

**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF OUTDOOR  
ADVENTURE PURSUITS**

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For Kathleen, Gregory and Caitlin

and for all who enjoy the outdoors

## Abstract

Outdoor adventure education is a popular tool for building individual self-esteem. Many programs such as Outward Bound attempt to enhance self concept, however the literature is inconclusive as to the individual effects of these programs. This paper attempts to look at the effects of an outdoor adventure on educators without quantitative tests. A qualitative method was incorporated with participants being asked to write about their experiences and their effects of those experiences on them.

Four educators were used as subjects in the study. The participants went on a six day caving and backpacking trip in the Canadian Rockies. As part of the trip, they had to overcome many physical and emotional obstacles such as free rappelling 17 m (56 feet) through the roof of a cavern and squeezing through tight passages. Throughout the trip, the participants recorded their thoughts, concerns, and reflections. Some of the individuals expressed themselves in other mediums such as poetry, painting and drawing.

All of the individuals indicated they were rewarded in their own way by being on the trip, however there were other common themes that emerged as well. With the perception of risk opening up emotions, many of the participants indicated that the experience provided them with the opportunity for introspection. Some of the participants found the experience to be a time for refocusing and redefining values which does not happen often in our hectic lives. A positive growth and change in the individuals involved was indicated, however the change is different in each. Personal growth and affirmation, introspection and change of the routine appear to be prominent outcomes of the outdoor adventure experience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	7
Risk.....	7
Adventure.....	8
Outward Bound.....	11
Youth at Risk.....	12
Special Needs Individuals.....	13
Self Concept.....	14
Adventure Education and Self Concept.....	16
Follow Up.....	21
Methodology.....	22
Process and Data Collection.....	22
Data Organization and Presentation.....	25
Results and Interpretation.....	26
Conclusions.....	38
References.....	40

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
1. Wellness-Illness Continuum.....	5
2. Adventure Experience Paradigm.....	9
3. Perception Matrix For the Adventure Experience.....	10
4. Four Processes for Articulation of Self.....	16

## Introduction

The pursuit of risk in today's society is a controversial issue. Many individuals and organizations pursue risk with a passion while others attempt to control these risk takers. In the last few decades, this line of freedom and control is forever changing.

In education, the pursuit of risk and adventure has and will create even more discussion and controversy. Many institutions including schools provide minimum risk activities in tightly controlled situations such as downhill skiing and gymnastics. The question which still needs to be answered is whether or not risk and adventure is beneficial to individuals in today's society, and if it is, should it become part of our education system.

Throughout the ages, young men and women have tested themselves in a variety of avenues. In historic times, young men went to war to protect the values they believed in and many young women were instrumental in the war effort in positions as nursing and non-direct military action. In medieval times, young men joined the crusades. In Australia, aboriginal people went on walkabouts as a passage from youth to manhood (Gibbons, 1974). In North America, the native people had passage rites for young men in their society. Some of these rites of passage that occurred in the indigenous cultures of North America and Australia were mandatory whereas others were available to those who wanted to join. In today's modern society, that avenue is not readily available to many individuals and therefore, many youth and adults are turning to other, often negative, "passage rites" such as drugs, alcohol, sex and gangs.

Society is becoming more ordered than ever before, however many youth and adults wish to test themselves and do things on their terms. One must only look at the increased popularity of high risk "sport" such as scuba diving, snowboarding, paragliding, mountaineering and rock climbing. One of the fastest growing sports and indoor activities in the 1990's is indoor rock climbing on artificial walls. These facilities are

springing up all over the country, not only in the mountain regions, but in urban centers great distances from the crags. In Alberta, there are more than ten indoor climbing walls at the present time.

It is also interesting to note that twenty years ago, it was mainly a male phenomena, however in recent years, more females are becoming involved in the adventure arena. For example, at popular rock climbing areas, there are many teams of serious female rock climbers. In the last few years, whole expeditions of women have made monumental assaults on high Himalayan peaks (see Annapurna: A Women's Place). Sharon Wood, a Canadian, became the first North American women to stand at the top of Mount Everest in the late 1980's.

Outdoor adventure programs and companies such as Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and other outdoor schools have this adventure component as one of their main purposes. National Outdoor Leadership School speaks to this;

We take as a fundamental premise that youth demand adventure and if adventure is not planned into our educational process, the youth will create adventure, often in illegal or unacceptable means. (Ewert, 1977: 2)

The pursuit of risk and adventure will provide an opportunity for today's society to test themselves and grow positively from these experiences. Unlike many sports, outdoor adventure activities can be pursued late into life providing a base for a lifelong enjoyment from recreation.

Many individuals and groups have described the benefits of outdoor adventure. Zook (1986: 55) describes five opportunities for personal growth commonly neglected by a technological society. Outdoor adventure programming can provide individuals with:

- Opportunities to increase their self-understanding and to develop their individual capabilities,
- Living demonstrations of mankind's interdependence,
- Real life adventure,
- Broader understandings of people's relationship with nature,
- Opportunities to clarify the distinction between needs and wants.

Over the many years I have been involved in the outdoor adventure field, I have seen many people grow and change after being on one these experiences. I have seen groups that do not know one another come together and become a very close knit unit not wanting the relationship to end. In many instances, these relationships carry on for years, if not a lifetime. It doesn't matter whether the participants are young or old, there is some "magic" that happens and all who participate, grow from the experience.

However, what attracts individuals to adventure is not very well understood. There are probably many reasons for the attraction, each one very different. According to Miles (1978), there are many reasons for pursuing risk and adventure and the "specific rewards" vary with the different activities. These rewards include:

- traveling to places of natural beauty which is not found in the daily routine.
- the elements of uncertainty; to test one's self,
- risk and adventure produces an intense emotion as one either perceives injury or even death as a consequence or elation as a major obstacle is overcome,
- the social perspective; working as a team to meet a common goal and finally,
- the consequence of the setting provides a humbling experience in that many of nature's forces are more powerful than man.

In the final analysis, it appears that people are motivated to participate in activities identified as high adventure risk recreation by many forces, as is true of any human activity. Some come to test themselves, to engage in risky sports for the adulation they may receive at cocktail parties and elsewhere, to impress their friends and enemies. Others come for the love of the challenge, of exploration of unknowns in both the self and the external world. They come to see the flowers and the views, to encounter other people doing the same activity, to share experiences and transcend human barriers. (Miles: 28)

In the last few decades, there has been a resurgence of people taking part in outdoor and adventure programs. This trend appears to be growing as the environmental bandwagon gains steam. The degree of difficulty in the activities varies with each



individual, however there appear to be underlying themes that lure people to the outdoors and adventure.

This idea of returning to nature is not new. Henry David Thoreau was an American philosopher who spent much of his life traveling through the wilderness in the middle of the last century. According to Nash (1967), Henry David Thoreau believed that "the presence of this wild country was of utmost importance."

Thoreau wrote "Our lives need the relief of [the wilderness] where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams" (Nash, 1967: 87). Many of his colleagues at the time also professed an understanding of the natural order of things in an almost spiritual way that we are finally starting to re-understand now in the 1990's. As the modern world moves closer to environmental chaos, much of what these individuals were attempting to say in their time is now starting to become clear.

Let me live where I will, on this side is the city, on that the wilderness, and ever I am leaving the city more and more, and withdrawing into the wilderness. (Nash, 1967: 84)

Henry David Thoreau concluded by saying "in Wilderness is the preservation of the World" (Nash, 1967, p 84).

