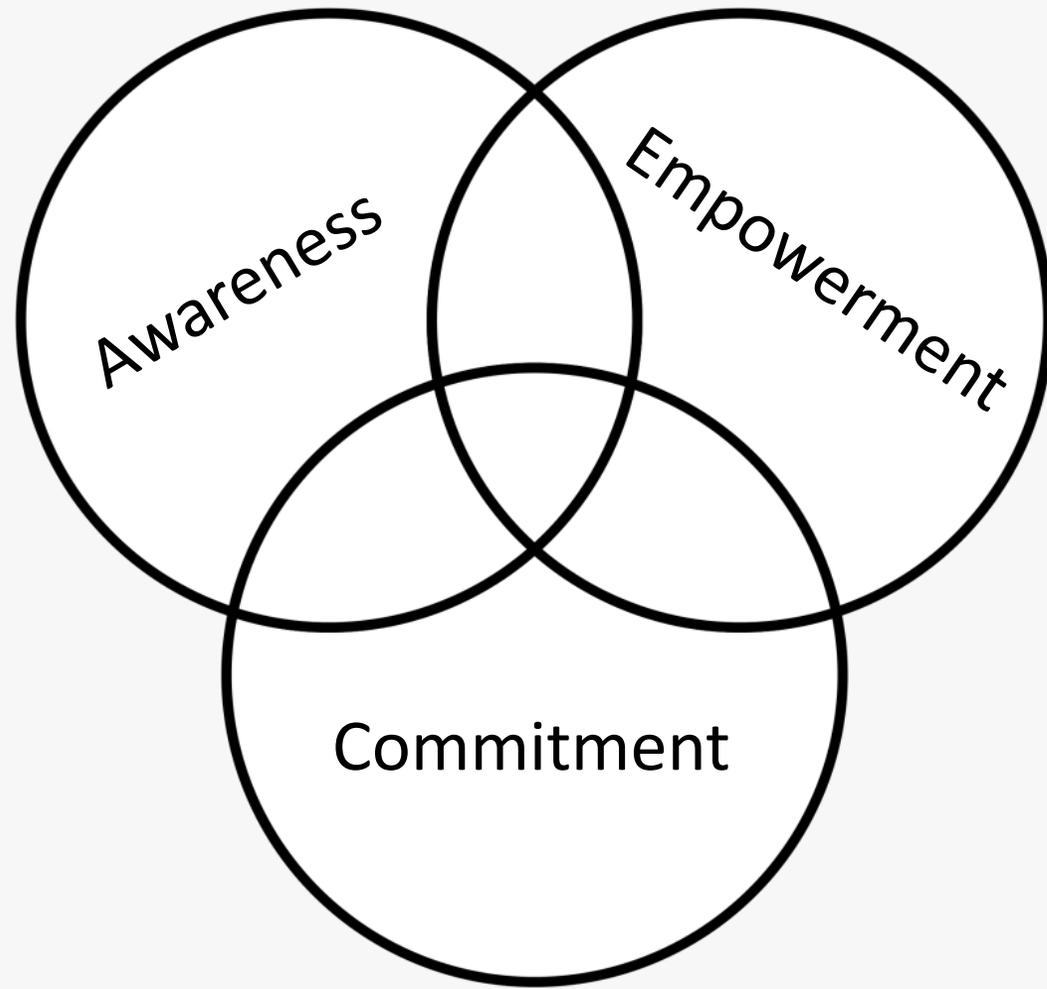
Role modelling

Mentoring

Shared endeavour of groups. Embracing behaviours that are regarded as norms (environmental beliefs and attitudes)



## Cooper's framework (1998)



# How will you ...



Raise awareness of positive action for sustainability in outdoor sports?

Empower others?



Show commitment?

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Thank you!