Environmental aesthetics is becoming more important to many individuals in the twentieth century. Sadler and Carlson (1982) state that

the aesthetic effect of places and landscapes is an important dimension of this [our] pervasive sensory ecology. A sense of beauty or even harmony enhances our lives; a sense of blight or discordance correspondingly diminishes them. (p. 1)

According to Sadler and Carlson (1982: 4) all environments, whether natural or modified, "evoke feeling, and have some aesthetic dimension." The environment can exhibit properties of beauty, grandeur, serenity and ugliness. Environmental aesthetics is "the storied meaning as well as the structured appearance of place and landscape." (Sadler and Carlson, 1982: 5)

Most of North America lives in urban areas and the visual eyesores, noise, and pollution associated with the city have generated a feeling of disapproval in the ways the urban areas have been developed. Many people are demanding that the cities be more environmentally pleasing and many people are leaving the city, even for a short time, to find these aesthetically pleasing places.

More and more people are discovering that many of their ideas about civilization and progress are changing and that progress cannot continue as it has. Reverting back to a simpler way of life may help to re-focus individuals to what is important. This occurs within the young and old. At a camp I recently attended, many of the students indicated they watched television for hours each day. However at camp they did not miss the television during the five days they were away. Many of the students said they began to realize how much time they lost where they could be doing things more constructive.

Toft (1987) indicates that our lifestyles in the developed world have created a degree of stress never encountered by a culture. The fast North America lifestyle is beginning to take its toll on both the people and the urban environment. Toft believes that outdoor pursuits may be a vehicle for individuals to move to high level wellness rather than to a neutral point that traditional medicine can give us (Fig. 1). The outcomes and benefits of outdoor adventure may be able to give heightened levels of existence and striving for one's greatest potential.

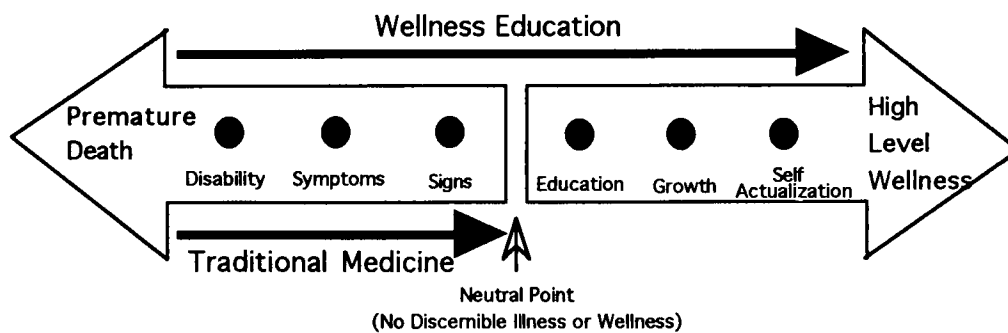


Fig. 1. Wellness-Illness Continuum (Toft, 1987: 17)

Like Murray Toft, I too believe that many people are trying to re-evaluate their beliefs and many return to the natural world to discover them.

In the outdoor field, there are many catch words used; many times indiscriminately. Outdoor education, adventure education, risk education, outdoor pursuits, and others have been used to describe programs, courses, camps and a host of other activities. To clarify the terminology for this discussion, a few definitions are in order.

Outdoor Education is a term used rather loosely when describing outdoor activities. Outdoor education is just as it implies; education in the outdoors. In this context, any subject matter such as math, science, art could be taught in the outdoors. It is education that takes place outside the classroom usually in an outdoor setting.

Outdoor pursuits is a term that has been coined by the British (Mand, 1978). Outdoor pursuits are used for offering various programs by bicycling, backpacking, rock and ice climbing, scuba diving, canoeing and kayaking, and others as the vehicle.

Adventure and risk will be described in the literature review.

## Literature Review

### Risk

We live in a world today that is attempting to remove risk from every facet of our lives, and yet, many individuals including the youth are actively seeking this risk. Risk, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1992) is the "possibility of meeting danger or suffering harm, loss, etc."

Unaware to most people, there are two types of risk as experienced by an individual. Actual risk is the real amount of risk that occurs in an activity. Apparent or perceived risk is the amount of risk perceived by the individual in a certain activity. For example, driving a car, an activity that most of us do everyday, is perceived as low risk but in fact may have high actual risk, especially in urban areas. Rock climbing, on the other hand, has very high perceived risk, but may have very low actual risk. Mayer (1979) states that travel to and from adventure programs may be the most hazardous part of an outdoor activity. He uses statistics from a number of full-time adventure programs and found a fatality rate of 0.5 individuals per million student hours of exposure. Compared to 0.1 individuals per million human hours in everyday living, adventure activities are about five times more dangerous than day to day living. However, compared to the death rate of 0.7 individuals per million hours while driving, adventure activities appear much safer than traveling in a car. Injury wise, outdoor adventure activities are about as dangerous as the occupation of mining and are in fact, less injury prone than college football.

Risk is a very difficult word to describe because each person has their own idea of what is risky. There are also many different types of risk-taking including physical risk, emotional risk, and esteem risk. Each can cause intense stress on the individual. What may be risk to one may not be a risk to another. It is the individual's assessment of the risk and how to come to terms with that risk that allows for growth in individuals from

outdoor pursuit activities. Elliott (1977: 12) describes risk-taking as necessary for individuals who wish to "live at the top of one's bent, not only to live keenly and powerfully in the life of the intellect, but also in the life of the senses, the life of physical activity, and the life of practical concern." Individuals who wish to live life to the fullest are willing to accept the hardships, pain and failures which in many instances will be unpleasant. Elliott indicates that this acceptance is not "evil in when they are necessary elements in a freely chosen mode of life" (p. 12).

### Adventure

Accepting risk, we must now look at adventure. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1992), adventure is an "unusual, exciting, or dangerous experience or undertaking." We live in a world that has been able to control most environmental factors. Our houses, workplace, and vehicles are able to create a safe haven in which to live. Why then do people want to leave their safe environments and become involved in a so called hazardous "undertaking"? And why the outdoors? What is so unique about adventure and risk taking that makes people strive for it and actually go out of their way to find it? What makes individuals who have never done any outdoor adventure want to get out and participate in some adventure activity? Many studies have been done demonstrating the benefit of outdoor pursuits with special populations such as youth, delinquency, and special needs individuals. The questions this study addresses are first; "What attracts individuals to high risk activities"? Secondly, "what do they get from the activity?" Thirdly, "Can this benefit be carried over into the education field?"

One of the interesting paradoxes in the outdoor field is the risk factor. As indicated earlier, there are two types of risk; perceived risk and actual risk. It is this combination of the two that creates a unique adventure environment.

Priest and Martin (1985) present a paradigm that looks at risk, competence and adventure and at what level safe adventure should proceed at. Two major components are essential to adventure; risk and competence. Risk, as defined earlier, is the uncertainty of the activity. Competence, however, is the ability to deal with the situation. If both risk and competence are perceived correctly, then the individual will be in an adventure activity. However, if one or both of the components are perceived with error, misadventure may be the outcome.

The adventure paradigm (Fig. 2) illustrates these two different aspects of adventure.

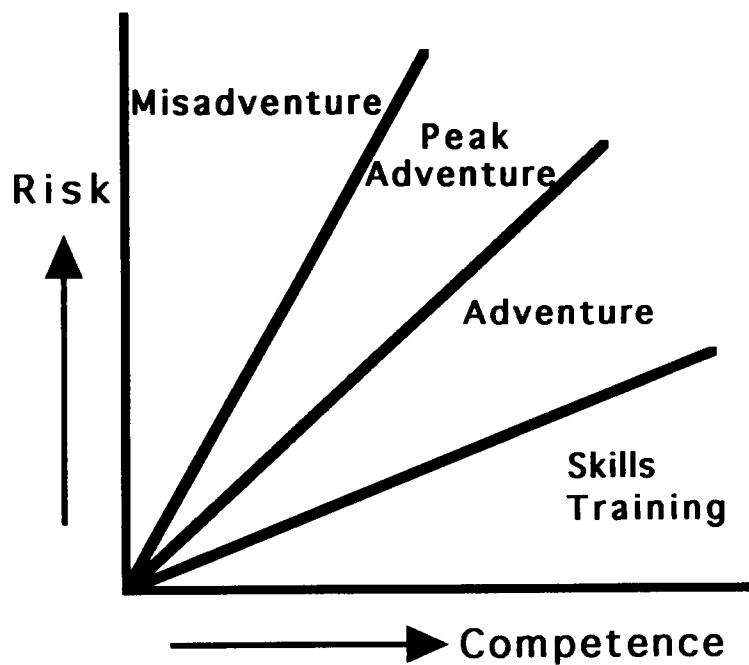


Fig. 2: The Adventure Experience Paradigm (Priest and Martin: 12).

What is interesting about this paradigm is that at a low skill or competence level of the participant, the risk does not have to be high to have an adventure or even a peak adventure. This allows for many programs to meet objectives without risking the lives of the participants. As the skill level of the participants increases, the risks can also be proportionally increased without a real increase in danger.

Most programs strive for adventure and peak adventure, however, beyond that, misadventure and disaster occurs. The authors present a matrix that illustrates the type of individuals found in each of the scenarios possible using the paradigm (Fig. 3).

		Competence		
		Under Perceived	Correctly Perceived	Over Perceived
Risk	Over Perceived	Timid and Fearful	Overawed	Carefree and Exaggerated
	Correctly Perceived	Insecure	Astute	Assured
	Under Perceived	Naive and Innocent	Bold	Fearless and Arrogant

Fig. 3: Perception Matrix for the Adventure Experience. (Priest and Martin, 1985: 3).

An individual who under-perceives their competence and over-perceives the risk is probably timid and fearful. Individuals who over-perceives their competence and under-perceives the risk, is probably fearless and arrogant and is headed for misadventure or disaster. Therefore, proper activities and realistic expectations are mandatory to keep risk from becoming to high for the individual. This includes physical and emotional risk. It is imperative that all facilitators of adventure education be aware of this paradigm.

Gaudiano (1980) poses some very important considerations that must be addressed by all adventure activity subscribers. "Is the risk worth taking?" "Do these programs make enough of a significant change in individual values to justify potential physical and emotional injury?" The value of "high-risk" activities or adventure activities

must be questioned and weighed, in respect to the contribution to the individual's physical and emotional well-being.

The final outcome from an outdoor education program has to be identified. Most programs are not skills training and leadership training but rather an experience for life.

As Alan Ewert states

As with most outdoor education programs, the primary objective of these courses is not to produce experienced rock climbers or river rafters but rather provide opportunities to learn new behaviors and attitudes which are "transferable" to the individual's everyday or normal lifestyle. (Ewert, 1989: 169)

Outdoor adventure research is often confined to special groups or programs such as Outward Bound and university outdoor education programs or youth especially youth at risk (juvenile delinquency programs). Individuals with special needs (disabled individuals) research appears to be increasing in the last few years. Very little research has been done with respect to general population individuals or as in this study, educators. It is this aspect of adventure outdoor programs that this study has attempted to address.

### Outward Bound

The most active school with respect to adventure education is Outward Bound. It began in England during the 1930's and 1940's by Kurt Hahn, a German headmaster who was jailed by the Nazi's for his criticisms of Hitler. Through the help of influential friends in England, he was released and moved to England and opened a private school at Gordonstown. There he developed his concepts and ideas of preparing youth for extraordinary challenges because of the impending war (Cumow 1992). Hahn organized a three week course in Wales which was to become the first Outward Bound Course. From this time, the Outward Bound program has spread rapidly with over thirty-four schools operating around the world today (Godfrey, 1980).



The first goal of Outward Bound is to build self-confidence and this is done through doing. The second goal is to be comfortable with one's self so that the individual can open up to others. These two goals are exercised through the use of the outdoors (Godfrey, 1980).

According to Jenson (1995:189), Kurt Hahn wrote

The purpose of Outward Bound is to protect youth against a declining civilization; the decline of physical fitness due to locomotions; the decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship; the decline of initiative due to spectatorships; the decline of discipline due to tranquilizers, and the decline of compassion which William Temple called spiritual death.

Zook (1986: 55) states that Kurt Hahn's philosophy of education is summarized by Hahn as follows. "I regard it as the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and, above all, compassion."

The objectives of the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness Schools are similar to the international organization but emphasizes certain components. Its draft mission statement from the Strategic Planning Process Committee defined the role of the Canadian Outward Bound Schools as

to provide educational experiences which respond to and enhance fundamental human attributes. Through carefully designed experiences, Outward Bound [COWBS] seeks to enhance self-awareness, care and respect to others, responsibility for the community and concern for the environment through challenging, shared experiences involving service and adventure (Curnow, 1992: 93).

### Youth at Risk

In the last few decades, many programs have been initiated that attempts to address the problem of youth at risk. Many organizations have become involved in this field including Outward Bound. In southern Alberta, organizations such as McMann Youth Services provide some outdoor programming for youth identified as being at risk.

According to Ewert (1989), three principle characteristics identify the delinquent.

These include:

- an unwillingness to assume any form of personal responsibility for his actions.
- usually a limited learner is collected without much evaluation, synthesis or casual inferencing.
- usually lacks self-confidence in both physical and social settings which leads to defensive behavior and resistance.

Due to funding of these programs by government departments and therefore some accountability must be done, measurement of success has been quite well documented. The statistics usually look at recidivism and other anti-social behavior such as crimes committed after the program. Some of the programs attempted to look at self-concept.

The objective of these programs is to allow the delinquent to integrate into a group with a positive outcome. It is hoped that the self-concept of the individual is increased in positive acceptable ways rather than in negative socially unacceptable behavior.

### Special Needs Individuals

In the last decade, great changes in attitudes towards special needs individuals has occurred. Unlike the segregation of previous decades, many of these individuals are demanding programs that meet their needs also.

According to Ewert (1989), the physically disabled have the same needs as non-disabled individuals. They have the same needs for socialization, self-esteem, and self-confidence. This can also be extended to mentally disabled individuals. The main reason for their exclusion from adventure is a social one, and not because of the activity.

## Self-Concept

Much of the research within the outdoor adventure field tries to relate the experience to some measurable and tangible idea. Many studies have attempted to increase self-concept in many outdoor adventure programs, however as much of the literature shows, the results are inconclusive.

An increase in self-concept is a major goal of education. Parents, teachers, and administrators all want to increase the self-concept of students (Shavelson et al., 1976). But what is self-concept? Marsh et al. (1984) states that through a review of the literature, self-concept is inadequately defined and causes inaccurate measurement instruments, methodological shortcomings, and a general lack of consistency.

According to Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976), self-concept is a person's perception of him/herself. These perceptions are formed during interactions with their environment and are influenced by environmental reinforcements and significant others.

"One's perceptions of himself are thought to influence the ways in which he acts, and his acts in turn influence the ways in which he perceives himself."  
(Shavelson et al, 1976: 411)

Self-concept must be presumed from an individual's responses to situations. This can be done in two ways; self-concept and inferred self-concept. The former is an evaluation of one's self whereas the latter is an evaluation by someone else.

There are seven features about self-concept that Shavelson et al (1976) identified as being important. Self-concept is: organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative, and differentiable. One of the findings that the authors present is that self-concept is quite stable and to change general self-concept, there must be considerable change in many specific self-concept components. Marsh et al. (1983) also suggested and demonstrated that self-concept is multifaceted and relatively stable for individuals. It appears that a dramatic change or intervention in an individual's life may

have a great effect on some portion of self-concept but general or overall self-concept will be affected only marginally.

Jordan and Merrifield (1981) indicated that one does not possess a concept of self at all but rather a construct of self which is continually undergoing re-evaluation and evolution. Individuals will constantly change their concept of self throughout their lifetime. There are four cognitive processes; remembering, evaluating, generating, and transforming which operate on the thought content which is known as self concept.

Remembering is similar to a data bank that allows the individual to use past experiences and ideas to assess a new experience. Remembering is a necessary prerequisite for evaluating. Evaluating involves judging and discriminating oneself from others. Self awareness cannot occur in the absence of self-evaluation, which involves comparing oneself with that of desired goals, traits, and behaviors. Generating occurs when the individual begins to change as the result of new learning. "Generating initiates the process of distancing the self from that which is learned" (Jordan and Merrifield, 1981: 88). At this point the individual can look more objectively at him/herself and can "place that which has been experienced at a more external or distant status." Transforming occurs at the end of the cycle where the data base has been restructured in response to the new information and insights. The authors describe self concept as an ever-changing phenomena that is influenced by many experiences

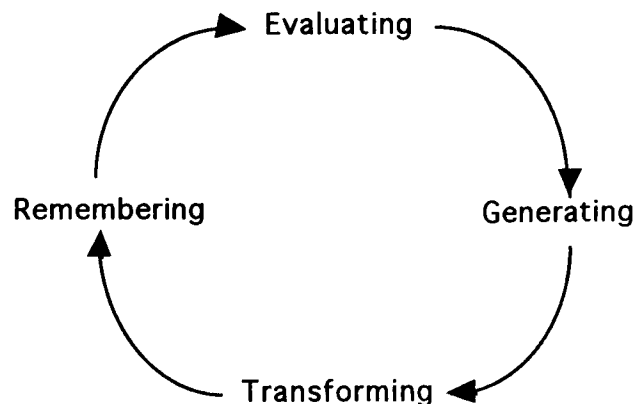


Fig 4. The Four Processes for Articulation of Self. (Jordan and Merrifield, 1981: 88).

According to Radford, Thomson and Fitts (1971), measuring self concept is difficult because of the personal nature of self concept. It is private and not directly observable. Combs and Syngg (1959) argue that self concept cannot be measured accurately because of the complex nature of the individual. There are many factors that will distort the self concept including clarity of the subject's awareness, lack of adequate symbols for expression, social expectancy, cooperation of the subject, freedom from threat and the degree of personal adequacy, and change in field organization.

Ewert (1989) indicates that many self-concept test measurements rely on a paper and pencil measurement using a self-report format. As Webb et al noted

Almost everything we know about attitudes [in the social sciences] is also suspect because the findings are saturated with the inherent risks of self-report information. One swallow does not make a summer; nor do two "strongly agrees," one "disagree," and "I don't know" make an attitude. (Ewert, 1989: 111)

#### Adventure Education and Self-Concept

There have been many studies attempting to demonstrate the effects of participation in adventure programs and self-concept and there have been a variety of results reported. Many researchers feel that allowing the individual to work through a stress filled activity will develop growth in self-concept.

Marsh, Richards & Barnes (1984) conducted a study with 361 subjects in 27 groups aged 16-31 years during a summer with Outward Bound programs. Students completed a Self Description Questionnaire III (S.D.Q. III) one month before the start of the program, first, and last day of the program. Results showed that participation in the program produced increases in the multiple dimensions of self-concept over the 26 day interval. Reliability of the tests were quite high; 0.77 to 0.95.

Wetmore (1972) studied 291 students from all over the U.S. on 26 day Outward Bound courses. The subjects were classified according to age, socio-economic status, race, education, residence, sports background and course attended. Using the Tennessee

Self-Concept Scale, the author demonstrated that eight of the categories showed positive change, three of them significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ). Wetmore found no statistically significant relationships between the change in self-concept and differences in age, socio-economic status, education, race, residence, sports background, or specific course attended. Wetmore also found that boys who rated high on the Tennessee Self Concept Scale were also rated high by the instructors using the Kelly and Baer Behavior Rating Scale. He concluded that the Outward Bound School experience appears to influence change in self concept of adolescent boys.

Many other studies have found similar results, Bertolami (1981) using an Outward Bound program demonstrated significant increases in self esteem and self assertion in both males and females. Many females decreased their perceptions that events were controlled by chance and others. The students felt more able to exert control over their lives while recognizing their realistic limits. Providing a structured wilderness experience provides an important medium for enhancing the personal development of young adults.

Ewert (1977) found no significant changes of self-concept in individuals taking part in an adventure program. 99 students used in a study were part of 4 classes at Eastern Washington University. Three of the classes ( $n = 55$ ) had an adventure component in the curriculum. Using the Tennessee Self-Concept Test before and after the semester, the author found no statistically significant changes in the self concept of the students. One major problem with the study was the length of time spent on the adventure component. Only one class was longer than one night and this was only 5 days. Most of the other studies showing increases in self-concept used longer sustained times with the adventure scenario.

Wright (1982) suggested that some high adventure activities may provide the medium to allow traditionally accepted goals to surface such as self-confidence, goal orientation and accepting a task responsibility.

Wright (1982), using 57 subjects tested the youth, aged 14-18 years, using the Adjective Check List and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Significant positive change was found with the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. The Adjective Check List showed three areas of growth.

In the last few decades, adventure education has been utilized as a rehabilitation tool for delinquency. There have been many programs offered to allow the young to test themselves and increase self-concept.

In 1964, the Massachusetts Department of Youth placed five juvenile delinquents in an Outward Bound program in Colorado. The group did very well and returned with very positive attitudes. Another 40 boys were sent to Outward Bound in 1965 and returned with high self-esteem. A six month study of the boys was completed and only four were repeat offenders as compared to the traditional 15-16. One must be cautioned that the boys were carefully screened. (Childs, 1980)

In 1966, a controlled study was completed on the effects of Outward bound on delinquent youth. One hundred twenty boys were randomly selected and separated into groups. The first group were dealt with in the traditional manner of Youth Services. The other group attended Outward Bound. One year after the experiences, a follow up study was conducted to determine the rate of recidivism (reconviction). The Outward Bound group had a rate of 20% as compared to 42% in the control group. (Childs, 1980)

It has also been shown that Outward Bound does not affect all individuals equally, but for many participants, positive results occurred when attending Outward Bound (Kelly and Baer, 1969).

Winterdyk (1980) demonstrated that there were no significant relations between wilderness exposure and attitudinal, behavioral changes or reconviction rates. Thirty male delinquents aged 13-16 years were studied in an Ontario based 21 day wilderness adventure program. The author used the Tennessee Inventory and an adapted Peirs-Harris Self-Esteem measure as the standardized test. The tests were given before, directly

after, and four to six months after the course. The only noticeable but not significant difference was the type of offenses committed by the recidivist in the follow-up. The offenses were less severe and fewer in the experimental group. The author provides one major recommendation, that was for some form of post structure after the course.

Gass (1985) also recommends follow-up programs so that the effect of the experiences is not lost as quickly. It provides reflection on the adventure. The North Carolina Outward Bound School claims they mail follow up letters to the participants six months after the course.

The increase of self-concept has been the goal of many programs in psychotherapy and education. However, there appears to be no consistent data on whether it is possible to increase self concept. According to Hattie (1992), some researchers believe that once self concept is formed, it is very difficult to change. Others believe that self-concept is continually developing and as individuals encounter new experiences, they obtain a new view of themselves from this different perspective. The purpose of Outward Bound programs is to provide an opportunity for individuals to "recognize and understand his own weaknesses, strengths and resources and thus find within himself the wherewithal to master the difficult and unfamiliar" (Hattie, 1992: 226). Other research has pointed out that Outward Bound affected multiple dimensions of self concept and has shown positive results, however according to Hattie, many of the studies are methodologically quite weak.

Alberta Education (1987) proposed a document that presented ten groups of essential concepts, skills and attitudes that education in the Province of Alberta was to provide to the students. Many of these concepts, skills and attitudes are directly related to self-esteem, acceptance of others, environmental awareness, and interpersonal relations. The document, however, does not give any indication how this is to occur. The use of adventure education and risk-taking may be one of the methods used to fulfill the curriculum with regards to these parameters.



Many of the above attitudes are required by individuals in the outdoor environment, especially on an adventure experience. There are many opportunities that will come forward to test and strengthen these attitudes during the course of an outdoor trip. In comparison to a typical classroom where many times individual work is expected, the outdoor environment lends itself to the group experience. Individuals having trouble will affect the entire group as the group cannot continue without accepting and dealing with the problem at hand.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge uses interpersonal and interaction sessions for perspective teachers. The sessions are usually two to three days with follow-up throughout the semester. Some of the goals of the interaction lab are:

- Students will increase their awareness of self and others with respect to thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Students will develop interpersonal skills within the context of a helping relationship: disclosure, feedback provisional try, support, trust, sharing, cooperation, conflict resolution and caring.
- Students will develop group process skills.
- Students will develop the skill of reflection as it relates to learning and teaching.
- Students will begin to transform educational theory and their experiences as learners into knowledge as teachers in order to facilitate the transition from student to teacher. (taken from hand-out)

My personal feeling of the process as I went through the interaction lab was one of mistrust. We were placed in random groups into a room with no reason or activity to hold us. It was just a hurdle we had to jump through and most of the students jumped. The situation was contrived and not realistic due to our limited knowledge of the process. I believe that the objectives of the interaction lab would have been better met if an outdoor adventure situation was instituted. The child and youth program at Lethbridge Community College uses an outdoor setting two-day workshop to allow the students and instructors to get to know and trust each other.

Many of the above goals of both Alberta Education and the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge could be facilitated through the use of outdoor pursuits.

## Follow-Up

As one reads through the literature on the effects of outdoor adventure, there is evidence that points to a positive effect on the individuals in the process. However, there is much ambiguity in many of the studies and there has been very little research done on the average or gifted individual. Any studies that are done are usually of a quantitative nature where whole groups are studied together. Because self concept and self esteem are very difficult ideas to agree upon, a different method of inquiry is required. Very little work has been done as a small group case study where the data collected looks at each individual's thoughts, perceptions, and concerns. It is hoped that this study will help to create a different means of studying the changes that occur during an adventure pursuit.

## **Methodology**

### **Process and Data Collection**

The purpose of this study was to look at the effects of an outdoor adventure trip on educators. Rather than looking at all participants as a group, an individual approach has been undertaken. I believe that individuals get many rewards from the activities they undertake, and some of these cannot be measured using a test instrument or checklist. Many times these tools stifle rather than enhance the study, and in doing so limit the essence of what is really occurring.

I found this to be quite evident in a research study I did in 1992. I designed an inventory style questionnaire where the participants in an outdoor education component did an objective style test before and following the week-long experience. The test indicated some common themes, but in many instances they were not conclusive. The interviews provided a greater wealth and depth of information. It was quite evident that many of the students got 'something' from the experience, but in many cases they were quite different from each other. In most cases, the benefits as identified by the individual was quite personal and these would many times not show up in a questionnaire. Each of the students had their own agenda for and during the outdoor experience.

In contrast to the study I did in 1992 which dealt with students from an Integrated Occupational Program, many of whom were students that do not succeed well in the traditional classroom, this study has attempted to address the benefits of an adventure program on individuals that are employed in the education profession. In this study, I have expanded on the insight I obtained last year. It is hoped that through this study, the effects and influence of an outdoor pursuit program on educators will be better understood.

Five educators, either practicing teachers from the southern region or faculty from the University of Lethbridge had indicated that they would like to do an adventure trip

during a previous course at the university. All participants were students or faculty from the graduate program in Education. It was assumed that traditional studies such as attempting to increase self concept would be of no real value as many of the participants probably have a fairly high self concept and a change would probably not occur in the week long trip. It is also difficult to validate an increase in self-concept because the idea itself is difficult to grasp. Each individual has their own idea of what is self-concept. However, I do believe that the participants have gained much from the experience, however each individual had their own reasons for going on the experience. It is this essence I wished to capture on the trip.

I have taken previous groups of adults on week long backpacking trips and have seen changes occur in the individuals and the group. Some at first seemed quite subtle, however upon contact with these individuals years later, the memories and growth that developed on the trip is still with them.

The participants first indicated they would have liked to do the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island, but upon further research, this trip would be very difficult to pull off logistically. In 1992, the National Park service instituted a draw system to control the number of people on the trail. Upon further discussion, the group decided that they would like to do a six to seven day backpacking trip through the southern Canadian Rockies. During the trip, the group did two to three days of caving in the Crowsnest Pass area and some mountain hiking and ridge walking along the continental divide. The participants themselves decided on the agenda of the trip in mid June. The trip was composed of challenges, however I will not introduce the challenges here but rather discuss the challenges in the results. The challenges were very physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. One of the highlights was a 17 meter free rappel through the roof of a cave to a cavern below and the subsequent climbing of a 20 meter cable ladder suspended from the roof. Other challenges include physical exertion and determination to get to places in the area.

Before, during and after the trip, the participants recorded thoughts, impressions, apprehension, and expectations as they prepared, encountered the obstacles, and reflected on the trip. They wrote a journal as the basic reference and data source, however many of the participants used other creative ways of illustrating their thoughts and emotions. It is through these avenues that I have attempted to make sense of their experience and to look for common themes within them. I also kept the writing agenda open so that all aspects may be addressed. I felt that if I tried to set parameters in the writing I would only stifle their creative abilities.

I also kept my own journal during the trip. Many times it was used to record discussions I had with the participants on the trip. Having been on many camps, it is fortuitous that most people like to chat and discuss ideas that they normally would not engage in. It is hoped that through this data I collected, major themes will become evident.

There were a number of questions that I posed informally before, during and after the trip. I will use these questions as a framework for the ideas I am pursuing. The questions or themes I wished to identify included:

- What are your reasons for attempting an outdoor adventure trip at this point in your life and career?
- If you were not on this trip, what would you be doing during the proposed trip time period?.
- What do you hope to get out of the trip both personally and professionally?
- Are your expectations being met by the trip thus far? Is the challenge there?
- What have been the highlights thus far?
- Will your teaching situation benefit from the experience thus far?
- Now that the trip is over, what have you learned about yourself, others, the group, and the outdoor environment?
- If you knew what you know now about the trip, would you still go? What would you do differently?
- Do you see any connections between this experience and your professional career? personal life?
- Have you reflected on the trip often since returning? What are the memories of the trip that stand out in your mind?
- Do you feel that an outdoor adventure trip is good for individuals? Should it be mandatory for students to go on one.

## Data Organization and Presentation

Looking back at the methodology, I should have realized that there would be a "mountain" (pardon the pun) of material to go through. I have attempted to find common themes, patterns, and threads which may indicate the benefits of an adventure opportunity for the participants involved. Without prior knowledge on the type of data that was collected, especially in the creative areas that some of the participants pursued, the prior method of discussion was hard to develop. The following is a brief overview of the discussion.

- a description of what occurred on the trip and an assessment of the risk and adventure during the activity
- a narrative of the experience from my experience and from the participant's experience based upon their stories.
- common themes from all the data collected.
- suggestions and implications for the use of outdoor adventure programming within education.
- suggestions for further research.

## **Results and Interpretation**

The trip began, for the participants and especially for myself, many months before the actual depart from Lethbridge. The preparatory thinking is always going on in the back of one's mind as one plans for the safe execution of a potentially high risk trip like this. I had unknown individuals in that I had never been out in the mountains with these individuals before and therefore all safety was for me to consider. My first priority was to find someone to help me with the technical aspect of the trip as I could not be in all places at the same time. Brent was a very capable and enthusiastic individual on the trip. He is also an energetic and upbeat individual that the group found very enjoyable. It was unfortunate that he had to leave after the caving excursions and couldn't stay for the rest of the trip. The group felt an emotional letdown after Brent had left.

The second priority for me before the trip was to make sure the individuals knew what they were getting themselves into on this trip. I don't believe that any one of them really knew what was ahead of them, nor do I think I could have prepared them for it. I found myself doubting the trip at certain occasions because at times I questioned my own leadership skills. It is the mental head games that goes on within your mind that sometimes throws you for a loop. I believe I learned more about myself than I did about the others on the trip because I had to look deep inside myself at the things I didn't really want to. I feel sometimes that each of us puts up a facade that provides us with a feeling of adequacy and in most instances the facade is not challenged. On this trip, my own leadership skills were placed under the microscope and the consequences of a wrong decision may be disastrous.

"I have laid awake most of the night thinking about the upcoming trip. I wonder what I am doing. I am taking four individuals out on a trip, potentially hazardous, and I really know little about their skills. I know that they will grow from the experience and I do have a partner along that I can depend on. I hope I am up to the challenge."(written a week before the trip)

The month leading up to the trip provided a number of stages or scenarios where some dimensions of personal growth appears to have taken place. Lisa writes

"I sense though that John is somewhat apart from the group. Perhaps this is a function of his role as "leader". Is it necessary for someone in this capacity to maintain a "distance." Do I in fact employ this same strategy in my classroom?

The situations are really quite analogous. I know nothing and place myself with total confidence in his hands. My students experience a similar phenomenon when they enter my classroom for the first time. Do I behave in the same fashion, somewhat aloof, giving encouragement, compliments, but not getting the desired results. Why?, because I don't know them and my posture only serves to widen the gulf."

In the training sessions where the participants were taught how to do some of the basic techniques of ascending and descending in a cave, many of the participants realized that this is not a common place for many people to be. Here they were the learner and the situation was totally foreign, similar to the classroom where a new student has to work and risk themselves in a foreign environment.

The participants indicated that they were more concerned about not doing it than the actual risk of the activity. The thought of losing face is many times more powerful as compared to the bodily harm.

Lisa writes

"As I was walking down to the van I convinced myself that there was no way I climbed that large face. Cathy and Leslie, already into their lunch, praised my efforts "You wouldn't have known for a minute that you were scared" and "If you were scared it sure didn't show. You looked like you were very confident."

There appears to be a love-hate relationship when doing something with a risk such as climbing and rappelling when just exposed to the situation. The individual wants to do it and must overcome many fears and anxieties before they can do it This may also be true when exposed to other situations such as work interviews, entering a new classroom, or applying for the M.Ed. program at a university.

I took the group out on a day climbing and rappelling clinic in the Crowsnest Pass area. There were a number of reasons for this excursion. First, it familiarized the group into the use of ropes and having them feel somewhat comfortable on a rock surface above



the ground because underground, the caves are rugged and steep and therefore this training will hopefully allow the participants to gain some confidence. Secondly, it allowed me to assess the individuals for their strengths and weaknesses. Most people find the first days out very difficult but soon learn that they do have the endurance and the necessary skills to do the challenge. Third, it allowed the group to work together and get to know each other for the week-long trip. During the trip, the participants had to work together to reach their goals. Outward Bound has done the challenge scenario with their groups for many years and is a very popular method to group dynamics.

We also had a number of planning sessions in town to discuss the logistics of the trip. Food and equipment concerns were addressed and much of the pre-trip hype was occurring during these sessions. Much of the discussion was centered around whether or not they could do the actual experience. All of them had never been on an experience like this before. They were taking a risk where they did not know the outcome, emotionally, mentally or physically. It was interesting to note that many of the participants had pre-trip jitters about almost anything. Lisa writes on the morning of the practice session

"Having talked about the prospect of my "personal challenge" at length to anyone who would listen I was forced to acknowledge the reality at about 6 p.m. on Thursday night. What in God's name have I committed myself to."

As the trip start date became closer, many of the individuals started to question the reason for the adventure, myself included. Why would any individual living a comfortable life jump at the chance of cold nights, being scared and risking esteem to go on a trip of this nature. Even I wondered why I had taken a group through a potentially risky situation. What had been the outcome? In the days before the trip I found myself not sleeping well and worrying about whether I was doing the right thing. It is not that I have not done risky activities before, but rather the responsibility of the total group was taking its toll. They were counting on me to make the correct decisions and I was counting on them to do the things correctly that needed to be done.

Individuals learn much about themselves when challenged. We all discussed the trip in a rather upbeat manner when we were together, but each of us had to look deep inside to see the real perception of the experience we were undertaking. The exploration of one's self is always difficult. If there is a guarantee of success, we tend to leave our facade of adequacy for all to see. However, when the outcome is not guaranteed and the consequences are potentially dangerous, either physically, mentally or emotionally, most individuals take a much greater introspection of themselves about who they are. Each of the participants had reservations about going on the experience and at different times through the experience.

The actual seven day trip left on Sunday as we loaded up and traveled to the Crowsnest Pass area where we stocked up on caffeine before the hike in. It took about an hour to get all of the gear that was required into the packs. Much discussion pursued on how this was to be carried up to the camp area. We took off on the trail (actually a four by four road) and crossed seven streams. These proved to be very interesting as I began to notice the level of confidence each of the individuals had in themselves. The road is about six kilometers long before it sharply climbs to the Camp Cave meadow. It was on this slog that the participants evaluated their fitness levels, both physically and mentally.

One of the interesting aspects of many trips is the underestimation of one's real ability. The perception of difficulty or stamina is usually in error because in today's society, most individuals do not test all of their abilities.

Lisa writes

"Can I carry this? More tomorrow, I resolve to do the best I can. So what if I have to make two trips."

I heard many comments on that they would probably not make the top of the hill to the cave. However after about an hour we reached the meadow and we began to search for the ideal camp site. The site in the camp cave area I had wanted to use was taken by another group so we moved down the slope a few hundred meters. It turned out to be the best area in that we had a sheltered area away from the wind and a gorgeous view of the

Ptolomy Creek valley. Many individuals in today's society do not know their physical and mental limits. This may be partly due to the industrial revolution and the development of convenience items. Most of us do not really know what our limits are and how far we can push ourselves. Through an adventure, we have the opportunity to push these limits. At the end of the long carry up the valley to the campsite, elation occurs at the realization that it has been done. "*Whoooee!!! I did it.*" writes Lisa at the end of the first day on the trip. Brian adds "*How much distance can be covered in little steps*" Most individuals do not know their own limits, yet ask individuals such as staff in the school and students in the classrooms to push their limits.

On a high spot behind the camp, one could see into British Columbia and view the sunsets each evening. A number of the participants commented on the time they had now to reflect and smell the flowers. Working for this luxury adds an additional reward. Brian writes

"A view that you have earned through your own sweat and muscle, a piece of cheese, cup of tea, fresh socks, soft shoes, warm sleeping bag - all things we take for granted in suburbia mean so much when they come out of your own pack."

In today's society we have lost the connection between needs and wants. We need shelter and food and water but we want much more and tend to take the needs as givens and automatics. When individuals have to personally look after their needs for a period of time, they appreciate many of the simpler things in life that our wants appear to cloud over. Brian notes that it is great to have a thermo-rest™ sleeping pad, however I doubt that a cheap sleeping pad would have detracted from the experience. It may even have enhanced it.

David Thoreau traveled for weeks at a time through the wilderness in the last century with only a 20 pound pack. During this time he survived in the environment quite comfortably while he wrote and philosophized. He had very few wants and he found his needs were met adequately in the "hostile" environment. He found himself

attracted more to this environment as the years went by. In today's society, I believe that we have misplaced the ability to survive and even thrive in an environment that appears hostile. We do not know the limits of ourselves.

Once we found our campsite we established camp and proceeded to start supper. Many of the aches and pains were gone by this time as water and food did their job.

The following day we hiked up to Cleft cave. The hike goes up a steep scree slope and follows a narrow bench to the cave entrance. The first fifty feet into the cave requires some delicate moves to where the headlamps and cave clothes are donned. Cleft cave is quite interesting in that it travels through the mountain ridge and overlooks the next valley. It required the participants to overcome their fear of small places because there is a crawl of about twenty feet that goes through a very tight hole. Once through the only way back is through the same hole. It took a while to get everyone through the hole and onto the window. The view was great and the group found it to be exhilarating. We left the window and traveled back through the cave to the entrance. Once past the crawl, all energies were focused to the downclimb from the entrance back onto the ledge. A few of the participants were extremely tired so Brent and I fixed a rope to help the group get down to the ledge from the entrance. The trip back from the cave was quite enjoyable. The group realized that they were safe and realized that they had done something that they probably would never had done in their wildest dreams.

One of the main themes that appeared throughout the experience was the inter-relationships between the individuals. Even though we had been together in class, we really did not know each other that well. Many of the comments in the journals addressed the question "Who are these other individuals?". Lisa writes

"One of my primary motives for planning a trip such as this is to open myself to some new, basically unknown individuals. I hope that we leave this adventure as friends. Thus I was very interested in watching and making sense of other reactions than my own."

Lisa continues "I wonder is anyone else looking? If so what do they see in me."

The following day was to be the big day. We have the equipment to drop the group down into the big pit in Gargantua Cave. The drop is about 17 meters straight down which must be done as a rappel. The rappel is free hanging in that your feet do not touch the wall much of the way down. Once at the bottom, the only way out is to climb up a swinging cable ladder that is only about 15-20 cm wide with the rungs spaced about 30 cm apart. It took Brent and I about an hour to set up the ropes and ladders and to make sure that everything was in place as a backup. Brent descended first into the pit to check the ladder and to see how slippery the rappel was going to be. He acknowledged that the rappel was great and the enthusiasm of the group increased as did the anxiety level. Lisa, Leslie and Brian were discussing the merits of the risk as they were waiting for the ropes to be set up. In hindsight, I wished that there was something for these individuals to do during this time, however space was at a premium and my first concern was for safety. Cathy decided not to come on this adventure because she was already stressed out by the previous days' adventures. Once Brent got to the bottom of the pit, he called back that the sensation was great and Brian decided to go next. It was interesting to note the Lisa and Leslie wanted Brian to assess the situation and give his honest opinion. Great for a gender issue discussion. Brian rappelled down into the pit with a safety line. He found the experience to be exhilarating and called back to the other members of the group to come on down. He went as far to say that the rappel was really neat. Lisa went down next, followed by Leslie. Once they hit the bottom, they were euphoric. They had done it.

In the last few hours before the big rappel, the group took on a new focus. Relationships between the individuals were developing and strengthening. Each individual had input into the group, and most of the input was that of mutual support. Brian writes

"John was all concentration now and I could sense his tension and his concern. I should mention that he said to me as we approached the drop that he had never been down the drop before. In a strange way his tension and concentration and the knowledge that he had not done this before was

reassuring. We were all in it together. I felt the bond between Lisa, Leslie and myself because of our common fear and John became a part of it because of his concern for the unknown. His wasn't fear but worry about getting us in and out. His feeling of responsibility made us a group."

On adventure experiences, the concept of group becomes very powerful. The group as a whole is able to do more than the sum of the individuals. The experiences that the group share allow the group to better know intimately the individuals involved. Brian continues

"So much of our existence is in the context of phony civilized discourse that we seldom know each other. We know words, we know actions, we know performance, we know clothing. We don't know each other."

The adventure experience brings out the inner being of the individual. As the perceived risk of the activity increases, the trust, sharing, strengths, weaknesses, and all other personal traits are brought to the front for all to see. In these moments, we begin to see the person inside the body. Brian adds

"But here, sharing food, fear, achievement, and weaknesses, six relative strangers have come to see each other as people. The dim headlamps, so ineffective in illuminating the physical cave that we found ourselves in having (sic) illuminated the personal abyss of isolation of each other. And not to stretch the metaphor too far - it is only by the light of another that we can be illuminated. We became more sensitive to each other and shared our observations and our feelings."

We knew now they were committed and realized that worrying about getting back up was useless. I rappelled down into the pit last and was very happy for the group. I felt that this experience will be etched into our memories forever. We had done something out of the ordinary. We had left a comfortable lifestyle and home to face the unknown.

It was fortuitous that the day was also Brian's birthday. We sang Happy Birthday to Brian and lit a few lighters as candles in honor of the day. Brian writes about the experience

"One of the strangest birthday parties I've ever had. Really what a good way to celebrate a birthday - in an adventure celebrating life - exploring what life has to offer - feeling alive, feeling your own capabilities, limits, fears, physical pain, emotional triumph and sharing it with fellow human beings in all of their punyness - in all of their glory."

We took a look around the pit and tried to get down to the next pitch which was only about 150 meters away. However, one of the slopes that falls away into a pit had to be traversed and it was quite slippery. We went back to the pit and got ready to go up the ladder to the top of the pitch. I used a jumar and the ladder to climb from the pit but the ladder twisted and I got hung up on every rung. I used a few choice words which didn't help the confidence of the others, but I made the top and proceeded to set up a top rope for the others. Each of the others made it up the ladder with relative ease and were ecstatic when they reached the top. There were tears of joy and hugs when each reached the top. Brent came up last and made sure everything would be pulled easily. Brian, Lisa and Leslie moved beyond the pitch where they helped to pull the ropes and gear. I think they enjoyed having something to do; it seemed to keep everything into perspective.

Brent had to leave the next morning. Brent is a unique individual who creates atmosphere with whom ever he is with. He had become an integral part of the group and was now leaving and therefore the group changed dramatically. All in the group said their good-byes in the evening as he was leaving at first light. It was interesting to note the change in the group when Brent left. Lisa writes

"There is an emptiness in camp this morning. We all miss Brent. It is amazing to me the sense of connection we have experienced. Is this typical? What a welcome respite from our day to day isolation."

The following day would be an easy day as each of the last three days were long and full. We had a leisurely breakfast and most of the group decided to use the time to write in the journals. Camp activities were done such as washing dishes, hauling water, and the likes. Later in the morning, Lisa, Leslie and I decided to hike back over the pass to the Ptolomy plateau to look for some of the other caves in the area. We packed a lunch and wandered around the plateau. On the way up, Lisa and Leslie commented on how strong they felt after a few days out on the trail. A few days before they were complaining about the trail up and now they were moving quickly up the slope. We had lunch and noticed a storm moving into our direction. We decided to take leave quickly as

there was no cover in the case of a lightning storm. We were at camp very quickly and met up with the rest of the group.

The following day we hiked over the pass again to the Ptolomy plateau. We attempted to hike to the lake on the very far south side of the valley but we could not get there because of a huge deep valley in between. We searched the meadow for some of the other caves in the area including Mendips, Yorkshire Pots, and others. The whole plateau is riddled with small pockets and cave entrances. We hiked to the very edge of the plateau where we looked upon the deep valley. We had lunch here and enjoyed the sunshine and the views. It was during these times that much discussion occurred amongst the group (some professional, some personal). The group then hiked back across the plateau and headed back to camp where we had supper. The weather appeared to be deteriorating and we set up some tarps to allow us to cook under shelter if the weather got worse overnight.

The next morning we awoke to find the valley was socked in with clouds and rain was imminent. We knew we could not hike today because we could not see anything. As a group we decided that we would leave this morning as we had a perfect five days and the rain was going to have the trip leave on a down note. We had breakfast and took camp apart by 11:00 and started down the trail to the car. It was much easier than the trip in as gravity was on our side and our packs were much lighter. We reached the cars at about 2:00 and reflected on the trip over a cold beer.

One of the most interesting aspects to the trip was perception that some of the participants were skilled in the outdoor field. The physical fitness of the individuals was in some instances under-rated and in other cases; overrated. It was interesting to note that the participants who I thought were going to have a difficult time with the trip, didn't, whereas those I felt were going to do quite well, struggled.



A common theme that appeared from all of the participants was the risk involved. They all wanted to do the activities and yet were scared to do them. We did a pre-session on a rock bluff which allowed the students to rappel down an easy slope.

All the individuals were scared doing the first step over the edge and had to force their minds to deal with the stress. After the ordeal was over, they all indicated that they were glad that they had done it. The learning of their capabilities were at a level that had not been explored before. In this situation, they were forced to perform under the risk of injury, not only physically but also mentally.

Another interesting theme was the self-exploration done by each of the participants. In all of the individuals, the number of hats that are worn by the person are too numerous to count. The participants indicated that they did not know what their role was at present. Both Lisa and Leslie indicated that they wanted to explore who they were and to come to discover some of the personal things they felt they were lacking. Lisa writes

"I haven't thought about my kids all day. This is what its about. I love them, need them believe in our family and the life we are building together but there are times when I feel sucked dry. No more to give, no reserves. Perhaps this is what it is about for, - Getting in touch with who Lisa is separate from my many other contexts"

Leslie adds

"...this group of people and this adventure-outing are food for my soul and for my self-esteem. I have come to believe that adventure is one of the things that I have been seeking for in my life - and I used to look to a man to supply that for me. No man that I was seriously involved with ever did this, but somehow in my "fairy-tale" view of the world I believed that it was not only possible, but expected that this was one of men's functions. Boys had adventures, girl's didn't. If girl's had adventures, they were planned by men and carried out with men."

Brian adds at the end of his journal:

"I hope it (journal) provides something worthwhile for, if not, it has only provided me a time to see myself as a

mountain climber  
caver  
writer  
poet

painter  
survivor friend  
weak-kneed coward  
singer  
listener  
and a person - no more no less"

One of the most interesting ideas that has come from my adventures with the outdoors is the feeling of accomplishment and the realization that hard work and pain and sometimes suffering is not only acceptable but that people actually thrive for it. The quick rewards of an experience pale in comparison to the rewards after an adventure experience.

Leslie writes:

"It felt real good to have a shower and sleep in my bed. But... not as good as the feeling of physical, mental and emotional accomplishment...of conquering the fatigue in my leg muscles, of conquering the fatigue in my mind, of conquering the Me inside of me that sometimes says that I can't do things."

There are some other ideas that come across in many of the journals that the participant's identified. One of the strongest one is the idea that they themselves should not be on the experience because they perceive themselves as the weakest individual in the group. Some even expressed doubt about coming. Early in the experience, sometimes even before the actual trip, the participants tried to discover the nature of the others in the group. Even though we were all part of the same class at the university and got to know each other quite well, this experience appeared to force the individuals to search deeper into the individuality of the participants. Each of the participants wrote about their perceptions of the others, especially to find their strengths. Whether it was to find a common thread if the trip became to much and they had an allay, I do not know.

## Conclusions

One of the most interesting parts of the project was the wealth of information that was supplied by the journals. Many of the individuals wrote an amazing quantity of material and didn't allow ideas to be censored, especially if they were in contrast to what I thought. Most people tone down their thoughts when verbalizing them personally because of not wanting to offend an individual. The reflection in writing also allows the writer to think through what they are saying rather than of the cuff.

The journal also became more than an account. Some of the individuals did some watercolor and pencil sketching, others did poetry and short story. One individual wrote about childhood experiences to help describe the ideas they were discussing. More than just sentences appeared on the page when the journals came in.

Reflecting in a journal is a good way for individuals to make sense and order from an experience. Some groups like Outward Bound do a debriefing session to discuss what has transpired through an experience. However, this may only be beneficial to the individuals who are not shy and express themselves openly. Others however, may be reluctant to say much and their ideas will probably not be heard. Journal writing gives all individuals the time to reflect on the experience that has taken place. Journals also allow the person to reflect on the experience later.

This paper is attempting to look at the outdoor pursuit activity in a new way. Rather than using a "test", I am trying to discover if a change in an individual occurs during an experience. Most of the studies done so far use a test that give inconclusive results. This study is also far from conclusive, however, I am sure that something happens to individuals on an experience as the members from this study were on. Self esteem may not increase measurably, skill level may already be high, and the individuals may have tried other risky activities in the past, but there are changes that are occurring

but may not be directly measurable. The use of journals may allow some insight into some of these changes.

The study did show some very positive results. The participants were given the opportunity to look at themselves in a new and unhurried way. In our regular lives, many of us including the participants do not have the time to reflect. This medium provides them with this along with the opportunity of learning and trying new things, making new friends, trust as well as a host of other attributes. These new personal insights will help these participants to affirm, modify and develop their self-image. I do not believe that it is possible to radically change an individual's self- concept in a week-long experience, however, I do believe that these individuals learned a lot about themselves by undertaking this outdoor adventure experience.

Any study in the outdoor environment requires that the safety of the group be the top priority. Safety includes personal safety and emotional psychological safety. If the adventure moves into misadventure and the stress becomes too great for the participants, then the program was too difficult. One cannot take people out on a major challenge on the first trip.

One of the most difficult parts of the study was trying to define my role in the group. I tried not to interfere with the ideas that the participants were discussing because I felt that if I verbalized my ideas from my background of experience, I may cloud the perceptions that the others' had. However, because of this, some of the participants noted that I was removed from the group and had a different role in the group. It is very difficult if not impossible to maintain a presence of an equal on the experience when in the role of facilitator. After this experience, I believe that it is impossible to be both a participant and a leader at the same time. We can only wear one hat at a time.

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